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A TEXTBOOK OF STAGECRAFT

BY

SUSAN RICHMOND

FOREWORD BY

CEDRIC HARDWICKE

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EXERCISES

FOREWORD

THE refrain of a popular sentimental song has it that only God can make a "Tree." The same may be said of the actor, but, as Susan Richmond well points out, the notion that an actor is born and not made is but a half-truth. An actor may have considerable natural aptitude, but he cannot give expression to this until he has mastered the technique and craft of his calling.

Susan Richmond's book, admirably and lucidly written by one who is herself a brilliant and masterly exponent of all she teaches, is a veritable treasure trove to the born actor, and to those blissfully aware of the absence of the divine spark.

To the ordinary hard-working professional or the amateur the book may well reveal possibilities of which their owner has been unconscious. It should be on the bookshelf of both the professional actor occasionally giving pleasure to others, and the amateur, constantly giving pleasure to himself.

One of the most distressing symptoms of modern life is the tendency to monotonous inarticulateness of the average man and woman. The increasing use of microphones, amplifiers, "talkies" and other mechanical devices all tend to encourage this; and the cultivation of clear and personal expression is consequently diminishing. It is therefore more vital that efforts should be made to create an interest in the histrionic arts.

Susan Richmond has made a gallant and a successful attempt; she has written a book which cannot fail to be of use to all who wish to cultivate personality, poise, clarity of diction and perfection of person; attributes which are equally valuable in all the walks of life as well as on the stage.

There is no "royal" road that the budding actor can tread; but here should become a "Richmond" way. If this book had come into my possession when I was a younger man it would have saved me many years of personal experiment and spared me many difficulties.

Although written for those with little knowledge of the theatre, I cannot but feel that the professional, as well as the amateur actor, will profit by a perusal of this book; that is if my own reading is a fair criterion. Those who take advantage of its sound advice and admirable exercises will find that their time has been well and profitably spent.

CEDRIC HARDWICKE.

INTRODUCTION

THE intention of this book is to provide a clear and simple course of study which will help Dramatic Students, professional and amateur, to gain some ic of the general principles underlying all good act Beyond the actual practical exercises and their acc panying notes I have written as little as possible. main object is to try and give those who are k learn a better knowledge of dramatic art. Few to this art exist, and mimicry alone is an unsatis way of attempting to learn it.

The book is the result of fifteen years' study art of acting, and I present it because the herein suggested have been tested by me i practice, and have invariably produced most e ing results. The exercises represent a year's w a class of professional students at a dramatic

As I perceived them, I picked out the acting which ignorance of the stage rendered difficult for students, and round each point I wrote a tiny sce at which they could work until that particular difficu was overcome. The result was that, when simil situations occurred in any play they were studyi rehearsals proceeded smoothly instead of being he up again and again, for the simple reason that t students had already grasped the underlying princi and were able to apply them.

I am convinced that those who will take the trou

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to work the exercises and scenes intelligently, noting carefully the directions and not leaving a scene until it is *mastered*, will find that they have gained greatly in ease and sureness : their whole capacity for learning will have increased ; and there will be added the joy that comes from realizing clearly in any piece of work what is being attempted and how to do it.

Teachers in dramatic schools and those responsible for dramatic societies, whether large or small, are invariably faced with the problem of how to find work which, during the short time at their disposal, will provide occupation for everybody. Frequently, half those present have to mark time while the rest fumble their way through an act of a play, and, at the end, the actual acting done by each person does not amount to more than five or ten minutes' work. Rapid improvement cannot be made in this way, and enthusiasm is apt to diminish under such circumstances.

If the actors can be taught beforehand, in as condensed a form as possible, how to manage the elementary mechanism of acting, the producer will not be discouraged at every turn by awkwardness and lack of knowledge when it comes to playing long scenes. The cast will be able to tackle the parts more quickly, and certainly with much greater efficiency and ease. It is with the hope of bringing about this satisfactory state of affairs that the exercises and dramatic scenes in the present book have been planned. For example :—Beginners often do not know how to walk on to the stage or get off it, which are vitally important points. Let them practise the exercises in the exercises that deal with these points. This will only take a minute or two to perform and a few lines can be memorized at once. Everybody should practise the scenes, going through them again and again until they can do them well and easily. By this

means all will have been occupied and have gained something of real value by their hard work. In addition, things will come much easier for the producer when long scenes are rehearsed.

I have covered as far as possible in the exercises the main points that will arise in almost any play, and each scene has been written to illustrate some fundamental rule of acting. At the same time I have endeavoured to make the discovery and mastery of these rules as interesting and amusing as possible.

S. R.

A TEXTBOOK OF STAGECRAFT

THE MIND OF THE ACTOR

THE idea that an actor is born and not made is only half a truth. It is by no means sufficient to be a born actor, though it is a thing for which to be very thankful when trying to learn the art of acting. It is true that one cannot become great in any walk of life without very considerable natural aptitude, but greatness is for the very few, and even they only achieve it through developing their natural gift by hard work.

Given a suitable physique and a full measure of imagination and perseverance, you can make yourself a very good actor, and most people must be content with that!

Personality you must have: everyone has some sort of personality, but the majority of us are so self-conscious, so utterly unable to free ourselves and be natural, that we seem colourless.

That is either because we are mentally sleepy and need rousing, or because our thoughts and feelings are pent up and do not express themselves outwardly. The first type of person is unlikely to feel an urge to act, but the second often seeks in drama the self-expression that is found so difficult in ordinary life. For these, acting is a happy outlet, and in time their whole personality benefits from its exercise.

Habitual repressions, over-reserve, awkwardness, mumbling speech, etc.—all the things that make them seem colourless—begin to yield and disappear gradually as self-confidence is gained, through expressing the characters of plays. In the end, with quickened imagination and freed from self-consciousness, they can truly express their real character in everyday life. Herein lies one of the deep joys of acting, but it cannot be gained without personal effort.

The whole will must be bent to the task, for no teacher can help you unless you are helping yourself; out of your own self must come the two vital ingredients of the actor's mind—imagination and perseverance.

The greatest difference between the first-rate trained actor and the average amateur is this :—One gets his effects by letting the light of his imagination shine *from within*, reflected in voice, movement and full expression of a perfectly submissive, because perfectly trained, body. The other tries to get his effects by telling the body to make certain moves, sounds and facial expressions which he believes will represent the desired emotions : he works entirely *on the surface.*

It is not easy at first to rouse the imagination to do its share of the work, but persevere and you will find that in proportion as your imagination comes to life, your self-consciousness will die. When you come to study a part, bend all your will to live through, in your imagination, the experiences of the person you are to represent. You must not be a spectator ; you must *be* that person.

It cannot be done in a moment. Sometimes it will come easily, imperceptibly, as you rehearse : sometimes suddenly, sometimes slowly, and sometimes only through discouragement and despair. This quickening of the imagination will come, however, and when the

part begins to be alive in your hands, you will know it at once with a thrill of joy. You will have " created " your part, and now you can start the second stage of the work—to make sure, to control it and fit it smoothly into the fabric of the play.

Actors in a play are, as it were, magic masons building a dream palace, laying on brick after brick to raise up the image that the author of the play conceived. From the moment the curtain rises, until it falls at the end of the scene, this building-up never ceases. First one actor lays on a brick and then another, then several are at it together, co-operating, alert, helping each other : each one lays his brick well so that the next man may add his, to the growing beauty of the whole.

Your mind, therefore, must not be shut up in your own part to the exclusion of all the other characters in the play. You must be sympathetic and responsive, for selfish acting can ruin a play. Every word, every gesture should be the natural outcome of what immediately precedes it, but how can this be unless the actor has given his full attention to what his fellow-actors have been doing ?

Live through every moment of the time you are in the stage, whether speaking or silent, hero or servant. Slack acting has an instantaneous effect on an audience, and interest is lost at once. Every word and every move must mean something to you before it can mean anything to an audience.

It is a good thing to think about your part when you are away from rehearsal and to let your mind dwell on it at odd moments. When you come to play : and are waiting to make your entrance, imagine the circumstances that led up to that moment.

You are Portia, waiting to enter the Hall for the trial of Shylock and Antonio ; and you have travelled

post-haste, full of horror at the thought of the predicament of Antonio, who is the friend of the man you love. You are strangely clad in a lawyer's gown and nobody must penetrate your disguise if Antonio's life is to be saved. You must not show one spark of fear or hesitation when the moment comes for you to plead his cause before a crowded court. They are calling for you to enter.—Now ! !

Thoughts such as these must have flashed through Portia's mind as she strode into the hall; and these thoughts gave to her whole personality the life and fire that brought a hush of expectancy over the eager crowd.

If you wait in the wings, fussing with your clothes or standing slack and uninterested, your entrance is going to mean nothing. Force your imagination to work. Plunge into that other self of the play and *live* your scene.

THE INSTRUMENT OF THE ACTOR

On the stage, everything—appearance, voice, action—is either going to help or hinder an actor in expressing the idea his imagination has created. He is, as it were, under a magnifying-glass and must only do that which is significant and true to the character he represents. The work of such artists as Sir Gerald du Maurier or Mrs. Patrick Campbell shows the vast difference between the crude attempts of the beginner and the quiet effectiveness of the trained actor.

What is it that makes good acting look so easy and in reality be so amazingly difficult ?

Why is it that so many actors cannot make an audience feel the emotions that are so vivid to them personally when acting a part ?

It is simply that they have not provided their idea with the means of expression, that is to say, that the body has not been taught to respond, and to become the instrument of their inward imaginings.

Actors cannot be *taught* how to make their imagination work ; that must come from themselves ; but they can learn how to develop their physical resources for dramatic representation.

In studying the means at their disposal for this purpose, the main considerations are deportment and voice, and these are accordingly dealt with at this stage : further on, in the exercises, the two are combined for actual practice.

(1) MOVEMENT AND BODILY EXPRESSION

Before you can hope to move well, you must know how to stand well.

Correct carriage means a straight back, the body evenly balanced between the two feet, the main weight being over the ball of the feet: shoulders pressed slightly back to facilitate deep breathing, and the head held erect between the shoulders, with the chin neither dropped, which makes for inaudibility, nor lifted, which will destroy the tone of the voice and distort the face for those of the audience who are seated below the level of the stage.

An actor has to project his personality and voice across a great space and he needs all the power and dignity that good carriage can give. This does not mean that he should be strained to attention like a sergeant-major, but that his normal way of standing on the stage must suggest confidence, ease and alertness.

Let the arms and hands hang naturally at the sides when there is no special reason for moving them. The hands are usually a great trial to the inexperienced actor: he feels he must clench his fists, clasp his hands or clutch the back of a chair, but all these subterfuges are just bad excuses for not being able to manage the hands. Self-consciousness is the root of this and many other difficulties, and they have got to be mastered sooner or later. For this reason, amongst the earliest exercises are those in [1] laughing, screaming, weeping, and all those things calculated to make the timid beginner shrink and declare that he cannot do them. As soon as he ceases to wonder whether he is making a fool of himself or not, the first rung of the ladder has been climbed and all sorts of things become possible.

[1] See page 62.

You are not fully alive until you feel the vivid reality of your part tingling in every finger-tip and toe. The whole body must be in this business, and if you make a gesture with the arm, the meaning of it must be expressed right to the tips of your fingers. It must never stop short at the wrist and leave the hand drooping at the end of the arm like a bunch of bananas on a stick. Expressive hands are an invaluable asset and worth a real effort to acquire; often a whole situation, which no amount of words could have explained, is summed up in the flick of one hand.

In modern life broad gestures of the arm are rarely used, so that when it comes to making them on the stage, first attempts are apt to look crude and even absurd. The tendency is to keep the elbows clamped to the sides or to hunch the shoulders when gesticulating, both ugly faults. The arms must move freely from the shoulders and independently of the rest of the body.

The preliminary exercises[1] contain valuable hand and arm movements, and if studied with perseverance they will soon give the necessary ease and freedom in moving hands and arms.

Exercise great discretion in the use of gesture. Only gesticulate when it definitely adds point and meaning to your words or the situation, and be sure that the meaning is as clear to the audience as it is to you. Carry your movement right through from start to finish with conviction and do not suddenly lose confidence and drop your arms weakly like an embarrassed child: unless a gesture is to have beauty and significance, control yourself and do not make it at all.

In considering movement, however, the vital importance of stillness must not be forgotten. To say of an

[1] See page 39.

actor that he has repose is high praise, for repose on the stage is never inertia. It is acting controlled: mind and body are expressing themselves in stillness. The lamp of the actor's imagination burns as bright whether he has to stand lost in thought or hurl himself on an adversary. Never think of stillness as merely negative; it is as clearly defined and full of meaning as movement. If you are in a scene at all, you are of necessity a living part of it, even though you have to sit quiet for half an hour without attracting attention to yourself in any way. Do not ruin your quiet acting by fidgeting: let your stillness be stillness: then when the time comes for you to turn your head or rise to your feet, you will be doubly effective. Remember also that the eyes of the audience will instinctively follow movement, so do not attract their attention by your restlessness, when the centre of interest is elsewhere. Great speeches have missed their effect before now, because a minor player sitting at the side of the stage fidgeted or twitched a foot throughout the speech.

All that has been said about stillness of body applies with equal force to the features. Do not let eagerness to express emotion in your face lead you to grimace. It is very easy to fall into this fault. Remember that the facial muscles respond almost involuntarily to thought, and that if your imagination is working properly, your face will express what is in your mind. No twist of the lip or eyebrow contortion means anything at all unless it is impelled by your thought. Keep a quiet brow above eyes that reflect your mind. Smile only when you mean a smile.

To quote a rather extreme example, think of the mask-like stillness of Charlie Chaplin's face, excepting when he wants to score a definite effect by the lift of one eyebrow or the roll of those dark, serious eyes. It

is because of the normal stillness of his features that his changes of expression are so exquisitely funny or pathetic.

It seems absurd that it should be necessary to *learn* how to stand, walk and sit when it comes to trying to do these things on the stage; but it is a sad fact that the habitual way of performing these most commonplace actions is generally so ungainly and ugly that, seen across the footlights, it appears quite unnatural.

To realize the truth of this fact, observe the movements of an average crowd in a park on a Sunday afternoon and imagine that you are watching a "crowd" scene in a comedy. It is certain that at the end of ten minutes you will have seen at least half a dozen people whose way of moving, if repeated on the stage, would have appeared extremely comic and been greeted with shouts of laughter.

To appear natural on the stage, therefore, you must learn to make every movement with a quiet balance, precision and neatness, which is far from natural to you in the ordinary way. You must be able to move slowly or rapidly, to time your actions to an exact second, and to fit in your moves accurately with those of the other actors.

All this requires control of the muscles and a clear brain behind it, directing every least little thing you do. Physical exercise, such as dancing, fencing, gymnastics, swimming, etc., all help to develop control of the muscles. For those who cannot give separate time and special study to deportment, the following two very simple ways of learning to move gracefully and well are suggested.

When you are out walking, make a habit of fixing something as your objective, at a distance of fifty

yards or more away, say a lamp-post. Then, with head erect, walk in a bee line to it, as though you were toeing a tight rope with a thirty-foot drop beneath you. You will find that only by keeping your body in perfect poise can you maintain a straight line. You must keep your back straight, eyes level, shoulders back and weight over the ball of the foot like any other tight-rope walker! Practise this first of all keeping the whole length of the foot straight along your imaginary tight rope: then practise it keeping the heels only in a direct line, and allowing the toes to turn out slightly in the natural way. There is no better exercise than this. Persevere with it, take it fast and slow and make it such a habit that you always walk well, whether you are thinking about it or not.

It is impossible for an actress to carry "period" costume, with full heavy skirts sweeping the ground, unless she holds herself erect; and though the results are not so disastrous without a skirt to trip over, the deficiencies of an actor who "carries" his costume badly are pitilessly shown up.

Another way in which you can help yourself is to practise moving quietly and quickly about a room. Cross from the door to the fireplace, from the fireplace to the window; then cross to the bookcase, select a book, draw a chair up to the fire and sit down and open the book. Now criticize yourself. Did you move with even, quiet steps, neither plunging nor hesitating? Was the body erect, set easy, and did the arms move slightly and naturally with the body or did they swing like pendulums? Did you bump into the table as you turned round or play "touch wood" with the chair backs as you crossed the room. Did you get the chair into position without fuss and then seat yourself quietly, so that no further arranging of your limbs or

clothing was necessary ; or did you drag it behind you with your body in a half-sitting posture and finish up sitting with legs sprawled ? A great deal can be done in such ways to acquire the habit of always moving well.

Work patiently and persistently to gain ease in acting. When this is attained forget the pains it cost you and let the happy result sink quietly into your actor's equipment.

(2) SPEECH

The need for good deportment for its own sake has been considered in the previous chapter, and this is doubly urgent when it comes to the question of the voice. The lungs can only fill to their capacity if the body is upright, and the mouth can only project the words across the theatre if the head is held erect.

An actor's voice must be clear, and it must be pleasing in tone. To achieve this the lungs, throat and mouth must be used to the best advantage, that is to say in the way in which, from their formation, nature intended them to be used. The actor therefore must learn enough of the mechanics of the voice to avoid misusing it. The ear must be trained to become sensitive to inflections and the sense of rhythm developed, so that expression becomes equally easy either in verse or prose.

Nobody with an impediment of speech is fitted for the stage, and anyone so handicapped should face the fact and desist, unless he possesses really remarkable talent, in which case he should seek the advice of a first-rate teacher.

The art of the reciter is a totally different thing from that of the actor, and therefore it is not advisable

for an actor to indulge in this form of elocution. If he does so, the chances are that he will never wholly free himself from a certain artificiality of diction. Provided that he has a normally good, clear voice, he will be wise not to involve himself in a course of somebody's theory of voice production.

On the other hand, an actor should be intelligently aware of the process by which he speaks, and it is therefore necessary to consider briefly the various factors that go to make up the vocal apparatus, and how to use them.

Breath.

The voice is carried on the outgoing breath, and therefore have plenty of breath in your lungs before starting to speak ; all the time you are speaking, breath is escaping from the lungs, therefore control it while you speak. If you let it come out with a rush, there will be too much breath for the first words and none left for the last. The escape of breath is regulated and kept steady by the use of those strong abdominal muscles, which can be felt at the base of the lungs in front of the body. By gradually pressing inwards and upwards with these muscles, thus keeping the lungs firmly inflated, let the voice flow out smoothly on the breath. Think of the bagpipes. So long as the bag is fully blown out, the tone is steady and loud ; but let the air partly escape and the bag get flabby, then the tone becomes feeble. By squeezing the bag at the base make it as taut as before, and, even though the size of it is reduced, the tone returns, because the air is once more being forced out by the same firm pressure. This is exactly the function of the abdominal muscles with regard to the voice. They are used to press upwards and keep the lungs firmly inflated all

the time you are speaking or singing and thus to preserve a full, even tone to the end of your phrases.

Never shout when you want a stronger, fuller tone. A shout is never anything but a shout, so only allow that quality in your voice when you are sure it is desired. When you need extra vocal power use deep breaths and stronger pressure from below. Do not try to get it by pushing downwards from the shoulders and rounding your back; but keep the back straight and the head up, and allow your voice to come out freely.

Throat.

You should not be conscious of the throat when you speak. If it aches, it is being misused. It should never feel tight or strained. If this happens, something is wrong and it must be corrected. Close the hand lightly round your throat, the neck being in the normal position, and then speak as you have been doing before. Notice whether there is a sudden tightening of the muscles at the top of the throat caused by closing the larynx too much, or a pushing down towards the base of the throat, caused by opening it too much. Thin, hard or throaty tone can usually be attributed to one or other of these mistakes. Now try speaking much more quietly, the chin level and the throat muscles relaxed, and test with your hand from time to time until you have eliminated the unnatural contraction that has been causing the tight or strained feeling.

Find the most pleasant notes of your voice—they will be about the middle—and without forcing in any way, work on these tones. Do not, in an instinctive effort to be heard, allow your voice to creep gradually up, so that it leaves the pleasant middle notes and

reaches the much harder ones just above your natural pitch. Many actors who in reality have very pleasing voices, sound harsh on the stage because, without knowing it, they habitually speak just above their true pitch. Keep at first to the notes that you feel to be easy and pleasant. As your breath control improves, you will acquire all the range and power you can need.

Mouth.

Stage speech is often rapid, so your enunciation must be clear and clean-cut. Do not be afraid to open your mouth and make proper use of lips, tongue and teeth. The French use their lips well, and the Germans know how to open their mouths when speaking, but the English, on the whole, are slipshod in their speech, and this accounts for much of the mispronunciation from which our beautiful language suffers.

The lips form a megaphone for the voice; they are sensitive and pliant—perfect for the purpose. To illustrate this, stand in front of a mirror and say "oh" in your usual way. Listen carefully and notice the position of the lips and the distance between the upper and lower teeth. Now open the mouth till the distance between the teeth is about an inch. Round the lips as though you were going to whistle. Press the tip of the tongue against the lower teeth. Now taking a good breath, say "oh," and note the greatly improved tone and carrying power. This should encourage you to use your lips properly in speaking.

To learn the best position for lips, tongue and teeth for the different vowel sounds, take first the simplest, the "ah" sound. For this the teeth should be over an inch apart—about two fingers' width—the tongue

should lie flat in the mouth, with the tip touching the lower teeth. The lips form an oval, the corners not being drawn back for this or any other vowel.

From this position, turn next to the sound "au" as in lawn. The only alteration here is that the lips come forward in trumpet shape, tongue and teeth remaining exactly as they were.

From "au" the next step is to "oh" in which the corners of the lips come forward to make a round O. and the teeth approach to a distance of an inch—the width of a thumb.

From "oh" change to "oo" bringing the lips still further forward. In the sounds "oo," "oh" and "au," the lips are the most important factor.

For the remaining vowels, it is the tongue that does most of the work. Go back now to your "ah" sound. From that change to the short "ă" (as in cat). This is done simply by arching the tongue a little at the sides, keeping the tip still touching the lower teeth; lips as before.

From "ă" change to the long "ā" (as in rain), in which the tongue curves a little further still. From "ā" the next step is "ee," the vowel for which the tongue arches the most. Resist the desire to draw back the corners of the lips for "ee." In the speaking voice this produces an unpleasing "tinny" sound.

The vowel sound in "mount," "town," etc., is composite. It is made up of "ah" and "oo." It is frequently mispronounced because for some reason there is a tendency to distort it to "ă-oo" or even "ā-oo." This is extremely ugly, but it can be cured if you will realize that "ah-oo" is the sound you want, and make the effort to pronounce the "ah" distinctly. Similarly, the vowel sound i, as in mime, is composed of a-ee (not ă-ee or au-ee).

The clear enunciation of consonants is a question of taking the trouble to form them. We all know how this should be done, but as an actor you should bear in mind the great distance across which you are to be clearly heard, and take corresponding care to attack your words well, and finish them off crisply. Never let a word or a sentence die away at the end.

When you start rehearsing in a large hall or theatre, take a look round you—see what space your voice has to fill. Never lose the sense of that space. Always at the back of your mind have a thought for the boy in the gallery. Toss your voice across the theatre as though it were a ball. If you are obliged to rehearse in a room far smaller than that in which your performance is to be given, try to bear in mind a larger room. Speak up beyond what your present space requires, forget the walls are close to you, and endeavour to rehearse as you will have to play.

THE PITFALLS OF THE ACTOR

It may here be useful to consider a few of the many pitfalls that beset the path of the actor. For instance, he may conquer stiffness and become restless; cure restlessness and become statuesque; learn to speak up and find himself bawling; gain technique and lose spontaneity. And so on.

I do not advocate a careful middle course for your progress, far from it. You had better make your mistakes boldly and strive gallantly on a possibly zigzag course, for there is little doubt that you *will* stagger between extremes if you are ever going to act well. But so long as you stagger *on*, there is no cause for despair. You are progressing all the time.

The big difficulties to be overcome have been considered already—the training of mind, body and voice. But after headway has been made in these there are many lesser but teasing obstacles that stand in the way. I will briefly touch on some of the common faults in acting, in the hope that recognition may assist in their removal.

(1) Lack of Concentration, and Thinking too far Ahead.

Lack of clear, concentrated attention upon the thing you are actually doing at the moment results in a weak, blurred effect. Thought must always precede word or action, but you must learn to think very quickly, for each separate thing as it comes

must have all your attention, or you will not hold the audience.

For example, you have an important entrance to make and you have (1) to enter, laughing, (2) to throw your gloves down on the table, (3) to catch sight of a man lying unconscious by the fireplace, (4) to give a cry, (5) to run across the stage and kneel beside the man in dismay. If the audience is to get the full value out of that little bit of acting, the mind must work with absolute precision. You must take these five points, each separate and complete, and act them in succession, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, not thinking of 2 until you have finished 1, and so on. During early rehearsals, you should act them with absolute mathematical precision. Later on, when imagination is taking the lead, the mechanics of the scene will go by themselves.

(2) Selfish Acting.

Do not let enthusiasm lead you into acting independently of the other players. Keep in sympathy with the scene and, if you have nothing to say, do not be tempted to fill in what you feel to be blank spaces in your part by individual acting or "funny business." This merely distracts the audience from the main thread of the dialogue, and the whole scene suffers.

(3) Lapsing from the Character.

On the other hand, do not, the moment you have spoken your line, collapse into blankness like a blown out candle. Remember that people are no less alive when they are silent than when they speak, and that you are representing a live person all the time you are on the stage.

(4) Artificiality.

Avoid artificiality, it is most irritating. Let every word and gesture you use bear the stamp of sincerity and truth; and, by exercising your imagination, learn to be real and to increase gradually the range of characters of which you can give a true interpretation.

For instance, the common habit of maltreating the eighteenth-century comedies by plastering the very real—however amusing—characters in the plays with quite inhuman affectations is a complete misconception. The manners and speech of that period were perfectly natural to the people who lived at the time; and to deny them their humanity and ignore their extremely robust feeling is to lose all the fun of the plays.

(5) Restlessness.

Do not shift your feet as you stand, or swing your arms about. Any intermediate state between moving and standing still is simply awkwardness, and unless you wish to convey this, hold yourself still; above all, do not step backwards as you speak, a very common and sometimes quite unconscious trick. By doing this, you "upstage" your fellow-actor, that is to say, you take the advantage of him by placing yourself in such a position that, in order to face you, he must turn his back on the audience.

(6) Awkward or Disadvantageous Positions.

Actors playing together should keep level as far as possible, both facing three-quarters to the footlights. They can then also face each other without their features being hidden from the audience. There is no

need, however, always to be looking at a fellow-player, turning your head to follow his every move: this is unnatural. If you have to move whilst addressing him, speak the lines to him, but keep your eyes for your own business and look where you are going: he can hear, even though your back is turned to him.

Never play a scene of any length turning the head over the shoulder and, whether standing or sitting, if you are to face a fellow-actor, do it properly with the head held straight between the shoulders. Do not attempt an important or difficult piece of acting from a disadvantageous position: you need all the help the stage can afford you and the subsidiary actors must give way in consequence. When on a small stage, take care that you are not "masking" another actor from the view of the audience. Positions should be so arranged as to prevent this, but sometimes with a fairly large cast it is essential for the actors themselves to bear it in mind and to take an unobtrusive step whenever they find they are immediately in front of or behind one another.

(7) Monotonous Speaking.

The commonest error, where the voice is concerned, is monotony either of pitch or pace. Monotony of tone may mean an insensitive ear, in which case it is difficult to cure, or it may be simply a sort of mental laziness. If your brain is not gripping firmly the meaning of each sentence, you are very likely to become monotonous, but if you think each and every thought distinctly, before you voice the words, there will be life in what you say. There is always a great temptation to "sing-song" in speaking verse. This is wearisome to listen to and it gradually hypnotizes everyone, especially the speaker. Here again you

must think what you are saying. Sometimes, with a difficult speech, it is a great help to turn the whole thing into everyday prose.

Write it out in your own words and then speak it aloud, quite naturally. Note your own instinctive inflections and the way in which the speech breaks up into its various parts, as one idea finishes and another begins. Work at it until the whole meaning is entirely familiar and then try the original verse, when you will find a wonderful improvement in your rendering.

In Shakespeare's blank verse, the music and meaning are so subtly interwoven that only the grossest distortion can rob them altogether of their beauty. This quality, however, though it enables a very inexperienced actor with poetic imagination to do better in Shakespeare than anything else, proves a pitfall for many a seasoned performer. He becomes so entranced with the good sound of his voice rolling out magnificent inspired phrases, that his imagination goes to sleep and he mistakes a mere flow of words for a dramatic performance. Shakespeare's words are, as it were, the clothing in which he wraps his flaming imagination. Unless you, as an actor, make them the clothing for your own, what is your performance but a lifeless scarecrow? Try to follow Shakespeare's imagination and strive with all your might to stretch the limits of your thought, till it can fill out the starry robe of his stupendous vision.

A very great actress once said that the minute she found herself listening to the sound of her own voice, she knew she was going wrong, because as a rule she never seemed to hear it. And it is true that a beautiful voice can be a real danger to the actor. It is so tempting for him to play on it merely for the pleasure of the sound. If you cannot free your

attention from the sound of your own voice, if it seems to stand between you and the heart of what you have to say—and many a fine voice does this—go away by yourself, cover your face with your hands, close your eyes and say the lines in a whisper, using no voice. Drag it up from the very depth of the imagination and keep whispering the lines until their light burns clear in you. Once you have felt them truly, your voice will worry you no more.

Do not expect to achieve this without painful effort, for you cannot cry the woe of Cleopatra or the despair of Othello and suffer nothing in your own person.

(8) **Mimicry.**

Beware of allowing yourself to mimic someone else's performance, however brilliant it may have been. Watch good acting by all means, learn all you can from it, and try to reproduce any technical excellences that may have struck you, but never suppose that by copying a famous actor's exterior mannerisms you are reproducing his performance. Many an understudy has played a part in such a way as to present an amazingly faithful copy of the principal's rendering and appearance, but the performance has fallen quite flat, because it was completely lifeless. The understudy had been so entirely absorbed in reproducing the externals of the principal's performance, that he scarcely gave a thought to the feeling that prompted those particular inflections and movements; when he used them they became meaningless because they were not the outcome of his own imagination.

Never say a line in a certain way because that is how it was said by Cedric Hardwicke or some other great artist. One grain of originality is worth a pec

of mimicry. And good mimics are rarely good actors, for mimicry is a different art. But if the true meaning of a line has been revealed to you through witnessing another's performance, it is likely that your inflections will be similar. This is not mimicry, but simply that a clearer idea of your part has been conveyed to you.

Beware of catching the tones of your fellow-actor; this is often done quite unconsciously, and has a very monotonous effect.

(9) **Errors in Pace.**

If one actor speaks too slowly he can drag a whole scene down to his pace, and thus render it dull. This fault must be guarded against by actor and producer, as it is very infectious. Variety of pace is of first importance in keeping a play alive. Many amateur performances suffer from too slow a pace all round, partly because the actors are uncertain of their lines, and partly from a preconceived, but erroneous idea that it is correct to speak slowly on the stage.

Stage speech is, if anything, a little faster than everyday speech, because it is more continuous and unhesitating; and for this reason good enunciation is particularly vital.

Do not therefore make indeterminate pauses or drag out unimportant sentences. Pick up your cues sharply in conversations. If you wait until the other actor has finished his speech, and then only when silence falls, begin to think, take a breath and finally speak, the scene in the meantime will have died miserably: all the life will have gone out of it during your disastrous pause. The only pause that has any place on the stage is the definite pause that means as much as the spoken word, and, when that comes, it is a positive part of your acting, not a mere negation.

Experience will teach you how to feel your pauses and to time them to a second, for they can easily fail in their effect by being just too short or too long. If you have to use pauses for emphasis in a speech, do not drag out the words as well: either speak slowly without pausing between the words, or speak at the normal pace and make specific pauses.

(10) Diffidence at Rehearsals.

Do not be afraid to experiment boldly during early rehearsals. It is always easy enough to tone down a performance, provided your ideas are not "set" too soon. You are sure to strain at the part at first and then ease down as facility comes; so that it is better, on the whole, to start with a little too much endeavour than to let the part grow very cautiously, perhaps never to arrive at full stature.

(11) Over-acting.

Over-acting is a fault which is very difficult to detect in yourself, therefore do not resent being told of it by your producer. As rehearsals proceed, ask yourself whether what you are saying rings true and whether the character would react in the way in which you are presenting it. So far as your acting convinces the audience that it is true and natural, you are on the right lines, for "natural acting" is that which appears so to the audience, not that which comes naturally to the actor; and between these two things there is a vast difference.

(12) Sensitiveness to Criticism and Desire for Approval.

There are only two opinions of your performance with which you need concern yourself at rehearsal:

—your producer's and your own. Of these two, the producer's should carry the greater weight. Never oppose his direction or criticism except in the most extreme case. He is in a far better position to judge than you are, and the success of the whole production depends on loyal co-operation and the readiness of the company to follow out to the best of their ability the ideas of whoever is in charge. Do not invite opinions from all and sundry, nor waste time in unnecessary discussion. You will only confuse yourself, and hold up the work that has to be done.

(13) Losing the Sense of Proportion.

It is a mistake to suppose that even farcical scenes can be wholly divorced from human probability. The moment they do this they cease to be funny, for it is the incongruity of human nature wrestling with ridiculous or fantastic circumstances that makes farce amusing. If a scene is really funny, be as simple as you can in your playing of it. If you try to heighten the fun by piling on comic effects of your own, in addition to those which your author has provided, you are more than likely to destroy the whole thing. Give a competent author the credit for knowing what he wants in the scene, and only build on that which clearly does not interfere with his idea.

Never push your joke to the last laugh. As soon as the laughter begins to wane, be content to pass on. Your successful comic acting has lifted the whole temper of the audience to a high level of good humour ; keep it there, and get on with the scene as soon as your voice can be heard. Meanwhile, as you wait for the moment to continue, hold the scene firmly —do not fidget self-consciously—and then carry straight on as though that interval of laughter had never been.

THE MAKE-UP OF THE ACTOR

THERE are certain broad rules for making-up which apply generally, but each actor must find out by experience the colourings that are best suited to the particular moulding of his or her face. It is wisest to purchase at first only a small number of good, useful colours and learn what can be done with them. Besides the paints, the following articles will be required :

Theatrical cold cream or olive oil ; a roll of cotton-wool for cleaning the face ; powder-puff, pad and hare's-foot ; face-powder and hand-powder ; hand-towel and soap ; hand-mirror ; small tooth-brush for eye make-up ; safety-pins.

The colour of the grease-paints for men and women being different, they are taken separately here.

Men.—The colours needed are—For groundwork, Nos. 3 and 5 ; for top colouring, Nos. 8 and 9 ; carmine, Nos. 2 and 3 ; lining pencils, medium blue, dark blue, brown, lake, black ; for aged parts, No. 7 and white liner.

The procedure for making-up is as follows. Press the hair back from the face. A silk handkerchief bound round is a good way of ensuring that the hair does not get touched by the grease. Now rub your cold cream or olive oil well into the face—all over and below the chin. Damp a piece of cotton-wool about the size of your hand, squeeze out, and carefully wipe the grease off the face. The pores of the

skin are now filled with pure grease, and the grease-paint will not be absorbed.

Now put on a thin coat of groundwork. Smear it in with your fingers till it is quite smooth all over. Use No. 5 for ordinary make-up, No. 3 for ruddy colouring.

Now add a coat of No. 8, all over and smoothly. The depth of colour should be about that of dry bracken. Warm the brown up by the addition of a little No. 9, making the tint a trifle deeper on the cheek-bones and below the eyebrows. Bring your colour down a little on to the neck and under the chin, so that no hard line shows between your own skin colour and the make-up.

Shade the eyelids with medium blue or brown. Now use powder freely, patting it well into the face. Wipe off the superfluous powder with the hare's-foot. Take your carmine and make a little dab on, but not beyond, the wide part of the lips—two dabs for the upper and two for the lower. Now with your fingers smooth the red on to the lips. You only want a little, and the outline must not be hard. With the blue or brown liner extend the outer corners of the eyes, with a fine V-shaped line. If necessary, accent the eyebrows with brown or black, and extend slightly outwards, following the natural line. This completes the average make-up. A wig is put on before applying groundwork, so that the colour of the forehead may be worked smoothly over the join. Whiskers, beard or moustache are attached with spirit gum.

Women.—The colours needed are—For groundwork, Nos. 1½ and 5; for top colouring, No. 9; carmines, Nos. 1, 2 and 3; lining pencils, medium and dark blue, brown, black; for character and aged parts, Nos. 8 and 7, and lake and white liners.

Start in exactly the same way as that suggested for men. No. 5 is the normal groundwork colour, 1½ for the very fair. No. 3 may be used for ruddy or dark-skinned parts. Spread the paint thinly and smoothly till the face looks like an ivory mask. Warm the tint with a little No. 9 all over, and then deepen over the cheekbones and below the eyebrows. The general tone should be peach colour. Nos. 5 and 9, without anything else, make a very natural and pleasing make-up, and many actresses use only these two; or you can add to the cheeks a little carmine No. 1 or 2. Use it sparingly, and smooth it well into the cheeks, leaving no definite edges. It is in this stage of the make-up that the inexperienced most often fail. It is only by practice and the intelligent study of her own face that the actress learns to make up to advantage. Do not bring the colour strongly up to each side of the nose, leaving a sort of snow peak in the middle of your face. Draw the colour faintly right across the nose and up into the forehead; draw it outwards to the ears, leaving a deeper shade in the middle of the cheeks, but letting it fade imperceptibly into the general tone. You also want a little deeper colour for the chin, and to smooth the make-up down below the jaw to merge into the natural skin-colour.

Now shade the eyelids very softly with blue or brown, bringing the shadow faintly right up to the eyebrows and a little beyond the outer corners. Powder freely and wipe with a hare's-foot. You have now only to add the finishing touches. Use carmine 2 for the lips, applying it as directed for men, but more freely. Add a small spot of carmine to the inner and outer corners of the eyes, inside the pencilled lines that extend the outline of the eyes. Pencil the eyebrows lightly with brown or black.

To make up the eyelashes you can either use water black, which goes on easily, but is painful if it gets into the eyes, or grease cosmetic which, being of a heavier consistency, needs careful application, but does not make the eyes water if it should get into them. Heat the cosmetic in the candle's flame to soften, and apply with a small tooth-brush.

If the make-up seems pale or lifeless add dry rouge to the cheeks; a touch may also be applied with advantage to the lobes of the ears and immediately below the eyebrows. The light cerise rouge is the most commonly used, but some of the more orange tones are also very pleasing. Use your hare's-foot to apply rouge, and do it with a very light hand. Powder the neck and hands, and if the latter are inclined to look red, use wet white for them, and powder over it.

Leichner's stick grease-paints are the most satisfactory. The Star grease-paints in pots are also extremely good, as is their solidified wet white. The best scentless theatrical cream is Crowe's Cremine. All these are inexpensive and they can be obtained at any chemist who stocks theatrical goods. Grease-paints, etc., can also be obtained at Boot's.

Character Make-up.

There are two methods of character make-up. You may paint your picture fully, and use no facial expression, or, following the structural formation for your face, you can indicate with make-up the lines into which it will fall as you play your part, and leave the rest to your changes of expression. The latter method is the one to adopt as a rule. The first method is only suitable to parts where a mask-like stillness is maintained, as for instance in the part

of Julius Cæsar—where definite historic features are portrayed, and the part demands statuesque repose. In this case expression will help you very little. You must paint your picture.

Do not use this method in parts where you are going to employ a great deal of facial play, or you will defeat your own ends. If you have already conveyed the finished effect by means of painted make-up, the lines and shadows made by your changing face will be robbed of their effect.

When a young actor has to play the part of an old man, his first idea is usually to paint a great many wrinkles on his face, and the result is disastrous. The basis of make-up for old parts is this. Use a ground-work of one of the duller flesh tints, Nos. 5½ or 5 mixed with a little No. 8. Add a little No. 7, to give a smooth mask like old ivory. Warm it faintly with No. 9 in the cheeks. Now study the bones of your face. Consider where the hollows will come in old age. The flesh will shrink and the bones become more apparent. What you have to do is to bring forward the bony structure, by lightening those parts in colour, and to sink the plump, fleshy parts by darkening them with soft shadows of brown.

Certain shadows are sure to come in all faces. Round the eyes, below the cheek-bones, between the nostrils and the corners of the mouth, beside the eyes, and across the forehead. Feel for these hollows with your fingers, and shadow them with No. 7 or any dull brown. Leave no hard edges. Deepen the colour on the eyelids and into the sockets with lake. Remember also to shadow the neck, or it will look incongruous. Be sure, before you go any further, that these shadows are not meaningless blotches. They must be intelligently placed, and worked softly

into the general tint. Now "high light" the cheek-bones and temples with a touch of No. 5 to define the contours.

Next you have to turn your attention to definite lines and wrinkles. Some of these are universal. Those from the nostrils to below the corners of the mouth, crow's feet and the lines below the eyes, and some on the forehead, are common to all old faces. Wrinkle your face into the lines it is going to take as you play your part, and make your pencil shadows carefully in those lines. You may need to extend the shadows beyond them, but always follow their direction, and use them where you can. These lines may be drawn with brown pencil, or with a mixture of lake and dark blue. The latter makes a more pronounced wrinkle than the brown, and is done by tracing a light line first of one and then the other, and smoothing them softly with the finger, till you have a single line of violet.

When you have satisfied yourself that your lines are natural, and cleanly marked, take your white pencil and outline all the wrinkles with an edge of light tone. Soften the edges. The purpose of this is to suggest the more raised flesh beside the wrinkles, which, without this high lighting, would simply look like so many flat lines drawn on the skin.

If your face naturally falls into strong lines, you need little beyond shadowing. The important thing is the general tone of the groundwork, which must not have the fresh pink and white tint of youthful skin. Beyond this, a few well-placed shadows and the most obvious of the wrinkles are all you need. It is far more by your imagination that you convey the idea of age—in your carriage, movements and interpretation of the part. I proved this by playing an old lady

convincingly, without touching my face with make-up of any kind. I was thirty at the time, so that I had to depend on my general feeling for the part, and do not recommend the experiment to all, but it did show me how little painted lines counted in comparison with the use of imagination.

If you need to paint out your eyebrows for a part or even reduce them, before applying the paints damp your soap and use it to flatten down the hairs, till you have a smooth surface over which to paint. For old parts, it is effective to rub the eyebrows up the wrong way, using a stick of No. 5 or white grease paint.

When using a dark make-up, always start with a light groundwork, as it is unpleasant to have the dark colours in close contact with the skin. Powder with fuller's earth instead of a light powder.

Always make up fully for the last two rehearsals before a performance. Do not leave anything to chance either as regards make-up, clothing or personal properties. Unless you are at ease in all external details, you will not be able to give your undivided attention to the interpretation of your part.

HOW TO USE THE EXERCISES

THE following exercises form a progressive course, and should be worked through steadily in the order in which they are given. You should, however, go back from time to time to each of them to improve and perfect your rendering of them as your general stage-sense improves.

You will find them far more interesting and helpful if you start at the beginning than if you use them at random, because the exercises gradually build up a clear and simple method of playing all kinds of scenes, and if you have not taken the first steps with me you will not be clear as to the method by which I approach the more difficult problems. If the early exercises come easily to you they will not delay you long. It is well for you to realize clearly what are those things that you can do without difficulty, and when and how you can employ them.

When you come to the exercises in dialogue, you will find detailed stage directions for every line, and, at the end of each exercise, notes in connection with it, giving you the objects to bear in mind and the faults to avoid as you study it.

I have written as simply as possible, and as exactly as if this were a cookery book. I beg you to follow the directions with the same exactness as you would if you were making a new kind of savoury. Do not alter the order in which the directions are written. I have taken great pains to give you far more minute

directions that you would find in an ordinary publishe play, because the object of the exercises is to hel you in technical detail.

For example, note the difference between the tw following :

(1) JOHN (*rises ; goes to table ; fingers book*). Is th what you mean ?

(2) JOHN (*rising, going to table*). Is this what yo mean ? (*Picks up book.*)

In (1) he does not speak till he has risen, gone t the table and touched the book.

In (2) he speaks as he rises and goes to the tabl and picks up the book after he has spoken.

I want you to notice the directions so carefull that you do each thing in the order in which I hav put it. This is very important. Where the move ments are indicated by the use of the present particip —as in (2)—it always means that the action take place simultaneously with the words that immediatel follow it. Where the present tense is used in th directions the action definitely precedes the word that follow.

My own method has been to start my classes wi a few minutes of the physical exercises—to loose the limbs and get the circulation working well. makes the students alert, and corrects the faults carriage into which they are so apt to fall, betwe classes.

Then I take a succession of short exercises for o two or three actors, working each exercise with all members of the class. This may mean taking th or four casts for the same scene. In this case, befo starting, I tell each pupil which part I wish him play, so that by watching the first cast he can bene by noticing the corrections I make, and save time

not repeating those mistakes. In the shorter scenes I give the lines by word of mouth, and the actors memorize them. This teaches them to memorize quickly, and also to act intelligently, as they have to recognize cues by listening to the sense of the preceding lines. I make them speak the lines over two or three times to familiarize them, then they go on to the stage and take the scene with its movements, at first mechanically, till the movements are clear and the words fitted smoothly into them. Then we "let it rip," put all we can into it, and take it over and over again till we have achieved a really finished little bit of acting. The scenes being so short it is possible to get this result.

Gradually I work in more difficult scenes, but each time I go back over some of the familiar exercises, though instead of making the whole class do each I now take only one or two casts for those scenes, choosing the players at random. I make a point, however, of seeing that every student in time tackles every part. It is well to return to old scenes after a certain lapse of time to find out what progress has been made by comparison with the earlier attempts. I never let a scene drop for good until it has been well and truly mastered.

With the longer scenes my method has been to write or type out the scenes, or the parts, separately on to slips of paper, or I ask the class to bring small tear-off writing-blocks and pencils, and it takes only one or two minutes to dictate them the lines. I allow them to hold these slips in their hands the first few times they take a scene, and then take the slips away. You cannot begin to teach people to act until they have memorized their lines. Quite a number of pupils I have had were under the impression that to

know their lines was all that mattered, that one you " knew your part " you could, of course, play i The truth is that you can only begin to do anythin with your part after you no longer have to think wha your words are.

This is the whole reason for the existence of thi book. I could not find scenes short enough to wor with. The time at our disposal being very limited, was necessary to have scenes that could be quickl memorized, and which, though only containing fiv or six lines, had some sort of dramatic meaning which to hang the precept ! I have tried in these litt exercises to give my students the chance of tacklin as many and as varied types of acting as possible give them courage and confidence, and some kind groundwork on which to build for themselves.

S. R.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE EXERCISES

R. = Right of Actor when facing audience.

L. = Left of Actor when facing audience.

C. = Centre of Stage.

R.C. L.C. = Midway between centre and right or left wings.

Entrance R.U. or L.U. = Right or Left entrance up-stage (from the audience).

Entrance down R. or L. = Right or Left entrance down near the footlights.

F.P. = Fireplace.

W. = Window.

 = Table.

 = Chair.

 = Sofa.

Properties, or Props. = Any small or personal articles used on the stage (bags, ornaments, books, etc.).

I. PRELIMINARY EXERCISES

Stand correctly before you start. Heels together : feet forming a right angle with each other : knees pressed back : back straight : head straight : chin in : shoulders back (but not forced) : weight over the ball of the feet. Start every exercise in this position, and let it become natural to you to stand properly.

Breathing.

Take a deep breath without raising the shoulders : breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth. Repeat six times.

Place the hands lightly over the lower ribs, so that the middle finger-points almost meet. Now, while breathing in and out naturally, press in and relax the muscle at the base of the lungs. Keep the shoulders still : simply work the muscle. Press in and relax, thirty times.

Hands and Arms.

Separate the fingers and stretch them downwards beside the body. Imagine that the tip of each finger and thumb is attached to a thread, on the end of which is a weight. Now draw the fingers and wrists up to the elbow level, and push them down again as far as they will go, as if there were a strong resistance against you ; pull up and push down using all the muscles to the forearm, till they ache.

Now, starting in the same way, working the fingers and wrists, gradually extend the arms sideways, till the pull and push is towards and away from the body at shoulder-level. This involves not only the finger and wrist muscles, but all the arm, and finally the shoulder muscles. Do not hunch the shoulders, but feel the bone rotating in the socket, while the muscles pull and push rhythmically.

From shoulder level lower again gradually till the arms are once more straight down by your sides, and rest.

This exercise is only of value to you if you really work the muscles hard, until they ache. It will bring life and meaning into your hands, and should not be neglected.

Extend the right arm at shoulder-level, palm up; raise the left arm, keeping the elbow slightly bent, so that the left hand (palm down) is immediately above the head. Imagine that at the end of each of your middle fingers is a chalk, and that you are standing facing a huge blackboard. With your two middle fingers you are now going to trace two big circles, the biggest you can reach to, by swinging your arms round, keeping the shoulders and body perfectly still.

To do this, bring the right arm (the extended one) over the head, and the left arm downwards and outwards. Complete these circles (which go first toward the left) and come back to the original position. Do this twelve times, keeping the body still and making the biggest circles you can. Feel the shoulder-joint working freely. Now reverse the position. Bring the extended arm upwards over your head and round. Take the right arm downwards, outwards, and upwards across the body. Finish each circle in the exact position from which you started. Repeat twelve times.

This exercise will help to free your arms and conquer cramped and hesitating gestures.

Pointing and Beckoning.

Stand with the heels about nine inches apart, weight evenly between the feet. Keeping the shoulders straight and chin level, turn head to right, and raising the right arm across the body, so that the hand describes three parts of a circle round the head, point to the right; the arm extended straight to shoulder-level; point with the first finger. Indicate—"*That is the man!*" Lower the arm to your side. Eyes front, turn head to left and repeat. Do this six times.

From the same position, turn head to right, and beckon, by extending right arm outwards, upwards and across the body, so that the hand describes three parts of a circle round the head. The beckoning movement finishes when the hand is breast-level, the arm across the body. Lower the arm from there to the side of the body.

Take this six times on each side.

Walking.

(See pages 6, 9, and 10.) Use dancing sandals or flat-heeled shoes.

(*a*) Imagine that you are an incense-bearer in a solemn procession in ancient Egypt. Hold yourself erect. Take the longest diagonal line you can and walk very slowly in a perfectly straight line: raise the right arm to shoulder-level and as you walk slowly swing the arm from right to left with a broad rhythmic movement.

(*b*) You are a sower sowing seed on a hillside. At your left hip hangs a bag of grain. Walk at an ordinary rather quick stride. Count one, two, three, four.

On one, two, you dip your right hand into the bag and take a handful of grain : on three, four, the right arm flings the grain over the field. Fling strongly to the right, arm and fingers fully extended. The left hand holds open the bag at your hip. Take this exercise twice round the room : then reverse, flinging with the left.

Gesticulating.

(*a*) Imagine that you are a starving barbarian citizen : the chariot of a Roman centurion comes thundering down the street. From the wayside you stretch body, arms, fingers, desperately up, wailing : "*Bread, give us bread!*" From the back heel to the tip of the fingers is one straight line, eagerly stretching forward. See that this is a good, extended position, and not humped or ugly. Now your imaginary driver raises his long whip and lashes out disdainfully into the crowd. They cringe back again like wind-blown grass.

The weight, from being forward over the front foot, swings back, without any foot-shifting, and is now over the bent knee of the back foot. The whole body swings round, the arms held up to protect the face—away from the chariot. The final position is crouching in fear.

Work these two from one to the other. The feet about 24 inches apart.

(*b*) You are cursing the unkind gods. Both clenched fists raised overhead, the muscles of the arms taut. From rage you change to despair, dropping on one knee, your clenched fists beat your breast, or support your bowed head.

(*c*) You are a savage standing waist-deep in the grasses ; you raise arms aloft in salutation to the hills. "*Hail, Gods of the Morning.*" Just before you

a snake rears its head in the grasses. You draw back with one foot, your up- and out-stretched arms coming back to your sides, hands in horror in front of you, the elbows bent, and close to your sides.

(*d*) You are pushing an immensely heavy rock forwards, step by step, up a hillside. Suddenly the weight becomes too great and slowly, step by step, resisting all the way, you are forced back and back to where you started from. Take this forward across the stage and back. Your whole body, including hands, must show muscular effort.

(*e*) Express in gesture — *"Go!" "Stop!" "Listen!" "Sit there." "I beg you to forgive me." "Give it me!" "See, there he lies!"*

Think out for yourself situations that can be expressed by broad arm gestures.

In all these, see that every gesture thrills to your finger-tips. Make it boldly, hold it fully, and then quietly drop your arm to your side. Do not involve neck or body in any purely arm gesture. When you use your whole body, feel the meaning from your toes to the crown of your head and in all your fingers.

Falling.

(*a*) You are struggling to escape from a house on fire. You are half-blinded and fainting. You stagger across the room and reach a closed door. You lean against it, and consciousness leaves you. You slide to the floor and sink in a heap. Use your imagination. Let every sway and staggering step show fatigue and effort. Stretch weak hands before you. When you reach the door, lean arms and shoulders heavily against it, and then relaxing at the knees first, let all the muscles go, and slide down the door into a perfectly limp heap.

(*b*) You have to play a scene in which you are killed by a shot from a robber facing you. The main point to remember in falling is that you should reach the floor with the side of the thigh, then the side of the body, and last of all the head. You will not hurt yourself at all. This is ultimately done so rapidly that even if you are to finish the fall on your back or your face, the roll into that position seems part of the fall and the effect quite natural.

To practise the mechanics slowly, first lay a rug on the floor in front of you. This is to give you confidence. You should not hurt yourself in any case. Raise both arms above your head and sway forwards; as you do so, turn your body slightly to the right and bend both knees a little. Now let the whole body fall forwards on to the left side. Do not crumple up nor stretch down your left hand to support the body. Fall in one straight line and take the floor first with the left thigh, shoulder and upstretched arm. Relax completely as you fall. Practise this right and left, rolling on to face or back.

The mechanics of the backward fall are almost the same. Turn the body slightly to the right, bend the knees, bring the left foot a short pace behind the right, and then let yourself go. Let the side of the thigh and back of the shoulder reach the floor first. Practise this on either side.

Curtsey and Bow.

To curtsey facing stage L., take a step back about 12 inches, with the right foot. Place this foot sufficiently far round for the right knee, as you bend it, to touch the left side of the left calf. Now bend both knees, keeping the back straight, and inclining only the neck. Extend the arms gracefully as you

go down ; this assists balance. Keep your weight evenly between the two feet as you go down ; push back on to the back foot as you come up, keeping the back straight. The down-stage foot is always the one to step back on to when seen in profile. Face R., and repeat on the other side.

For an ordinary bow stand erect, heels together, bow, and return at once to a good erect position.

In the eighteenth century the bow was rather more elaborate. In this case, take a step back with the down-stage foot, bringing the weight on to the back foot. As you do so, bow from the waist, bringing the right hand to the left side of the breast, and drawing the front foot back to meet the other without haste. The feet should be together before the body is raised to an erect position, and the hand lowered.

II. SCENES IN MIME

A girl comes into a kitchen, and sees with disma across the room a spilt flower-vase on the floor. Sh goes up to corner cupboard to fetch a bowl and clot kneels down, mops up water, replaces flowers in vas and sets it on mantelpiece. Pours dirty water bowl away down the sink, washes out the cloth an hangs it to dry. Dries her hands. Fills a jug wit water, and goes out of the room.

Have your door down L., the fireplace opposite, an the vase beside it. The corner cupboard up R. Th sink L. alongside and above the door.

International spy scene. Madame Z. heard laugh ing as she comes towards room: "*I don't believ you, Flatterer!*" Enters R., still laughing. Find study empty. Closes door. Face changes and b comes hard and alert. French window C. bac She goes swiftly to window to make sure no one near. No. Crosses to writing-desk. Searches the papers, light-fingered and quick. Cannot find t document she wants. Tries all the drawers, loo through two or three, sees the others are full of ledge so only pulls out and pushes them back. Stands a second in thought, bookcase behind her containi files. Looks through shelves, from down stage upstage. Finds a likely-looking file. Opens (facin down-stage). No luck. Puts it back. Turns towar centre table beside window. Crosses hurriedly, loo through papers there. No good. Turns towar

desk. Sees attaché-case on the floor in the knee-hole. With a smothered cry she pounces on it, lays it on the desk, opens it, turns over pages, finds blue paper. Triumph. Opens it, devouring its contents with her eyes. Hears voice outside. *"I'm not sure—I'll tell you in a moment, though——"* During these words Madame Z. rapidly replaces paper. Shuts case and returns it to its place, then leans carelessly against writing-desk.

As he finishes speaking Mr. X. enters. Stands transfixed at sight of Madame Z. Then advances with a smile, lifts her hand to his lips and murmurs, *"Ah, Madame, to what chance may I attribute this honour!"*

NOTES

Take both scenes (1) with imaginary, (2) with real properties.

The thought must precede every action. Concentrate your attention on each point as it comes, and do it to the best of your ability as though that action were the only one you had to do. Finish each thing properly before you go to the next. (See page 17, Pitfalls.)

Mime Exercise to Music.

Time this exercise precisely, to fit into Beethoven's Minuet in G, Gramophone record H.M.V. No. E 18.

First 8-Bars.

Three Victorian beaux chatting on the pavement. Four young ladies, two and two, walk demurely down the street. The Beaux draw aside politely to let them pass. The last lady gives a side glance and drops her handkerchief. One young man picks it up, coughs—*"Ahem!"* Lady turns startled. He advances, holding handkerchief. She feigns surprise, is abashed, curtseys as she takes the handker-

chief. The other ladies have watched shyly. The laugh as she rejoins them. She shakes her head ar they go on their way, pursued by admiring glance

All these moves and nods should be expressed clearl definitely, and in order, one at a time.

1st bar. Laugh from ladies. (Off L. upper.)
2nd bar. Beaux step back. (Up C.)
3rd and 4th bars. Ladies cross stage diagonally down R., fourth lady drops handke chief C. as she passes.
5th bar. First gentleman strides across to L., pick up handkerchief, ejaculates, "*Ahem!* Lady stops with a start; face expresse innocent surprise.
6th bar. Lady turns, hands held up, face expressi "*Oh dear! my handkerchief.*" Gentl man crosses to her, bows, holds it ou for her to take.
7th bar. Lady takes handkerchief, curtseys (bob turns away to rejoin friends.
8th bar. Ladies titter and exeunt. Gentlema watching them over his shoulder, r joins friends.

Second 8 *Bars.* (Ladies are off stage.)

The gentlemen seat themselves at the table outsi the inn to call for drinks.

1st bar. Second gentleman turns R., walks upper end of table and sits.
2nd bar. Second gentleman thumps fist twi sharply for pot-boy.
3rd bar. First and third gentlemen walk rou below end of table and sit beside seco chatting in pantomime.

4th bar. First gentleman (who is down stage of the others) beckons to boy, who is within doors, the door being on gentleman's R.

5th bar. Boy hurries in, stands before them, across table, pulls forelock.

6th bar. Third gentleman, indicating the empty table, suggests drinks.

7th bar. Boy pulls forelock and hurries off into house.

8th bar. Gentlemen laugh and talk together.

Third 8 *Bars.*

Mary, the maid in the house opposite, comes with note for a visitor at the inn. She delivers it to her sweetheart, the pot-boy, who is serving drinks.

1st bar. Mary emerges from house opposite, meaning to go to inn, hesitates, seeing admiring glances of gentlemen.

2nd bar. Pot-boy enters with mugs of beer.

3rd bar. Sets mugs before gentlemen. Sees Mary.

4th bar. Mary beckons, boy joins her L.C.

5th bar. Mary gives boy letter which he puts in pocket.

6th bar. Boy puts arm round her waist, she bends away, hiding her face, hand raised.

7th bar. He takes her by shoulders, turns her to him and snatches a kiss.

8th bar. She runs off L. He walks back into the inn.

NOTES

These mimes to music are of a different nature. They are real "dumb-show." The movements are to be timed exactly into the right bar, though they are to flow smoothly

when the exercise is performed properly. Do not step time to the music, but let a rhythm underlie everythin Work purely mechanically at first, till there is no hesi tion. Then act the little scenes, keeping the pace as befo but covering the bare bones with living impersonatio

III. STUDY FOR THE VOICE

READ carefully the chapter on Speech (page 11).

Find the true natural pitch for your voice by speaking aloud any quiet dreamy verses you are fond of. W. B. Yeats' Dedication (" When you are old and gray and full of sleep, and nodding by the fire . . ."). Shelley's lines to Night. Wordsworth's Sonnet on Westminster Bridge. Read quiet prose, Kipling's " They."

Stand for Portia's speech, " Merchant of Venice," Act III, Sc. 2, " You see me, lord Bassanio, where I stand——" Sit for Lorenzo's " How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank," Act V, Sc. 1. But take these smoothly, quietly, without any forcing of voice.

When you have found the control of your voice :

Stand, visualizing the army around him for Henry V's speech ; " Henry V," Act IV, Sc. 3, " What's he that wishes so ? "

Kneel for Queen Katherine's speech, " Henry VIII," Act II, Sc. 4, " Sir, I desire you do me right and justice."

Do not recite these without trying to convey their dramatic meaning. Learn the words, then feel them and live them. Speak them because they express what is within you.

Rapid Speech.

You are kneeling at the bedside of a sleeping man. You shake his arm, and speak in a rapid, even, urgent tone, with plenty of breath behind it.

Accession No 2807

" Oscar ! Oscar, wake up, oh quick ! There's not moment to lose ! "

He wakes and raises himself on his elbow to listen

" Oscar, those letters must reach the King to-nig to-night, do you hear ? Despard is on your tracks. I may be here at any moment. (Glance to door.) *I ha a fresh horse waiting below."*

" But——" (He is just about to question her, h she goes on.)

" Oh, don't stop to ask questions. You must trust m The King's safety is in your hands, Oscar. Take t valley road and cross the river at Nathan's Mill. He are the dispatches. (Rises.) *Quick ! "*

This is one torrent of speech, broken into its differe waves of meaning, but never stopping. Oscar's mo ments, and his *" But——"* are simply thrown into t tide. Do not think of them as interruptions. straight on. The voice rises and sinks in pace a pitch, as the sense dictates to your own feeling. Ope the mouth, pronounce the consonants clearly, and u the lips.

IV. VOICE AND MOVEMENT COMBINED

Making an Entrance.

Your acting starts when you are still in the wings outside the door, before the audience sets eyes on you.

Your entrance must be clear and purposeful, so that the kind of character you represent can be grasped with as little delay as possible.

Enter *immediately* on your cue.

Get well on the stage before speaking your first line, unless otherwise directed.

EXERCISE 1.

Taken first slow and stately, then quick, imperious.

A Redskin chief greets the assembled tribe. Enters L.U. Cross to R.C., raising the left (up-stage) arm and extending it overhead in gesture of greeting. Halts and draws the body to full height before speaking.

"Hail! People of the Red Mountains!"

EXERCISE 2. RUNNING ENTRANCE.

A villager warns oncoming crowd. Enters R.U. running, to L.C., both arms extended forward. Shouts as she runs. At L.C. takes up arresting attitude and holds it to the end.

"Stop! Stop! Stop, I say! The bridge is on fire."

EXERCISE 3. RUNNING ENTRANCE AND EXIT.

Street scene. Reveller looking for his friends. Enters R., runs up L., looks eagerly up street to L.,

crosses, to look off R.U. Sees friends off R.U. Beckons calling :

" Beppo, Mario, come here ! " Points down L. *" There they go——"* Runs off down L.

NOTES

Be sure your position is not ungainly. Remember your audience. When you are stretching to right or left there must be one straight line from heel to shoulder, the hip in line, not protruding.

EXERCISE 4. GREETING : MANAGING A DOOR.

A. sits in a chair L.C. facing the fireplace (imagine) L.

B. knocks at door R. lower.

A. (turning head). *" Come in."*

B. enters quietly, closing door behind him, then comes R.C. ; stands hesitating.

A. (recognizing B. slowly. Rises, stands well clear of the chair. Stretches arms in welcome). *" John, you've come back ! "*

B. (Hurries over to A. and embraces her.) *" My dear ! "*

NOTES

Take all your moves one at a time quietly. Do not blur the effect by running one thing into the next. Follow the directions in the exact order given.

If the door opens on to the stage, open it with the left hand, walk till your body is clear of the door, then close with the right hand. (Reverse if door is in the L. wall.) If it opens off stage, come right on to the stage, then close behind you with the down-stage hand. Make the whole business as unobtrusive as possible. Do not let it interrupt the emotion which the entrance has to convey.

In a stage embrace the arm nearest the audience must be

kept below shoulder-level, the up-stage arm can go round the other actor's neck.

Do not bend forward as you move to embrace someone. Walk erect till you get close to the person, and then hold your position quietly, without any shifting of feet.

Do not fumble. Be clear as to how the embrace is to be made, and do it without hesitating or bumping each other.

EXERCISE 5. SCENE IN DUMB SHOW.

A. enters L. to keep assignation. Looks around. Nobody there. Looks at wrist-watch. Resigns himself to wait. Folds arms. Strolls down R. to R.C., faces off R.

B. enters L.U., running, hiding stolen goods under cloak, held under right arm. Hurrying stealthily, he almost runs into A.'s back. A. does not move. B. turns cautiously round to face L., hoping to creep away unseen, takes two steps in that direction, when A. swings round, suddenly catches his arm and pulls him round again so that they face each other. A. expresses "*What mischief are you up to?*" B. expresses fear—"*Hands off!*" Hold positions as for curtain.

NOTES

In silent acting make each idea you wish to convey clear, one at a time, unhurried and precise, or it will all be muddled and blurred.

Let the thought always come first, then act on it without delay.

As a general rule, turns are made facing first towards the audience, not up-stage, back to the audience. In turning, move the feet neatly and definitely, using as few steps as you conveniently can.

In this type of scene where rapid movement is required, stand always with the one foot a little advanced, according

to which turn you are about to make. From this positi you can turn swiftly with practically no foot movemer

Make your turns fully ; face squarely in the direction yo want to face.

Making an Exit.

EXERCISE I. EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. A. sits L. B sits C. level with A.

A. (who has propounded a dishonest scheme t B., quiet but angry). *" Am I to understand that yo refuse to entertain my proposition ? "*

B. (rises). *" That, Madame,* (left hand on chai back) *is what I hope I have made clear to you.* (Durin these words B. lifts chair and places it against bac wall, two or three steps, keeping his eyes on A. a the time, and returns to stand in his original position *I have the honour to wish you* (draws himself up) *Goo night."* (Bow as the last word is spoken.) Turn a you bow and sweep off. If curtsey, take one back ward step after " Good night," in order to bring you weight on to the left foot, so that you can turn dow R. for your exit. After taking the curtsey, advanc the right foot.

NOTES

Move the chair as quietly and neatly as possible, so tha the movement is hardly noticed by the audience. It h no importance to the story, but the chair has to be got o of the way. Therefore speak while you move it, and ke your attention apparently wholly fixed on the other acto One quick side-glance is enough to show you where the cha should go.

Remember, down-stage foot behind for curtsey.

You have not done with the scene till you are right of Keep the character and mood till the door has closed behin you.

EXERCISE 2. MEDIÆVAL.

Father and daughter. Father stands down L. facing audience, daughter kneels below him by his left knee, her two hands clutching his left forearm, the elbow being bent. He looks down at her.

DAUGHTER (weeping and pleading). *" My Lord, my Father, have you no pity for your child ? "*

FATHER (flings out his left arm to throw her weeping on the floor). *" None ! "* (Turns away from her, and begins moving across the front and right round the stage, finishing above Daughter L. Moves throughout rest of speech.) *" Get you gone, lest my anger rise and I strike you, false lying wretch."*

DAUGHTER. (Has wept quietly ever since she was thrown down. She now rises slowly to her feet, facing audience, stands quite still. Speaks quietly, but with emotion.) *" May Heaven forgive you—I am no such thing."* (Walks quietly towards exit up R. When three-quarters of distance to the door, pause (right foot in advance), turn down-stage towards Father, extend hands in pleading. He makes no response. Drop the hands sadly, turn once more and exit.)

NOTES

This exercise teaches you to " take the stage," and to hold a long, slow exit without faltering.

FATHER. Make the biggest circuit the stage will permit of. Your walk as well as your voice is enraged. On the word " strike " raise the right arm angrily, keep the arm up in gesture till " wretch." Lower it, fist still clenched, and stand perfectly still, facing down L. for remainder of the scene.

DAUGHTER. Sob quietly and continuously from the moment the Father flings you down to the end of his speech. Let your body be flung, limp and unresisting,

your head falling on your outstretched arms. Afte
" wretch," raise yourself, first to a kneeling position, facin
audience, then stand; let your face be the still face o
despair; do not strive for facial expression, or you will los
dignity. Do not begin to move till you have finished
speaking.

Do not lose grip of the scene till you are right off th
stage.

Be sure that your attitude in pleading is effective an
beautiful in outline, as seen from the auditorium.

EXERCISE 3. MODERN.

Try this in many ways, giving different characters
make A. guilty, then innocent, etc. A. and B. s
opposite sides of a table, facing L. and R.

A. (rises but does not move away). *" Then you ar
not going to send for the police?"*

B. *" No.* (Pause.) *You can go.* (Pause.) *Now.*
They look into each other's eyes, then A. makes an ex
in front of table, and off L. through door immediate
behind B. His walk expresses his thoughts and chara
ter. B. does not look round, but sits perfectly still

EXERCISE 4. THE DISMISSAL.

GIRL (stands C., addresses husband down R
*" Really, Archie, you've about as much pluck as a wh
mouse."* (Braces herself.) *" I'll tell her!"* (March
off to door C. back. When half through, turns.)
do adore brave men!" (Exit slamming door.)

NOTE

To deliver a parting shot, be near the door before spea
ing your last word. As soon as your climax has bee
reached, whether it be a word or a gesture, let your ex
be as swift as possible. Delay destroys the effect.

FURTHER STUDY

Exit of Viola, Act II, Sc. 2, Ring speech
Exit of Antonio, end of Act II, Sc. 1
Exit of Sir Toby, Act II, Sc. 3.
} "Twelfth Night."

Working up an Entrance.

Scene : A Reception Hall. Buzz of conversation among guests as Curtain rises. Door C. *back.* (1), (2), (6) *and Hostess grouped down* R. (3), (4), (5) *up* L.

(1) Are you sure Sir John has arrived ?

(2) I saw him from the stairs.

(3) (*looking out of window*). There is his car driving away.

(4) Are you sure it's his ?

(3) Of course ! I know that grey and green car well.

(5) (*crossing to* 1 *as she speaks*). Oh, Mrs. Graham, I'm dying to meet Sir John Sternways !

(6) I suppose he is quite the most famous astrologer of the day, isn't he ?

HOSTESS. He has just arrived, I believe.

(7) (DAUGHTER *entering hurriedly, whispers*). Mother, here is Sir John.

(2) (*to* 1). He's come !

BUTLER (*entering, announces*). Sir John Sternways.

(1) Here he is.

(2) I can't see him. Where is he ?

(3) He's coming in now.

(5) (*looking through door*). He's awfully handsome, don't you think ?

(6) (*looking through door*). Very picturesque, certainly.

(*Enter* SIR JOHN.)

HOSTESS. This is a great honour, Sir John——

NOTES

From the moment the curtain begins to rise till the Butler appears, do not let the buzz of eager anticipation cease for a second. The lines are spoken quickly, and follow each other without a second's pause. There is a moment's silence for the Butler's announcement, and then the buzz is resumed. The lines here should overlap one another. The moment Sir John appears there is silence, all eyes are on him.

To get the effect of general conversation, if you have no suitable words ready, use the alphabet, or the numbers, e.g. "A B C D E," "7 8 9 10 11," spoken in a conversational tone gives a good effect.

Working up an Exit.

Scene: Mediæval castle. KING *on throne* L. *Crowd of soldiers filling the stage, face the throne. Excitement.*

KING (*rising*). By all the Saints, they shall not enter this castle whilst there is one man of us left alive.

CROWD (*murmurs from various soldiers*). Cast them out. Vermin! I fear them not. Why do we tarry? By St. David, they shall die.

KING (*breaking in*). Be you all true men?

CROWD (*louder*). Ay, ay, my liege. Here is my sword. Ay, all true men. Lead on. We be ready. Let us but meet face to face. We will show them.

KING. We go forth on a desperate venture. Be there any of you that fear to die?

CROWD (*shouting*). Nay, not a man of us. We have no fear. We be better men than they. I care not for them—— Drive them forth. Lead on, my liege.

KING. Then follow me (*draws sword*) and God defend the right! (*Descends from throne, crosses stage and off* R., *crowd following.*)

CROWD (*shouting, more excited*). God and St. David! Lead on. Death to the robbers. We follow. We be ready, the Saints be with us.

Curtain falls while he leads them off.

NOTES

The effect of this exit is built up during the preceding scene; without keen co-operation from the soldiers the King is helpless, and the scene will fail.

CROWD. The King's lines constitute a single speech, which is broken up by your exclamations. Each time you lift it on to a higher level of excitement.

You must keep the shouting going till the King's voice breaks in, and during his lines you must retain the atmosphere of tense expectation. Get the effect of many voices shouting together.

Do not bunch together round the throne, leaving the rest of the stage bare. Spread yourselves, give yourselves room for gesticulation, and if possible fill your whole stage and represent a large crowd.

Keep up the acting till the curtain has fallen.

KING. Think of your lines as a single speech; pause for the crowd responses, and to take a deep breath, then carry straight on again, with increasing force. (See p. 12 on Breath.) Break in and "top" the crowd each time; do not let the voices fade before you speak. Take it up to a big climax with full voice on your last word. Hold your attitude for two or three seconds before moving, then stride off boldly.

V. SIMPLE EXERCISES IN EMOTIONAL ACTING

Laughter.

EXERCISE I.

Two thieves stand down L.

A. (*taking small case from pocket and handing it to* B.). I give 'im ten quid—ten quid for them sparklers.

B. (*opening case*). You did? (*Looks closely at diamond brooch, then up at* A.). Ten quid—for that?

A. (*alarmed*). What's wrong with it, eh?

B. Wrong? Look at it, you mutt. (A. *snatches it back and peers at it.*) The thing's a fake!

A. This ain't the same brooch.

B. I bet it ain't. They done you proper this time! (B. *looks at* A.'s *face of consternation, and breaks into peals of laughter. Turns away and makes exit* R. *laughing till out of sight.*)

NOTES

1. It is not difficult to laugh on the stage, but only a matter of courage at the start. If you open your mouth, take a deep breath, and go on saying "ha, ha" loudly with determination, you will soon find the trick.

2. It is not necessary to laugh with the whole body. Avoid extravagant swingings and tossing of the head. Sometimes this is permissible, but you must teach yourself to stand or sit quite still and laugh with control as well as uncontrolledly.

3. Do not cover your mouth or face with your hand as you laugh.

EXERCISE 2.

Enter VILLAGE IDIOT, L., *chuckling. Puts envelope containing letter on* R. *end of table. Hides behind window-curtain* R. *Enter* JOSH. L. *Picks up paper, standing above table, reads, laughs, sits* R. *of table. Enter* SETH. JOSH *hands him paper. He reads, sits* L. *of table, both laugh. Enter* MRS. JOSH. *To above table.*

MRS. JOSH. What the—— (*They hand her paper. She laughs loud and long, and sits above table.*)

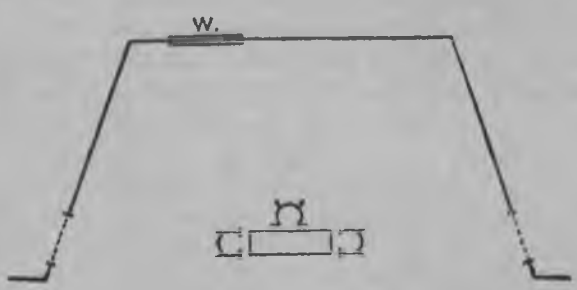
SETH (*wiping eyes*). Oh, lordie, lordie——

JOSH. Think it's true ?

MRS. JOSH. 'Course it's true. Oh, my goodness. (*All laugh.*)

VILLAGE IDIOT (*comes out, bangs his book on the floor*). "April Fools ! " (*Exit, roaring with laughter.*)

They sit up with a start when he bangs the book, and stare open-mouthed till he is off.



NOTES

The laughter in this scene is continuous.

Seth counts three slowly after Josh sits before entering.

Mrs. Josh counts three slowly after Seth sits before entering.

Seth counts three after Mrs. Josh sits while they all go on

laughing. Then he wipes his eyes and speaks, and the laughter subsides till "Oh, my goodness."

This must all be loud, hearty laughter, kept up without flagging. Open mouth, and plenty of breath.

Characterize the people as you please. Take the whole scene at a good pace, for comedy.

Weeping.

EXERCISE 1.

A girl sits on a sofa reading a letter of bad news. It is ended. She lays the letter beside her. Her face is stricken with grief. She covers her face with her hands as sobs begin to rise, and throws herself against the end of the sofa, burying her face in the cushions, and sobs unrestrainedly.

EXERCISE 2.

An old man sits in a chair, staring before him. An open letter is in his hands. He whispers, "*It isn't true!*" Then the voice rising to a despairing cry, he repeats, "*It isn't true!*" He covers his eyes with one hand, and weeps bitterly and painfully.

NOTES

Weeping, like laughter, is simply a question of having the courage to make the sound and go on making it. It will soon come easily. Go on practising until it does.

EXERCISE 3.

Scene: A Posting Inn. An elderly woman, fierce and evil, sits R. LUCILLE, *a young girl, kneels at her knee.* MADAME *holds her two wrists tightly.*

LUCILLE (*terrified*). No, no, I will not betray my benefactor.

MADAME (*fiercely*). Listen to me. You will do as I tell you, or——

LUCILLE (*weeping, breaks in*). Have pity on me, I beg you, I implore you!

MADAME. Be quiet! Little fool!

LUCILLE *weeps more loudly.* MADAME *shakes her, then rises and flings* LUCILLE *from her, who falls down* R., *sobbing wildly.*

Nothing can help you now. Monsieur le Comte is a hundred miles away, and——

M. LE COMTE (*entering* L., *stands* L.C.). On the contrary, Monsieur le Comte is here!

LUCILLE *rises and runs to him crying* "Armand!" *She clings to his right shoulder. He puts his* R. *arm round her.*

MADAME (*furious*). Sir, this is a most unwarrantable intrusion between a lady and her serving-maid!

M. LE COMTE. Pardon me, Madame, but the serving-maid happens to be also, my wife.

MADAME. Your wife!

LUCILLE (*stepping forward between them*). It is the truth. At last I am able to confess it openly.

NOTES

LUCILLE. Cry all through your first two speeches. The words must be clear, but they come mingled with sobs. Run right up to Armand joyfully.

M. LE COMTE. Anticipate your entrance, so that you are on by "away," and pick up your speech at that word, disregarding her "and." Entrance and speech must be neatly done. Move swiftly, but without hurry.

EXERCISE 4. (See Exit No. 2, p. 57.)

Melodrama.

An "Edgar Wallace" villain disposes of his victim.

A. (*strong and sinister, stands* L. *of writing-table. Calls*). Come here!

(B. *enters timidly, stands near door.*)

Shut the door.

(B. *shuts it.*)

(*Pointing to chair.*) Sit down.

B. (*crosses, sits, very frightened*). What do you want?

A. (*speaking slowly and watching effect*). The "Santa Maria" has been wrecked (B. *starts*) and all on board are drowned.

(B. *shudders, and, with a groan, hides face in hands.*)

So that only one person remains alive who knows my story, (B. *looks up with dawning horror in his face*) and that is—you.

B. (*rises*). What are you going to do?

A. (*taking revolver from drawer*). Well, I can hardly afford to let you leave this room alive, now can I?

B. (*blankly*). So this is the end.

A. I'm afraid so.

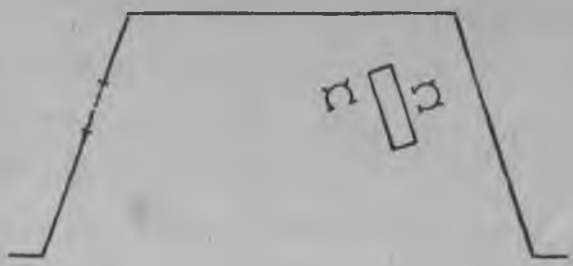
(B. *suddenly makes a rush for the door, shrieking.*)

(*Almost simultaneously.*) Stop!

(B. *stops and turns, panting, leaning against the door.*)

Stay where you are, you fool.

B. *starts forward, arms outstretched in pleading. he does so* A. *shoots.* B. *falls dead.*



NOTES

Do not be afraid of over-playing this. It is impossible to do so, provided you are sincere. You must go for it.

A. should play smooth and cat-like. Cruel and persistent. Speak rather slowly till the last two lines. Snap these out sharply.

B. Show each reaction clearly. Remember, when you rise, that your next move is a rush to the door. Therefore stand clear of the chair when you first stand up. There should then be no further movement till the rush. Let out a big scream and run as though you meant to get away. Fling back against the door in a good natural and dramatic attitude. When the shot is fired fling your arms overhead and throw your head back. Fall as in exercise on page 44.

Hysteria.

A. (*battering against door* C. *back*). Don't go! Let me out, let me out, you can't be so brutal! (*Sinks to the floor, weeping.*)

Sound of steps. A. *raises head, listens. Rises as door* L. *opens.*

Enter B. *Locks door behind him. Stands.*

B. (*gruffly*). So we got you after all.

A. (*steps forward*). Let me go! Oh, please—You must let me go!

B. Let you go? After all the trouble we've had to get you?

A. (*twisting her hands*). I won't tell—I swear I won't, if you'll let me go. It would be much safer for you——

B. Safer for us! (*Laugh.*) Well that's a good one! Ha, ha, ha! Safer for *us*! (*Crosses below A. to door* R., *laughing loudly, unlocks door, exits, bangs door and locks it.*)

A. *takes two or three steps after him, then sways, moans and falls face down.*

NOTES

A. Slide down the door and sink limply in a heap. Speak all the words rapidly, but clearly. But do not string the sentences too quickly together. Get hold of each thought first, and then speak it quickly.

B. Use increased emphasis for your second "Safer for us," start moving and laughing as the words fall from your lips. Do not hurry over it.

Terror.

(A. *stands shrinking*, C.)

(B. *having caught him red-handed, is moving towards bell on* L. *wall, when* A.'s *voice stops him. He turns and listens.*)

A. (*as* B. *goes to bell*). No!! Listen to me—you *must* listen!

(B. *turns and stands watching him.*)

Don't ring that bell before I've had a chance to explain

I'll tell you the truth, I swear I will, if you give me a chance. (*He creeps nearer to* B. *and changes his tone to a pitiful whine.*) I've never stolen a thing in my life before, I swear I haven't. You don't know what it is to be hungry and cold and penniless. To tramp the streets from morning till night, looking for work. You can't understand the horror of it——

(B. *at word "horror," turns once more to ring bell.*)

A. (*throws himself on ground at* B's *feet, clutching at his knees in terror, crying*). Wait! Don't ring that bell, for pity's sake. You can't be so cruel! (*Flinging himself back on heels in kneeling position.*) I'll kill myself if you do.

NOTE

A. You can do nothing with this until you know your words thoroughly. They must pour out without hesitation. Take "No!" and "Wait" sharp and urgent, with a clear, short pause afterwards. Otherwise your only pause is after "give me a chance," where the thought changes, and you try to play for sympathy. From that point work up and up to "horror of it" when B. again moves to bell. After "Wait," pile up the sentences in a crescendo of excitement and terror.

Joy.

(*Sofa* C. *Chair above* F.P. *right. Door* C. *back.*)

ETHEL (*off stage*). Mother! Father! Where are you?

MOTHER (*sitting on sofa* C., *knitting*). Here, dear, in the study. (*As* ETHEL *dashes in, she puts down knitting.*)

(FATHER, *who is seated* R., *looks up from book.*)

ETHEL (*running in*). Oh, Mother, Dan's coming home! Here's the cable! (*To* R. *of* MOTHER.)

FATHER (*rises*). My dear! } (*Almost*
MOTHER. Dan coming home! } *simultaneously.*)

ETHEL. At last! He's coming! Dan—Oh, Mother, it's a sort of miracle!

MOTHER } (*simultaneously*). { How wonderful! (*rising*)
FATHER } { It's too good to be true—
{ Dan!

ETHEL. But it *is* true! It *is* true! (*Throws herself into* MOTHER'S *arms, laughing and crying.*)

FATHER (*coming to join them in front of sofa*). Coming home! Coming home—oh, my dear child! (*He is almost overcome with relief and emotion. He lays his left hand on her shoulder.*)

(ETHEL *raises her head and turns radiant face towards him.*)

NOTES

Keep the excitement and happiness going from start to finish. Do not hurry the lines; put "punch" behind them. Father and Mother never take their eyes off Ethel.

VI. OPENING AND CLOSING AN ACT

Opening.

Scene: A Lounge Hall. Door L. *Table* C., *sofa below it.* F.P. R.

Curtain rises on an empty stage. Door L. *is thrown open;* VISITOR *enters, followed by* MAID. *As* VISITOR *enters he draws off gloves and speaks.*

VISITOR (*coming* C.). If you are expecting Mr. Lanchester at five o'clock, I think I'll wait. (*Lays hat and gloves on table.*) I see it is ten to, now. (*Crosses to* F.P.)

MAID (*just above door*). Very good, sir (madam).

VISITOR (*strolling back to* C.). Oh—and by the way, have you the evening paper?

MAID. I'll fetch it, sir. (*Exit.*)

VISITOR. Thanks. (*Sits on sofa.*)

Take this with various types of character.

NOTES

Concentrate your mind on the character you are to portray, before the curtain rises, and make your entrance clear and decisive. It is your business to catch and hold the interest of the audience, to arrest fidgeting, and lay the first foundations of the play. Speak very clearly, remembering that your audience has not yet settled down to silent attention.

FURTHER STUDY

Entrances, "Twelfth Night," Act I, Sc. 2.

Closing.

EXERCISE 1.

JUDITH (*standing* R.C. *with her back to* JIM). Oh, I shall be all right, thank you. Good-bye.

JIM (L.C.). Oh . . . I see. (*Pause. He looks at her unrelenting back, then goes to her and turns her to him, shaking her gently.*) You little beast! (*Drops his arms and glares at her.* JUDITH *flings her arms round his neck and buries her face on his shoulder.*)

JIM (*laughing*). Oh, you darling. (*His* L. *arm goes round her waist, right hand caresses her hair as he speaks, then he lays his cheek against her head.*)

Curtain.

EXERCISE 2.

(*A table* C.)

ANNE (*standing* R.). But the jewel-case?

ARCHIE (L.C., *above table. Taking case from pocket*). There is the jewel-case: as you will see (*throws it on table*), there is nothing in it.

ANNE *rushes to table, opens case and stares.*

Hold the position till curtain falls.

NOTES

The interest of the play must never be allowed to slacken at the ends of the acts. Keep a firm grip on it. Speak the last lines clearly. If you have pauses, let them be very purposeful. Do not relax till the curtain is down.

FURTHER STUDY

Duke's speech, and curtain, end of "Romeo and Juliet."

VII. MANAGEMENT OF PROPERTIES

Exercise 1. The Cloak.

The scene is a wayside inn parlour. Fireplace L. A chair up C., the back towards the audience. Door R. Traveller enters, a long dark cloak lined with a light colour hangs from the shoulders. He strolls across, looking at the fire; as he does so he quietly and wearily flings off the cloak and throws it over back of chair, without turning to look at it. Warms his hands at fire. Hears voices he recognizes in a room above, listens, goes swiftly out again, picking up the cloak and wrapping himself in its dark folds.

NOTES

In managing properties you need to think ahead and plan clearly. In getting rid of the cloak, bear in mind that you have to put it on again, right-way out, in a hurry. Do it like this. As you enter, grasp right side of collar firmly with right hand. Swing cloak from shoulders, downstage and round in front of you. Grasp centre back of collar in left hand, and as you come level with chair, fling it straight over the back. Mark the chair with a swift side-glance, but do not turn the head. You now know that the collar is straight behind the chair-back, the lining of cloak uppermost. When you have to grab it quickly, go straight for the collar again with your right hand, swing the cloak round in front of you, with the outside towards you. Grasp each side of the collar with your hands and fling it round over your left shoulder and

into position. If you are wearing a large hat, you must let go with the right hand as you fling it round, and grasp it again as it swings round your back.

EXERCISE 2. THE HURRIED SLAVEY.

The scene is a boarding-house dining-room. Door up R. Sideboard against R. wall. Table C. Chairs against L. wall.

Slavey bearing tray of "early lunch" hurries in and puts tray on sideboard, muttering "*It's all very well.*" Takes table-cloth from sideboard drawer, bangs drawer to shut it. "*I won't be bullied.*" Plunges over to table, sniffing dejectedly. Lays cloth. "*Old brute, that's what she is.*" Plunges back to sideboard for tray. "*I'm not a dog.*" Transfers things to left side of table. "*Nor yet a worm.*" Plunges down L. and brings up chair, sets it against table. "*I've turned, that's what I've . . .*" Unpleasing voice of proprietress screams "*Maud!*" Slavey grabs tray, yells "*C-o-m-i-n-g,*" and dashes out.

NOTES

Never stop moving from beginning to end. Your actions are ceaseless. Speak while you are doing the various duties.

Management of Properties to Cues.

EXERCISE 1. HIGH TEA.

Sitting-room of Workman's dwelling. MUM *and* CISSIE *at table.* MUM *above with basket of darning.* CISSIE R., *elbows on table, reading.* BOB'S *slippers under chair* L.

MUM. What's the time?

CISSIE (*looking up at clock on cupboard*). Just gone half-past five.

MUM (*begins to put away sewing*). Time to get tea.

CISSIE (*buried in book again*). Mm.

MUM (*rising*). Come on, my girl. (*Puts basket on cupboard.*)

CISSIE (*stretching*). Oh, all right. (*Slops off* R., *leaving book on chair.*)

MUM (*drawing window-curtains, looking out*). Oh, you're back, Bob. Dad there?

BOB (*outside*). Just up the road. (*Entering* L.) Tea ready? (*Sits down* L., *begins to take off boots.*)

CISSIE (*entering* R. *with tray of crocks*). Just on. (*Sets tray on dresser.*)

MUM (*looking out at door* L.). Da-ad! Te-ea!

CISSIE *and* MUM *lay cloth from opposite ends of table, then lay tea things.*

CISSIE. Who won? (*To* BOB.)

BOB. Arsenal. Blast! (*Dragging off boot.*)

MUM (*coming down to table with cups*). What you done now?

BOB. Nail in me boot. (*Pulls it off.*)

MUM (*setting down cups*). There now! And I told you only this morning to hammer it down. (*Exit* R. *with tray.*)

CISSIE (*sitting down* L., *picking up book off chair*). You're a nice one. If you think I'm going to darn your sock for you you're much mistaken.

BOB. Who arst you? (*Puts on slippers.*)

CISSIE. You can give them to your precious Doris.

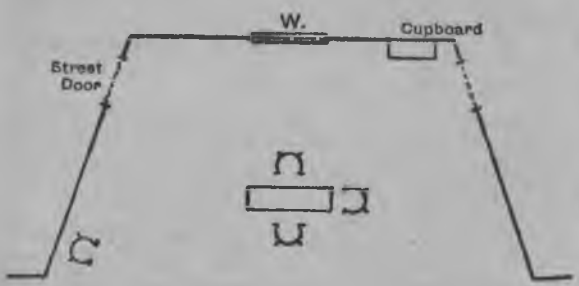
BOB (*dragging chair up to table*). You leave Doris alone, d'you hear?

MUM (*enters with sausages and plates, puts tray on cupboard*). Now then, you two. (*Sets plates and sits above table.*)

DAD (*entering very cheery. Hangs coat and cap on peg*

on door.) Hello, Mother! Got a cup of tea for the old man? (*Sits below table.*) Oo, smells good! I can do with a bit of food, I can.

MUM. Come on, Cissie, pass your Dad the sauce.



NOTES

The moving about of properties must be done neatly to cue, or you will find yourselves getting in a muddle. The spots to mark are—"Mum" must be coming down to table with cups at "Blast!" Cissie must be down at table when Mum makes her exit, so as not to block her way out.

Do the table laying again and again till you are perfectly clear about it.

Mum moves rather quickly but quietly.

Cissie is lazy.

Bob truculent, and Dad a cheery old bird.

EXERCISE 2. THE EARLY VISITOR.

Scene: MARGARET'S *Bedroom.* MARGARET *in bed up* C. *with breakfast beside her* R. ELLEN *has just entered* L. *and is standing by bed.*

MARGARET. *Who* did you say, Ellen? (*Cup poised in hand.*)

ELLEN. Mr. Derbyshire, madam—your brother.

MARGARET. Cecil! What on earth—— Well, (*puts cup on tray*) I shall just have to ask him to come up if he can't wait. (*She sits on* L. *edge of bed.*) Get me a wrap, Ellen.

(ELLEN *gets one from cupboard* L.)

Wherever are my slippers?

ELLEN *first puts wrap round her, then fetches slippers from dressing-table down* R. *and puts them on.*

See if I left my cap in the bathroom.

ELLEN *exits to bathroom up* R. MARGARET *crosses to dressing-table, sits, combs hair.*

Oh dear, what a bother.

ELLEN. Here it is, Madam.

MARGARET. Thanks. (*Takes it and puts it on.*) All right, you can ask him to come up. (*Powders nose.*)

Short pause.

(*Exit* ELLEN. *Knock. Re-enter.*)

MARGARET. Come in.

ELLEN. Mr. Derbyshire, madam.

(*Enter* CECIL.)

(*Exit* ELLEN.)

MARGARET (*coming forward, extending cheek.*) Hello, Cecil.

CECIL (*giving it a chilly peck*). I'm afraid I've disturbed you, Margaret. (*Sets hat on stool at end of bed.*)

MARGARET. Not at all.

CECIL (*drawing off gloves*). I'm a man of habit, as you know. (*Puts gloves in hat.*) And I've always been an early riser.

MARGARET (*rather gloomy*). I know. (*Sits at dressing-table.*) Do sit down. Is something wrong?

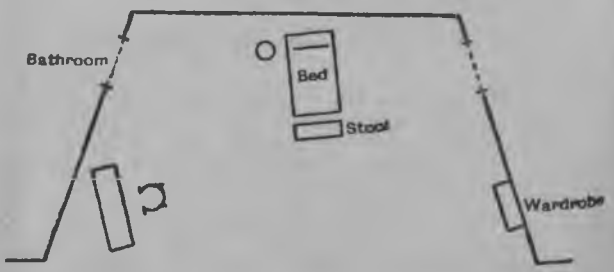
CECIL. Not wrong. (*Sitting on stool, hat beside him*). Merely something rather important, or I should not have disturbed you, hum, hum—so, so early. (*Draws document from inner pocket.*) This paper—— (*Rises.*) May I take off my overcoat? The, the heat in this room, is rather—— (*Takes it off, lays it on end of bed.*)

MARGARET (*murmurs*). Oh, of course, do—I'm sorry——

CECIL. Not at all. (*Sits.*) Ah! that's better. Now—(*gets out glasses and adjusts them on nose*) if you'll give me your attention for a few minutes, I'll explain what it is I want you to sign.

MARGARET (*a little nervously*). To sign.

CECIL (*peering at her solemnly*). To sign.



NOTES

ELLEN. Do not get flustered over the dressing. No efficient maid would. Keep your wits about you, and do it all quietly, and well.

MARGARET is spoilt but charming. Accustomed to being waited on hand and foot, and inherently lazy.

CECIL gets out paper, eyeglasses, takes off coat, all while he continues speaking. Does not hurry anything. Methodical and pernickety.

VIII. SIMPLE CONCERTED SCENES

EXERCISE I. THE DIARY.

A group of girls are eagerly reading an old diary, which KATE *holds in her hands. She has stolen it from her* UNCLE'S *study.* ALICE *stands* L. *of sofa,* CONSTANCE *behind it.* DOROTHY *sits on floor at* KATE'S *knees.* BEATRICE *and* KATE *sit on the sofa,* KATE *on* L.

ALICE (*excitedly*). Oh, Kate, show it to me.

BEATRICE (*dreamily*). Was ever so strange a story!

KATE (*nervously*). If my uncle were to discover . . .

CONSTANCE (*gaily*). But how could he? You shall put it back in the library as soon as we have seen it.

DOROTHY (*eagerly*). What a romance! Who would have thought—— (*She breaks off because* ALICE, *who faces door, has started and paled with fright. All look towards door and see* UNCLE JAMES *standing there watching them.* DOROTHY *rises and shrinks to* L. *end of sofa. All eyes are fixed on him. He walks slowly right across to* F.P. R.: *turns, looks at them.*)

UNCLE (*in a harsh tone*). May I ask what book that is you have, Kate?

KATE (*rises, trembling*). It is . . . it is . . .

UNCLE *holds out* R. *hand.* KATE *comes to him and gives him the book, her head bent. He takes it. There is a stony pause. He turns and throws the diary on to the fire.*

NOTES

Characterize each of these girls. Have your minds fixed on the story in the diary. Pick up your cues at once. From the moment you see Uncle James let there be a frozen, horrified pause. Then Dorothy shrinks back. Not till she is still does Uncle James move. All eyes follow him. He does not look at them as he crosses. Goes straight over, stands back to them three-quarters facing audience (L. foot in advance to facilitate turn), then deliberately turns and addresses Kate.

In tense moments keep everyone still except the central figure of the scene.

EXERCISE 2. A MIDNIGHT CONFERENCE.

A Country Inn, run by retired Army officer. The smoke-room, midnight. Window open, left by escaped thief. Guests, in deshabille, have rushed down on hearing shouts. When scene opens, they are all seated, as directed on scene plot.

PROPRIETOR OF INN. And now perhaps, ladies and gentlemen, one of you will be kind enough to explain the reason for this commotion in the middle of the night.

GENERAL. All I can say is, when I woke up in that chair (*pointing at* INTENSE LADY, *who wilts*), I distinctly saw the figure of a man bending over the writing-desk.

FLAPPER (*on arm of* GENERAL'S *chair*). But, Daddy, it was completely dark.

INTENSE LADY. What about the moon?

FLAPPER. There wasn't a moon.

GENERAL. I saw him outlined against the window.

PROPRIETOR. But were the curtains not drawn?

SMART LADY. They certainly weren't when I came into the room.

NAVAL OFFICER (*who likes the* SMART LADY *a good deal*). What brought *you* down ?

SMART LADY. Why, the row the General was making —I mean—that is—I vaguely heard——

GENERAL'S WIFE. It was hardly likely that the General would make no attempt to find out who this mysterious stranger was.

GENERAL (*stiffly*). Hardly.

INTENSE LADY (*leaning forward*). But are you sure he *was* a stranger ? (*Looks from one to another.*)

FLAPPER (*with relish*). O-o ! Daddy, what was he like ?

GENERAL (*solemnly*). Unfortunately he took fright at the first sound of my voice.

FLAPPER *giggles, but is suppressed quickly by the* PROPRIETOR.

PROPRIETOR (*snapping*). Don't giggle : or go : which you like.

NAVAL OFFICER (*gazing at ceiling, softly*). Joke over.

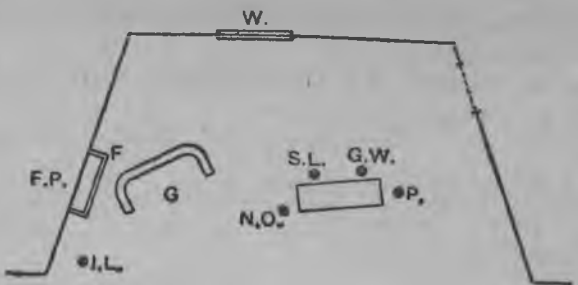
INTENSE LADY (*hoarsely*). Perhaps he's still behind the curtains.

All turn silently and gaze at window. SMART LADY *suddenly sneezes very loud.*

GENERAL. Good God ! What's that !

SMART LADY. Oh, I *do* beg your pardons. I've nothing underneath, you know. (*To various ladies.*)

GENERAL'S WIFE (*very disapproving*). I, for one, shall go to bed. I can't see that we are catching anything here except colds. (*Rises, marches with dignity to the door.*)



NOTES

This scene must be taken lightly and amusingly. Therefore with exact finish and neatness. Toss the lines from one to the other as though you were playing a balloon game. Never let it drop. Make the characters live. They speak at various paces. The General ponderous and important, picking up his speech each time as if there had been no interruption. The Flapper inconsequent and flippant. The Smart Lady charming and garrulous. Etc.

There is no action in this scene, so that you can give your whole attention to voice, pace, inflection, etc.

EXERCISE 3. A HUNTING ACCIDENT.

Scene: A Bedroom. Sofa C. *Washstand up* L. *Dressing-table down* L. *against wall. Chair against* R. *wall. Door up* R. (JULIE, *a maid, is folding a dress on sofa; crosses to dressing-table, opens drawer, fetches dress, lays it in drawer. Tidies brushes, etc., puts her own cap straight in front of mirror. Hums to herself all the time.*)

GILES (*as* JULIE *arranges cap, calls*). Julie, Julie! (*Runs in breathless.*) Julie!

JULIE (*turning*). What's the matter?

GILES (*at* R. *end of sofa*). Your mistress is hurt. She has fallen from her horse.

JULIE. Dear God! Where is she?

GILES (*running back to door*). They are bringing her here.

JULIE *bustles up to washstand; pours some brandy into a glass. Fetches salts from drawer, places them by brandy.*

JULIE. Salts, Cognac. What will she need——

GILES (*looking off stage*). Here she is! (*Stands above door.*)

Enter LYDIA, *supported by two labourers. She is in a swooning condition. They lay her on sofa, head* L.

JULIE (*standing* L. *below sofa*). Oh, my poor mistress! Oh, dear! (*Wrings her hands and wails.*)

1ST LABOURER (*at foot of couch*). Don't you fret, young woman, the lady is only bruised. She will be all right in a day or two.

2ND LABOURER (*above couch*). You found a doctor?

GILES. Yes.

2ND LABOURER. How soon will he be here?

GILES (*looks through door*). Here he comes.

Enter DOCTOR. *Goes straight to couch, feels pulse. Crosses* R. *to fetch chair. Sits below couch. Lays hand on* LYDIA'S *forehead.*

LYDIA (*moves, opens her eyes*). Oh! My head!

JULIE. Poor child, poor child! Oh, dear! (*Weeps.*)

DOCTOR. Tch, tch! Keep calm, my dear young lady. There is no need to make all that noise.

JULIE *subsides during next lines.* GILES *goes up to washstand, pours water from a jug into a bowl, picks*

up a clean handkerchief from dressing-table, comes round and kneels below head of couch, tugs JULIE'S *skirt for her to come and bathe* LYDIA'S *forehead.*

1ST LABOURER. If there's nothing more we can do, sir, we'll be getting along.

DOCTOR. Thanks, my man. It was lucky for the young lady that you were at hand.

1ST LABOURER. Her horse shied at a newspaper flying in the wind.

DOCTOR. So I understand. You can leave us now, thanks—er—er—call in a few days, I should say.

2ND LABOURER. Very good, sir. Thank you, sir. (*They go out.*)

DOCTOR (*to* JULIE). You have some brandy?

JULIE. On the table, sir.

DOCTOR *goes up to table, sniffs tumbler, brings it down to* LYDIA, *sits, holds it to her lips.*

NOTES

GILES. Start calling before you come in sight of the audience. Run on and stand, looking at Julie while you speak. Fetch the bowl of water at "It is all right." Come round between Julie and head of couch, and kneel. Keep still when Doctor comes with brandy.

JULIE. Make your moves clear and purposeful. Do not bend forward as you walk. Stop bathing forehead when Doctor comes with brandy.

LYDIA. Lean most of your weight against the shoulder of 2nd Labourer on your L. Your left arm is round his neck. Enter semi-conscious, but swoon as they lay you down. Relax all muscles. Do not raise your head from cushion, only move it a little from side to side when you moan.

LABOURERS: *1st Labourer.* Support Lydia by placing your left arm round her waist, right hand supports her

right elbow. Come round below couch, support her as she sits, then lift her feet to R. end and step back towards R. end of couch.

2nd Labourer. Lydia's arm is round your neck; hold her left hand in yours. Your right arm is around her just below the shoulders. Come round to front of couch, head end, then allowing her hand to slide from your shoulder, let her gently down into a sitting position. Then, still supporting her shoulders, lay her with her head raised on cushions at L. end of couch.

DOCTOR. Very quiet and precise in all you do. Take command of the situation the moment you come in.

All players must take care not to mask each other from the sight of the audience.

IX. EXERCISES FOR ORIGINALITY

EXERCISE I. THE FORTUNE-TELLER.

FORTUNE-TELLER *seated up* R. *Guests grouped around, seated. After a dinner-party.*

FORTUNE-TELLER. You ask for the truth about yourselves?

A. Yes.

FORTUNE-TELLER. Before all your friends?

B. Why not?

FORTUNE-TELLER. It is as you please.

C. I'm not sure that it would please me.

FORTUNE-TELLER. Quite possibly not.

D. I know, tell us one at a time, in a whisper.

FORTUNE-TELLER. You think you will not give yourselves away?

E. Not much.

FORTUNE-TELLER. I will tell each one thing—and then you shall tell me if it is not the truth. (*She moves away to* L. *end of a sofa, which is down* L. *as far as possible from the main group.*)

F. That's the idea. We are really most startling people, you know!

(*Laughter.*)

G. Charles, you go first. Let's try to guess what she is telling him!

ALL. Yes. What fun.

(*Laughter.*)

(*Throughout the following scene the* FORTUNE-TELLER *whispers to each so that only the person concerned hears what she is saying.*)

(A. *goes and sits beside* FORTUNE-TELLER.)

FORTUNE-TELLER. That gold cigarette-case you put in your hip-pocket. You value it? Where is it now? It is very awkward for you, with the thief a guest at the same table, and watching you at this moment.

(A. *goes back to his place.* B. *rises and sits by* FORTUNE-TELLER.)

Try to forget your anxiety. Your little boy's fever will have left him to-morrow. It is not, as you fear, a grave illness.

(*After* B., C. *takes his place by* FORTUNE-TELLER.)

You are very pretty, my child, but very foolish to risk your happiness for the sake of a silly flirtation. Your good husband is worth ten of the other gentleman. Show him that you know it.

(*After* C., D. *takes the vacant chair.*)

Do not attempt to deliver your note to the lady. Her husband is watching her all the time. Believe me, my friend, the game is not worth the candle.

(*After* D., E. *seats herself by* FORTUNE-TELLER.)

This is your last dinner-party. You know that? I thought so. Yes, the next attack of pain will be the last. You will be glad . . . You are a brave woman. Adieu—and *bonne chance* . . .

(*After* E., F. *takes the vacant chair.*)

It is not for admiration he has been looking so intently into those big, big eyes of yours. No, no, he wishes to find out if the eyelashes are stuck on or no.

(*After* F., G. *takes the chair by* FORTUNE-TELLER.)

You are hard up? Yes, in a tight corner, is it not so? But you go the wrong way when you steal from your friend. Why deny it? I know. It is in here, eh? (*Touches her bag.*) Listen. Slip into the dining-room. Throw it under the table. And find a better way to pay your debts.

NOTES

A. is very attentive to F., D. to C., who is the wife of A.

Before starting this scene, let each one know what is to be told to her, but keep it secret from the others. By the manner, walk and reactions to what is said each one must try to give the clue to their personalities and to what is passing. Do not try to explain yourself by exaggerated, unnatural reactions, but think out how it can be done by significant looks, gestures, manner of crossing to and from the sofa, etc. Between each scene the other guests in a low murmur try to guess what the Fortune-Teller has said. When the séance is finished, find out how correctly it has been accomplished. Invent further interviews for yourselves.

It is important that the faces of both players on the sofa should be clearly seen, so place the sofa at a convenient angle.

FORTUNE-TELLER. You must co-operate with each, asking for their response. As you make each point, give a pause, an inquiring look—watch for the reaction to your words. You mean to make them give themselves away, and they do.

EXERCISE 2. WHAT WAS IN THE LETTER?

FINISH THIS SCENE.

A. (*standing* C., *facing* L.). You've got the letter?

B. (*seated* L. *at writing-table, facing* A.). Yes.

A. What does it say? (*Pause.*) Why won't you tell me?

B. Why should I?

A. I hate you!

(B. *throws down letter on table and strolls up to window* C. *back.*)

(A. *snatches up letter and reads.*)

Finish this in three lines as you like.

X. CONVEYING THE ATMOSPHERE OF VARIOUS TIMES AND COUNTRIES

EXERCISE I. THE OLD KING'S LAST BATTLE.

Scene: Mediæval Castle. OLD KING *on throne* R. QUEEN *on his* R. (*above him*). *Soldiers along back except* IST SOLDIER.

(IST SOLDIER *kneeling by lancet window* L., *looking out.*)

KING. How goes the fight?

IST SOLDIER. Ill, my lord, ill.

(*Murmurs from others.*)

KING. Have they reached the bridge?

IST SOLDIER. The bridge is safely raised (*rises, still looking out*). But the enemy swarm like rats. They are swimming the moat—my Lord—— (*Turns to* KING *in fear, arms outstretched.*)

QUEEN (*grimly*). Like rats they shall drown. (*Murmurs.*)

(*Enter* BLANCHE L., *running in terror. Throws herself down at foot of throne.*)

BLANCHE. We are lost, we are lost! Our enemies are battering the great gate. (*Weeps.*)

QUEEN (*raising her*). Courage, courage. You should feel shame to weep like a child, when most we need brave hearts.

(*Enter* CAPTAIN R., *staggers to foot of throne, falls on his knee, panting.*)

CAPTAIN. My lord, the enemy have crossed the moat. They are piling firewood against the great gate.

KING (*rising*). Are the gates burning?

CAPTAIN. Not yet, my lord. There is hope still. (*Rises feebly.*) A sally; a sally from the south postern. Lead your horsemen through the wood—Surprise the rear—Ah! (*Catches his side and sways.*)

BLANCHE. He is wounded!

CAPTAIN. A scratch, a scratch. (*He swoons and is caught by two soldiers, who lay him on the ground, head* L.)

BLANCHE (*falls on knees beside him*). Fulke! (*She sees that he is dead—weeps, crosses hands on breast. Stays kneeling there.*)

KING. By all the saints, they shall not enter this castle whilst there is one man of us alive! (*Murmurs* "Cast them out. Why do we tarry?")[1] Are you all true men?

(*Cries of* "Ay, ay, liege, all true men. Try us and see. Lead on," *etc.*)

Then follow me, and God defend the right.

Shouts of "We will—God and St. David! Lead on! Death to the robbers." KING *raises sword above his head and leads them forth* L.—*below corpse*—QUEEN *takes a few steps after them. Stops. Looks at the weeping* BLANCHE. *Goes back to throne, and sits waiting.*

[1] NOTE.—Crowd work for end of this scene is dealt with in detail on page 60.

NOTES

Play the scene strongly and at a good pace. All gestures must be broad.

THE OLD KING is grim and quiet, gradually kindling to fiery desperation as the scene goes on. His last speech has been worked in detail with full notes on page 60.

QUEEN. Steely and fearless.

BLANCHE wails as she runs in. The Queen lays her hands on her shoulder, and she rises weeping quietly and stands up on L. of Queen above throne.

CAPTAIN. At "a scratch" the soldiers must be there to support you. Your knees bend towards R. a little, then let your whole body go limp, the soldiers holding you up from behind. Let your head fall forward. They lay you down slowly.

EXERCISE 2. THE DEATH OF THE CARDINAL.

Scene: Terrace outside the Palace. Along the back from R. *to* L. *the young* KING *and three ladies are playing bowls. Down* R. *a lady sits working at an embroidery frame,* L. *two ladies are winding wool, laughing and chattering together: one is kneeling.*

As the Curtain rises there is a burst of laughter from the players who go on bowling quietly through the first part of the scene.

Enter ROGER, *a courtier,* L., *below players. Crosses to* R., *head bent, anxious demeanour, meaning to enter Palace* R. LADY R. *lays down frame, rises and touches his arm. He stops.*)

LADY (*speaking low*). Roger, what news? How does the Cardinal?

ROGER (*with stealthy glance round*). He is dying.

LADY. Dying!

ROGER. Ss! Not so loud.

LADY. Roger—who will tell the King? (*Looks towards* KING.)

(*Bursts of laughter from players.*)

1ST PLAYER. No, no, it is his Majesty's turn.

(KING *throws.*)

3RD PLAYER. My ball is nearest the jack!

2ND PLAYER. Oh, Sire, yours is a better throw than any.

KING. Passable, passable. (*Strolling* R., *flicking dust from coat.*)

3RD PLAYER (*pointing down* L.). Here comes my Lord Bishop.

1ST PLAYER. With a face as long as a fiddle!

(3RD *and* 1ST PLAYER *drift up* L.)
(*Enter* BISHOP *down* L.)

KING (*coming* C. *to meet* BISHOP). How now, your melancholy Reverence, what jest have you for me?

(*Laughter from Players:* 2ND PLAYER *drifts* R. *joining* ROGER *and* LADY *down* R.)

BISHOP. No jest, Sire. I am the bearer of ill tidings.

(*Pause. All rise quietly and listen intently.*)

KING (*laughing.*) Well, then—out with it, my black crow.

BISHOP. The Cardinal—His Eminence the Cardinal, is dead, Sire. (*Pause.*)

KING (*loud and sharp*). What's that?

BISHOP (*crossing himself and going on his knees*). God have mercy on his soul.

KING. Dead! (*Shudders; covers his face with his hands.*)

Ladies fall on knees, men bow heads, cross themselves. One lady weeps gently. Others mutter, "God rest his soul. God have mercy"; "God save us all."

NOTES

All players in this scene must keep alive and never let it drop. Roger and Lady arrest attention by tense and definite acting. Bowl-players gay, keep voices subdued, and listen for the cue "Who will tell the King." Toss up the laughter at once, and speak the next lines with animation, snap up the cues.

The whole pace changes on Bishop's entrance. Mark this clearly. Allot lines at end of scene to definite actors, and settle their order. The voices should overlap and the sound come like the sigh of wind in the grass. Do not hurry. Get the atmosphere.

Hold the end for a slow Curtain.

EXERCISE 3. FANTASY.

A Chinese Mandarin and his head wife introduce themselves. They kneel L.C. *and* R.C., *facing down stage.*

THE MANDARIN (L.C.). I am the Mandarin Tong. I am the friend of his Celestial Majesty the Emperor. I am custodian of his jewels, and a person of great responsibilities. I am much to be feared by the common people, for my sword is a sharp one. It does not rust upon the walls.

HIS HEAD WIFE (R.C., *a tea-tray beside her with two cups*). I am Yu-Tong; I am a very great lady. I am the chief wife of the highly honourable Mandarin Tong. All have praised me for my beauty and for my skill in playing upon the violin. (*She rises, comes to* TONG'S

side, kneels facing him, cup in hand, head bowed.) I am dutiful and loving to my husband, thoughtful for his every need. (*He takes cup. She bows her head to the ground.*) I am the light of his eyes, the joy of his heart.

MANDARIN TONG. Yu-Tong, leave me, I have many thoughts in my mind. I wish to be alone.

(*She rises; exits down* R.)

NOTES

You are dipping into the realms of "once upon a time." No matter how fantastic, play with simplicity and conviction.

This particular kind of speech should be taken very smoothly. The sentences, however long, flow uninterrupted to the end. Keep the face still as a mask, only the glint of the eyes showing any change. Move smoothly and quietly.

Study old Chinese pictures. Notice the delicate way they use their hands.

FURTHER STUDY

"Midsummer Night's Dream," Act II, Sc. 1 and 2.

EXERCISE 4. DANGER IN THE JUNGLE.

The Scene is a Clearing in the Jungle. Undergrowth thick on all sides. MAC, *hacking his way, staggers through to the clearing from* R. *Wipes sweat out of his eyes. Slips hatchet into belt.*

MAC (*going back* R. *to help his friends*). Here, Allen, here, this way. There's a clearing.

ALLEN (*up* R. *in undergrowth, supporting* JOE). All right. Give me a hand with Joe, can you. He's beat.

MAC (*joining them*). Coming. (*Gets* JOE'S *right arm round his neck, and they half lift him along.*) Hold up, old man. It's all right. We've got you. Now, steady.

(*They emerge into clearing, and stand breathing heavily.*)

ALLEN (*gasping*). We must cross the river to-night, or they'll get us.

JOE (*his voice thick with weariness*). Go on. What's the use. Leave me.

MAC. Don't talk rot. (*Leaves others, peers off* R.U.)

JOE (*shaking his head slowly*). I can't—I can't.

ALLEN (*letting him sink gently*). Rest a minute.

JOE. My God——

ALLEN. How much farther, do you think ? (*Squatting on his haunches.*)

MAC. Two miles, at least. (*At back, listening and peering into jungle.*)

JOE. Two miles !——

MAC (*taking flask from breast pocket*). Here—drink. (*Falls on knees beside* JOE. *He takes a gulp and gives it back.*) Better finish it. (*Holds it out to him again.*)

JOE (*pushing it away with right hand*). No. It's all there is. (*He staggers to his feet.*)

ALLEN. Better ?

JOE. I'm all right.

MAC (*getting hold of* JOE *as before*). Come on, then.

(ALLEN *leads the way off* L. *through jungle.*)

NOTES

This must all be done in the flat, emotionless voice of physically exhausted men. But underlying it must be urgency, desperation and taut nerves. The sense of a

swiftly following foe must darken the whole scene. Take the action broadly and slowly. You can put any amount of dramatic work into this scene. Imagine the jungle.

EXERCISE 5. FIRST VICTORIAN SCENE.

A PLEASANT FRIENDSHIP

Scene: The Parlour of MISS LUCY TRAVERS. LUCY *seated on sofa down* C. CAPTAIN STACEY *on her* L. *on sofa.* EMILY *on chair* L. *of a small tea-table which is in front of the sofa.*

STACEY. I appreciate very deeply, Miss Lucy, your kindness in asking me to have tea with you on your birthday.

LUCY. But it gives me the greatest pleasure, Captain Stacey; the preparations for our little party have made quite an excitement in my very quiet life.

EMILY (*gravely*). I wish birthdays were the same happy event in after life, as they used to be in childhood!

LUCY (*laughing*). Poor Emily. (*Turns to* STACEY.) I think she hardly has need of our sympathy as yet.

STACEY (*laughs*). No, no, Miss Emily, I can only believe you were inviting a compliment, and if so, I shall be delighted to supply it, for I never saw a young lady whose beauty showed less sign of declining!

LUCY (*to cover* EMILY'S *slight confusion*). Come, Emily, let me give you a second cup of tea.

EMILY (*handing cup*). Thank you, Lucy. Oh, Captain Stacey, lest I forget, Mr. Weatherall has bid me to inquire if you would speak for him at the opening of the new Schools.

STACEY. When is that to be?

LUCY. On the Wednesday after Easter—you will be here then?

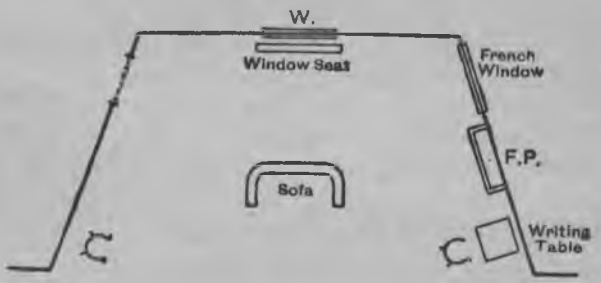
STACEY. I have no intention of leaving Milchester—either at Easter, nor, I hope, for many a long day.

LUCY. That is good news indeed, is it not, Emily?

EMILY. Indeed it is. I think we were half asleep till you came to the village.

STACEY (*gaily*). Then I must try to replace a pleasant dream by an equally pleasant reality, or you will wish me away!

SCENE PLOT FOR ALL FIVE VICTORIAN SCENES



NOTES

Play this scene simply and graciously, with smooth, clear diction.

LUCY is a charming woman of thirty, which in those days (about 1840) was considered to be no longer young.

STACEY is a modest and manly gentleman, of moderate means, retired from the Army. Age about forty.

EMILY is a young girl, companion and friend to Lucy.

EXERCISE 6. THE RIVALS. (*Sheridan.*)

For gaining natural movements and inflections in difficult costume scenes.

ACT I (PART OF SCENE 2)

(LYDIA *and* JULIA *are seated on the sofa* R.C. JULIA *on* L.)

JULIA (*reproachfully*). Come, Lydia, you are too inconsiderate.

LYDIA. Nay, I do but jest.

(LUCY *enters* C. *back.*)

What's here ?

LUCY (*in a hurry*). Oh, ma'am, here is Sir Anthony Absolute just come home with your aunt !

LYDIA. They'll not come here.—Lucy, do you watch.

(*Exit* LUCY.)

JULIA (*rising*). Yet I must go. (LYDIA *rises.*) Sir Anthony does not know I am here, and if we meet, he'll detain me, to show me the town. I'll take another opportunity of paying my respects to Mrs. Malaprop, when she shall treat me, as long as she chooses, with her select words so ingeniously misapplied, without being mispronounced.

(*Re-enter* LUCY.)

LUCY. Oh Lud ! Ma'am, they are both coming upstairs.

LYDIA. Well, I'll not detain you, coz. (*They move* R.) Adieu, my dear Julia. (*Passing* JULIA *across her toward door* R.) There—through my room you'll find another staircase.

NOTE

Keeping exactly the same movements, do the following modern version of the above.

(*Mansion Flat.* MARY *and* RITA *seated on sofa.* MARY *laughing.*)

RITA (L. *end of sofa*). No, really, Mary, that isn't fair.

MARY. My dear, I was only teasing you—you mustn't——

(*Enter* MAID C. *back.*)

MAID. Excuse me, miss——

MARY. What is it, Parsons?

MAID. There is a car just drawn up outside, that looks to me like Lord Silchester's.

RITA (*to* MARY). Your uncle!

MARY. I'm out of Town, Parsons.

MAID (*going*). Very good, miss.

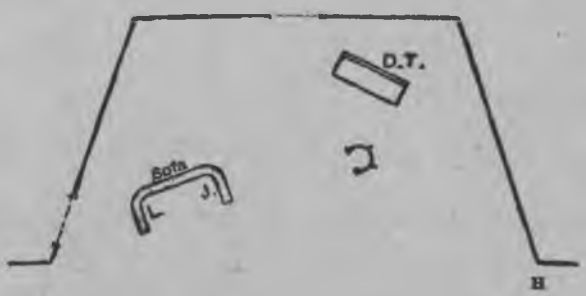
(MARY *rises.*)

RITA (*rising*). I must be off, Mary—if he should come up he'll want to know why I was not there at lunch, and——

MAID (*re-entering*). Lord Silchester is on his way up, miss.

MARY. Good Heavens! Watch out and tell me when the lift is up. I'm so sorry, dear. (*Moves* R.) I know you don't want to meet him. (*Kiss.*) There, (*passing* R. *in front and across her, towards door* L.) through my room you'll find the staircase.

(*Exit* RITA.)



NOTES

First tackle " The Rivals " scene, and when you have that mechanically correct, leave it and do the modern version. The mechanics are exactly the same. Play it perfectly naturally, lightly and at a good speed. Do not leave it until you can play it without a fault and at a lively pace.

Now go back to " The Rivals " and put the same spirit into it. Go for it boldly.

These eighteenth-century comedies must be played with breadth, graciousness and humour. Remember, while rehearsing, that the dresses will be voluminous. Carry yourself well; make all your movements clearly defined and graceful. This is a perfectly natural little scene. Play it as such, even though the manner in which it is expressed is a little different from our own.

FURTHER STUDY

" Macbeth," Act I, Sc. 6.

XI. MORE DIFFICULT EXERCISES FOR THE VOICE

Topping the Noise of a Crowd.

(*Guests at long table, laughing, at festive dinner.*)

(*Enter* A.)

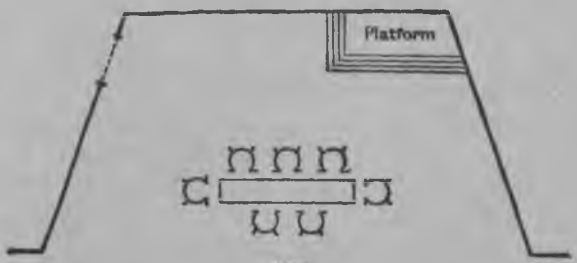
A. Listen, listen, I say! (*Noise continues. He pushes past and mounts platform up stage.*) We're all ruined, do you hear?

(*Derisive laughter.*)

If you don't believe me, the Colonel will tell you when he comes. (*Laughter, which sinks low while he speaks, bursts forth anew.*)

A. (*at top of his voice, over loud laughter*). The *Bank has failed*, I tell you!

(*Silence.*)



NOTES

For crowd, see p. 105 on Sotto Voce.

A. Gather your force each time before you speak. Hold yourself erect, fill your lungs, and fling your voice out over the noise.

You must keep dignity if you are to dominate, so do not shout at them uncontrolledly. Bear them down by the driving power of your voice. (See pp. 13 and 16.)

FURTHER STUDY

Forum Scene, "Julius Cæsar," Act III, Sc. 2.
End of "The Old King's Last Battle" (p. 60).

Whispering.

A., *wounded and bound, leans against the wall,* L. *of fireplace* C. *back. It is dark.* B. *enters down* L., *feels her way across the stage, breathing as one who has run in fear.*

B. (R.C.). John, John, where are you?

(A. *groans.*)

(*Turns towards* A., *bumps into table in the dark.*) Ah! You're hurt!

A. Who is that?

B. It is I, Madeline—I'm trying to find you in the dark. (*With a sob. Feels her way round behind table.*) Where are you?

A. Over here, by the fireplace.

B. (*feeling her way to him*). Oh, John! (*Using more voice.*) Thank God I've found you in time!

A. Hsh! The very walls have ears in this devilish place.

(*All this is whispered.*)

NOTES

The sound will only have carrying power if there is plenty of breath behind it and all words are very clearly articulated by lips, teeth and tongue. You need a little vocal sound behind the whisper.

MADELINE. Try to represent the movements of one in an almost pitch-dark room fumbling and agitated.

Sotto Voce.

Scene outside an Hotel. A., B. *and* C. *at table* L. *Others at table* R. *drinking and talking.*

A. (*rises, her voice is loud and bright*). Then you'll turn up about half-past eight?

B. (*suave. Rises, goes up to door* C. *back, opens it for* A. *Stands* R. *of door.*) Without fail. It is so good of you to ask me.

A. You *are* a saint, Jim. (*Exit, laughing.*)

B. (*strolling back to table*). Far from it, believe me. (*Sits.*)

C. (*sitting* L. *of table, sotto voce*). You got my message?

B. (*sotto voce*). I did.

C. Can you get the stuff this evening?

(*Enter* WAITER *up* L. *to table* L.)

B. With any luck. (*Raising voice.*) Two coffees, please.

WAITER. Yes, sir. (*Exit.*)

C. (*sotto voce*). What time shall I meet you?

B. Eleven o'clock, with the car.

(*Enter* PAPER-BOY *calling late edition.*)

C. Of course. (*Aloud.*) Here, paper!

(Boy *gives paper, then crosses to table* R.)

B. (*hissing*). Look out! (*Quietly.*) Radcliffe coming up behind you.

NOTES

The sotto-voce lines are to be spoken in a quiet, flat tone, with plenty of breath to drive the sound. Sit still, and play as conspirators who are aware they may be watched. Change tone and manner to casual, on approach of waiter and news-boy.

A. Your line opens the scene. Throw it up well.

Group at table R. When you have a group of people making a background of talk and laughter, they must all keep their voices low, laugh very lightly, but articulate real words. A blurred sound of "er-er" can never seem like conversation. If words fail you, say the numbers or the alphabet, quietly enough for no individual voice to stand out.

Dialect.

Second Victorian Scene

Maggie and John (Scotch Maid and Gardener).

(Scene Plot on page 99.)

The Scene is the Parlour of Miss Lucy Travers. *Date,* 1840. *Time, early morning.*

John (*standing in doorway* R., *a vegetable-basket on his* R. *arm*). Maggie, you there? I've brought they beans. May I come in?

Maggie (*blowing dust from mantelpiece*). So be you've wiped your boots.

JOHN (*entering*). That I have. (*Puts basket on chair* R.) How be Miss Lucy to-day?

MAGGIE. But so-so, poor lamb. (*Bunching sofa cushions.*)

JOHN. Maybe she's fretting about the Captain. She was rare fond of him, I suppose?

MAGGIE (*crossing behind sofa to* JOHN). Don't you go supposing no supposings—I'll not have my Miss Lucy made a subject for idle chatter in the village.

JOHN. But, Maggie, who said . . .

MAGGIE (*crossing to below head of sofa* L.). Here, give me a hand with the sofa.

JOHN (*following her to foot of sofa*). But, Maggie . . .

MAGGIE (*without looking up, arranges shawl on sofa*). Oh, be off with you!

JOHN (*turns, picks up basket and trails towards door*). You're hard on a chap, Maggie.

MAGGIE. Now then, where be you taking my beans?

JOHN (*turning doubtfully*). I thought to shred them for you in the kitchen.

MAGGIE (*crosses to him, relenting*). There, there, I never meant for to snap at you, but you be an aggravating fellow, John.

JOHN (*meekly*). I'm sorry, Maggie.

MAGGIE (*shaking his arm a little*). Oh—get along with you, John. (*She bundles him off, and follows.*)

NOTES

This is a study in characterization and dialect.

MAGGIE is a kindly, practical soul. She is fond of John, but devoted to Miss Lucy. She busies herself about the room all the time, excepting during the two speeches

when she crosses to John, first to scold him, and then to cheer him.

JOHN is slow-moving, gentle and shy. He adores Maggie.

MAGGIE. Do not bend forward when you come to talk to John.

XII. SYMPATHETIC ACTING

EXERCISE I. HOPE DEFERRED.

Scene: Two old people. A. *is restless, and shows his anxiety in every movement and expression.* B. *is placidly affectionate, sits with hands in lap calmly, throughout scene. Only once raising herself to sit straight up in her chair* (*on the word—"listen"!*)

A. (*stares ahead. Looks at clock on mantelpiece. Compares with own watch. Listens to tick of watch. Replaces it. Fidgets fingers for a moment*). Jane, Jane, ye doan think 'e've missed the two-forty-four.

B. Doan you worry, Sam, he'll be 'ere in a minute. Give the lad a chance.

A. (*rises, wanders* R.). It's not like Fred to be late. (*Up to window, uneasy, looks out. Turns to* JANE *and comes down to above chair.*) 'E *did* say the two-forty-four, Jane, didn't 'e?

B. The letter's on the mantelpiece.

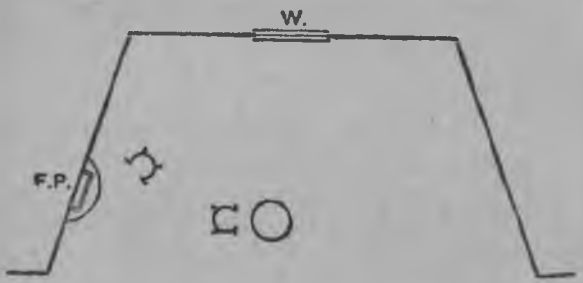
A. (*half stretches out hand for it, then drops it*). A know, A know. (*Wanders below table to* R.) But somehow, I can't 'elp 'avin' a feelin'—Listen!

Their eyes meet. At word "'elp" steps outside start, louden, then fade away. They listen tensely. B. *sits up after* "Listen!"

(*As steps die away* A.'s *whole figure droops with disappointment.*)

B. (*gently*). Sit down, Sam, you're getting all of a fuss for nothing.

A. (*not moving*). Suppose 'e—suppose—— (*Sighs, then moves to chair*). Ah, well—maybe you're right. (*Sits.*)



NOTES

In impersonating old people, do not exaggerate. Do not make a man of 70 doddering and senile. Stand a little less than straight, and move as if there was some stiffness in all joints. Do not make them be unnecessarily melancholy. Rub a little harshness into the voice, but keep it virile and alive. Move and speak with rather more deliberation than in youth. But do not depend on any exterior mannerism. Feel sympathetically, and try to believe yourself to *be* the old man or woman for the moment. The characters may be male or female.

Think before you speak.

Exercise 2. The Home Tyrant.

Amyas (R. *of table* C., *speaking thickly*). Hark 'ee, Madam, I'll have no more of "*dear* Cousin Rowland."

Beatrice (*sitting* L. *of table*). What do you mean, Amyas?

Amyas. Mean? Ha-ha! You think I'm a fool.

But you're wrong. I'm master in me own house, d'you hear. (*Bangs fist on table.*)

BEATRICE (*rises*). Are you crazed—what do you suspect ?

(*Enter* CONSTANCE L.)

CONSTANCE (*gaily*). Mother, come quickly—here's such a surprise—— (*Breaks off, lays* L. *hand on* BEATRICE'S *wrist.*)

BEATRICE (*turning to her, places her right hand over* CONSTANCE'S L.). Not now, dearest.

CONSTANCE. But, Mother, 'tis Cousin Rowland.

BEATRICE (*draws herself up a little. Faces front. Drops right hand*). Later—I will come. Leave us now, dear.

(CONSTANCE *draws away a little, puzzled.*)

AMYAS. I will see to Cousin Rowland myself. (*Striding out.*)

CONSTANCE. He is in Mother's boudoir, Father—— (*Begins to follow him.*)

BEATRICE. Constance !

CONSTANCE. Yes, Mother ?

BEATRICE. Stay with me. (*Sinks in chair.*) I—— I——

CONSTANCE (*running to her*). Mother !

NOTES

Amyas is slightly drunk. Play the scene with verve. There should be a slight pause after Constance breaks off at " surprise." She sensing trouble, they controlling their anger. Another expressive pause after "'tis Cousin Rowland." Let there be no shifting of feet except when definite crosses are made.

EXERCISE 3. CAT AND MOUSE.

A. *is malicious and suave.* B. *is inexperienced, and uncomfortable.* B. *looks straight in front of her till the last line.* A. *glances at* B. *from time to time, with a faint, unpleasant smile.*

A. (*seated behind and at* R. *of* B.'s *arm-chair, leaning one arm on the back of* B.'s *chair*). So you went and lived in the same lodging-house as Mr. Tesmann?

B. Yes.

A. You were not afraid . . . of what people might say of you?

B. I was Mr. Tesmann's secretary. It was absolutely necessary that I should be on the spot——

A. Of course. Of course.

B. We were often obliged to work late into the night——

A. Oh, yes (*bland*). I have no doubt.

B. (*floundering*). Of course it is impossible for you to realize how difficult it is——

A. Oh, no. Very difficult, of course.

B. You cannot—(*rises and faces* A.) Mr. / Mrs. Schönberg—You are surely not accusing me of——

A. (*breaking in with a laugh, leaning back*). Ha, ha! —Oh, dear me, how easily you blush! Are you angry with me? I haven't said a word!

NOTES

This is an exercise in facial control. The minds of both are shown in their faces.

A., knowing B. cannot see him, does not disguise his contemptuous dislike, nor the pleasure he derives from tormenting B. A.'s personality dominates B.'s. There

is faint insinuation behind everything A. says. He speaks with a slight drawl.

B. is too naïve to hide her feelings. All her thoughts flash across her face, as she sits looking straight before her.

EXERCISE 4. THE HANDKERCHIEF.

LESLIE, *strong, dominating the scene, never moves while he speaks.* FLORENCE, *nervous, trying to appear casual, always makes her moves while she speaks.*

LESLIE (*enters, shuts door, comes down* C. *to* L. *end of sofa*). Florence, there is something we must talk about.

(FLORENCE *grabs bag and gloves and rises, meaning to escape.* LESLIE'S *voice stops her.*)

Something that needs an explanation.

FLORENCE (*going up* C. *and to door*). Not now, Leslie—I'm just going out.

LESLIE (*gets to the door before* FLORENCE, *and faces her, back to it*). I'm afraid you must wait.

FLORENCE (*coming down to back of sofa, throws gloves and bag on sofa*). Don't be so tiresome.

LESLIE (*near door still*). It's serious, Florence.

FLORENCE (*sighs, goes round end of sofa and sits*). Well?

(LESLIE *comes* C., *holds her with his eyes. She laughs nervously.*)

Oh, *do* hurry up!

LESLIE (*pauses, watching her. Makes up his mind, goes to writing-table, opens drawer, lays blood-stained handkerchief on table*). Do you know anything about this?

FLORENCE. That? What is it?

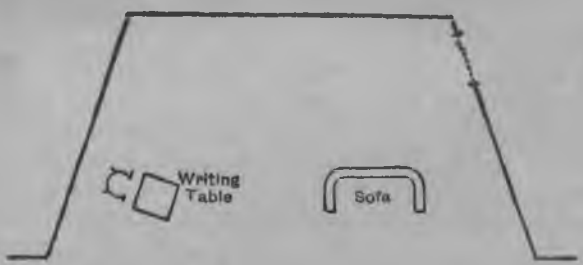
LESLIE (*behind table*). It was found at Villiers' flat. (*To end of sofa.*) Your handkerchief.

FLORENCE (*springing to feet*). What nonsense! (*Crosses to table, picks up handkerchief, drops it again. Turns to* LESLIE.) And if it is—what then? You don't suppose I had anything to do with Villiers' ridiculous duel, do you?

LESLIE. It appears you don't realize——

FLORENCE (*breaking in, moves quickly to sofa, picks up bag, etc., goes round far end of sofa towards door as she speaks*). Oh, do stop! You do bore me so! I'm going.

LESLIE (*not moving, but imperative*). No! This is not a matter you can put aside lightly. You must hear what I have to say.



NOTES

Follow the directions exactly and in order. Florence speaks quicker than Leslie.

There must be no fidgeting movements from either. The scene is very clear-cut and definite, both in the lines and pauses.

FLORENCE. "Villiers' ridiculous duel" is difficult to say. Practise the words over and over again till you can speak them perfectly clearly and rapidly.

The characters can be male or female.

EXERCISE 5. FOURTH VICTORIAN SCENE.

EMILY FIRES UP

(Scene Plot on page 99.)

PRISCILLA (*calling gaily outside french window,* L.). Cousin Lucy, Cousin Lucy! (*Enters.*) Oh, bother! (*Sits on sofa, takes off hat, puts it and riding-switch on sofa. Shows boredom and impatience. Rises, goes to writing-table, and pries into everything. Opens drawers. Finds a letter.*) Oh-ho! (*Takes letter up to window, stands reading, back to room.*)

EMILY *enters, stands watching* PRISCILLA. PRISCILLA *turns, hiding letter behind her back.*

PRISCILLA (*lightly*). Emily, dearest—you do look surprised to see me here. (*Laughs.*)

EMILY (LUCY'S *shawl, books, etc., in her arms: speaks coldly*). Indeed, I am surprised.

PRISCILLA. I rode over to see my dear cousin.

EMILY. Miss Travers has not yet come downstairs.

PRISCILLA (*sitting on sofa*). I'm in no hurry. Do inform her that I am here, like a good, kind girl.

EMILY (*lays shawl and books on end of sofa. Stands beside* PRISCILLA). What is that letter?

PRISCILLA. Letter? Oh, this, (*showing letter*) this is a *billet-doux.* (*Laughs and tucks it in her dress.*)

EMILY. Give it to me!

PRISCILLA (*raising her eyebrows*). My dear Emily, give you my love-letter!

EMILY (*blazing*). How dare you lie to me like that! I saw you take the letter from Miss Travers' desk.

PRISCILLA (*rises, laughing nervously*). You are talking the craziest nonsense. This letter——

EMILY (*breaking in*). —is from Captain Stacey to Miss Travers.

PRISCILLA (*face to face*). How do you know?

EMILY. Because I saw her put it there. Put it back, do you hear!

PRISCILLA. I shall do nothing of the sort.

EMILY (*with a look towards door*). Here she comes (*urgently*). Do you want her to know that you have been prying into her private affairs?

PRISCILLA. My dear girl, I picked this letter up off the floor.

EMILY. That's a lie!

PRISCILLA (*thrusting her chin out*). Is it? (*Sees* LUCY, *and runs to embrace her.*) Oh, my dear Cousin Lucy!

NOTES

This scene must be neatly dovetailed by the two actresses. They must play in close sympathy, and keep the emotions of the scene strong and clear all the time. Only move when they mean something by it. Every glance or turn of Priscilla's head must be significant. Emily is very still and quiet, white hot with indignation.

XIII. MORE DIFFICULT SCENES

Exercise 1. Third Victorian Scene.

The Visit

(Scene Plot on page 99.)

Lucy *lies on sofa.* Emily *is seated on stool below sofa reading Tennyson's poems aloud.* Lucy *sews.*

Lucy (*interrupting*). Emily! Hark!—Surely that was the front-door bell. Oh, I do hope that Maggie will say that I am asleep, and unable to receive visitors.

Emily (*closes book and runs up to window* c. *back*). Oh, Lucy, there is a barouche at the door, and the loveliest lady descending from it. The footman is handing her down.

Lucy. Who can it be? Emily, quick, hide away my needlework. Is my hair tidy?

Emily (*kissing her forehead*). Yes, dearest, you look beautiful.

Maggie (*enters* r., *highly excited*). I've brought visitors to see you, Miss Lucy. I knew full well you'd be eager to see them—'tis your own brother's girlie and her gentleman, my pet. (*Back to door.*) Will you be kind enough to step this way, missie.

Enter Priscilla *cross to above sofa,* Mr. Bowes *follows, stands down* r. Emily l.

Priscilla (*gushing*). My dear, dear Cousin Lucy! What a joy to see you. We were driving through the

village, and I could not resist giving myself the pleasure of calling on you.

LUCY (*a little overwhelmed*). Priscilla, dear——

PRISCILLA. But, my poor darling, how sad to see you so pale, so ill, so different from the gay Cousin Lucy of last year.

LUCY. It was good of you to call and see me, and to bring—this gentleman.

PRISCILLA (*suddenly recollecting, crosses down to him*). Oh, this is my dearest Mr. Bowes. James, let me present you to my cousin, Miss Lucy Travers.

MR. BOWES (*to sofa; takes* LUCY'S *hand, and bows over it*). Delighted, charmed to make the acquaintance of one so near and dear to my future wife.

PRISCILLA (*above sofa, takes his left hand*). You must give us your congratulations.

LUCY. Oh, I do, my dears—indeed, I wish you may be very happy.

PRISCILLA *sits on window-seat.* EMILY *at writing-table.*

MR. BOWES. Too good of you. I am indeed a fortunate fellow.

LUCY. Pray sit down. It is a rare treat for me to have visitors.

MAGGIE *brings chair from* R. *for* MR. BOWES, *who sits.* MAGGIE *stands beaming.*

Maggie, that will do, thank you. (MAGGIE *still beams.*) Maggie—you may go.

(*Exit* MAGGIE, *reluctantly.*)

PRISCILLA (*eagerly*). Oh, Cousin Lucy, we are dying of curiosity to hear more about that dreadful Captain Stacey. (EMILY *gives quick look from* PRISCILLA *to*

LUCY.) Is it true that he embezzled money, and is fleeing from justice at this very moment?

EMILY. What nonsense are you talking, Priscilla.

PRISCILLA (*crossly*). Oh, indeed. Is that all you know about it? Let me tell you——

LUCY (*breaks in gently, but firmly*). Please, please do not let us waste this charming visit in fruitless, and perhaps painful argument.

NOTES

Try to capture the atmosphere of the early Victorian years. Speak quite naturally, and smoothly, and at a fair pace. Avoid jerkiness. Remember that a simple graciousness and elegance pervaded the lives of these people. Priscilla, of course, is an affected minx, and Mr. Bowes pompous and mannered (but still human).

PRISCILLA should make a sweeping entrance, speaking as she comes right up to C. back of sofa. She swoops down to Mr. Bowes' side, then stands R. end of sofa, till she sits on window-seat.

EMILY sits on chair at writing-table. She is gentle but strong.

MR. BOWES carries gold-topped stick, hat and gloves. He transfers hat from right to left hand as he advances to Miss Lucy. Places hat on floor beside chair when he sits.

All the ladies must carry themselves erect. Otherwise they cannot manage their crinolines. Sit straight. Think of the boned bodices.

EXERCISE 2. DIGNITY.

Scene: The Terrace at Windsor. Seat up L. *faces front.*

QUEEN VICTORIA *and* LORD BEACONSFIELD *confer in the sunshine on the terrace. They stroll from* R. *to* L.

BEACONSFIELD (*walking beside the* QUEEN). Indeed, Ma'am, I am afraid the situation *is* grave, for the moment.

QUEEN (*stopping* L.). When did you promise the deputation your answer?

BEACONSFIELD. On Tuesday next—— (*They start moving* L. *to* R.) But I doubt if I shall see my way clearer by then.

QUEEN. The riots at Bristol have been graver than the papers have dared to tell. (*Turns and paces back, deep in thought. He follows her.*)

BEACONSFIELD. Yes—yes. (*The* QUEEN *sits on seat* L., *he stands beside her* R.) Still, Ma'am (*with a smile and gesture of the hand*), I think the honourable member will make himself heard very soon.

QUEEN. I have every confidence, both in his courage and his good sense.

BEACONSFIELD. And his personal charm—a valuable asset, just now.

QUEEN. I shall see you to-morrow, then, Lord Beaconsfield.

BEACONSFIELD (*bowing*). Without fail, Ma'am.

Bow again, take two backward steps, turn and exit R.

NOTES

You can only convey the idea of dignity by use of your imagination, not by any assumption of pomposity or external mannerism. Try to play this little scene as naturally as possible, remembering that these are great personalities, accustomed to dominate. Stroll gently up and down, enjoying the sunshine. The Queen taking the lead at the turns.

The Queen is grave and thoughtful. Beaconsfield a little whimsical, endeavouring to lighten her anxiety.

EXERCISE 3. FOUL PLAY.

Sofa down C. *on which a man lies. Head* L. *end, face downwards, head and right arm hang limply over the edge of sofa.* F.P. L., *chair above it, table* C. *back. Body concealed from door up* R. *by back of sofa.*

(*Enter* MAID *followed by* VISITOR.)

MAID. I can't understand how it is Mr. Traill's not back yet, Miss.

VISITOR. Oh, I expect he'll be here in a minute. (*Crosses to table, lays down bag, goes to* F.P. *while speaking.*)

(*Exit* MAID. VISITOR *drifts down towards sofa, sees body, stops.*)

(*In horror.*) Max! (*She moves swiftly to below sofa, lifts head, recoils. Sees scrap of paper by her feet, snatches it up, reads. Face registers comprehension and fear. Hides paper in dress, lifts* MAX *on to the sofa, arranging body as though he were asleep. Rings bell above* F.P. *Moves* C. *behind sofa. Waits in nervous tension.*)

(*Enter* MAID.)

Lucy, you made a mistake—your Master is asleep on the sofa—look!

MAID. Well I never! Fancy now—shall I wake him, Miss?

VISITOR. Oh no, don't do that—I expect he's tired. I'll ring up later. (*Crosses to door while speaking.*)

MAID. Very good, Miss. (*Follows* VISITOR *out.*)

(MAID *returns, stands hesitating near right end of sofa.*)

MAID. Mr. Traill . . . Sir . . . (*Comes nearer to head end of sofa, touches his arm shyly, peers closely at face. Gives a long cry of terror.*)

NOTES

Grip the scene firmly from start to finish. Hold it through the silent acting as well as through the lines. Express each thought and emotion fully in face and bearing: one at a time.

VISITOR. Make each cross one definite and purposeful action, walking rather swiftly. When you go to raise up the corpse, stand by lower part of the body, so that you do not hide head and shoulders from any part of the audience.

MAID. Take the first part of the scene lightly, show no apprehension till after "Sir." After touching Max, let the truth dawn slowly. Do not scream till the feeling of terror fills your mind.

EXERCISE 4. FARCE.

The Scene is a seaside parade, there is a hexagonal shelter C., *of which three sides can be seen. A windy summer morning. Behind the parade is a row of Private Hotels.*

BOOT-BOY (*sits* R. *side of shelter, bent forward over his knees reading a paper book. He straightens, licks thumb to turn over, looks up. Sees* MURIEL, *a young servant girl, who is walking along parade from* L. *to* R.). Hi! Muriel!

MURIEL (*she is* R. *corner. Turns and looks at* BOOTS). Eh?

BOOTS. Wanter show yer suffin.

MURIEL (*approaching leisurely*). Watcher doing aht ere, eh?

BOOTS. Waj yer doon yerself, sfars that goes?

They spar together quietly, while the Lady with the Pomeranian—(dog not seen)—enters R. *and crosses the stage. She leans forward as she walks, balancing*

her hat against the wind. She peers as she goes, calling "Fritz-ee, Fritz-ee," *and stops* L.C. *to perpetrate an unsuccessful whistle. She then goes off* L.

MURIEL. Ooh—I'm fed up. She's run out of porridge for the lodgers and sent me out to get some.

BOOTS (*stretching*). I'm gettin' "The Times" for an ole josser.

MURIEL. Oh!

BOOTS. Oh, y'know that tale I was tellin' yer about Satday?

MURIEL. Mm.

BOOTS. Well, it's like I said; you see 'ere.

MURIEL (*catching at strand of hair*). Oh, the wind!

BOOTS (*turning over pages*). Arfa mo.

(*Lady looking for dog, enters* L. *She has spied the dog off* R., *devouring succulent cod's head. She hurries rather flat-footed, in pursuit, calling*—"Fritz-ee, aaugh! Dirty! Put down that nasty cod's head. Augh, bad dog. Fritz-ee!" *and vanishes* R. *As she goes she passes the* MAJOR *and* MISS WILLING *coming on* R.)

MAJOR. So I said, "damned if I could"—ha, ha, ha!

MISS WILLING (*giggling*). How frightfully funny.

MAJOR (*stops* L.C. *and throws out his chest*). By Jove, what a morning! (*Breathes deeply.*) Grand, eh? Makes you feel a young man.

MISS WILLING (*catching the enthusiasm*). Yes, doesn't it! (*They lean elbows on rail and gaze out to sea.*)

(*Elderly trippers enter* L. *just before this.*)

HEMMA. It's no good, 'Arold, I can't 'elp it. Me

feet ache and I'm going to sit down. What you want to get up so early for I don't know. (*They sit* C.)

'AROLD. I can't catch shrimps only when the tide's low, can I?

HEMMA. But the tide 'asn't gone down yet.

'AROLD. Well, I can sit and watch it go, can't I?

HEMMA (*wearily*). If this is 'olidays, give me 'ome. What with the wind, and asphalt, and a baby next door 'owlin' all night.

'AROLD. Oh, do try to look at the bright side, Hemma. (*Gets out pipe and strives to light it. Then removes shoes and socks during next dialogue.*)

(*Lady with pom darts on, stands* R.C., *raises left arm, gazing off* L.U.) "Haugh! Haugh! Fritzee! Please don't threaten him with your umbrella—it makes him so angry. Fritzee! It's all right, sir, don't be afraid, he can't bite, he's lost his teeth. Fritzee, *Fritzee*, leave the gentleman alone." (*Runs off* L.)

MAJOR. Well, what about this shelter. (*They stroll up and sit* L.) Or have you still to wrestle with the merry bacon and eggs?

MISS WILLING (*wincing*). I never touch breakfast. I'm on a diet.

MAJOR. Good gracious me, what for? Are you ill?

MISS WILLING. Oh, no, but I'm afraid of getting fat.

MAJOR. Fat? (*With a critical glance.*) But—oh well, I suppose you know best.

MISS WILLING. The family eats porridge every morning. I come out here so as not to have to hear it. I suppose it must be over by now, so I'd better go in and find out what the ploy is for this morning. (*Rises.*)

MAJOR. Ah, well, (*rises*) and my " Times " is waiting for me—" chacun à son goût " (*waving hand airily*).

(*They part. He goes* R. *and she* L.)

MURIEL. Sure you can spare it? (*They have been reading.*)

BOOTS. Yep. See yer Satday.

MURIEL. Rightee-oh. (*Saunters off* R. *looking at book.*)

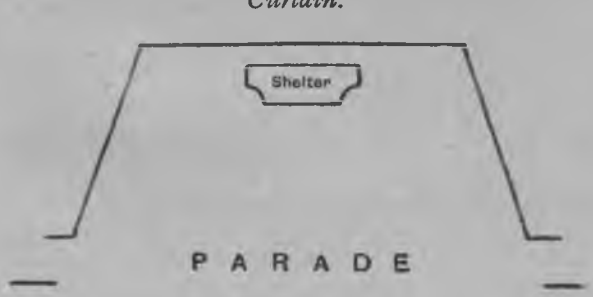
BOOTS. So long. (*He strides off* L., *hands in pockets.*)

'AROLD. Best leave me plimsolls 'ere. Don' let nobody pinch 'em, Hemma. (*Picks up paper bag and shrimping net. Peers at* HEMMA *and finds her to be asleep.*) Oh, well—Forward the Light Brigade. (*He steps gingerly down and off* R.)

(HEMMA *sleeps on.*)

(*Lady, followed by aged dog in a plaid overcoat, enters* L. *and stalks majestically across and off.*)

Curtain.



NOTES

Put plenty of life and pace into this. Play each character for all it is worth. Let there be no pauses between the appearance of the different people. Each new-comer enters *on*, not *after* the last word of his cue. Muriel's " Ooh, I'm fed up " comes *as* the lady with the dog goes off.

Use any dialect you can manage convincingly.

This kind of scene allows for a good deal of individual comedy. See what you can make of it. Think out what you can do with the parts, and, with the permission and advice of whoever is in charge of the scene, try out various ideas, and choose whatever seems most effective and amusing. Do not overload the lines with "business," or you will kill the effect. You will not see the wood for the trees—— Select the best and most direct comic effects, and eliminate any lesser ones that may encroach on them. Remember the advice on page 25. Do not go beyond the bounds of human probability.

When you are not the centre of interest, subdue your personality and fade into the background.

Get the mechanics of the scene, timing, overlapping, etc., absolutely clear before you begin to let it rip.

Further Study

I. "As You Like It," Act III, Sc. 2. Rosalind and Orlando, starting at "I will speak to him like a saucy lackey."

II. "The Rivals," Act V, Sc. 1. Lydia and Julia.

III. "Twelfth Night," Act II, Sc. 3. Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Feste, Maria.

Exercise 5. Fifth Victorian Scene.

Straightening Things Out

(Scene Plot on page 99.)

(Lucy *seated left end of sofa.* Stacey *seated chair down* L. *This picks up the end of a scene between the two.*)

Lucy (*staring before her, hands in lap*). And that is how it was. You went away rather than let your friend lose his post.

STACEY (*rising, going up to window*). It meant everything in the world to him. (*Looks out of window.*) So you see, Miss Lucy, I was obliged to leave Milchester, with no word of farewell or explanation, (*turns to her*) even to my dearest friend. (*Wanders to window* R. *as he speaks next lines.*) I hoped, nay, believed, they could not think so ill of me as to suppose I had a guilty reason for my departure, (*turns, facing down stage*) but I find some mischief-maker has been at work.

LUCY. What has led you to believe such a thing?

STACEY (*down to table* L., *plays idly with paper-knife*). The coldness of my reception among my acquaintances. (*Short laugh.*) I had not a sufficiently high opinion of myself to feel injured by their slights, but taken in conjunction with——

LUCY (*pause*). With what, Captain Stacey?

STACEY. With your silence throughout the months I have been away, I realize that I am shunned by—by *all* here, as an unconvicted criminal.

LUCY (*deeply moved*). How could I know you wished me to write to you?

STACEY (*at left end of sofa*). When my third letter remained unanswered, I knew that even you had believed me guilty.

LUCY. Letter? You wrote to me?

STACEY. Three times—as you must surely know.

LUCY (*greatly distressed*). Oh no—no—— Your letters have never reached me!

STACEY. Not reached you? (*Sits beside* LUCY.) I knew you were away from home and staying with your cousin——

LUCY (*very low*). Priscilla!

STACEY. Yes, Miss Priscilla and her sisters. But I presumed all your correspondence would be forwarded to you.

LUCY. It was.

STACEY. And yet you never received my letters?

LUCY. No. Someone—intercepted them.

STACEY (*rising*). Then the mischief goes deeper than I suspected.

LUCY (*whispering, her head averted*). Priscilla, Priscilla, all the time. (*Rise, cross* R. *restlessly, turn to* STACEY). Charles—— (*Holds out letter.*) This, this is a letter of yours. I kept it in a drawer in my writing-desk, here. (*Goes across to desk.*) Priscilla told me she found it on the floor—she gave it back to me this morning.

STACEY. What letter was it, Lucy?

LUCY (*her back to* STACEY). It was the last one you wrote me before you went away. It told me that you loved me, asked me to marry you. Said you were calling the next day to see me; but you never came.

STACEY. My dear one, now you understand why——

LUCY (*turns to face him*). Oh, yes! How can I ever forgive myself!

STACEY. Only one thing can matter now—I must have my answer. I love you with all my heart and soul.

LUCY. As I love you.

STACEY. And you will let me take care of you always. Lucy—Lucy?

LUCY *stretches both hands to him. They embrace.*

NOTES

Play this scene with perfect sincerity and real feeling. STACEY moves restlessly through his first two speeches. Do not let this be merely aimless wandering. Stacey definitely goes first to the window at back, then to the

other, then to the writing-table, but it is not a meandering, but the expression of suppressed emotion.

LUCY must guard against overdoing facial expression. She should listen with sympathy to all that is said to her and react with quiet intensity of feeling.

To develop characterization, practise the Five Victorian Scenes (pp. 98, 106, 115, 117 and 126) in succession. Note that "THE VISIT" precedes "EMILY FIRES UP."

FURTHER STUDY

"The Rivals," Act I, Sc. 2.
"Richard II," Act III, Sc. 4; Act IV, Sc. 1 (Richard's entrance).
"Merry Wives of Windsor," Act II, Sc. 1 (Mrs. Page and Mrs. Ford); Act III, Sc. 3.
"Othello," Act IV, Sc. 3; Act V, Sc. 2.
"Antony and Cleopatra," Act II, Sc. 4; Act IV, Sc. 13.
"Taming of the Shrew," Act IV, Sc. 3.

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