

The Use of Conversation in the English Novel

by Bertha B. Schafer

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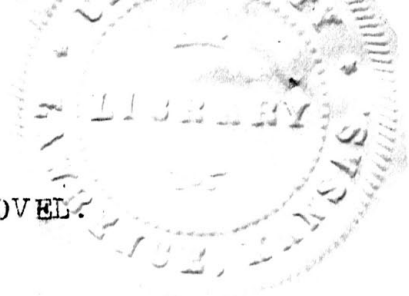
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THE USE OF CONVERSATION IN THE ENGLISH NOVEL.

Chapter I

"Lo, the poor Indian" of the newspaper jokes, who is so niggardly in his use of words, and who expresses all his emotions with a guttural "huh," is not altogether an imaginary creation. As a matter of fact Indians talk very little. Indian children in the mission schools will sit in straight rows on the ground for hours on the sunny side of a building, blinking at each other in contented silence, - and this on their half-holiday, the only time during the week when they are allowed to speak their native tongue. While this may be to a certain extent the manifestation of the peculiar temperament of the American Indian, it must be, I think, a general characteristic of the childhood of a race. History indicates this, especially the history of language. Time was when the English language numbered only words. As civilization advanced new things, new emotions demanded new words and these the ingenuity of man has never been at a loss to supply, until now we have words for everything and to spare. Speech, with us, long ago ceased to be merely a necessary means of communication, and became an art, and a pastime as well. The American or European of the nineteenth century is undoubtedly a conversational animal, and talks, for talk's sake.

But the immediate tendency of our present generation, in America at least, is toward economy in the matter of words. We condense,

we abbreviate; in fact we speak more in terse, if disjointed phrases than in sentences. Is our hybrid civilization reverting to the original stock? The cause is without doubt, in the main, the economizing of time and effort; the result, we can scarcely conjecture. Mr. Allon McLane Hamilton discusses, in the March Century, some of the conversational peculiarities of our society up-to-date. He says: "If it were possible to report exactly the verbal intercourse of a small community, say for a day, and afterward to tabulate the different words and calculate their number, the result would probably be most curious, in showing not only the paucity of forms of expression, but the general intellectual atony which exists, except in a very limited direction. . . . It is to be deplored that in this country, as well as elsewhere, there is such a difference of character between the written thought and the conversation."

If such an experiment as Mr. Hamilton describes has ever been performed, the result - and that result would be exceedingly interesting from other points of view than that of Mr. Hamilton, - the result has not been given to the public. But I cannot help thinking Mr. Henry James has approximated this result in some of his novels. It would be entirely in accord with Mr. James's avowed methods to suppose that some of the conversations he gives us are tabulations from actual experience; certainly they indicate a state of "intellectual atony" on the part of his characters, and produce a like effect upon the minds of his readers. Page after page of "The Portrait of a Lady" is given up to a skillful adjustment of spacing and quotation marks. I noticed the other day in reading

"The Princess Casam^aosima" that single quotation marks were used throughout to enclose the speeches of the different characters, and wondered if the printer had adopted this device ^{to make} for making his stock of marks hold out. Many people, most people I think, find Mr. James's novels, so charming in many respects, so skillful in vivid, highlight description, rather tiresome in the matter of conversation. His characters talk so much and often so meaninglessly. Yet the most carping critic can scarcely claim that these conversations are overdone from the standpoint of real life. No tired passenger in the railway train, no good-natured observer of a chance meeting of acquaintances in a streetcar, no bored participator in social gatherings, in short no one who philosophizes at all, ^{of} cynically or otherwise about the sayings and doings of men, but will bear witness that people do talk more and more meaninglessly than Mr. James makes them do in his books. Realistic it certainly is, but to most readers it is undoubtedly tiresome. And this brings us to the question of how, - how far, - how much the novelist may use conversation as a means of developing his story.

It would be most interesting for our purpose if we could go away ~~back~~ back to Anglo-Saxon England and compare the conversation of our pre-historic ancestors with the carefully recorded statistics of Mr. James and his school. But there was no Mr. James to tabulate Beowulf and Caedmon, Piers Plowman, or even Chaucer and Spencer. The everyday manners and customs of a people do not crystallize into literature, and particularly into the novel, until men and manners become more artificial and more like our own time.

The first book printed in England which bears any relation

to our novel of the present day was Sir Thomas Mallory's "Morte d'Arthur" published in 1485, an Anglicized version of the Arthurian legends from the French; the story of Arthur and his knights of the Table Round, and a sort of deathbed revival of the romance of chivalry. It possesses but little unity of plot, but in style it is simple, strong, straight forward and wonderfully charming prose. As it is above all a novel of adventure, and as the adventures are absolutely unlimited, conversation if conversation it may be called, plays a very insignificant part in the story. The characters speak only when they have something to say that must be said. The speeches are generally brief, and usually quite to the point. Not the slightest attempt is made to individualize the different characters in their conversation, or even to suit the speech to the speaker. Kings, queens, knights, ladies, squire~~s~~, churls, and scullery-maids all speak the same vernacular. Every speech is introduced by "said he," "he said," "said she," with seldom an indication of the motive or manner of saying it or any phrase of description. In general the author seems to use conversation, or rather the speeches of his characters, as pegs on which to hang the tissue of his story

"And as soon as it was daylight the king arose for he had taken no rest all of that night for sorrow. Then went he unto Sir Sawaine and Sir Launcelot that were risen to heare masse. And then King Arthur said againe," Ah, Sir Gawaine, Sir ~~Launcelot~~ Gawaine, yee have betrayed me, for never shall my court be amended by you, but wee will never be sorry for me as I am for you.' And therewith the tears began to run down by his visage. And therewith the king said

'Ah knight Sir Launcelot, I require thee that thou wilt consaile mee, for I would that this quest were undone and it might bee.' 'Si Sir' said Sir Launcelot, 'yee saw yesterday so many worthy knights that were sworne that they may not leave it no manner of wise.' 'That wot I well,' said the king, 'but it shall so heavy me at their depart~~xxx~~ing that I wot well that there shall no manner of joy remedy me.' And then the king and the queen went to the min~~is~~ter. So anon Sir Launcelot and Sir Gewaine commanded their men to bring their armes; and when they were all armed save their shields and their helmes, then they came to their fellowship, which all were ready in the same wise for to goe to the minister to heere the service..... Then the queene departed into her chamber so that no man should perceive her great sorrowes. When Sir Launcelot missed the queene he went into her chamber, and when she saw him she cried aloud, 'O, Sir Launcelot, ye have betraied me and put mee to death for thus to leave my lord.' 'A! Madame,' said Sir Launcelot, 'I pray you be not displeased, for I shall come againe as soon as I may with my worship.' 'Alas,' said shee, 'that ever I saw you! but hee that suffered death upon the cross for all mankind bee to you good comfort and safetie, and all the whole fellowship.' Right so departed Sir Launcelot, and found his fellowship that abod his coming; and so they mounted upon their horses, and rode through the streetes of Camelot, and there was weeping of rich and poore, and the king returned away, and might not speake for weeping."

Jussarand says of the singularly cold and dispassionate attitude of Mallory, which the most casual modern reader can scarcely fail to feel: "No one perceived the coldness of Mallory's stories.

He wrote for a youthful and enthusiastic people; it was a period of new birth throughout Europe, the period of the springtime of modern literature, the epoch of the Renaissance. There was no need to depict in realistic fashion the passions and stirrings of the heart in order to excite the emotion of the reader. A relation of events sufficed for him; his imagination did the rest, and enlivened the dull painted canvas with visions of every color." Mallory's work was popular and probably widely read. One authority says it "was constantly reprinted during the sixteenth century, and delighted the contemporaries of Surrey, Elizabeth, and of Shakespeare. But it seems to me its popularity must have suffered a partial eclipse in the tremendous vogue of the Italian stories in England; otherwise we should find Shakespeare and the dramatists of the time drawing more largely from it. Both Mallory's work and the Italian romances were strenuously and vociferously condemned by Ascham and other divines of the time; but clerical denunciation seems to have ~~been~~ had the same effect in those days in those days as now. The romances continued to be read; they exerted a mighty influence upon our literature in paving the way for the English novel.

The first novels, - must one call them novels? - really written in English came a century later, and belong to the Elizabethan period, - or rather to that later sixteenth century, the time of Shakespeare. They deserve very careful study in this line of investigation, but a consideration of three principal ones will serve somewhat inadequately our purpose. The first of these was the "Euphues," of John Lyly, published just about a century after the printing of the "Morte d'Arthur." Of Lyly's style in general litt

need be said: it is well known - and in spirit effervescent, artificial and overdone. But it furnishes some valuable data in the line of conversation-treatment.

The most striking general characteristic in Lyly's book is its moralizing, sermonistic and highly instructive tone. ~~But~~ The idea of giving instruction and moral teaching in conversation while carrying on a more or less apparent thread of a story is an old one, - at least as old as the Dialogues of Plato, and may have come from Greece along with Lyly's hero. This hero, Euphues, a young Greek, in the opening chapters of the book, is enjoying a visit to Naples, "a place of more pleasure than profit, and yet of more profit than pietie, the very walls and windows whereof showed it rather to be the tabernacle of Venus than the temple of Vesta."

An old man who admires the extraordinary talents of the young Greek, and fears the moral issue of his visit to that immoral city thus accosts him: "Young gentleman, although my acquaintance bee small to entreat you, and my authority less to command you, yet my good will in giving you good counsaile should induce you to believe me, and my hoarye hairs (embassadors of experience) enforce you to follow me, for by how much the more I am a stranger to you, by so much the more you are beholding^{ing} to me, having therefore opportunity to open my mind I mean to be importunate with you to follow my meaning. As thy byrthe doth showe the expresse and lively image of gentle blood, so thy bringing up seemeth to me to be a great blotte to the noble lynage of so noble a brute, so that I am enforced think that either thou didest want one to give thee good instructions or that thy parents made thee a wanton with too much

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cockering: eyther they were too foolish in using no discipline or thou too froward in rejecting their doctrine: eyther they willing to have thee idle or thou wilful to be ill-employed. Did they not remember that which no man ought to forgette that the tender youth of a childe is like the tempering of waxe, apt to receive any forme? Hee that will carry a bull into Milo must use to carye him a calf also, hee that coveteth to have a straight tree must not bend him being a twigge. The Potter fashioneth the clay when it is soft and the Sparrow is taught to cme when he is young. As therefore the yron being hot receiveth any form with the streake of the hammer, and keepeth it being cold forever so the tender wite of a childe, if with diligence it be instructed in its youth, will with industrie use those qualities in his age.

"They might also have taken example of the wise husbandmen who in their fullest and most fertile ground sow Henpe before wheat, a grain that dryeth up the superfluous moisture and maketh the soyle more apt for corn, or of good gardeners who in their curious knots mix hissoppe with ^Time as ayders one to the growth of the other, the one being dry, the other moist." And so on in the same strain for four solid pages, whereat "the old gentleman having finished his discourse, Euphues began to shap him an answer in this sort: "

Hand p. 40 'Father and friend (your age sheweth the one; your honesty the other), I am neither so suspicious to mistrust your goodwill nor so sottish to mislike your good counsayle, as I am therefore to thank you for the first, so it stands me upon to think better of the latter; I mean not to cavil with you as one loving sophistrie nor to controvert you as one having superioritie, the one would bring my

talk the suspicion of fraude, the other convince me of folly.

"Whereas you argue I know not upon what probability, but sure I am upon no proof, that my bringing up should be a blemish to my birth, I answer and swear to that you were not therein a little overshot, either you gave too much credit to the report of others, or too much liberty to your own judgement; you convince my parents of peevishness in making me a wanton, and me of lewdness in rejecting correction. But so many men so many minds, that may seeme in your eye odious which in another's eye may be gracious."- Euphues carries this discourse tirelessly on through six pages, -"and having thus ended his tale departed leaving the old gentleman in great quandarie," and probably not a little grieved and incensed at being outdone in the matter of talk.

Most of the dialogue is after this manner. These speeches are introduced in the most formal way; sometimes the "he said," "said Lucilla," or some such phrase is enclosed in parenthesis, sometimes the speech is even more formally introduced:-

p-297- "And so turning on my left side I fetched a deep sigh, Issyda the water standing in her eyes, clasping my hand in hers with a sadde countenance answered me thus: 'My good Fiders if the increasing of my sorrowes' " etc.

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p-318 "But you have not answered my request touching what flower you most desire; for women do not resemble flowers, neyther in show nor favour? Philautus, not shrinking for an April shower, followed the chase in this manner: 'Ladey, I neither flatter you nor please myself,' "etc.

The characters exhibit the most unnatural patience in listening to these endless speeches. I found only one case of an interrupted speech. Euphues has delivered a discourse of considerable length upon a very tender subject.. "'An heretic I was by mine invective against women and no less than a hypocrite for dissembling with thee for now Philantus I am of that mind toward women...' but Philantus taking holde of this discourse, interrupted him with a sodaine reply as followeth: 'Stay, Euphues,' etc.

Short speeches are rare, commonplace ones unknown. The author makes some attempt at bringing out the individuality of the characters in their conversation, but this not in the sense in which it is done to-day, - i.e. of making the words used, the manner of speaking and the style of the speech itself, independent of the sentiment expressed, to portray the character of the speaker. Once the author, as if himself out of patience with the tedious loquacity of Euphues, drops his euphuistic style and reports a dialogue that is humorous and realistic. Euphues and Philantus are on ship-board en route for England; Euphues has told a long tale, pointed a long moral, and finished off at length with an account of England, its geography and its people, and advised Philantus as to his conduct when they arrive. Euphues has finished this discourse covering nineteen pages, - "Philantus not accustomed to these narrow seas, was more ready to tell what wood the ship was made of than to answer to Euphues's discourse; yet between waking and winking, as one half sick and somewhat sleepy it came in his braynes, answered thus:

"'In fayth Euphues thou hast told a long tale, the beginning I have forgotten, the middle I understand not and the end hangeth not

together; therefore I cannot respect it as I would nor delight in it as I ought; yet if at our arrival thou wilt renew thy tale I will rub my memory; in the mean season, I would I were either again in Italy or now in England. I cannot brooke these seas which provoke my stomach sore. I have an appetite it were best for me to take a nap for every word is brought forth with a nod.'

"Euphues replied 'I cannot tell Philontus whether the sea make thee sick or shee that was borne of the sea; if the first thou hast a queasie stomacke; if the latter a wanton desire..... and such Philontus is thy disease, who pining in thine owne follies chusest rather to perish in love, than to live in wisdom, but whatsoever be the cause I wish the effect may answer my friendly care: then doubtless thou shalt neither die being sea-sicke nor doat being love-sicke. I would the sea could as well purge thy mind of fond conceits as thy body of gross humours.' Thus ending Philontus again began to urge,-

"Without doubt Euphues you dost me great wrong in seeking ~~xx~~ a skar in a smooth skin, thinking to stop a vein where none is opened and to cast love in my teeth which I have already spit out of my mouth, which I must needs thinke proceedeth rather from lack of matter than any good meaning, else/ ^{or} ~~Wouldst~~ thou never ^{harpe} ~~work~~ on that string which is burst in my heart yet ever sounding in my ears..... ~~Lucilla~~ ^{Lucilla} is dead; and she upon whom I guess thou harpist is forgotten; the one not to be redeemed, the other not to be thought on. Then good Euphues wring not a horse on the withers with a false saddle, neither imagine what I am by thy thoughts but by mine own doings: so shalt thou find me both willing to follow

good counsell and able hereafter to give thee comfort. And so I rest sleepe with the seas."

But this seems to be the author's unconscious lapse into ~~conv~~ naturalness, and the rest keeps up the heavy didactic character of the first quoted specimens. Euphues at the house of Lucilla is asked to discourse upon various topics for the instruction and entertainment of the company, which he does with alacrity. All the characters seem only to be glad of a chance to deliver a four or five page dissertation on almost any subject. The captain of the ship thus announces the arrival of the ship in the harbor:

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"Gentlemen and friends, the longest summers day hath his evening Ulisses arriveth at last and rough windes in time bring the ship to safe Road. We are now within four hours sayling of our Haven, and as you will thinke of an earthly heaven, yonder white cliffes which easily you may perceive are Dover hills whereunto is adjoining a strong and famous castle into the which Julius Caesar did enter, where you shall view many goodly monuments both strange and ancient. Therefore pull up your harts. This merry wind will immediately bring us to an easy bayte."

More than one half this book, I think, is conversation. Is this an indication of the vogue of artificiality, pedantry and pomposity in the age which produced it, or merely ^{inadequate} unfinished literary methods and a crude idea of the form and function of the novel? We cannot imagine a state of society in which people talked as do Euphues and his friends. Jusserand says of this: "From the particular point of view of the historian of the English novel, Lyly with all his absurdities had yet one merit which must be taken into account

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 sense of Skelton.
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With him we leave epic and chivalrous stories, and approach the novel of manners. There is no longer question of Arthur and his marvellous knights, but rather of contemporary men who in spite of excessive oratorical gew-gaws, possess some resemblance of reality. Conversations are reported in which we find the tone of well-born persons of the period." Another proof that Lyly's book represents to some degree the manners and conversation of his time is found in a letter written by a Frenchman, Sir Hubert Lanquet, to his friend Sir Philip Sidney. Lanquet had visited England during the year in which Euphues was published, and wrote to Sidney the following year. "It was a delight to me last winter to see you high in favor and enjoying the esteem of all your countrymen; but to speak plainly the habits of your court seemed somewhat less manly than I would have wished, and most of your noblemen appeared to me to seek for a reputation more by a kind of affected courtesy than by the virtues which are wholesome to the state and which are most becoming to generous spirits and men of high birth."

Euphues went through five editions in six years, - ~~and~~ an indication of popularity corroborated by the host of imitators who followed Lyly. An Euphuistic literature sprang up, and flourished during the twelve years following this publication. But Euphues was finally superseded by Sir Philip Sidney's pastoral romance, "Arcadia;" Euphuism became old fashioned, and its balanced, antithetical and alliterative sentences gave place to the Arcadian style.

Sidney's style is harder to analyze and describe than Lyly's; - it possesses the same faults in reality, manifested in a different

form. The Arcadia is harder to read, and I think really less interesting to the average modern reader. Its only redeeming feature to me is Sidney's delicacy and poetic touch, - things we are scarcely in the mood to enjoy in a novel, while we are continually aware that Lyly is a man of force and plenty of sense.

The proportion of conversation in the Arcadia is much less than in Lyly's work, but there is considerably more of adventure, - the Arcadia seems to resemble the romances of chivalry in this particular. The speeches are noticeably shorter; when a long speech does occur it is usually a history of some individual's adventures closely concerned in the plot. The long moral digressions, to which Lyly's characters are so fatally prone, are not found to any extent in the Arcadia.

This is Sidney's attempt at a spirited conversation: Musidorus has just met his cousin, the prince Pyrocles in the forest disguised as an Amazon. Musidorus reproaches the prince for having left him and their host, Kalander, so unceremoniously; speaks contemptuously of love, of women and of Pyrocles's Amazonian garb. It is a long speech and Pyrocles replies to it also at length, closing with, -

"Neither doubt ye because I wear woman's apparel I will be the more womanish, since I assure you (for all my apparel) there is nothing I desire more than to prove myself a man in this enterprise.

Much might be said in my defense, much more for love, and most of all for that divine creature which hath joyned me and love together. But these disputations are fitter for quiet schooles than for my

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troubled braines, which are bent rather in deeds to perform than in words to defend the noble desire that possesseth me! 'O Lord (said Musidor) how sharpwilled you are to hurt yourself.' 'No (answered he) but it is the hurt you speak of which makes me so sharpwilled.'

'So (said Musidorus) as every base occupation makes one sharp in that practice, and foolish in all the rest.' 'Nay rather (answered Pyrocles) as each excellent thing, once well learned, serves for a measure of all other knowledges.' 'And is that become (said Musidorus) a measure of other things which never received measure itself?'

'It is counted without measure (answered Pyrocles) because the workings of it are without measure, but otherwise in nature it hath measure since it hath an end allotted unto it. The beginning being so excellent I would gladly know the end. 'Enjoying, answered Pyrocles with a deep sigh.' 'O (said Musidorus) now set ye forth the baseness of it, for if it end in enjoying it shewes all the rest was nothing.' 'Ye mistake me (answered Pyrocles) I speak of the end to which it is directed which end ends not no sooner than the life. Also let your own brain disenchant you (said Musidorus)' 'Thy heart is too far possessed (said Pyrocles) But the head gives you direction.' 'And the heart gives me life, answered Pyrocles.'

Sidney's novel was immensely popular even during the seventeenth century, - but it would have been on account of its author I think, irrespective of itself. It is not Sidney's best work, and seems to me to be much less important to the development of the novel than Lyly's work. In general it seems to me it looks rather backward to the romances of chivalry than forward to the novel of the next century. And Sidney's work for the novel was rather a gen

eral one of influence than a specific one of style or treatment. But the two books, Euphues and Arcadia, are similar in two important characteristics: both are romances of the court, - or rather of high life, and both are exceedingly artificial and improbable, for whatever of realism enters into them, the fact that Euphues ~~xxxxx~~ the Greek, and his Italian friends, and the shepherds and shepherdesses of Arcadia have the manners and speech of the English court at their own time, is entirely unconscious and unintended on the part of the authors.

These two points mainly distinguish the work of Lyly and Sidney from that other phase of the sixteenth century novel which manifested itself in Spain in "Lazarillo de Tormes" and "Guzman de Alfarache," in Ger^many in "Syl Eulenspiegel," and in England in "The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Adventures of Jack Wilton," by Thomas Nash.

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The novel of the Elizabethan age in English literature is particularly interesting from the point of view of the development of conversation as a novelist's tool. We have seen with what indifferent success the Elizabethan novelist used this means. Let us compare the work of Lyly and Sidney in this respect with the following, chosen almost at random from one of ^{our present} ~~the~~ American writers:

Miss Brenton
Harrison.
2 weeks
house party "Standing by her hostess, one slender foot on the low wrought-iron fender, was a tall, distinguished-looking girl, with rather weary large blue eyes. One could see at a glance that she had been "out" for several seasons, and had not yet done with theories.

"In a wicker chair drawn up to get the best part of the blaze sat a lady, also unmarried, no longer young, not pretty, but possessed of a certain decorative quality in attire. Miss Brenton was desirable to hostesses in that she was passed along their line burdened with the most recent budget of infinite nothings concerning the only people worth hearing about - the members of their own set. At the present moment, while apparently stirring her tea, she was actually engaged in watching the effect upon her former schoolmate, Gwendolyn Talcott, of a speech she had thought well enough to reiterate.

"'Yes, I had it - if not exactly in so many words - from the girl's own mother to-day. Pray how does it strike you, Gwendolyn?'

"'How does any announcement of a new engagement strike any one? A little wonder, a little babble, and the thing glides down the stream,' said Miss Talcott, taking her foot from the fender, and beginning to pull on her jacket to go out.

"Let me help you with your sleeves, dear," exclaimed Miss Brenton, jumping up to face Gwendolyn, as she effusively performed the proffered service.

"Isn't she rather young for him?" asked Mrs. Algy, who was never too much surprised by anything.

"Young!" exclaimed Miss Brenton, her eyes fixed on Gwendolyn's face, while hovering officiously around her. 'Bless me! dear Mrs. Bliss, do you forget that for a man time stands still between thirty and forty, and Brook isn't more than thirty-two? It's a dreadfully unfair distribution of things; for here Gwendolyn and I, at twenty-six, are already 'old girls.' All the younger set call us 'Miss,' and get up and offer us seats when we come into the room. Besides, a man like Brook, who has seen everything, needs, when he marries, to be refreshed, amused, looked up to as an oracle. He doesn't want a mature being with a mission behind his coffee-urn, but a little pink and-white Dresden shepherdess like Gracie. Lucky Brook! He can be choosing still, while Gwen and I must wait to be picked up, and thank the picker - eh, Gwendolyn?'

"Miss Talcott made no reply, but Mrs. Algy supplied the deficiency. She was conscious of a trifling mental discomfort that neither of the admirable footmen could remove.

"Then that accounts for it. My husband wired me this morning that Brook would probably come up with him this afternoon to stay over Sunday. And here I was wondering why he was so sociable all at once, when he has never before accepted one of my invitations. I think Mrs. Wotherspoon might have given a hint of this first to me instead of to you, Josephine. She said it was neuralgia that

kept her at the house this afternoon.'

"Don't be severe on her, dear," said Josephine Brenton, nimble. 'Think what a wise for the Wotherspoons to intermarry with the Brooks!'

"Gracie is my Clara's age," pursued the matron; "and I should never have thought of Clara and Mr. Brook together. The child is pretty of course, for any one who admires exceedingly fair hair and pink cheeks," - the Misses Bliss were as brown as ~~xxx~~ hot-cross buns - 'but I've often felt like telling poor Mrs. Wotherspoon that her daughter was overdressed, especially when I saw her come out just now in white cloth lined with rose-color. So theatrical, I think; don't you?'

"I heard Brook himself say last summer at Newport that the girl looked like a fashion-plate on rollers," remarked Josephine. 'But perhaps she will get over that second-rate taste when she marries Brook. Any rate, Mrs. Brook can dress as she pleases.'

"Should you think a white skating costume would be becoming to Clara?" asked Mrs. Bliss, a little anxiously.

"Clara's brown and crimson is so perfect," answered Miss Brenton, while helping herself to another pate sandwich; and Mrs. Bliss allowed herself to be convinced.

"As the door at the lake side of the house opened at this moment to let in, on a burst of frosty air as stirring as the blare of a trumpet, a group of merry, chattering, young people, - conspicuous among whom was the white-vestured maiden under recent discussion, - Gwendolyn Talcott, her fur collar pulled well about her cheeks, started to pass out along the way by which they came.

"'Oh! I wanted so much to talk to you about being secretary to our new Society for Inducing Citizens not to Strew Paper in the Streets,' interposed her hostess, with a sort of parenthetical breathlessness that was common to her.

"'Another time,' said Gwendolyn. She was longing to be out of the atmosphere in which she was beginning to believe the best part of her had been wrecked. Passing through the incoming crowd she found a boy to put on her skates, and was soon along with her thoughts, speeding swiftly over the farthest confines of the lake."

I cite this not as a gem of modern production, but merely to show the ease with which a story-writer of to-day uses means and materials absolutely impossible to the Elizabethan novelist. Why is this? Mr. Hall Caine calls the novel and the drama twin-sisters. Mr. F. Marion Crawford says that novel is most perfect which is for its reader a miniature stage. But the same age which produced these crude performances of Lyly and Sidney gave us the greatest dramas the world has ever known. Now-a-days managers offer magnificent prices for even half-way good plays, and that in vain.

I am not prepared to offer even a suggestion as to the reason for this. The dramatist writes only conversation: to be sure he must conceive the action, the costumes and the stage-setting, but he leaves it to the players to put these before the audience. His task, compared with that of the novelist, who must build around his conversation, narrative and description to take the place of this action, costumes and stage-settings, in the play, is comparatively a simple one. The novelist must have the creative genius of the dramatist, - although possibly it is necessary in a less degree,

but to this he must add the eye of unerring exactness and the hand of infinite skill. The dramatist may be a native, untrained, untrammelled genius; the novelist cannot be.

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