

ing, a perversion and derangement of general taste, proceeding from the present Theatre; but, seeing that the Theatre's unbounded popularity gives it also an irresistible influence upon manners, through its influence on taste, we signify withal a profound decline of public morality, to rescue whence appears an earnest and a noble task. But only through taking the Theatre itself most earnestly in eye, can success be promised to such a toil.

So much, at present, for the Theatre's power. How to get at that power, we cannot learn before we have rightly grasped its mainspring; and this we shall only do when, without unmerited disdain, we acknowledge it to be Mimetic-art itself.

VIII.

When we described the relation of the merely imitative Mime to the truly poetic 'interpretative' artist as resembling that of the monkey to the man, nothing was farther from our mind than an actual belittlement of his qualities. However easily comparisons of this kind may lend themselves to such a construction, especially in the heat of argument, we here were moved by quite another motive—namely to draw from one of Nature's methods, falling well within the popular comprehension, the most striking analogy for the relation we were about to discuss. Were the poetising artist ashamed to recognise himself as an originally merely-imitative mime developed into an 'interpreter' of Nature, then Man himself must be no less ashamed at finding himself again in Nature as a reasoning ape: but it would be very foolish of him, and simply prove that he had not got very far with the thing which distinguishes him from an un-reasoning ape.—The analogy adduced, however, will prove most luminous if, granting our descent from monkeys, we ask why Nature did not take her last step from Animal to Man from the elephant

or dog, with whom we meet decidedly more-developed intellectual faculties than with the monkey? For, very profitably to our object, this question can be answered by another: why from a pedant no poet, from a physiologist no sculptor or painter, ay—to borrow the well-known answer given by the lips of beauty to a Czar—why from a Russian privy-councillor can one create no ballerina?—In Nature's election of the ape, for her last and weightiest step, there lies a secret which calls us to deep pondering: whoso should fully fathom it, perchance could tell us why the wisest-constituted States fall through, ay, the sublimest Religions outlive themselves and yield to superstition or unbelief, whilst Art eternally shoots up, renewed and young, from out the ruins of existence.

In view of the significance thus assigned by us to the theme, we may hope to expose ourselves to no more misconstructions if we commence our further inquiry by tackling it in all earnest to the analogy of man and monkey. For we believe that in this analogy, when taken as representing the relation of man's merely imitative to his 'interpretative' faculties, we have won a very helpful light wherewith to lighten the relations of *realism* and *idealism* in Art, about which there's such a vast amount of slipshod talk.

What scares the plastic and poetic artists from contact with the mime, and fills them with a repugnance not entirely unakin to that of the man for the monkey, is not the thing wherein they differ from him, but that wherein they resemble him. Moreover what the one imitates, and the other 'interprets,' is one thing and the same: Nature; the distinction lies in the How, and in the means employed. The plastic artist, who cannot reproduce his model, the poet who cannot reproduce the reported incident in full reality, foregoes the exhibition of so many of his object's attributes as he deems needful to sacrifice in order to display one principal attribute in so enhanced a fashion that it shall make known forthwith the character of the whole, and thus one glance at this one side shall reveal

what a demonstration of the object's every side can make intelligible to none but the physiological, or, in questions of Art, the æsthetic judgment: i.e. to the judgment of just the plastic or poetic artist. Through this restriction the plastic artist and poet arrive at that intensifying of their object and its re-presentment which answers to the conception of the Ideal, and through a wholly successful idealisation, that is to say, a realisation of the Ideal, they obtain an effect completely indemnifying us for the impossible inspection of every facet of the object's manifestation in Time and Space; and to such an extent, that this mode of representment is acknowledged to be the only resultful, nay, the only possible method of dealing with real objects, their aspects being inexhaustible.

To this ideal, this only veritable art, however, the mime steps up with all the matter-of-fact-ness of an object moving in Time and Space, and gives the man who compares him with the picture * somewhat the terrifying impression as though a mirror-image were descending from its glass and walking up and down the room before our eyes. To the æsthetic eye this phenomenon must needs have something positively ghostly; and if one makes the acquaintance of mimetic art through performances such as have been the daily work of great comedians,—if, sitting as guest to a Garrick, we see at one moment a despairing father with his dead child in his arms, at another a money-grubbing miser, or again a drunken sailor cudgelling his wife, then, possessed with the ideality of pure plastic and poetic art, our breath may easily forsake us, and with it all desire to meet the fearsome man a-joking cheerfully at Art's expense—a thing he is always very fond of doing.—Is this Mime an incomparably higher being, or a being small beyond compare? Nay, neither one thing nor the other: merely he is a being quite other. He presents himself as Nature's intermediate link, through which that absolutely realistic Mother of all Being incites the ideal within you. Like as

* "Dem vom Bilde auf ihn Blickenden"—lit. "the man looking at him from the picture," or "from the image."—TR.

no human Reason (*Vernunft*) can discharge the commonest diurnal act of Nature, and yet she never tires of forcing herself in constant newness on Reason's apprehension : so the mime reveals to the poet or potter ever new, untold and countless possibilities of human being, to be fathomed by him who could invent not one of these possibilities,* by him to be redeemed into a higher being.—This is Realism in its relation to Idealism. Both belong to Art's domain, and their difference lies in that between the *imitation* and the *interpretation* (*Nachbildung*) of Nature.

How far this realism can become an art, without the slightest brush with idealism, we may see by French theatric art ; which has raised itself, and altogether of itself, to such a pitch of virtuosity, that the whole of modern Europe pays obedience to its laws. Very helpful for the further pursuance of our physiological analogy, appears to us a saying of Voltaire's, when he described his countrymen as a cross between tiger and ape. It is surprising, in fact, how speedily this nation has made itself known to other European nations mainly under two distinctive types : natty to the point of finnicking, particularly in its capers and its chatter ; cruel to bloodthirstiness, springing furious to attack. History shews us such a springing, and yet capering tiger, in the real founder of modern French civilisation : Richelieu (no less than his great precursor, Sully) was passionately fond of dancing Ballet, and—we are told—made himself so ridiculous through a scandalous dance before the Queen of France herself, that he avenged his mortification with all the tiger's fury.† This was the man 'fore whom no noble head in France sat firmly on its trunk, the man who founded withal the almighty Academy, whereby he coerced the spirit of France into adopting that Convention, entirely foreign to it thitherto, whose laws still govern it to-day. These laws permitted anything but

* Cf. Vol. III., 305—concerning Frau Schröder-Devrient.—TR.

† The vengeance was taken on the so-called "Day of Dupes," November 11, 1630, when the Queen-mother, Maria de Medici, the Duke of Orleans *et al*, were outwitted by Richelieu and had to escape to Brussels.—TR.

the cropping-up of ideality ; on the contrary, a refinement of realism, a supernal prettifying of actual life, attainable only by guiding the monkey-nature, which Voltaire twitted in his countrymen, to a successful imitation of the courtier's etiquette. Under this influence the whole life of everyday assumed a theatrical shape ; and the only difference between real life and the Theatre proper, was that public and players changed places at times, as if for mutual recreation.—It perhaps is hard to say whether it was a general talent for the Theatre, that brought about this conformation of French life, or whether it was the conventionalising of life that turned all the French into talented actors. The actual result is, that every Frenchman is a good comedian ; and for this reason, again, the French Theatre with all its customs, idioms and requirements, is simply imitated throughout all Europe. Now, this would not be of positive harm to Europe, if theatric art in France itself had only been able to approach the Theatre's true aim, in a higher sense, through adopting the plastic artist's and poet's Ideal. But not one piece of an ideal scope or import has ever been written for the French stage ; no, their Theatre has always been kept to a direct copy of real life—so remarkably easy for it, too, since life itself was nothing but a theatrical convention. Even in the portrayal of socially-exalted or historically-distant spheres of life, where the ideal trend has come quite of itself to every poetic nation, it has been turned from that direction by the spectre of Convention, and here most utterly of all. To keep forever to a copy of reality, the Versailles court—which, again, was planned with a single eye to theatrical effect—was held up as unique type of the sublime and noble ; if one meant to set Greek and Roman heroes in their worthiest light, it would have seemed absurd, and in the worst possible taste, to let them speak loftier language, strike nobler attitudes, or in any way think and deal otherwise than the Great King and his court, the flower of France and the *grand siècle*. Nay, God himself must at last submit to being addressed with the courtier's "*Vous*."

Thus, however high the French spirit might try to lift itself above the common life, the loftiest spheres of its imagination were everywhere delimited by tangibly and visibly realistic life-forms, which could only be copied, but not 'interpreted': for Nature alone supplies a model for æsthetic moulding (*Nachbildung*), whereas Culture* can become an object of nothing but mechanical imitation. A wretched state of things indeed, in which none but a monkey-nature could really feel at ease. Against it no rebellion of the *man* was possible; for only through a glance at the Ideal, does he consciously outstep the circle drawn by Nature. But the "tiger" could rebel. After his tigress had—danced once more, around the guillotine (for nothing will pass off well in France without a dance!), and he himself had grown tipsy with the blood of his Culture's lawgivers (we know the loving-cup of the September Feast!), this wild beast was tamable by nothing but letting it loose upon the neighbouring nations. Marat—the tiger; Napoleon—the tiger-tamer: that is the symbol of new France.—Without the Theatre, however, the tiger was not to be broken in: the monkey must help in the taming. Known for centuries as the worst of soldiers, and jeered at by the Germans in particular, since the Revolution the French army has ranked as the best. We are aware that this result has been effected on the one side by a discipline which crushes out all sense of self, but it has been maintained, on the other, by a happy blending of the interests peculiar to the tiger's and the monkey's natures: the new phantasm, that has replaced the old court-nimbus of Versailles, is the sufficiently notorious, specifically Gallic "*gloire*," which we here need mention merely in so far as it has become the new expression for that same theatrical Convention which has taken the place of Nature for good and all with the Frenchman, and beyond whose pale, as we have put it once before, he would believe himself plunged into Chaos.

* "*Die Kultur*"—our author invariably uses the foreign term to signify "artificial culture"; for "culture" in its best sense, he employs "*Bildung*."
—TR.

What notable alterations the baptism of the French Revolution has effected in the character of this great people, this people destined for such important fortunes, we should be glad to see explained in detail by some qualified Culture-historian, from a similar standpoint to our own. The blends and shadings of this Folk-character—which in so episodic a notice we naturally have been able to consider merely according to its general type, as from a bird's-eye view—these nuances, when reviewed from quite close, will surely shew no less a natural disposition to culture of the Purely-human, than is to be found among the other members of the European family. Nevertheless the open-minded Frenchman, of all persons, will regard with despair the possibility of his nation's character undergoing a total new-birth. In view of the state of things to-day, he must confess to feeling uneasy at any thought of dissipating the phantom "gloire," since he knows not whether, once this glittering canvas drawn aside, the tiger might not spring forth again. Perhaps one might set his mind at rest by telling him that behind this stage-coulisse, merely painted on its outer face, there lurks the capering monkey, already well-acquainted with its realistic back. Would it comfort him to find that perchance the vanity and light-mindedness of his nation, which stand even its military bravado in such good stead, have helped no less than the Imperial discipline to tame the tiger; and—as pleasure is so much the Frenchman's summum bonum, that he classes Art itself under the rubric of Amusement—to find that these qualities may after all be competent to resume unaided their ancient duties of police?

But enough! We possibly may find some other source of comfort. Let us therefore turn from the French, with whom we had nothing to note but Theatre and theatrical virtuosity, and come back to Germany; paying our first attention to how this Theatre and its virtuosity stand out upon our native soil.
