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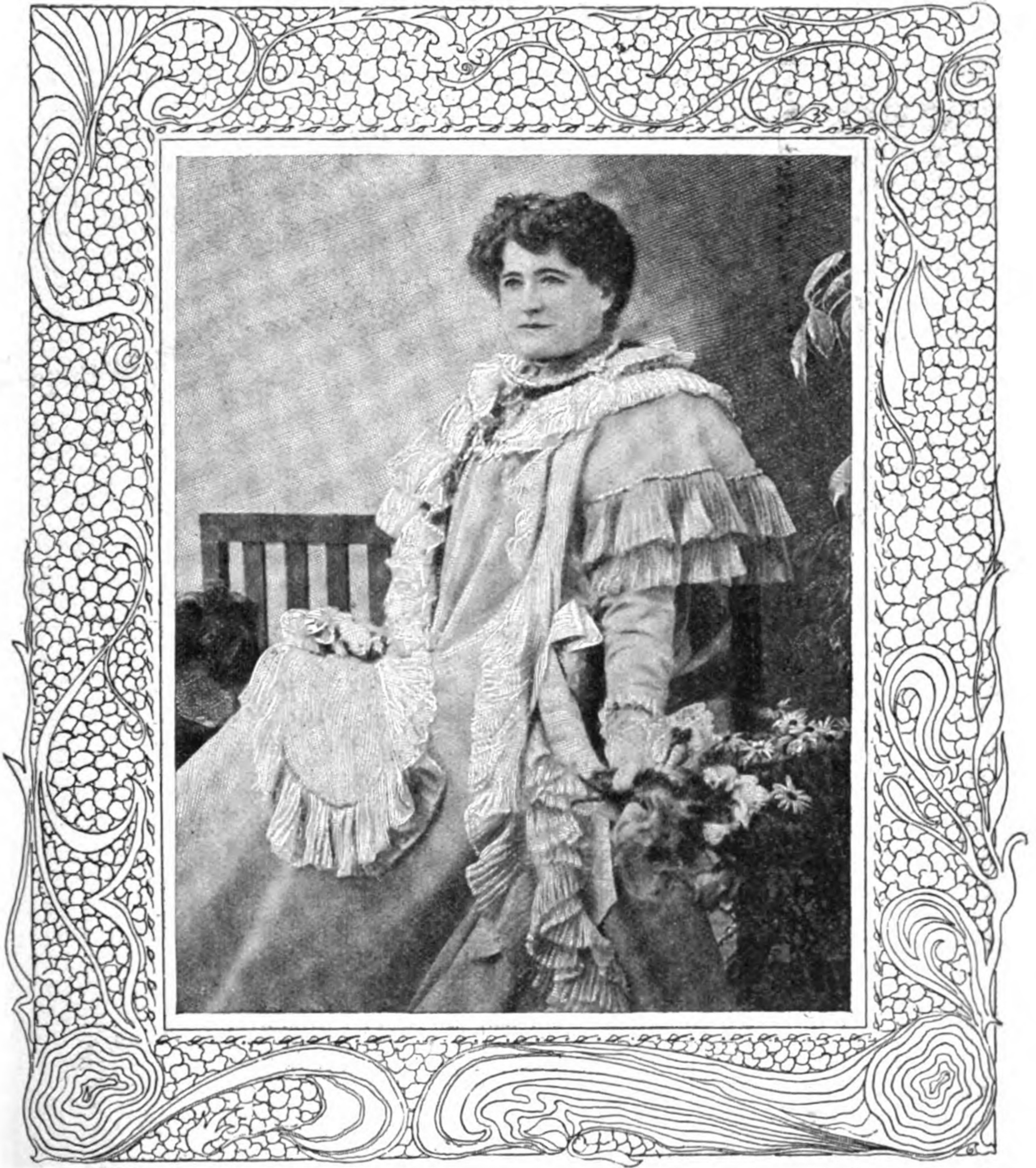
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A recent portrait.

THE ART OF ELLEN TERRY.

By BRAM STOKER.

THE place of Ellen Terry in the history of her art has been won by great gifts used with much skill and consistent effort. She has a power of pathos which passes beyond the bounds of art, and manifests itself as an endowment of especial excellence. The exercise of such a gift implies the existence of another quality — sincerity, for though art may not enable a person naturally without power to achieve a high place within its range, the want of it can deny to any one the reaching of its highest point, and in art

the truth is all in all. The pregnant phrase of Pope, "Nature to advantage dressed," is an epitome of its scope and limitations. For art is not of necessity creative; its etymology shows that its purpose is rather to construct out of complete materials than to nucleate particles from the beginning. In fact, the word art, in its original meaning, "to join," shows that the artist is a joiner. An actor's work is both creative and artistic: but every expression of it given, beyond the first presentation, is of necessity purely artistic. It is achieved by



AS "FAIR ROSAMUND."

means of an organised effort, carried out with intention, self-guidance, and restraint. Thus it is that what at times may seem a very whirlwind of passion, or an abyss of despair, is regulated and controlled by intention and by guiding principles as marked and definite as those which fix the bounds of the work of the painter, or the sculptor, or the architect. As the actor deals with the complex and varying emotions of humanity, his material is of endless variety; but still, even as the shape of humanity is fixed within certain lines, so that although individuals differ the type remains constant, so the work of the artist, although capable of an endless varying of expression, must remain within typical bounds. When this reticence is observed by an artist of any kind, his work is accepted critically as true, and exercises on those to whom it appeals the power which only truth and sincerity can achieve. Ellen Terry's early training had much to do with the development of her nature in her art. Sprung from a theatrical family, she was from the first in contact with the exercise of stage-craft. The youngest child may be drilled into imitative effort; but such effort must be in large measure consistent with natural emotion, or else the labor to both teacher and pupil is ineffective and evanescent. When she was very young, Ellen Terry made her appearance as Mamilus in *A Winter's Tale*, with a tiny triumphal car as a toy. It would almost seem as if Nature in a mood of prophecy had thus typified the honors of her after-life.

In her earlier years she had a whole world of experience, and great artists like Mrs. Charles Kean took endless pains with her. Whilst Ellen was still a little girl, she and her elder sister Kate played as child-

actresses with very considerable success. The experience thus gained in playing a range of parts otherwise impossible to her, served her in good stead later on in life; for though a child may not at the time understand to the full the words which it speaks or the emotions it may have to portray, the effect of the necessary study remains, and the fuller understanding comes with larger experience of life.

When as a very young woman Ellen Terry began to win her place with the public, her artistic charm seemed to have full scope and opportunity through her artistic training. She was not hampered at every turn by awkwardness incidental to a lack of knowledge of the differences of stage perspective compared with that of ordinary life. For it must never be forgotten that on the stage the measure of things is different from that in use off it. In fact, for critical accuracy there should be a quantitative as well as a qualitative analysis of stage fare. In the glare of the footlights and amid the surroundings, both implied and actual, of stage effect, the painter's perspective is sharper than that taught in the schools, and the "vanishing-point" is closer to the beholder than it would be in a

marked and definite as those which fix the bounds of the work of the painter, or the sculptor, or the architect. As the actor deals with the complex and varying emotions of humanity, his material is of endless variety; but still, even as the shape of humanity is fixed within certain lines, so that although individuals differ the type remains constant, so the work of the artist, although capable of an endless varying of expression, must remain within typical bounds. When this reticence is observed by an artist of any kind, his work is accepted critically as true, and exercises on those to whom it appeals the power which only truth and sincerity can achieve. Ellen Terry's early training had much to do with the development of her nature in her art. Sprung from a theatrical family, she was from the first in contact with the exercise of stage-craft. The youngest child may be drilled into imitative effort; but such effort must be in large measure consistent with natural emotion, or else the labor to both teacher and pupil is ineffective and evanescent. When she was very young, Ellen Terry made her appearance as Mamilus in *A Winter's Tale*, with a tiny triumphal car as a toy. It would almost seem as if Nature in a mood of prophecy had thus typified the honors of her after-life.



AS "OPHELIA."

MISS TERRY and SIR HENRY IRVING in
The Vicar of Wakefield.



MISS TERRY AT THIRTY.

perfectly as though speaker and auditor were alone in a drawing-room; but there is a power behind the expression which amplifies and intensifies it indefinitely. From the stage there is a surprising volume of sound — sound articulated, modulated, varied with every thought passing through the speaker's mind, but still sufficient to fill the vast expanse of a theatre and penetrate to every corner of it, conveying all the while the minutest purpose of both the poet and his interpreter.

In every other way as well as with regard to sound, the requirements of the stage necessitate an enlargement of ordinary methods; and with all these the skilled actor must be thoroughly acquainted. These things are not to be adequately learned in a day, or a month, or a year. "Art is long," and it is, or should be, patient; for the lessons of it are endless. The performer on the stage must be so familiar with its needs, especially where

landscape. In a world where everything must be enlarged or intensified or concentrated to suit dramatic exigencies, ordinary conditions are out of place and do not seem true to Nature. Every art has its own necessary conditions. Art is not to *be* real, it is to *seem* real; and although the artist must understand the reality of things so that he may work to an ideal end, he must use the prototype as something to be represented rather than as something to be reproduced. In the mere matter of sound alone, the theatre requires a greater force than is necessary elsewhere under conditions of seeming similarity: an actor therefore must have a voice that can carry. Mere volume of voice is not sufficient; nor does it suffice that the method of speaking be cultured and natural. Both are necessary, if the deadening effect of a couple of thousand persons breathing in an opposite direction to the speaker is to be overcome. These mechanical difficulties must be mastered if success is to be achieved, and actors soon learn the limits of their physical powers. I do not know any better lesson for a young artist than to study Ellen Terry's method of delivery—such a speech as, for instance, Portia's "Quality of Mercy" in *The Merchant of Venice*, or the little poem, "Rainbow, Stay," in Tennyson's *Becket*. In each of these, every condition of truth and fineness is observed as



AN EARLY PORTRAIT.



AS QUEEN HENRIETTA MARIA in *Charles I.*

these differ from ordinary life, that given a sense of environment, he will instinctively fit himself to his surroundings; and to this end time, and practice, and repetition are necessary. The mere technique is endless. For we must remember that on the stage it is not sufficient that the work be done in the round, like that of a sculptor. Every action, every pose, every gesture, every movement, has to be fitted to a condition of things which makes only one side of them visible; the whole of the routine of life has to be adapted to the conditions of a framed picture which can be seen from only one point of view. On the stage, while an actor is visible at all, the part of his body which can be seen is alone able to convey its lesson to the spectator's eye. In the old days when candles and oil-lamps did what they could to dissipate the gloom of a great playhouse, most of the actors, recognising the fact that without light they were lost, tried to arrange themselves in a row down on the footlights and there by face and gesture convey their intentions to the audience. But time and science have changed all this, and now the actor while "on" has to be *en évidence* even though it be as a listener, or a sleeper, or a corpse; it is required of him that even at such times he shall be true to his part and do no violence to the essential conditions of these exempli-

fications of repose. When therefore we consider the extraordinary number and variety of conditions, sometimes antagonistic to natural surroundings, and sometimes differing from them in varying degrees, and when we remember that all these must be held in mind from first to last by the player, so that he may be able to force home illusion to the minds of the audience by counterbalancing the restrictions under which he works, we may get some idea of the manifold excellence of mind necessary for a great actor. Passion and coolness, purpose and premeditation, instinctive readiness to recognise and to conform to accidental conditions, all these are antecedent to success, and entirely exclusive of those creative and mimetic powers which go to form the personal equipment necessary for success. Through all these difficulties and studied differences Ellen Terry has held perpetually before her eyes the great exemplar, Nature, and each artistic end has been achieved by Nature's methods.

The range of her parts has been very wide, and she has won success in many



AS VIOLA in *Twelfth Night.*



Miss TERRY and Sir HENRY IRVING in *Robespierre*.

By Byron, New York.

fields. When, as the "Wandering Heir" in Charles Reade's play founded on his story of the same name, she burst with all her charm upon the public, they thought that Peg Woffington had come again, for never had so winsome a girl become so fascinating a boy; and when later on she played Olivia in Wills's version of *The Vicar of Wakefield*, she carried the pathos of tragedy into the sublime. Those—and they are many—who have seen her in the third act where Squire Thornhill unfolds to her the base story of his deception and her own betrayal, can never forget the ring of horrified amazement as she repeats the phrase, "The truth?" or the chastened tone of her despair as, after striking him on his endeavoring to embrace

her, she sinks back in her seat with the wail of self-regretting anguish, "Lost—lost even my womanliness!" For this sweetness of disposition, even under terrible adversity, we are prepared from the outset of the play; the manifest sympathy between father and daughter can come only from hearts bubbling with light and love.

In the course of her artistic life Ellen Terry has played not only a great range of parts, but a great number of them, even exclusive of her early working years, when a young actor plays many parts of no special importance. It is by great work that an actor, or indeed any artist, is finally judged. When one person can play Lady Macbeth and Viola (*Twelfth Night*); Ophelia, Des-



AS "FAIR ROSAMUND."



AS "CORDELIA."

characters she has made a place in art that is all her own—for instance, Iolanthe in *King René's Daughter* (re-christened *Iolanthe* in Wills's version), or Ellaline in Calmour's poetic play, *The Amber Heart*. In the former of these, her portrayal of the blind girl is full of delicate beauty; every touch and turn and word, every gesture and

movement, is simply incarnate grace and sweetness. In the latter, pathos is carried to its limit; the sorrows of loss and the joys of gaining are exemplified with a depth of feeling which has more force with the imagination or the reason than fairy romance or the most argumentative of problem plays.

It is, however, in plays abounding in life that Ellen Terry has most personal delight. Her own nature here answers most willingly to the calls of her art. Her Beatrice, for instance, is a creature of vitality in whose veins run, together with the red blood, special corpuscles of fun. "I was born in a merry hour," she says to Don Pedro, and in almost every moment of her appearance during the play she makes her audience aware of the fact in a more eloquent way than by the speaking of Shakespeare's words. As should be in all good comedies, the effect of the fun

demonia and Volumina; Beatrice, Portia and Cordelia; Rosamund and Madame Sans-Gêne; Margaret, Nance Oldfield and Lucy Ashton, and can illuminate and adorn them one and all, each with its own suitable qualities and excellences, there can be no doubt as to her command of the resources of her art or as to the varying nature of her powers.

In some special

or humor is brightened by a contrast, and a comedienne to be great must rise to the height of the larger emotions. In *Much Ado About Nothing* there is such a contrast, and this particular actress rises in it to a sublime height. The scene is where in the church her cousin is affronted by Claudio. Beatrice is full of generous rage at the baseness of the insult and of pity for the young girl so wounded to the heart. Burning with passion and weeping with compassion, she strides about the stage railing at Claudio's conduct and upbraiding Benedict for his tardiness of revenge; till finally her "Oh that I were a man!" brings her bashful lover at once within the range of her love and her purpose of revenge. To see Ellen Terry play this scene is an enlightenment as to a woman's powers—of charm and passion, of pity and love, of cajolery and hate.

From *Much Ado About Nothing* to *Madame Sans-Gêne* is a far cry, and yet in both somewhat the same qualities are required. The age is different, the country is different—in fact, all the conditions of nationality, epoch, social



AS "PORTIA."

quality, length of years, training, and equipment are varied; and yet such is the expression of essential womanhood in both that the grouping of these two characters well serves to illustrate the truth of Kipling's quaint phrase—

"The Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady Are sisters under their skins!"

An instance of the way in which



AS "IMOGEN."

the acting of a play grows may be taken from Ellen Terry's playing in *Madame Sans-Gêne*. At the first presentation of a play the characters are seldom so thoroughly elaborated as is afterward the case; familiarity with the part allows a competent actor to add

attempts at dancing, and the actress is awkward—delightfully awkward, with an assumption of ungainliness which to a naturally graceful woman must mean study and intention of no small degree. She has put on a long riding-habit in order to become



MISS TERRY as "Lady Macbeth."

to the minutiae, especially in such matters as belong to the differentia of the character. In the play in question, the washerwoman-Duchess is having a lesson from a professor of the choregraphic art. The business of the play requires her to be awkward in her

accustomed to manipulate her court-train in the dance, and is so much troubled with it that finally she tucks it over her arm whilst she is learning how to take the steps. The train keeps slipping off her arm and has to be perpetually replaced, and the episode



Miss TERRY and her son, Mr. GORDON CRAIG, in
The Dead Heart.

is a cause of much boisterous amusement. For many nights, both in London and the provinces, this scene was given without any change except such small matters as are necessitated by the accidents of the moment.

One night in a great manufacturing city she was playing the part with even more than her usual *verve*. She was lost in the assumed character so thoroughly that it was real to her, and the ex-washerwoman, with her mind harassed and worried by the trying conditions of her artificial court-life, instinctively returned to the habits of her youth. In a moment of abstraction, finding the fat coil of stuff across her arm, she instinctively began *to wring it out*. The response of the audience was electrical; every woman—and man—who had ever seen a washtub recognised the sincerity of the action. This moment of creative instinct was recorded in the actor's mind, and "the business"—as in stage parlance anything is called which is not the words of the text—has ever since been repeated. This instance will convey a better idea than perhaps would be done by a more important episode of the dominating truthfulness to nature of the character and instinct of the great actress.

Another instance, the latest, of her sincerity to nature is given in her acting of Volumnia in Sir Henry Irving's production of *Corio-*

lanus. All great actors regulate their efforts so as to be consistent with their own personality; in an art of illusion it would be ridiculous to create unnecessary obstacles to the convincing of an audience.

Mrs. Siddons, for instance, who had quite other views as to the type of the character with which she had to deal, played Lady Macbeth as a dominating personality, ruling her husband with a rod of iron and compelling him to unwilling effort. She did this because she was of fine stature and commanding presence, with eyes that could blaze and features whose expression could be well seen even in the dim lighting of the playhouse of a century ago. Her Volumnia, too, was of the rugged, antique type, swaying her son's grim purposes with a larger dominance. Throughout, she commanded so effectively that her stooping to beg justified the comments of her son. In this character her nature and her physique were at home; there was equal poise for both the actress and the woman. From the records, we can judge that the inflexibility of the Roman matron was conveyed by her very presence; and it is certain that at the time her method was effective. To her dark, imperial beauty, personal dominance was almost a natural attribute, and she used it throughout so effectively that from beginning to end there was no soft spot manifest in her nature. Even Volumnia's love for her proud son was based rather on her own pride than on the joy of motherhood, and in the hands of Mrs.



Miss TERRY and Mrs. STIRLING in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Siddons this singleness of nature always stood out to its full worth.

But *autres temps autres mœurs*. The century which has gone has given woman a truer place in the organisation of the world than existed at its dawn, and with a wider tolerance of woman's ambitions and efforts comes a better understanding of her limita-

Her Volumnia is all woman; not weak woman, but woman in all her essential attributes. She has recognised that the force of such a mother was in her silence as well as in her speech; in the sweetness and common-sense of her domestic life as the mistress of a great household, as well as in those moments of haughty ambition in which she urged her



An early portrait of Miss TERRY as "Portia."

tions. Neither women or men of to-day expect a strong man to take orders, no matter how imperiously the orders are given. "Sweet reasonableness" has a part in the incitement to action, and especially in the persuasion to change.

For this reason, as well as to suit her own ideas and purposes, Ellen Terry has given us a different Volumnia. Without altering in meaning a single word of Shakespeare, she has vitalised his creation with her own nature.

great and victorious son to still greater and more victorious deeds. The end of the author is attained in each case, but by means differing as widely as the personalities of the two actresses. When we see Ellen Terry sitting in her household as a true woman must, interested in the small affairs of daily life, and, after the manner of antiquity, dominating her son's wife even to gentle chiding of her fears, we realise that this is a woman who, when she does speak, will speak

to some purpose. This reading of the character is essentially true to human nature, and in its sincerity has much, and added, force in the play. When Coriolanus listens, either to her upbraiding or her beseeching, he knows that the origin, and source, and cause of it are true; and it is this feeling pushed home to the hearts of the audience, as well as to the stage character, that saves the great Roman from an instinctive judgment of vacillation on the part of those who note in more than one instance the quick abandonment of his settled purpose.

Ellen Terry's education had a fortunate beginning. Though the lessons which a child learns at a very early age are but rarely retained in its mind as guiding principles, they are nevertheless of value if begun along natural lines. She never had to be forced



As Clarisse de Maulucon in *Robespierre*.

to act a part or drilled to the point of fatigue, as is the case with many children. Her parts came naturally to her, and she never departed from the truth as she felt it to be in her portrayal of even the most conflicting emotions.

Indeed, the more we know of her method of stage art, both as to the conception of a character and the instinctive recognition of its place in the perspective of the play of which it is a part; of the sincerity of her regard for the essential truthfulness of things; and of the becoming and enchanting manner in

which she can convey the purpose of her mind to the senses of her audience through all the resources of a subtle and vastly various art, the more we feel that her success and honors have been justly won.



AS "MARGARET."