

SARAH BERNHARDT

IMPRESSIONS

BY

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TRANSLATED WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

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ILLUSTRATED



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INTRODUCTION

THESE Memoirs of Sarah Bernhardt,—lightning sketches rather, span not only the odd fifteen years between the tempestuous and almost apocryphal early years and the tragic and gallant dignity of her last decade; but serve also lightly to bridge the gap on either side of which the *fin de siècle* and the Twentieth Century appear so sharply differentiated.

Gone were the days of the so easily *épaté bourgeois*, his hair bristling and his flesh creeping at the legends of lovers abandoned and fauna acquired in three continents, of the vivid life with its perpetual *Memento Mori*, the notorious gold-mounted coffin, surely the strangest gift ever asked of a grateful lover; of a career jeopardised to avenge a slight to a young sister at the *Français* by the slap in the face of an established and superior actress.

Forgotten the early days of neglect by her glittering mother, the rediscovery of the hectic, attenuated child, the flair of that mother's friend, the Duc de Morny, in sending her to the Conservatoire, her début with Coquelin; and annihilated the critics' dictum,—one to rank with the bad eminence of "Back to your Pills!": "Bernhardt has a fine voice but will never make an actress".

Past, too, the time of the giants—when, free from the early horde of lovers and detractors, she inspired and was inspired by Victor Hugo and Dumas fils; when, as the peer of Mounet Sully and Coquelin, she drew to her shrine the theatre-going public — *Saradoteurs* — antagonists of the followers of her rival, Marie Colombier, and when the rivalry on the boards spread to the printed page, and the libellous “Sarah Barnum” was countered by the corrosive “Marie Pigeonnier.”

The disastrous episode of her marriage, as strange as any of the legends, was over: that sudden antagonistic love for the Greek—Damala—surviving unfaithfulness and cruelty and in 1889, after a racking eight years, bringing her to his death-bed.

The world tours, with eighty trunks and an honorarium of some sixty thousand pounds, were past, the early taking of London by storm, when even *Punch*, always the mouthpiece of the sedate citizen, acclaimed this sinuous wraith among actresses as “Sarah Chrysostoma.”

All this glittering tumult surged to the tolling of recurrent warnings,—mockingly disregarded—of danger from tuberculosis and of increasing pain from the injury to the knee, later the source of such martyrdom and such fortitude, when near the end of her days *La Glorieuse Blessée*, seated in an arm-chair in a camp somewhere behind the Front, gave the best of her art to the *poilus*, as in her early days she had turned from it to nurse the wounded who filled the Odéon in

the days of the "barricades" and evoked in this French-Dutch-Jewess, a Greek by marriage, that patriotism which links her to the 'nineties, for all their cosmopolitanism moving with the gusto of children playing at soldiers to the jingoistic music of Kipling and Hugo.

In the halcyon fifteen years covered by these sketches the *bourgeois* has ceased to be *épaté*—on either side of the Channel, even on either side of the Atlantic he and still more his wife and daughters are *Saradoteurs*. Society has opened its doors to her, imploring her to enter them; that conglomerate Society recorded by E. F. Benson, Anatole France, and Henry James, the compact leisured class privileged by tradition or success, permeated or penetrated by fastidious and exotic cosmopolitans and by Transatlantics weary of mechanical comfort and seeking the effulgence of the maternal hearth. This society evolved a tradition of hospitality to its artist guests based on a real love of beauty and interest in the Arts independent of the guidance of illustrated weeklies or of journalistic peers.

These English, French and American *Saradoteurs* seem more adult yet less sophisticated than the Public of to-day. Capable of thrilling to the dignity of *Phèdre*, of agonising with *La Dame*, they could also sense and vibrate to the real frustrations and pain that underlay the deep tones of the golden voice.

Their successors, irritated and bored by real tragedy which even the perfected mechanism and insouciance of modern life cannot altogether

ignore or formalize or view æsthetically, contemplate with stolidity the abnormal—life torn from its natural course—and struggling emotions alike. Even the thrills the late 'nineties derived from "strange" or purple sins are impracticable, because there are no longer any sins, merely errors in degree of æsthetic solecism.

Young things of all classes and ages, subdued to uniformity, appreciate the triumphs of golf-course Queens and Negro musicians presented for their easy enjoyment by the *Tatler* and the B.B.C.

Certainly they are more comfortable. The stars of Queen's or of the Gaiety shoot up in their courses in luxurious lifts, to have their standardized eyebrows and mouths perpetuated in Camera Studies wearing their favourite bandeau, or in camera rhapsodies listening to their favourite record, and are received in a palatial studio sundered by all modern amenities from the days when the greatest actress of her day painfully climbed a winding metal staircase to give a sitting to the chief photographer of her day.

A Rolls Royce, conveying the champion of the air or the waves, eats up not only the distance between her and her impresario hosts, but the years that divide her from the idol of the day rattling noisily and smokily to Croydon and appreciating the practical homage of the Mayor, a forgotten worthy, spiritual heir of Raleigh, carrying an arm-chair across the permanent way to ease the wearisome waiting in the ever changeless discomfort of the South Eastern Railway.

The planet these sketches perpetuate is remote,

but it sparkles pleasantly enough in the firmament, unconscious of the perfection of our arc-lights. In it Sarah lives and shines again, and the figure of the Watcher of the Skies is not the least attractive of her many satellites: Clairin the sculptor, Coquelin the actor in his greatness, Sacha Guitry at the beginning of his fame, Rostand, invigorated and invigorating.

Reynaldo Hahn himself, destined to fame for the perfection of his art, here plays a *Violon d'Ingres*, exposes an art not his own, but whose traditions and dignity echo in his own fastidious accomplishment.

To-day the leisured public that patronises dramatic art in its so various forms is larger, its appreciation of the arts more widely diffused, and the general standard of comfort and beauty is undeniably higher. Motion in the dance of Life is less impeded, the chorus is improved—but the protagonists seem less.

The cult of mechanical comfort, the dominion over space and time, the impatience of check or frustration culminating in the final disintegration of the years of the War destroyed the microcosm of cultivated and privileged leisure.

It is good to live again in its suavity, to sense the rhythm of an obsolete air which was, to many still living now, the music of their youth.

Punch, so often accused of delay in appreciating innovations in art, paid his tribute at all periods, and the Punchinello's melancholy whistle strikes a true note and joins with the muffled music of Maurice Rostand's prose at her literary

obsequies: faintly echoes the triumphant sonnet of the father at the festival of 1896:

Punch, April 4, 1923.

" Yet an undying flame has passed
Sunward between his¹ fumbling hands
For he can only hold
The empty cresset cold.

There has gone forth in this hushed hour
When the tired flesh sinks into sleep
An elemental force, a power
Drawn from the deep unto the deep
And the world of men is left
Wondering, bereft.

All that can change of her lies now
Aloof and royal in repose;
Dead poets bend o'er her dead brow,
And phantom wreaths of Bay and Rose."

(¹ Death's)

ROSTAND'S " SONNET A SARAH ", DEC. 6, 1896.

En ce temps sans beauté, seule encor tu nous restes
Sachant descendre pâle un grand escalier clair,
Ceindre un bandeau, porter un lys, brander un fer,
Reine de l'attitude et Princesse des gestes.

En ce temps sans folie, ardente, tu protestes!
Tu dis des vers. Tu meurs d'amour. Ton vol se perd.
Tu tends des bras de rêve, et puis des bras de chair
Et, quand Phèdre paraît, nous sommes tous incestes.

Avide de souffrir, tu t'ajoutas des cœurs:
Nous avons vu couler—car ils coulent, tes pleurs!—
Toutes les larmes de nos âmes sur tes joues.

Mais aussi tu sais bien, Sarah, que quelquefois
Tu sens furtivement se poser, quand tu joues,
Les lèvres de Shakspeare aux bagues de tes doigts.

PREFACE

SARAH BERNHARDT's name is linked with my most distant recollections. My parents admired her passionately. I was six or seven years old the first time they took me to see her act. It was an absolute thunderbolt. My imagination—childish but perhaps already that of an artist—remained dazzled by this event.

Very many years later I was introduced to Sarah, and the confident affection with which from that time on she honoured me is one of the chief causes of pride in my life.

Until her last days I had the joy and privilege of seeing her continuously, and of being able to note the varied aspects of that prodigious and peerless personality. I have often regretted having written no more on her than the few pages which follow. What charming and entertaining tales I might have told! I have, however, the shadow of an excuse in the difficulty there would have been in fixing with any accuracy these brimming moments, themselves the result of many elements, which at times made me exclaim with Goethe: "O moment tarry, thou art too fair."

I showed these hasty notes, unworthy as they are, to their subject. She kindly wrote and told me that she approved a true likeness. She even

added: "Thanks to your diary and to Rostand's sonnet, I can embark confidently on the great journey".

It is because she wrote this to me that I feel that I may—that I must—lay these notes before the public.

R. H.

"Love that which will ne'er be seen again."

—ALFRED DE VIGNY.

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SARAH BERNHARDT

CHAPTER I

1895

THE *DAME AUX CAMÉLIAS*—THE GAME WITH THE POWDER-PUFF—*LA SAMARITAINE*—REHEARSAL OF *JULIE*—THE BEAR DANCE

SECOND and third Acts of the *Dame aux Camélias*. I go up to Sarah's dressing room; she is finishing her toilet. I dislike her costume for the second act—a heavy dressing-gown which makes her look clumsy. She is putting a pin here and there, ties a scarf round her waist. She has Influenza —“All the horrors of 'Flu!” They knock for the curtain to go up.

The second act is a marvel of execution. Is there merely beauty? No, it is life, and life in all its most elusive aspects—the most difficult to represent by any artistic means, whatever they may be:—normal everyday feelings, all the daily fret of life. How far Sarah excels Duse in this act, she who for many people is “wanting in naturalism”! Good Heavens! what actress ever had more? Is being “simple” on principle really

natural? And if this varied truth of life is displayed through the medium of a fastidious personality, is not that an added beauty?

I am sure that no actress was ever more natural on any stage than Sarah in the scene with the powder-puff. After the dialogue with Armand (what excellent truth of detail, as for instance "when she lies"), from her "Don't let's speak of it" until the moment when she goes to sit down at the table for her great couplet, it is incomparable. She goes up to the table, opens a casket, takes out a mirror and a powder-puff, shakes the puff, powders herself. She only turns round once (a half turn, which produces a far more natural gesture than if she turned right round), then hums while looking at herself in the glass. There is no great genius perhaps in this, as any actress of talent will agree, for it is feminine, it is gracious, it is true to powder oneself whilst humming, appearing to do it mechanically. But the manner is all. Here it is unequalled.

Much less do I admire the way in which she plays the rest of the scene this evening. The tirade is a little monotonous, and I have seen Sarah do better.

In the third act she wears a new flounced dress in white mousseline which moulds her very individual form, that form which introduced a new type of feminine grace: one which is still our standard. A white fichu knotted at her breast gives to her toilet that discreet elegance so characteristic of the period.

From her dressing-room she has sent to the stage manager pretty little pink flowers to distribute about the stage (she will tuck one into her dress when she leaves the beloved house) and a huge bunch of lilac which she arranges in the big vase while the two lovers gaily discuss their future. She almost turns her back on the audience; answers in a low voice, occupied with her sprays, which she arranges with a florist's skill, breaking a branch here, arranging a cluster of lilac-blossom there, giving to the whole a symmetrical disorder.

She herself carries the vase to the *console* and turns round at the entry of *Duval Père*, whom she greets at first without looking at him, picking up some papers from the table as if he were a frequent guest of no great importance.

She is embarrassed on perceiving a strange and serious face. Her astonishment turns to anxiety at the words "I am Armand's father"—but her expression changes at the old man's sharp and dismal words. Her mouth, half-open in surprise, droops at the corners, she raises her eyebrows slightly: her whole attitude betrays a proud reserve, a wounded soul in rebellion. The civility, the calm of her reply stiffen to irony, perceptible in the disdainful half-smile, and become more marked when she says:

"I leave here even more for you; oh yes, even more for you than for my own sake."

But all constraint vanishes by degrees as the act develops. "I assure you—you are mistaken." She says it ungrudgingly with the surrender of a

woman happy to have obeyed the dictates of her love.

How can one describe the end of the act? All artificiality has been shed in her presentation from the moment she sits down to the table to listen to Duval.

I have seen her express variously the agony she feels at the idea of leaving Armand for ever. This evening she stares for a moment, then utters a heartrending but stifled cry as at the pain of a wound grown stiff.

The veil which shrouds the future seems to grow opaque before her eyes. She grows pale and her lips quiver. Under the pallor of the mask one feels the tumult in her mind, and her heart beats so fast it seems to stop. Only those who have never consciously renounced happiness, broken the bonds holding them to a stage in life, turned away from a heart where love still lives, can fail to understand the eternal quality of Sarah's acting in this last act.

No attempt can be made to describe it, but one may condemn those who deny truth to this incarnation of a woman in love. There are no longer even accents here. There are sobs, tears more bitter than gall, that come from an even more remote source than the soul before us, that come from the very depths of the soul of the first woman who ever loved and suffered.

20th May.

I arrive at the theatre during the first act of *La Samaritaine*, I slip into the wings and see

Photine carrying the amphora preparing to leave the well, and the white-robed Unknown speaking to her. "Where is thy husband?" he enquires.

The Woman of Samaria hesitates, abashed. "But——" and one feels that she blames herself for being moved by this simple question asked by a stranger. The severe words of Christ exasperate and at the same time fascinate her, and when she tells Him that the chaste joys of wedded union are unknown to her she softens. What even in that sin-stained soul has remained pure dilates and grows imperceptibly as the dialogue proceeds. Sarah's proud and nervous personality grows supple and takes on humble and attractive attitudes.

With what a voice she speaks of the two sacred mountains she never visits. What an inimitable harmony in the rendering of the line:

"Le vallon a des fleurs qui font oublier Dieu"

(God is forgotten when one sees those
flowers).

It is still indifference, but an assumed indifference, concealing emotion and surprise, and when she says that she believes in Him who is to come, a childlike hope informs her look.—As Photine speaks of things learnt in childhood, her accents are suffused with faith; one feels that nothing can destroy the first beliefs of a child.

The dress is admirable in its brilliance and simplicity. Blues, yellows, complicated folds of

drapery, but the line very pure—one of those dresses that only Sarah can wear, draped and pinned on to her every evening. The form of the wig is charming. The heavy golden hair is short, almost smooth, curling only on the shoulders. Her hands are heavily weighted with rings and her feet are bare. This Woman of Samaria, this creature living for pleasure—one feels her to be saturated with perfumes.

Seeing her thus seated on the ground in one of those incomparable poses, revealing so many elements of beauty in a low voice stifled by emotion and by the fervour of past anguish and present joy, I thought of the *Dame aux Camélias*. Can this really be the woman who hummed the other night as she powdered her face, who sobbed as she wrote the letter to Armand, who peeped laughing round a half-open door to speak to Prudence?

The three last words—"I am listening"—make the progressive fulfilment of the conversion. The first avid, almost stifled; the second trembling with a mystic voluptuousness; the third languid with bliss accompanied by a marvellous movement, both arms stretched wide to Jesus.

When the curtain falls she says a few words to Brémont;)¹ he rises, and she, without changing the position familiar to the audience, nevertheless modifies it a little. It makes a delicious tableau. After the last "call" she rises quickly, is wrapped in a woolly shawl, and climbs the little staircase to her dressing-room.

¹ The actor who played the part of Christ.

Then she leans against the big triptych mirror in which the electric lights are reflected, "to get warm". She asks for her part, wants to rehearse the second act. Brémont takes the manuscript, and Sarah, with an incredible quickness which does not in the least change the steel-like precision of her articulation, pours out hundreds of lines of this second act, catching the answers in flight whilst some twenty people come in and go out, sometimes stopping to give an order, to scold the prompter who has come to take Brémont's place, to stretch out a hand to a new arrival. She says to the prompter:

"Wherever were you yesterday evening at that moment? You know quite well you should have been in your place to prompt me, 'Be gentle' You know I always have to be reminded."

She sends for the actor Rupert who plays one of the cavilling priests, reproaches him because yesterday he gave his answers while the crowd was murmuring, thus making her own reply unintelligible. She goes on saying her part to the end imperturbably and swiftly. The second call comes. She rises, she is bathed in sweat; she asks for a handkerchief and dabs her face.

This evening she seems unbelievably young—has the look she wears in her early photographs.

At the beginning of the second act, pleasant music by Pierné with a barbaric and florid sonority.

During the prophecy Sarah gradually reaches the height of power and authority. Her voice,

tuneful and sweet to begin with, leaves the high register to rest on the lower one and it is with the full strength of her lungs, in the middle register and consequently with an almost brutal energy, that she cries, stressing each syllable:

“*Et sachez qu'il est dit dans le Deuteronome . . .*”

(And know it is said in the book of the Law).

The effect is irresistible in its power.

Monday.

This evening I am present at the last acts of the *Dame*. In the fourth act Sarah wears the dress she had for the revival, but she has abandoned the turquoises, and that spoils the effect. It is less brilliant, less luxurious, although she is wearing a diamond chain, and on her bodice at the back a great arrow made of pearls and diamonds.

A diaphanous lace dress with flounces, gold-trimmed with a few camællias scattered about. She comes in, her head held high, her walk full of self-confidence, greeting here one, there another, with friendly charm.

All of a sudden she perceives Armand and stops abruptly. “Oh, what a mistake I made,” she murmurs, turning away.—And that is all, but what a look, what a shudder—and that subtle palpitation of her heart! The swift beauty of this performance can only be appreciated if one has once met at some street-corner somebody who is separated from oneself by every circumstance, yet still is loved.

But what is beautiful in this performance of Sarah's is its whole tone, the intentional irradiation, vague and individual, which makes of it not an imitation but an artistic interpretation, the definite presentation of emotion.

In this big scene I always admired the way Sarah allows Armand's words to intoxicate her. Her back is turned and her body betrays the weakness of her spirit. At last she grips his shoulders with both hands, and it is with a rending motion and one of those stifled cries so characteristic of her that she tears herself from his arms. Then again, when she says feverishly and in confusion: "I can't follow you, I have promised", and as she realises the indiscretion of her words, her mouth quivers in that moving way which is one of her amazing secrets: the lips quiver, her eyes, terrified, look into space, one feels that her heart must be beating like a bird's wings against a window. This vibrating immobility, this rigidity in which only her heart and her lips seem alive, is characteristic of Sarah's manner.—No other actress has this terrible and rare method of expression.

Under her trappings one perceives a woman, ill, stricken by death. In this last struggle which Armand ends by throwing her on to the sofa one never ceases to perceive simultaneously with the moral exhaustion of this unhappy creature her bodily weakness, the physical impossibility of bearing so many emotions, and when he takes her by the throat and almost crushes her on the sofa she seems like a bent stem which straightens

out again feebly. By a supreme nervous effort she stiffens, and standing upright she suffers the most horrible ordeal—abuse from the man she adores.

He insults her directly before everyone. Then her look beseeches him, she utters little moans which express all the horror of her wounded spirit, and it is only when she gets the bundle of notes thrown full in her face that she gives way and falls into the arms of her friends.

Duse's way of acting this scene is much admired and the repeated "Armand!s" that she adds. For my part I found this interpretation rather false, and all Duse's accomplished art has not made it acceptable to me. She puts a thousand reproaches into the various intonations with which she utters this name, a thousand exhortations, a thousand supplications, and their careful variation displays too much art.

Tuesday.

I arrive at three o'clock for the rehearsal of *Songe d'une Matinée de Printemps* (Dream of a Spring Afternoon), a one-act play of d'Annunzio's, but they are rehearsing *Julie* (by Octave Feuillet).

In the stage box are seated the stage manager, Merle, and an old friend of Sarah's, a most frenzied admirer, the Countess of Najac. Sarah is on the stage, Calmettes stands beside her.

It is the end of the second act; Turgy and Julie, having been united, part for ever, full of love and sorrow. Sarah sits weeping, her elbows on the table. From where I am I cannot dis-

tinguish the words she utters in a low voice, broken by sobs, but I perceive her back and her head shaking weakly. Then she grows a little calmer, momentarily regains control of herself, bites her upper lip, lowers her eyelids over her wet eyes, leans her head back slightly. . . . From time to time her eyelids lift and flutter in fear under the painful crease of her brow, and at last, at Turgy's final farewell, her heart once more bursts through its restraint and she dissolves in tears. The act is over, she turns round and perceives me.

"Well, well?" she says.

She smiles, but her tears still flow.

"I can't help crying," she declares. "I absolutely must feel grief at each rehearsal, otherwise I am no good at all."

With her little handkerchief, that minute handkerchief which figures so much in her performance, she dabs her eyes, and wipes her forehead while she speaks. The rehearsal of the third act begins, and Sarah, not being "on" in the first scene, sits on the step of the prompter's box, chin in hand. I am sitting by her, closer to the ground. I gaze at her. Seen thus, she is like one of the figures on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

It is when she directs a rehearsal that her taste and her knowledge can be best appreciated. In what appears to be a satisfactory whole she picks out a hundred imperfections and with swift and exact directions corrects them.

Just so Ingres, indignant at the ascription to him of a fine drawing, seized a pencil and, while

following the lines of this drawing, traced a second one of true proportions—"That, sir, is how I should have done it."

It is this supreme delicacy of perception that reveals the born artist, and it is this unhesitating correction without fumbling that denotes the artist's experience.

Thus Sarah is shocked by details unnoticed by others, even by actors grown old in their practice. The truth is that this improvisatrice, with her reputation for fantastic and irregular sallies, is a past master who has learnt her job from universal experience.

She rises and goes to the door by which she is to enter, she remains there for a few seconds whilst Brémont, who acts the husband, moves here and there, hectic, excited by what he has just learnt about his daughter.

Sarah enters, or rather seems to come on, for she had not actually left the stage; but her action is as of having opened a door, crossed the threshold, and returned again, closing the door. It is astonishing. Smiling and dignified, she asks a number of questions of her husband, then moves towards the garden door. He holds her back. Astonished, she returns, still smiling, like a woman who expects a little discussion on some everyday subject. She sits down on the sofa to the left, and here the scene begins. But while Brémont is speaking, I see that she is thinking of something else. She looks to the right and left, then rises and says:

"No, we'd better do it all over on the other

side. We look as if we were repeating the scene with the daughter when you were in the identical position."—And she begins again from her husband's reply: "Stop, I must speak to you." But instead of coming down centre of the stage and sitting down on the sofa she crosses and sits on an arm-chair by a table.

In order to know whether Julie loves Turgy, her husband plans to tell her of his death. Holding a letter, he shows it to her without reading it aloud.—"I have had a letter from Algiers" . . . Sarah, by a single motion of her mouth, changes her aspect, which, from a smiling surprise, becomes anxious, and when her husband hesitatingly says—"Bad news"—one can hardly hear the words she breathes rather than utters: "Dead?" He bows his head. Sarah does not move, the sweat seems to break out on her forehead. It has already been said that Julie suffers from heart disease, and a drama has just been enacted in her whole being. "How did he kill himself!" she murmurs, almost forgetting that she is speaking to her husband.—"But he didn't kill himself."—"Ah!"—It is an indescribable intonation. Then, as if to justify her distress: "What a grief for his mother!" In these last words her voice seems stifled, her breathing heavy and difficult. Sweat seems to freeze on the temples and cheeks of the tragic actress. One feels that with a word the man beside her has wounded her heart in its most vulnerable spot. Julie grows restless, answers her husband's questions clumsily, realizes she is doing so. She sees

that he is lying in wait, that he holds her trapped. She chokes in moral and physical anguish. Moved by the instinct of those in distress, she rises and goes, staggering heavily, to the couch, on which she collapses trembling, still with that painful breathing and wheezing slightly.

"You see how I suffer," she says.

"Heart trouble, isn't it?"

"Yes, yes, it is from the heart," she says, touching her breast. And this reply moves one by the simplicity of its accents. The unhappy woman suffers so much that she can hardly think any more of her husband, her lover, her daughter. She really has heart-trouble, but really of the heart. Actually she is stifling with cardiac disease.

It is not the oppression of the phthisical Marguerite Gauthier; a doctor would note the differentiation in their gasping breath. This is truly suffocation brought about by disease of the heart. It has all the marks and symptoms. The breathing is more laboured, noisier, more interrupted than in the last act of the *Dame aux Camélias*. This poor woman is in desperation. She feels that she will suffocate when her husband, unable to contain himself, shouts at her "But now explain to me!" She is horrified, but gathers her strength for a moment. She rises and with a quavering voice and labouring speech makes her two first tirades: the first on the subject of her daughter and the horror she would feel at her being married; the second on her own sufferings, her shame and her remorse.

All this is presented so sharply that in spite of the interruptions of the prompter, of lapses of memory, it is impressive and poignant.

When Turgy is announced and Julie, after a few confused ejaculations, should fall dead, Sarah sketches in this movement without fulfilling it. She turns round quickly. "Thank you," she says to the actors. "Quick, quick, the *Guirlandetta*.¹ She breaks off to say to Brémont: "Don't move too far from the sofa, so that I can remain near it, for I shall fall on to it like a log." Then while the scene is being set she comes to sit in the prompter's box, wraps her legs up in a shawl, and chats gaily with us.

Sarah—she herself has said it—is not musical. The other day, being in a gay mood, she sat down at the piano and played me her "only composition"—"The Dance of the Bears"—"*La Danse des Ours*".

She brings to this performance a comic carelessness, and it is curious—in these few worthless bars one can trace the effects of an arrested will-power. These are very commonplace phrases with false harmonies, but they seem co-ordinated by some sort of symmetry.

Then as we chaff her and congratulate her on her talent as a composer, "It is an improvisation", she says. "One day when Maurice (her son) said to someone, quite in earnest, 'My

¹This term *Guirlandetta*, i.e. small wreath, was her name for d'Annunzio's piece, "Dream of a Spring Afternoon" on account of a song which occurred in it about a *guirlandetta*. I wrote the music, I don't know what has become of the song.

mother is very musical', I sat down at the piano and composed the Dance of the Bears. You will observe," she added, "that the left hand never varies, never!"

Then as I ask her whence the title, "Dance of the Bears," she answers that the rhythm and manner of her composition suggested the name to her, and she starts dancing the tune to me, singing in a debonair manner and stressing each note.

Sarah, dressed in a white tailor-made, her bosom and hands covered with jewels, dancing the "Dance of the Bears"—swaying first on one foot, then on the other, her arms folded across her—it has not been given to all the world to contemplate that!

June 8th.

For several days I have neglected impressions of Sarah. The fact is that the more I witnessed the Second Act of *La Samaritaine*, the more I realized the impossibility of conveying any idea of it in words. How can anyone express the mystery which was accomplished for ten successive days between ten and eleven at night? Who would attempt to describe the means by which this astonishing woman moves us to such a degree during the second act?

Last night I was behind a prop at the Third Act of *La Dame aux Camélias*. Sarah's cheeks were washed by her tears.

June 12th.

I went to the station to say good-bye to Sarah, who was leaving for Le Havre, where to-night

she is playing *La Dame aux Camélias*. To-morrow she will play *La Tosca*, and the day after to-morrow at Rouen *La Dame*. She will be back on Friday.

She was wearing a tailor-made dress of dark green cloth with a little hat and a dark veil.

She occupied a carriage with Saryta (her niece) and Marie Thion her first dresser. I asked her at what time she reached Le Havre.

"At half-past five; we shall just have time to dine, to be sick, and to act."

Gay and laughing, she sits down in a corner of the compartment. A few friends are there: Geoffroy, Madame Barnot, and Victor Ullmann go with her. Deval, alone of all the company, is on the train. The other actors went by the morning one. A whistle—the train clatters out, Sarah rises and leans from the window to smile at us once more.

June 16th.

Sarah's knowledge is such, and proceeds with such wonderful exactness, that she halts during rehearsals never last more than a few seconds. They are suggested by material details of production (and the remedy is pointed out at the same time as the mistake), or perhaps by an incomplete or false conception which a false intonation betrays. In this case, Sarah does not lose time by explaining to the actors their mistakes of conception or feeling: she confines herself to a precise, material indication, always followed by good results.

CHAPTER II

1896

THE CROSSING—CONFIDENCES—THE TIGER HUNT
—LYSIANE—MLLE. GEORGES—THE BARREL-ORGAN
—AT THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S—ADRIENNE LECOUVREUR
—PHÉDRE—FROU FROU

London, June 18th.

WE left Paris this morning, Sarah wearing her tailor-made costume of green cloth, braided with green, a collar turned over a black satin cravat, a boa of dark feathers, and a little Italian straw hat surrounded by dark green tulle and trimmed with a feather; a little white veil with big flowers; a wonderful ensemble of youth and elegance. She is sharing a carriage with Ullmann, Saylor and Saryta.

I spent the first part of the journey in another compartment with the Brémont family, Deval, Charmeroy, Luguet and the charming Mlle. Labady. We discussed foreign actors—Novelli, Salvini, for whom it seemed Sarah had a great admiration. We talked about Rossi, Irving and others.

At Amiens station I went and sat in Sarah's carriage. I found her without her hat, her hair a little ruffled, sniffing an enormous bunch of

roses and irises that her friends had brought her for her journey.

She is gay, laughing a great deal, and, once the train goes on again, sits down by Ullman, whom, on account of the darkness of his skin and his beard, she calls "My little angel" and "my little blond".

As I talk to her of "The Dance of the Bears" she plays it to me again on her knees, singing it roughly. I question her about Salvini; she tells me that she has never seen anyone like him, that he is the greatest actor she has ever met, and one of the most beautiful men in the world. When I wonder at the absence of old Madame Guérard, she replies:

"She is staying behind in Paris. She's getting old, a little eccentric and a little jealous of the people. She received me when I came into this world, and she was with me through all my childhood; then, after an interval of a few years, she came back to me, and for thirty years she has never left me."

"What!" I said; "has she never thought of taking notes day by day of all your doings?"

"Never. That surprises all my friends. Never in her life has she taken a note. As for me, I haven't the time; but I do hope, some time, to be able to arrange some fairly interesting memoirs. First, I have all the Press-cuttings that I have collected from the beginning—I could fill this carriage with them—and when my memory plays me false I shall know where to look, for I shall say exactly the opposite of what

I see in the papers, knowing that thus I speak the truth. On my first journey to America, as I thought that I might quite well die just then, I burnt a number of letters. Since then, as my health has greatly improved, I have kept others, but they are in a safe place, and I know that, if I died, they would be burnt immediately."

We spoke of her "falls" in various plays, when she "died".

"It is ridiculous to work at it," she said. "The first condition of being able to fall well is not to calculate the fall, to let oneself go without fear, just anyhow. It is a question of suppleness; it only hurts if one is not supple. I throw myself to the ground, I let myself go without special care, and I hardly ever hurt myself."

She herself thinks that her death in *Léna* was remarkable; it is then that she falls on her face, struck down by morphia.

"I die rather well in *Adrienne Lecouvreur!*"

She loathes that play, which she considers badly written, badly played, and only acts in it because she produces a great effect. She has also often played *Le Maître de Forges* and is said to be a little ashamed of it. She says: "it is written in such a ridiculous way". She has never acted *Pauline Blanchard* in France. The public, she says, do not like to see her as a peasant being addressed by rustics in familiar French. People like to see her always in fine clothes. Then with an abrupt change of subject:

"Is it long since you saw Countess P.? She

was marvellously beautiful a few years ago, but she has ugly wrists and ankles, and I could kill her when she wears black with a red rose."

Moreover, Sarah, who never talks indecency, is shocked by the "unbridled conversation" of the Countess.

We return to the usefulness, if any, of writing her life minute by minute. She tells me that a young man, M. Maurice Guillemot, has for years collected everything concerning her—articles, portraits, caricatures, programmes—and that a short time ago he brought them to her for her memoirs. I confide my plans about notes concerning her. Very simply but very sincerely she answers: "Now it's no longer very interesting and it won't be for long, but Guérard!—Guérard, who never left me for thirty years!"

I ask whether she likes playing *Frou Frou*.

"Fairly, but the first act is too young for me and rather bores me: the rest goes all right."

She knows herself better than anyone knows her. Everything she says points to it. She knows her powers, the methods at her disposal, those she must make up her mind to abandon. She has no secrets from herself. I notice this every time I have any conversation with her. I tell her that as Julie she suffocates differently from *La Dame*, that one really feels Julie has some form of heart disease.

"Yes, yes," she says a little vaguely—"it's an aneurism, an aneurism." (At the moment she is thinking of something quite different. There is no doubt that in playing this part each time

she displays fresh symptoms of heart disease—none of them premeditated.)

As we are nearly there, Sarah goes into the adjoining compartment, powders, puts on her hat and her veil, and changes her gloves, telling Suzanne Seylor to “put the dirty pair in a bag.”

The train stops. An official presents himself to take the tickets and recognises her. (As a matter of fact, all along the route it is known she is on the train.) An old sub-stationmaster on some futile excuse puts his big red head through the curtain, then goes and whispers to a bearded passenger, “That’s her all right.”

We laugh over this naïve pretence, and Sarah fixes the bearded one with an amiable but slightly mocking look, dilating her nostrils a little to be “attractive”

We continue our conversation. We talk of Harancourt, of Rostand, of Richepin, then we drift into talk about a journey to India, that voyage of which she dreams so often and which will probably never materialize.

A Maharajah staying in Paris came to see her and begged her to go to his country. A large party would go—about fifteen in all, counting a few friends who would also act. Sarah counts up four or five pieces which she “might adapt at a pinch”. She would choose the *Dame aux Camélias*, *Tosca*, *Adrienne Lecouvreur*—“nothing too subtle”.

These performances would be given in certain theatres, especially in the homes of Rajahs, “before swarthy princes covered with jewels”.

One of them promised her the entertainment of a tiger hunt, but a tiger hunt especially for ladies.

"They make a vast iron cage and twenty or thirty people get inside it, then the tigers are attracted round the cage (an odd reversal of parts), and *people fire on them from behind the bars.*"

As Sarah tells it this description is irresistibly comic. Actually she would prefer a real tiger hunt, when "one is on elephants that caper monstrously". I look at Sarah while she talks. What a unique silhouette! What a vision! She has again put on her feather boa and with a cameo brooch she has pinned two roses into it. She stands, very straight and gallant, one hand resting on a railway cushion, the other moving and gesticulating a little. A white veil, very tight and fitted to the contours of her face, encloses her features in a triangle of lace, through whose transparency they show unreal, wrapped in a mist which lends an increased strangeness to their well-known originality—the line of nose and chin, the cheek-bones, the blue-green eyes, laughing and a little cruel.

Calais—Sarah, holding her enormous bouquet, jumps down on to the platform. She refuses to go on to the boat by a gangway said to be more convenient, but takes the common gangway and "that of the luggage". We set about it. She confides her flowers to me and carefully goes down the wooden slope with the cross-pieces; they are "like circus elephants" I tell her, and she then gives that shrill little laugh, her true

laugh. Whenever this little laugh bursts out it surprises one. It is pitched very high and grows gruff at the end.

Sarah immediately goes to the saloon cabin reserved for her, takes off her hat, and from the door calls out with a hideous accent: "Stewart, Stewart! Bottel champagne aïci. Aïci (iced)— (Sarah never succeeded in pronouncing English properly). Then, turning to Emile: "Do tell him to bring us a half bottle of champagne and a sandwich."

A few minutes later I return, defying seasickness, to see what Sarah is doing. I find her prostrate on a sofa. She exclaims on seeing that I carry an immense glass containing a half bottle of champagne which I had fetched to exorcise nausea.

"But look here, you'll make yourself ill."

When I tell her that I am preparing myself to swallow an anti-seasick remedy grain by grain:

"You will granulate yourself far too much." And, turning to Seylor: "You see, he's a musician, and he's going to swallow a lot of minims, quite tiny minims." (*Minim* in French=*blanches*, and the pills were white). I leave her with her champagne and sandwich and Seylor, who hesitatingly settles down in a corner. Usually Sarah sleeps a little under these conditions. On deck I find Brémont and his wife in deck chairs. Deval, rather unquiet, asks me for pills and soon disappears into the depths of the boat.

Mlle. Labady gradually turns sky-blue, then

mauve, and she, too, vanishes from sight. The men of the company seem fairly settled, as are Saryta, really looking lovely to-day, and Blanche Dufrene, who has her child with her. I sit down in a corner near them and Mme. B., an excellent woman, poor and plain, who, her only living being a tobacconist's business, every year does some dressmaking to enable her to follow Sarah on her tours in the Spring.

At Dover, Sarah, not ill but uncomfortable, emerges from her cabin and gets on to the train.

There with Ullmann, Chameroy, and her niece, in a splendid Pullman car, she plays baccarat, whimsically, with a rather comic feverishness, and with looks made purposely fierce and greedy to amuse us.

In a short time she wins a hundred and sixty francs, and seems delighted.

Here we are in London. The platform is roped in, and several people await Sarah, among others the impresario, Maurice Grau, and some young girls who greet her with flowers and who shout joyfully "There she is!" on seeing her.

London, June 20th.

It is Sarah's first performance. The house is full, although she is to play *Lysiane*, a play by Romain Coolus, of which no one here has ever heard.

The curtain rises, the opening scenes are met with apathy, even with boredom. The actors mumble. But *Lysiane* is about to come on.

"That's she," says a "Personage". Truly it is she—it is Sarah—Sarah as a woman of forty, still charming and alluring, dressed in a white cloak lightly trimmed with fur. She wears a little black toque and a white boa. She is the embodiment of distinction—that distinction peculiar to women no longer young but youthful: a restrained elegance, a sure and discriminating taste.

No sooner has she come on than she is forcibly stopped. The whole house greets her with passionate applause.

Without changing her manner or attitude, she bows slightly, moved, smiling, and after a prolonged moment cuts the ovation short by proceeding with the interrupted dialogue. She plays the whole scene lightly, speaking quietly and in a high-pitched voice.

She displays to the friend who returns after a three years' absence all the grace of her mind and of a more gentle beauty. She has, among other effects, a simple change of position which she brings about by saying, "That is, I think, my handkerchief on the table". The execution of this "change over" is so simple that my neighbour leans to ask me whether it is part of the performance.

Her exit—a marvel of gracious simplicity, receives the same applause as her entry: the rest of the act is listened to with perfunctory civility.

In the second act—at the ball at her own house—Lysiane wears a pretty dress, green or pale blue, low-necked, a little lace on the bodice—

one of those gowns made famous by Sarah, which themselves contributed to her fame by establishing her as a type, a type unknown till her day, and since then the model for so many women.

It is noteworthy, moreover, that for all her "dresses of ceremony", for whatever occasion they are intended, she insists on that same Sarah Bernhardt-esque cut—a bodice draped to her figure and a skirt that clings more tightly round the legs than round the hips, giving the appearance of encircling her in a spiral.

Moreover, a spiral has always been the formula for Sarah. In all her movements the principle of the spiral obtains. When she sits, note that she sits in a spiral, her dress swirling round her, her train on the ground completing the spiral design which her head and bust carry out in the opposite direction above.

To-night she is astonishingly "herself". I have never seen her more "Sarah".

London, June 22nd.

I arrive at the end of the show and go into the Green Room. The performance is the *Dame aux Camélias*.

"Sh!" says Maurice Bernhardt, "it's the death scene."

It is indeed the moment when Sarah, alone, reads Père Duval's letter. With some of the actors I sit down behind the back cloth, and Sarah's voice can be heard, broken by sobs. Suddenly the barrel organ begins to play, the

window is pushed open, and Sarah, all in white, looks out.

This evening, they all say, she is acting with her whole being. A lady dressed in apple-green satin squats in the wings and looks at Sarah through a crack in the scenery. The act comes to an end. Guitry, Seylor, Denenbourg, Madame Boulanger are "on"; I listen intently, and without looking I can tell Sarah's acting.—It is intensely poignant when she says "Ah, what's wrong with me?"

Then a terrible silence during the long embrace. Then Armand's weeping.—Curtain.

The house bursts into swift applause. Sarah remains prostrate during the first raising of the curtain. It rises five, six, seven times to a stamping audience.

Sarah, a little weary, smiles through her pallor, thanking with eyes and gesture, her cheek on her clasped hands or both arms outstretched. She smoothes her hair with one hand, pants, seems exhausted.

In her dressing-room she confides to me that she is tired. She went in the afternoon to see Mrs. Patrick Campbell in *Pelleas and Melisande*. She finds it more tiring to go to a play than to act.

"Also," she adds, "I played very well to-night, and I'm exhausted. Indeed one cannot even play *La Dame aux Camélias* really well without being tired out.

She dresses, puts on a white, tailor-made gown, a pretty hat with pink roses; round her

neck she hangs a number of chains, whose pendants click together. At the stage door downstairs a closely packed crowd gathers—greet her respectfully, silently.

She gets into the landau; as it moves off with all of us, herself, Ullmann, Seylor, Saryta, Maurice and myself, she greets her adorers with a friendly nod, and to a man who takes off his hat she says: "Good-night, sir."

"How friendly they are," she says to me; "how deferential, what sympathy!"

It is quite true that the crowd who awaited Sarah at this door was very different from that at the Stage door in Paris—one that has often to be pushed back, so vulgar a curiosity do its members display.

As we agree that the *Dame aux Camélias* always carries away an English audience—"Because", says Sarah quickly, "it is a real drama of Love. Lovers always draw and always will draw".

The talk is of one thing and another. Sarah shows a childish pleasure at an illuminated sign which lights up and goes out on top of a house. Talking of Ellen Terry, whom I saw to-night in *The Merchant of Venice*, we discuss her beauty and the ugliness of certain women. On this subject Sarah is most amusing, and says things that are accurate and true. But as a rule she is tolerant, except of fat woman.

She tells me that as a little girl, walking with her mother in the Tuileries gardens, she saw an enormous lady seated on "two chairs". Her mother told her to look well, as it was Mlle.

Georges¹. Sarah, who had "never seen anything so vast except an elephant", began to scream.

London, June 23rd.

I await Sarah at the door of the theatre when she is expected at one o'clock for a matinée. The play, *La Dame*.

She arrives in high good humour and goes straight into her dressing-room. I take my leave of her, and with gravity and grace she curtseys to me.

Unable to be present at the whole performance, I arrived during the last act at the moment of the "death" and stand in the wings. The barrel organ sounds. . . . But what is happening! Absurd discordant cacophonous sounds are heard, and we are seized with uncontrollable laughter. Sarah comes to the window, astonished at this horrible noise. Seylor goes close to her and signs to her, laughing like mad. Sarah, feigning not to see, goes on with the speech, charged with tenderness. But as Seylor continues to giggle she interpolates "Now, that's enough"—a murmur of displeasure—and goes down stage as if fainting, chilled by the cold air of the street represented on the back cloth. In the wings there is a lot of chaff going on. I am asked whether it is new incidental music written by me. Guitry once more declares that he will never again act in this horrible play—he has quite made up his mind about that. He goes on to the stage, and I get behind the nearest flies. Sarah appears to

¹ The celebrated actress.

me to be less deeply moved than usual. In the well known "What is wrong with me?" her voice is admirably true. One feels it is the last flicker of life, but something indefinable is wanting. X. whispers to me, "She is acting perfunctorily to-day; what a difference from yesterday!" (So I am not mistaken.)

Now she has dropped dead and the applause begins—the applause of English matinées, the frenzied applause of women and girls. The first thing I say to Sarah is, "Madame, what do you think of the Barrel Organ!" But immediately I see that this is not a joking matter. . . . She finds this episode "odious".

"So they find it funny?" she says, outraged. She questions those round her: "Well, that barrel organ!—Who worked the barrel organ!"

The property manager, Steibler, comes forward.

"Madame, I prefer to give myself up at once, but I am not alone in my guilt. I left the instrument there behind the door for four minutes. Someone took advantage of my absence to tamper with the handle. Does Madame think I was amused at this! I beg of you, Madame, for my sake, to forbid anyone to touch my properties."

His indignation disarms Sarah. She goes on to her dressing-room.

"I'm tired," she says, wiping her forehead and her neck. "Also Guitry let me fall too soon without first pushing me back. He doesn't like that part and despite his talent he shews it.—And of course he was laughing all the time about

the organ, and when I find no response I can't act."

She is not angry but vexed. She says she will dine at the theatre before acting again to-night.

"Maria," she says to her dresser, "that night dress won't do for Croydon to-morrow night. Have we brought the old one?"

"No, Madame."

"Well, you must wash out the ends of the sleeves, but only the ends of the sleeves."

June 24th.

Invited to lunch at Croydon by the Mayor, Sarah set out at eleven this morning. They played the *Dame aux Camélias*. She returns at six. I go and meet her at the station. As she passes the barrier a collector asks her rather brusquely for her ticket. Sarah points to Ullmann following her and says:

"Ask gentleman."

The collector doesn't understand her and seems about to put a hand on her arm to prevent her from going through. Then Sarah thunders at him with the voice she used to assume in *Théodora* to say "Gag him": "Ah! not touch", makes a movement of disgust and goes on her way to the confusion of the official. She smiles and says to me—"I simply cannot bear to be touched, to be stopped—my heart beats and I see red."

She gets into her carriage and returns to her hotel. I escort Marie and Dominga, the dressers, in a cab.

We go up, and Sarah sits down to dinner

before going to play *Lysiane*. She eats two poached eggs and a little cold roast beef, drinks Apollinaris and whisky, liking a frequent change of drinks.

This evening she plays *Lysiane*, which doesn't tire her, then gets into her open landau, a lace scarf over her head. She tells me the Mayor of Croydon was charming to her and that among other attentions he crossed the rails carrying an arm-chair, so that she should not have to stand and wait for the train.

"Pity me," she says, "I have to go to the photographer to-morrow."

I am told she is unbearable on these occasions, that she won't budge from a pose she likes, however badly lit or disadvantageous it may be. All the proofs which she dislikes she has destroyed at once. I have seen charming ones among these, but for some detail of feature or poise she destroys them ruthlessly. Once she said to Nadar:

"Why do you always make me ugly and black? I look like Tessandier."¹

London, June 25th.

This morning a sitting at the photographer's—Downey. The whole Studio awaits her with joyous impatience.

It rains, and it was feared she might not arrive. However, she does arrive at eleven with Clairin, Seylor, and Marie. Very chilly—she finds the weather "freezing". Actually it is a hot day.

She greets old Downey loudly and affectionately. She has known him for twenty years.

"Still young," she says, patting his shoulder.

¹ A well known actress.

The old man, a true artist, is radiant. He is deeply devoted to Sarah.

We go up to the studio by a dark little staircase. Sarah is very clumsy about going up and down stairs, and she likes a hand to guide her or a shoulder to lean on. She is in a very good mood. She takes off her pretty Leghorn travelling hat and puffs out her hair before the mirror with a precise movement of her forefinger.

She raises her eyebrows a little, and, shining with youth, comes before the camera.

First she poses in a white cloth dress, her new dog, Jack, by her side.

Then, after various poses, all from the repertory of attitudes she has created and fixed, she changes her dress behind a screen and puts on Lysiane's travelling dress, grey alpaca with a coat to match lined with a thin pink material.

She poses two or three times more. I tell her how successful is this kind of skirt which she has invented and continues to wear in defiance of changing fashion—a shape clinging to the legs and swirling out about the ankles. This undulating line is characteristic of Sarah Bernhardt's silhouette.

We go down, and old Downey asks her once more to write something in his album. He gives her as tribute one of his photographs of her as Phédre framed and glazed. As thanks she taps him on his bald head and calls him "darling".

We get into the carriage again.

"Jojotte," Sarah says to Clairin, "you're lurching with us?"

"No."

"But look here Jojotte, you really are a swine, you might have told your relatives (his sister and niece) that you were lunching with me." A festive drive home. She says I am a scallywag: 'But you are forgiven because you amuse me.'

Joyfully I accept this compliment.

In the course of her gossip she tells us that one of her former maids having deceived her husband with a coachman, the said husband came in tears to tell his tale to Sarah.

"A coachman, I tell you, just a coachman. If she had at least taken one of Madame's friends. . . ."

We reach the hotel and go upstairs. In the corridor Sarah sketches a little dance, "very distinguished".

We all go to her sitting-room, where luncheon is laid, and settle down to lunch.

We are having coffee and someone knocks. It is Miss L. This romantic old maid is rather spotty, with light eyes and a prominent nose, and is one of Sarah's adorers, one indeed of hundreds like herself. She lives only for Sarah and by Sarah. She has made of her sitting-room an altar sacred to Sarah, loaded with photographs—with trifles she has worn and even touched—a pair of gloves, a garter, some artificial violets, a hairpin. And this altar is eternally renewed, dressed with flowers, lit up.

"Oh how pleased I am to see you!" cries Sarah, holding out her hands to her.

Miss L. kisses her sacramentally, then sits on the edge of an arm-chair, her eyes downcast.

Sarah speaks to her kindly, asks a thousand questions.

She answers: "Yes, Madame chérie; No, Madame chérie."

If any one moves or addresses her she starts up. From time to time she raises her eyes to Sarah, then lowers them with a remorseful smile. Suddenly she goes up to her idol and whispers to her:

"The day before yesterday I was at the performance. Oh, magnificent, magnificent, beloved lady! May I, oh, may I go again tomorrow?" And as Sarah answers her smilingly: "But of course, every day", she murmurs "Thank you, oh, thank you!"

She gets up to go at last, genuflects, goes to the door, and before going out blows a chaste kiss to Sarah and curtseys tentatively.

A concert of laughter follows the closing of the door. But Sarah, very angry, commands silence.

"You are all stupid and spiteful. Why make fun of that poor woman, so worthy, so quiet? She adores me, she harms no one; she is cultivated and distinguished, her zeal for me is touching, yes, touching. I like her very much, really very much indeed, and I forbid anyone to mock at her."

Then after a few seconds' silence—very seriously: "I think she drinks."

Laughter bursts out again, and Sarah rises, half annoyed, half smiling, takes her sables, and flings them over her back like a wallet. "You are all absurd," she says, shrugs her shoulders, and goes out of the room.

Evening, June 25th,

All the afternoon Sarah rehearsed *Frou Frou*, which she is to play to-night. She asks Richepin, who has come to see her, for a play he showed her.

“My *Gitana!*” she cries.

A talk with Richepin. We discuss the “unique” fame of Sarah. He told me the following:

When he was touring with her in Scandinavia the train had stopped in the night at a wayside station. As the delay in starting seemed unduly long, Richepin went to see what was happening. He learnt that some hundred peasants were on the line, declaring that they would not move until they had seen Sarah Bernhardt. They had to wake Sarah, who, wrapped in furs, came to the door, smiled at them, threw them flowers, kissed her hand to them. This done they dispersed and let the train proceed.

The tale reminds me of one Professor Robin told me. When he was travelling in Bessarabia with one of his friends they took a canoe to cross a river. The man who paddled it was a savage who could hardly speak even in his village dialect. Robin and his companion, in the course of conversation, mentioned Sarah’s name. Immediately the guide cocked an ear, broke into smiles and murmured repeatedly in confusion—“Sarah Bernhardt—Sarah Bernhardt”.

26th June.

Sarah rehearsed to-day from two o’clock till a quarter past seven—*Magda* by Sudermann,

Adrienne, and, from nine o'clock till one in the morning, *La Femme de Claude* and *Julie*. She also rehearsed *La Pluie et le Beau Temps*, a one-act farce by Gozlan that she is to play with Coquelin at a charity Festival given by the Duchess of York (now Queen Mary).

27th June.

Sarah returned from rehearsal at one in the morning.

To-day she gets to the theatre after luncheon and rehearses *Julie*, then *La Femme de Claude* (six acts), then once more Gozlan's little play. I prompt for the latter.

"You prompt better than Pitou. I engage you."

It is evident that she is exhausted. She can hardly utter her replies, she just murmurs them, and yet she keeps the values, there is nothing out of proportion. Quietly, low, almost inaudibly, she utters a forcible passage, then a subdued one in a still lower voice, a mere whisper, the ghost of a voice.

I marvel at the way in which she indicates—in which she sketches in the whole at a rehearsal. It is a design in relief which suggests the colours.

In the third act of *La Femme de Claude*, as Deval, leaning over her, whispers insults, she whistles a little tune at him, making fun of him charmingly, grimacing to make him laugh.

After the rehearsal she has a couch brought into the dressing-room and sleeps an hour before dinner.

This evening *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. At first I am astonished, then retrospectively extremely interested. Sarah now makes quite a different impression on me. Her presentation of *Adrienne* is as accurate as conjecture can make it.

The actresses of the eighteenth century were not what they are to-day. Less received into society than now, they were fundamentally more presentable than are many of the present profession. They had, in their bearing and in their language, some of that reserve characteristic of the *Ancien Régime*—and we do not imagine *Adrienne*, *Clairon*, even “the *Dangeville*” *Ponsin*, noisy and half mad.

In reading the lives of these actors and actresses of the eighteenth century one is struck by the decorum that they brought to their breaches of morals. Everything is in harmony with this perfection of tone. *La Clairon*, capricious fantastic, unbearable, never lost a certain majestic arrogance. The others, respectively passionate, light, or malicious, were always distinguished and elegant. *Sophie Armould*’s jests are more veiled, more discreet than the naïve remarks of the women of the world of to-day.

In the costumes worn by actresses of the eighteenth century vulgarity was impossible. Moreover, Romanticism had not come, confusing everything, changing the social focus, giving to the passions a freedom and a character of “adventurousness” which they have retained.

Bohemianism did not exist.

The actors of the *Théâtre Français* were men of

letters. It is always a fresh surprise on reading their memoirs to note the careful education they had received or given themselves, their classical knowledge, their intelligence. Possibly they were without "inspiration"—what we so easily term "genius"; or, if they had it, it was displayed, as always at that period, by a golden mean, pruned and presented with taste and judgment.

It was thus, then, all the great men of the time, all the true geniuses proffered their intellectual wealth. Good taste informed all, no exaggeration was suffered, no expression that was not curbed by good taste based on talent.

The only exaggerated "great men" of the period were Rousseau and Rameau (both held to be mad) and Gluck (who was German). And here too, what restraint in their language! What a dignified conception of art!

It therefore seemed probable that no one would give a less realistic presentation of Adrienne Lecouvreur as she (probably) was, than Sarah—the incarnation of all that Romanticism has added to the actor's art.

But from the moment of her entry in the second act in Roxane's beautiful costume, the oriental cloak on her shoulders, turban and veil surmounting her forehead, holding a little morocco-bound volume of Racine, concentrated, attentive, calm, and grave, her voice steady, her diction clear, I saw that she had once more transmuted her soul; no longer was she Sarah, but Adrienne.

"But what are you seeking?" the frivolous *Abbé* asks her, fluttering about.

“The Truth.”

In this answer Sarah conveys a serious grace which strikes the keynote of her whole rendering of this personality. In this whole act, which is all sweetness and serenity, with at the most two or three moments of agitation, there is a complete and perpetual balance of tone and feeling.

And I then recall Bartet in this part: Bartet, who excels in chaste dignity, in calm, in concentration of feeling.

But to the same conception Sarah brings methods peculiarly her own. An unequalled ease in its execution. And then to-night she seems incredibly youthful. That head-dress, that costume. While she recites “The Two Pigeons”, at the moment when, leaning on Maurice de Saxe’s shoulder, she murmurs in a delicious and gentle voice:

“What will you do?

Will you forsake the brother that you love?

Oh! of all evils absence is the worst”,

I tell myself that there is revealed to me the Sarah of bygone years: she whose legend I have always heard, she who is sometimes contrasted with the Sarah of to-day. It is lyric beauty in its transience, the Sarah of Dona Sol of Zaik, she of whom Felicia Mallet said:

“It seemed to me impossible that she was tangible; she was as smoke, as a puff of air.”

Yes, at this moment she is all that. And yet it is the Sarah of to-day, with all her rich experience, her dramatic skill and technique—at the

zenith of her genius and free of all the charming follies of youth.

In the second act she wears a rose-coloured dress and a great hood on her fair, lightly-powdered hair—a watercolour of Bandour's.

She has one particularly happy touch: it is after the scene in the dark with the Princess, when it again grows light and the Princess has vanished. Sarah remains upright, confounded, her eyes on the door, while behind her the others talk.

The third act displays extraordinary variations on the theme of jealousy. It is during the dialogue, full of hate and bitterness, with the Princess of Bouillon, a royal autocrat, that the great actress, Adrienne, shews the concealed emotion, the almost unwilling perfidy brought about by the jealousy of an overflowing heart.

I was eager to know whether she would say the lines from *Phèdre* in the same way as when she herself plays *Phèdre*. She says them quite differently. Instead of uttering them in a feverish crescendo she says them slowly, in jerks, with painful halts, and as she approaches the two final lines by which she strikes down the Princess, she slows down and raises her voice. It is like the majestic and terrible rise of wind or sea.

She has replaced the movement which so struck me at the line:

“Show the world a face that scorns to blush”—
by another gesture more apt to the condition of this production. She stretches out an arm in the

direction of the Princess and points at her, her hand thrown open with a little motion of the forearm of disgust and contempt.

During the last few moments of this act her countenance preserves the impression of disfigurement caused by all the shocks she has experienced, and it is almost reeling, her eyes frightened, her cheeks pale, that she craves permission to withdraw. The curtseys are of a decorous grace. Then from afar she bows to Maurice, and it is on drawing herself upright that she reels back and faints in the arms of the horrified court ladies.

The "death" in *Adrienne Lecouvreur* is considered one of Sarah's masterpieces. It really grips one and has a realistic quality unusual to her.

It is death by poison, and one is made to perceive the effects of the poison. But I very much deplore the episode of hallucination in which Adrienne imagines herself to be playing Corneille's *Psyché*. It does not move one, and merely chills one's emotions.

When, in her arm-chair, Sarah, in torturing agony, utters hoarse and shrill screams at short, even intervals on one note, it grips the heart.

Calvé in her box weeps, overcome.

And when, after her last breath, she sinks into the arms of Michonnet and of Maurice, the theatre rings with applause of a kind unknown in Paris. Ten times the exhausted actress is recalled. At the last call Sarah opens her arms and says audibly "Merci."

But her voice is lost in the noise of stamping and cheers.

London, June 28th.

Before the first act of a *matinée* of *Phèdre*. The house is already full. I knock at Sarah's door and find her in her costume before the mirror. I see by her manner that she is annoyed.

"Good-day," she says hastily, without shaking hands. "I am in an awful state of nerves. Would you believe it, I have nothing here that I need to dress for the part—My dressers arrive *now*. It is abominable" (her special word) "it is abominable to have to hurry like this. I don't know at what time they had luncheon nor how long they took to come here from the hotel. It is annoying," she says, putting a final pin into a drapery, "to be so exasperated before playing such an arduous part, to be distracted by such idiocies."

Marie and Dominga keep mum. Saryta, sitting in a corner, also keeps quiet.

At this moment Emile comes in.

"Emile," says Sarah crossly—"what time did they have lunch?"

"At twelve, madame."

"Well, they might have fed earlier. It is really unbearable. I arrive an hour before the performance and find nothing I need—Emile, since you come here every morning, you might at least make it your business—be my dresser—as the dressers are useless. Come!" she snaps at Marie, "see to this, for heaven's sake."

Embarrassed by the culprits' confusion, I discreetly go to my stall.

The first scene between Théràmène and Hippolyte, not very well acted, is received with indifference. But the audience sits up attentive at the words, "It is the Queen". All eyes are fixed on the portico.

She comes, leaning on her two servants, following *Œnone* in tears. She is astoundingly beautiful.

In the whole of Greek Art there is no more imposing or touching figure.

La Champmesle was probably very charming and pretty, but over and above the fact that she did not wear classical dress, she cannot, being of the seventeenth century, have had this languid sinuous bearing.

La Clairon, majestic as she was, cannot have evoked the pity we feel for this unwilling sinner. She had no appeal, all her contemporaries agree on this point.

Rachel was magnificent and terrible but had she this divine grace under her dark, heavy coronal of hair? And yet certainly *Rachel*, at her first entry, must have made an impression similar to *Sarah's*.

Both (the proof is in *Ristori's Mémoires*) had a similar conception of this entrance. But I can hardly believe that *Rachel* was able to give, as *Sarah* does, the idea of a woman mortally wounded by love. Her entry is entirely individual and is one of the most beautiful things ever seen: all that has been conceived in the purest type of

sculpture is here combined with the ravages, the tortures love can impose on a human being.

It is beauty ennobled by suffering. One can hardly note, alas! all the details of this presentation. One would have to devote a whole volume to it, and still it would be impossible to convey, even in a minute chronicle, the impression produced by those divine instants. Again, how can one describe the almost imperceptible changes which knit up the living meshes of this precious fabric?

But nevertheless one must note and praise certain details which convey a whole microcosm of emotion:

The "thou hast named him", said with a swift intensity, with the head turned away in shame, eyelids lowered.

The magnificent lines:

"Ye Gods—would I were far in forests' shade!" murmured in a sort of chant.

"Why cannot I through blinding clouds of dust

Discern a chariot in its headlong flight?"

A quickening of voice and gesture—the perception of a distant vision.

And the "It was known to thee" of the fourth act. A longish pause, during which Sarah turns her head slowly towards CEnone, her jaw firmly set, her eyes half closed, sharp, terrible. Two seconds, and then, very quickly, in a clear, dry tone on one note: "It was known to thee". And

her lips close immediately, but her eyes still pierce those of her follower.

During the invocation to Venus, spoken in a gush of hope, the gesture (so beautiful that Madame Grandet herself in the midst of her pre-occupation with her own part owns that she was dazzled by it) endows her whole personality with an almost sacerdotal bearing. She seems to be at this moment a priestess who invokes her goddess. The gesture is simple. The right arm outstretched almost straight, letting the white, gold-embroidered cloak fall, the left hand on her heart, the eyes raised.

Sarah, when I go to see her after her third act, tells me she is not in the mood.

"God has not come," she says. "Perhaps he will come to-night."

But in the fourth act sublimity reaches its heights (she herself feels this), and the house is moved by such strength, such passion, such tempestuous rendings.

The tragic actress's terrifying voice, crushing the unhappy and terrible *C enone*, grips the heart, and the audience vibrates in frenzied enthusiasm.

In the fifth act Sarah is transformed—a living corpse.

"Medea brought a poisonous phial to Athens long ago."

Indeed it is that, the wretched woman has chosen a terrible death. The skin of her face is drawn over her cheek bones, livid, withered. Under the draperies of the royal cloak even the

limbs seem shrunken. The proud folds seem to be those of a winding-sheet, dry and cold.

In a voice as of beyond the grave she confesses in this supreme moment her double crime of love and falseness.

There once more Sarah gives the impression of a human being given over utterly to pain.

With each word she spends some of her little remaining breath. Looking at her, one feels penetrated by the cold which already numbs her body.

Racine's promise is fulfilled. The heroine, having inspired pity, demands sympathy; the victim of fate, the victim sacrificed by Venus to her pitiless son, she dies in pain and uncomplaining in the arms of her servants, who can hardly hold up the body, heavy already in its eternal sleep.

Phèdre, interpreted by Sarah, will always remain one of the most perfect things given to our hearing and sight on earth.

After the performance, in her dressing-room, Sarah talks to me through a curtain as she takes off her jewels. She is satisfied with the fourth act.

Saturday evening.

This evening she acts *Frou Frou*, having dined at the theatre.

How she acts! After the great victim of fate, this little frivolous bird, mad with love of pleasure.—Ill too, but ill with a modern malady.

The first act, as Sarah said to me, is too youthful for her. She presents it, however, with ad-

mirable skill. In a chestnut-coloured riding-habit, the skirt lifted to show a patent leather boot, a little round hat, and a crop in her hand, she is charming.

In the dialogue with Valréas, which she sketches in lightly according to that artistic formula which is all her own, she shows an ease and distinction which fix the character from the first scene. It is always very interesting to note how Sarah carries out commonplace passages. She does it straightforwardly, as it should be done, for there are certain patterns which recur invariably, inevitably as do certain strokes of the brush necessary to a picture, as do certain customary normal harmonies, which one expects and which everyone uses in much the same way.

Sarah, great and experienced artist that she is, renders them naturally, but she cannot help introducing a personal note. Thus when Brigand comes in and she says to him, taking his arm as they go out: "M. de Valréas said things to me, such things", she speaks this line as a simple and decorous actress would do. And yet in the second "such things" there is an almost imperceptible intonation, a variation the ear can hardly apprehend, but which has a whole world of distinction, of tradition. It is the difference between simple technique and superior talent, the fraction of an inch that in Michael Angelo's Creation of Man differentiates between man's finger and that of God.

In the second act, comparatively easy to play, there is the rehearsal scene in which Sarah is

“inimitable”. The tone she assumes for this performance is well observed. It is the full tone of foolish asides, the badly poised voice of the woman of the world who likes to pose as an actress.

Here at the moment of the kiss Frou-Frou’s hesitations are shown with a comical and very telling humour, and she says “Oh well, well, skip the passage, that’s all” with all the vivacity of a witty Paris lady.

Sarah’s talent is able even to fill the intervals. Between two acts she can, in ten or fifteen minutes, live six months, a week, a day.

In this third act, from the time she comes on, even before she has spoken, we see she is no longer the same Frou Frou.

How she plays the scene with Louise, and above all how she leads her. Her mimicry during Louise and Sartory’s dialogue is absolute, and when Sarah at last bursts out, the force of a thousand violent emotions is felt, the urge of a long suppressed resentment.

The fourth act, although well played, did not strike me particularly, unless perhaps when Sarah throws herself at her husband’s feet imploring him not to fight a duel. She uses a voice I have not heard before. A hoarse voice stifled with tears heard through repressed sobs. She weeps, weeps, weeps, the tears streaming down her cheeks, but during the tender moments of waiting that she punctuates with starts, with interrupted phrases, “No, I cannot—no—no—it’s abominable to wait thus”, her tears cease, petrified. I also noticed the beginning of a nerve

storm as she knelt there after her husband's departure.

The last act of *Frou Frou* is—so Sarah says—“the death of a little Paris sparrow.”

I am in the wings and Sarah is in black, a lace scarf on her fair hair. She stands behind the door to await her entry.

“I have just made myself sad before ‘going on,’” she says to me.

Marvellous technique of the nerves, to sharpen one's sensibilities at will! An ear to the door, she listens to what is happening on the stage, and behold! she is weeping, her eyes fill with real tears. She turns round, almost bashful, smiling a little. “It's quite true,” she says, “I really am sad.”

And Chamery, who just then opens the door to fetch *Frou Frou*, finds her in tears, swooning.—“Ah, my poor father”, she says in the wings to intensify her grief, putting her arm on the actor's shoulder. And she “goes on” sighing, sobbing, dying.

Monday, *Adrienne Lecouvreur*. I reach the wings at the moment when Adrienne is reciting the lines from *Phèdre*. I stood down in the wings. Sarah has just turned her head in my direction. Her pale face quivers with anger: her hand points rigidly to the *Princesse de Bouillon*.

“I know my crimes,
Cenone, and am not of those bold women
Who, in their wickedness enjoying peace,
Can show the world a face that knows no blush.”

She utters "that knows no blush" with that strange movement of her head so characteristic of her, capable of the most fervent affirmation, of the most convinced denial, a *violent* movement, it is from one side to the other.

I go into the audience to hear the last act. It is moving, and yet it does not move me—perhaps (and I am probably very foolish) because of her powdered hair carefully dressed under the little square of lace. Yes, I'm sure it is because of that.

Sarah in the death scene exerts herself terribly. It exhausts me: her nerves are stretched to breaking-point, she knows no bounds. She suffers, she screams, she becomes livid, And this evening she perhaps spins out this terrible agony.

The curtain falls, I go round. Sarah seems done! She is called six times and really has to rouse herself to go and bow.

At the last call she leans heavily on the arm of the old man Lacroix, and, staggering, her eyes half closed, goes back to her dressing-room, where she collapses into an arm-chair, her eyes shut, her hands ice-cold. We stand round her. Her fingers cling convulsively to Lacroix's arm. We give her smelling salts, Eau-de-Cologne, Marie and Dominga dab her forehead. She opens her eyes slowly and gazes with a hard fixity at the people standing round her. She breathes deeply a few times, half opens her eyes, and gradually comes to.

Lacroix, moved and trembling a little, says to me:

“It’s the same thing every time she plays this d——d piece.”

In truth, at the end of the fifth act of *Adrienne*, Sarah has acute nervous exhaustion and often faints, as this evening.

“It is,” she says, “a kind of momentary cerebral anæmia brought about by such terrific efforts. My circulation stops, my arms and legs grow cold.”

She is going to play this piece all the week in the provinces. I try to dissuade her. But she insists. “The *Dame aux Camélias* is known to satiety,” she wants to give something new. I guess what she does not say; she needs money.

I go away much moved by the scene, and a thousand thoughts besiege my mind.

CHAPTER III

1900

AT SARAH'S HOME—ATHLETES AT HOME—SARAH IS A MUSICIAN—THE COOK'S TEA—DEATH OF L'AIGLON—FIFTEEN HUNDRED FRANCS' WORTH OF MYSTERY

Paris, July 31st.

IN the dark bedroom shut off from all noise, Sarah, dressed in a simple white house-dress without jewels, sits by the open window playing Halma with Renée Parny. There are also Valentine Feydeau seated on the ground, Madame de Najac on a pouf, Saryta, all in black, looking very pretty.

Sarah gives me a hand whilst with the other she feverishly and abruptly pushes the little men into the holes, her eyes fixed on the chequer board, taking no notice of the conversation, entirely taken up with the game, which she plays with decision, enchanted with the idea of vanquishing her young and beautiful opponent.

She seems tired. She is pale and a little puffy round the eyes. But what an air of pride on her fine and distinguished face!

I sit on the "parlour bicycle". The game having come to an end, Sarah notices my mount.

"Come on, do a little cycling," she says, smiling mockingly.

She does it every morning. She gets up, "throws off her clothes" and mounts, having put something on the saddle "so that it shan't be too chilly". She also has a sculling-boat on which she takes exercise, grasping the sculls so tightly that sometimes she can hardly pull.

I tell her she should put a book in front of her during these moments of "parlour sport", as I used to do when I was practising.

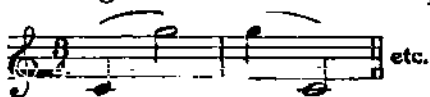
She then tells us that her mother used to make her practise scales at six in the morning. Having placed her daughter at the piano, she used to return to bed. Sarah, supposing her to have fallen asleep, would stop playing, but used then to hear a terrifying voice:

"Well, what are you doing?"

And quickly Sarah returned to her scales. She hated the piano. And when I remind her that she once played me Weber's *La Dernière Pensée*, she enumerates the pieces she has learnt. "I used to play *Les Cloches* very well."

(I wonder what this can have been? Certainly not Lefébure-Wély's horrible *Cloches du Monastère*, which is well beyond Sarah's musical grasp.)

She used to play a piece to them by George Sand, called *L'Antre*. She had, so she says, a charming voice, and a professor whose name she cannot remember wanted her to work at it, but it was too boring to do and made her spit blood.



It was only later that she acquired those thrilling chest notes with which she gets such fine effects. At that time she had only melodious sounds.

She no longer dares to play the piano on the stage, as for instance in the *Femme de Claude*. She could not do it, for she is no longer at the age when one "dares all without counting the cost." When she was first on the stage she used to play the piano in performances or sing, as for instance in the *Malade Imaginaire* with Bressard.

In *Le Passant* it was not Massenet's music that she sang but that of Artin, the conductor of the orchestra of the Odéon, "because it was simpler". In that of Massenet there are "shakes." And, nodding her head and raising her eyebrows, Sarah hums vague snatches of the Serenade.

Tuesday, July 31st.

We discuss her voice, which has grown so much in strength and in quality, and come to talking of her first interpretation of *Phèdre*, which was, so to speak, improvised. One day, Mlle. Roussel, to get I forget what rise in salary, declared that she would only play *Phèdre* (a week ahead) on condition of this rise. Perrin then asked Sarah if she felt able to take on the part of *Phèdre*.

"What risk do I run? They won't kill me if I do it badly?" She went to Regnier, who said to her—"You are very foolish. You stake everything on an idiotic undertaking; you will strain your voice".

And he in turn went to Perrin, who said to him, "I assure you most earnestly that she is right to want to try—leave her alone."

In a week she learnt the part. The two first acts were applauded.

Occasionally a Paris audience is in that receptive state when it senses a personality not quite like others.

The third act was a little feeble, in the fourth her voice broke two or three times. The fifth act was a brilliant success.¹

Madame de Najac asserts that Sarah early in her career had a different conception of Phèdre, and that she was not then as great in the part as now. Sarah protests that she always conceived Phèdre thus and acted it as she does now. "But now," she adds, "it is, of course, on a bigger scale." And she says to the Countess:

"It impressed you in that way because you had seen Rachel and she played it in an academic, classical manner, and I at once threw into my rendering all that a woman feels who loves "to distraction."

She expresses surprise that Ristori should blame Rachel for appearing exhausted at her entry. "But how stupid," she says, very alert and with that conquering smile which is her chief weapon in discussion, and seems to say, "But that is self-evident"——

"What, this woman who has not eaten for I

¹Sarah has often told me that Offenbach, the conductor at the *Théâtre Français*, had at once seen what she was and what she would be, and when she was criticised or teased always said to her: "You have the stuff in you."

don't know how many days! Enone says to her "Lo, many days you have no sleep, no food."

I: Moreover, such deep desire, so ardent, so ceaseless, would it not exhaust like the worst physical pain, which it actually is, leaving a terrible fatigue!

Sarah: And then think that this woman is no more than a rag torn between two tortures. She loves passionately (and in that there is nothing surprising—she is young and lovely: that love is easy to understand). But it is forbidden her by all the forces that govern her life.

Then the conversation turns on chastity, and Valentine Feydeau says she thinks clothes are indecent and that it is far more natural and purer to go about naked.

Sarah keeps the ball rolling and upholds Valentine's theory. She quotes savages and people of classic times.

I point out to her that in Greece men were comparatively naked, but women very much clothed.

Sarah is eloquent, her speech is effortless, apposite and distinguished, except when she purposely stresses her opinions by some cruder word. Her actions, when she argues, follow her words—she uses her hands to help. She stands, so to speak, face to face with her opponent and from a distance shakes his position by the combined strength of speech and action. She can raise her voice and dominate a raging flood of

discussion. Then, quiet in the midst of the silence, she marshals her arguments with a distinct hammering force, a perception which guesses, penetrates, anticipates arguments, separates them, distinguishes them and fights them one by one.

And when she feels she has come to the end of her arguments, that she has not succeeded in convincing, or that she must convince still further, she submerges the whole in a lava-like flood, encircling, irresistible, which carries all away.

There is tea. I bring her some. Sarah tastes it, grimaces abruptly, and spits it into the cup.

“What on earth have you put into it?”

“Tea,” I answer, smiling at the question.

But Sarah is nervous and anxious. She says she is terrified of poison and, quite in earnest, wonders what is going to happen. “Since I tasted that tea my tongue is sore.” She summons her butler, he protests that he is innocent and says, “It is the cook”.

“Call her—no, don’t go down, call her by the speaking-tube—no good warning her.”

While we wait for the cook to come up she shows great impatience, is angry at the carelessness of servants, and almost utters certain suspicions.

The cook comes in—a great big woman.

“With what did you make this tea?” says Sarah in a dramatic voice.

“With the water from the kettle.”

“No, that’s not true—it is disgusting.”

“But, Madame——”

"Don't tell fibs, it's some filth you put into the water, or else it's dirty water. Anyway taste—taste! Here! It's frightful!"

"But, Madame, I don't know."

"Well, you should know, one doesn't poison people to tell them afterwards that one 'doesn't know'."

The cook is accustomed to abuse. She goes away in silence. Calmed down, Sarah returns to her game. The maid comes to ask whether she wants fresh tea made.

"Yes, but I hope I shan't be poisoned again."

Madam de Najac speaks with horror of the murder of King Humbert.

Sarah does not think there is anything shattering in it.

"He was an ugly man, hideous, my dear Countess, with the eyes of a devil and the moustaches of a mandarin."

"He didn't care about the arts. I detested that, so there you are. Oh, how ugly he was!"

Sarah's face expresses a comic horror.

"And then, dear Countess, listen. A slater who falls off the roof and cracks his skull on the pavement—that's just as sad. It's the destiny of kings, so why worry?"

She touches with horror on the murder of the Empress of Austria—"But that Humbert!"

A few minutes later Sarah is talking of old Olga de Lagrenée and decides she was a mad spark. And she relates, amidst bursts of laughter, that at a garden party at the English Embassy she saw a lady coming up who said to her:

"You don't know me."

"Indeed I do," Sarah answered, smiling—"how can you think that?"

"Then," said the unknown, "tell me my name."

Sarah, ill at ease, stammered—"Oh, you have agitated me, I can't remember at all. Oh, but how ridiculous! A name I know so well. Help me, Madame, Madame——"

"—Madame de Petigny."

"Ah, that's it—dear Madame de Petigny——"

"Not a bit of it!—I am Mademoiselle de Lagrenée." And she turned on her heel.

In telling this story Sarah screams with laughter, putting her head into the curtain in paroxysms of laughter. And as I exclaim, "What bad taste on your part to make such a bad joke!" she answers me in all sincerity: "Oh, that didn't matter, we were such friends."

She tells of the oblivion that comes over one with regard to certain faces. She tells an amusing story with regard to the Prince of Wales (Edward VII) and the King of Greece, and another about an encounter she had with the Queen of Holland. The Queen had received her in audience and, Sarah sitting beside her, she was talking to Sarah on some subject of great interest. Then the Royal Lady got up. Sarah, who did not at that time know the rules of Court behaviour, and who, moreover, was much interested in the conversation, cried: "Oh no, do stay a little longer, there is no great hurry. Sit down again, I beg of you, sit down." The Queen sat down. . . .

Sarah, in her dressing-room, saying good-bye to the Countess, teases her, says that Brisci, the Italian murderer, from her point of view, performed an admirable deed of valour and self-sacrifice.—“That is undeniable”.

But the Countess is troubled by these subversive notions and says *au revoir*. Sarah politely gives her an arm and escorts her downstairs.

To my last farewell she answers with her effective little gesture—finger on lip.

31st—Evening.

Action, with Sarah, fills out her part with a marvellous accompaniment. It gives shadow and subtlety to the text, defines the meaning, delays or prolongs the bearing of a phrase, reducing or increasing its meaning at will. For a musician it is an interesting study from the point of view of accompaniments and their value.

August 2nd.

In the studio. She is sculpting a fair woman whom I recognise, having seen her at Mme. Lemaire's (when she posed as Ophelia). Sarah is doing the head of a dead girl held in a crab's claws. This composition is called “The Kiss of the Sea”. Sarah is standing up, absorbed in her work, whilst conversation goes on round her. I speak of Madame—— and Sarah, with a few reserves, praises her.

When I think of the way that woman spoke of her!

August 3rd.

This evening before dinner I went to put flowers round the mirror in Sarah's dressing-room. She arrived while we were working, in a light dress, soft and charming, and with a very pretty black cloak. They give her papers—accounts.

“Dominga, Marie, can't you attend? Make me some tea.”

She holds the papers in one hand, her eye-glasses in the other. She reads while the papers are explained to her. Then she gets up, looks at herself in the glass, smiles, and welcomes Dubury's daughter, who has come to Paris for a few days. This girl has been winning prizes at examinations.

Sarah says, kissing her:

“Well, you've carried off all the prizes.”

“Twelve,” the girl answers modestly.

Sarah is astonished at her coolness. She moves about and stops before the flowers. She thanks me and reminds me that she had preserved the other floral frame for seven whole months, even when it was quite faded.

This evening *L'Aiglon*, last acts. When we reach her box Sarah is stretched out on the sofa, talking.

We talk of one thing and another. She is exquisite in this white uniform with decorations and a black stock.

Her light eyes gleam softly above the red of her lips. She gets up at the Stage Manager's call and tells us to go to her stage-box.

From there we see the fourth act. She is astounding for the restraint of her performance and for her discreet bearing.

When she gives Guitry the dish, she hands it with an abrupt movement which makes one of the rolls fall off. At the moment when she speaks of the "Hands of Josephine" she is divine,—such a melancholy, noble silhouette that in looking at her one almost forgets to listen to the incomparable voice which rests on the deep notes with the drawn out sweetness of an alto.

Afterwards in her dressing-room she is on a couch surrounded by visitors of which one, Monsieur de L., R——'s secretary, a fat, gossipy man—tries to convince Sarah that she will be decorated. Sarah displays a quite unconcerned indifference and smiles almost ironically, saying it is whispered that she will also be decorated by the Chamber of Commerce.

I ask her whether she has *Les Palmes*. She does not appreciate the witticism and is almost annoyed.

"You can imagine I should not have accepted that decoration."

I try to explain, but there is no opportunity.

In the fifth act, under the white limelight, Sarah seems diaphanous, although the uniform is not slimming.

Before the sixth she leans on my arm to go up the steps which lead to the stage, and her hand leaves a trace of *ambre* which still persists.

Later, in her dressing-room, we talk. She considers, I don't know why, that Frédéric¹ has a

¹M. Frederic de Madrazo—artist, son of the author's brother-in-law.

good voice for the theatre, that Count P. is as false as dice, that Duse has no right to complain of *Le Feu*, that d'Annunzio does not deserve all the reproaches his book has drawn on him from the public, his only fault being a too great self-glorification.

In giving me her hand Sarah drops me a funny little curtsy.

The death scene is played to-night with more realism than on other nights. Her skin seems wrinkled on the cheek-bones. Her pallor becomes almost cadaverous.

The scene in which the *Aiglon* reads the letter is extraordinary—the muffled, monotonous, stifled breathing, all these symptoms indicating mortal weakness and distress. All this testifies definitely to her genius.

Talent and experience alone will not bring an actress to this point.

The movement of exasperation with which she frees her ears from her hair to hear better, the eagerness, the effort of the spirit at the moment of stabbing memory and the final "Napoleon", interrupted but nevertheless attempted with a passionate adoration,—this is all on a level with the most enduring works of art.

Two stories Sarah tells me, and I note one of an Eastern Queen Ranavalo, who is dressed for a reception in a corset and gloves and weeps because these trappings encumber her; and one of the Shah of Persia who has all his wives dressed as ballet dancers.

August 5th.

At Sarah's house. I am shown into her library, where they say she is coming down. She enters dressed in white satin and sits on the writing table.

"I was working—I was writing."

"— Your Memoirs"—

"No—an article for an American Review on *Hamlet*. It tires me."

"But you write with great ease."

"Yes, but I have to give a lot of technical detail. I must mention various actors who have played the part. Rostand reproaches me for accepting this. He says 'you are wrong to reveal your—mystery to them', but you must understand I am being paid 1,500 francs for this article."

She smiles; I feel she is giving an excuse for doing something which really quite amuses her.

"There you are, I give them fifteen hundred francs' worth of mystery,—that's all. What is Madrazo doing?"

"I believe he is working."

"And you? Are you working? I often think of the opera of which we spoke. I've spoken to Rostand about it."

"The difficulty is to find a good subject."

"Come now—Orpheus, it would be marvellous."

We speak of fat Mme. G.

"She's a good sort and very kind, poor old G. And one could lead her to the end of the world with a cake."

And Sarah imitates the movements of someone whose mouth waters at the sight of a feast prepared for her to guzzle, rolling greedy little eyes.

I ask who is the mother of the husband's daughter.

"Good old G., she used to deceive him. She's too kind, isn't she? Can't say No.—She was madly in love with N——, but it didn't last long. He was unfaithful and let her down in every possible way."

In connection with this she began to talk on various topics with surprising freedom and great truth, expressing herself forcibly but never crudely.

Madame X. is announced; Sarah makes a movement of infinite weariness. She turns to Emile with a plaintive voice:

"Oh no, no, say I'm asleep."

I object feebly:

"She may have seen my conveyance at the door."

She leaps up—"Then no—no! Go away—Good-bye!" She pushes me out in a comic frenzy. "Good-bye, good-bye, tell her something. Say you haven't seen me, that they wouldn't waken me." And she disappears.

Downstairs I meet Madame X. and take her away. Everything is smoothed down.

Before that Count C. had been announced.

"No, no," says Sarah, "I don't want to see that old geyser."

"He asks when you will see him."

"Never—but tell him any time, I shall be delighted. Then perhaps he will not be in a hurry to come back."

August 8th.

I sent Sarah some cold aubergines this morning that Mme. Stern was kind enough to have prepared for her.

This evening, going up the Boulevard Malasherbes, I see Sarah driving. She sees me and puts her head out of the window. "Thanks", she calls to me.

A light kiss blown from her finger-tips, a very youthful smile, a black hat on golden hair.

The carriage disappears.

August 10th.

Seven o'clock. I am at Sarah's house just as she is starting for the theatre. I hear a comically deepened voice saying:

"Come in, come in, come in, come in."

The curtain over the doorway of the dining-room is pushed back, and Sarah appears, wearing that tight-fitting coat which suits her so well and a black straw hat trimmed with violets.

"You come very late, so as to see me as little as possible, I suppose?"

She goes down, and at the main doorway says:

"Saryta, am I too much powdered?"

I am behind her, and she throws a half-mocking glance at me whilst Saryta points with one finger to a place under her eye where too much powder has collected. Sarah rubs it.

"You help in my toilet, eh? . . ."

And lightly and swiftly she half turns to me and pinches my nose, then climbs into her carriage, makes that charming movement of farewell with her finger-tips, and disappears in her swift carriage.

CHAPTER IV

1901

THE LITTLE DOG—LUNCHEON—THE AMERICAN ACTRESS—THE WIPING OUT OF 400 MILLION CHINESE
—TRAVELLERS' TALES—SARAH'S JEWELS.

10.30 at night.

I GET to the theatre during the fourth act of *L'Aiglon*—the one of the ball—just before Sarah's speech, "Le petit Caporal". I stand in the wings. Having said her lines, she turns and sees me. I raise my hat, and she greets me, bending her head as if to look into the distance. This gesture, carried out with admirable tact, she accompanies with a slight lowering of the eyelids which, indicating a smile and greeting for me, is seen by the audience as an effort to see better. In this byplay the lips move infinitesimally—just sufficiently for me to discern a smile, not enough for the audience to suspect anything.

After the act on the Plains of Wagram, Sarah seems tired. She is out of breath, and breathes through her nose "so as to avoid a 'stitch'". This stretches the fine nostrils and adds to the distinction of her appearance. Through the curtain I hear Sarah arranging Saryta's head-dress: "You look younger like this, you must

show your ears." Saryta protests, "I shall look like a tube." "Not at all—you look nice and the other way is too unbecoming. Good, now you look a hundred times better."

"Oh, Auntie, I am hideous, they'll all hiss." "They won't hiss—I am there."

As she returns to her own dressing-room two ladies appear. Sarah hastens to welcome them affectionately. "Does she know them?" we ask one another.

I draw near and kiss the hem of her cloak. Sarah's scent is so penetrating that when she has leant on my arm my sleeve smells of it for hours.

August 11th.

Half-past six, at Sarah's house. She and Saryta are eating fried eggs.

"Sit down there, young man."

She points to a chair at her left hand. We talk. We talk of fried chicken, which Sarah likes done in oil; of sauerkraut, which she also likes. At intervals I feel Saryta's little dog nibbling my legs. I take no notice and go on talking. Sarah, all of a sudden, is seized with laughter.

"Why do you laugh, Madame?"

"Because this morning Simone, who answered you on the telephone, . . ." and she begins to laugh again.

We go on talking, and the little devil of a dog continues to nibble at my legs. At last Sarah bursts out into a paroxysm of laughter, hiding her face in her table napkin. She laughs, laughs,

laughs; her eyes fill with tears. She is exhausted, crimson.

Taking advantage of a lull, I ask the reason of this mirth.

"Because it's a misfire," And she goes on laughing, as Simone (her little grand-daughter) emerges from under the table. It was she who had been pinching my legs for the last ten minutes. They had expected me to get up quickly. But I, thinking it was the little dog, had borne these harmless sallies with stoicism, and the joke had fallen flat. Then Simone in despair had tugged at Sarah's dress, and she could no longer contain herself.

Pitou brings her a letter and says:

"From the 'Royal Tiger.'"

Sarah begins to laugh again. It is a Geneva furrier who has sold her furs. She is paying his fare for him to come and "try her on".

"It's half the price. My sable coat, you know, it cost me twenty-two thousand francs (£880). Doucet here in Paris would ask forty-five thousand. The Thibetan rug on my bed cost two hundred francs there, the same thing here would be twelve hundred. Everything else in proportion, they pay no duty. It is time to go."

Sarah rises. "When shall we see you again, or rather," she corrects herself, "when can we catch you? For all this doesn't count, one only has glimpses of you. Will you lunch to-morrow?"

August 12th.

Luncheon at Sarah's. She comes in from a walk in the Bois, youthful, slender in a dainty transparent black dress.

We sit down to lunch. We are a small party—Maurice Parny, Madame Guérard, Maurice Perronet, Simone and myself. Nothing much to record at luncheon. We talk of jewels.

"I hate dark stones, sombre jewels. Jewels should be joyous. I love very ornate jewels like those of the Renaissance. A fine stone just set in four claws leaves me cold. I detest diamonds."

We discuss stones. Sarah is enthusiastic about dark topazes:

"They have such shadows, much finer than yellow diamonds"; she likes the effect of star sapphires against the skin—at night, not by day; she adores pearls.

We discuss railways and accidents. She is angry that Third Class carriages have not the same guarantee concerning accidents as First Class.

"It is iniquitous—iniquitous!"

Coquelin is announced.

Coquelin comes in; he seems to me to have aged. Eyeglasses on his prominent nose. He has come to ask Sarah to be president of an Exhibition he is arranging for the benefit of the Society of Dramatic Artists. An Exhibition of the portraits of artists.

"I am yours, my Coq," Sarah says to him affectionately. "You've caught me."

We discuss the possibility of spoken opera, which always interests Sarah. She enlarges on the subject.

Coquelin expresses his doubts. I ask him when he is going to start his singing lessons.¹

Sarah interrupts, "But you sing quite well enough". And in a deep voice she imitates Coquelin in the *Précieuses*:

"Oh, oh, je n'y prenais pas garde."

It seems like a return to bygone days at the *Comédie Française*.

They talk of their next tour—of actors of the third rank whom they can engage. And as Coquelin lowers his voice:

"Come with me," says Sarah, and carries him off to her studio. As she moves the black *paillettes* glitter to her swaying sinuousness.

August 15th.

I call on Sarah. Sarah perches and settles herself on a divan scattered with innumerable cushions. I sit at the foot and Frederic Madrazo on the ground.

She talks on innumerable subjects, describes with some point a luncheon at Jean Louvain's, imitates an American actress who was playing *Fédora*. Sarah in a box laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. The whole theatre thought she was weeping, and after the performance she

¹One evening I was congratulating Coquelin on the way he sang the little Villanelle in *Don César de Bazar*. He said laughingly, "You must give me lessons—you owe me that, since it was originally through me that you went to the Conservatoire."

went to the dressing-room and said simply, "Look at me".

She speaks of Réjane, whom she likes and admires enormously, and whom she thinks a deliciously feminine figure; of X.—"I hate a behind that nearly touches the ground; of Henriette Fouquier—"What a beautiful creature!"; of Marie Leconte; of Brandés; of Mlle. N.—"She could have been enchanting if she'd cared to."

For a week my work prevented my going to see her.

I went to her dressing-room to say good evening and to take her some flowers. The performance is *L'Aiglon*.

"Well, it seems a century since you were here," she says, as she goes down the low stairs that lead from the stage to her dressing-room. She is pale and a little breathless, as always after that exhausting third act.

Her room is besieged by visitors. Among others a Russian in a white uniform, with dirty hands and boots. Sarah, having dismissed several people who wanted an interview with that smile which gives charm even to her farewells, says to us:

"Though I may not look it, I tell you I am a very weary woman." And she lies down on the sofa.

I spread a shawl over her feet.

"If you can find chairs, sit down."

The talk turns to the Chinese. The gentleman

with the dirty hands tries to excuse the part they played in the war with Russia.

Sarah starts up, interrupts him—"What's that?" in her imperious manner. The officer is completely abashed.

"No, I don't see it at all from that point of view, I don't see that one should not be able to go freely about the world in every direction. In this century it is not permissible to close any road on earth. If I choose to go to China I must be able to go, and as a people they are impossible. Anyhow I hope one day they will all be wiped out."

"But, Madame, four hundred million——"

"Well, four hundred million Chinese shouldn't be hard to kill. I alone could kill a hundred thousand."

She continues her Philippic with great verve. Youthful above the black stock, that distinguished head, framed in its golden hair, accompanies her rapid words with persuasive movements of her right hand fingers outspread as if to seize her interlocutor.

She rises quickly at the announcement that the scene is set and stands in front of the glass still talking of the Chinese as she makes up.

"And then how ugly they are, badly made. They are ugly, ugly!"

She purses her lips in disgust; her mouth, her frown all express repulsion.

"The Japanese are ugly too, but so clever and æsthetic."

She stops abruptly and, having fastened her

sword to her belt, goes off, without farewells, alert, slim and valiant for her entry.

At the next interval I only stayed a short time—enough to witness an amusing little scene between her and Dubury, who brings a photograph for her to sign. He is armed with ink and pen and blotting-paper, knowing what a business it can be. Sarah tells him to leave it and come back later. Dubury shrugs his shoulders incredulously, and Sarah reiterates "Leave it, leave it here".

I offer her some branches of leaves and berries. "Oh, how pretty! how silly of you not to show them to me sooner!"

She goes to put them in a vase and performs a comic scene with Dominga, who has put a pot holding a common little plant on a very conspicuous stand.

Sarah seizes the pot and gives it to Dominga, who in her lingo tries to explain something.

"In the first place, it's useless to shout like that. So put it there. It's frightful."

Trifles, intimacies acquire the value of high comedy from that divine mouth.

August 28th.

I go to Sarah in the afternoon. She is seated on the divan, her elbow resting on her knee, all in white, no chains and little jewellery: only a little brooch, a black pearl hanging from a bar, and bracelets made of three gold curbs decorated with pearls. She wears one on each arm, which gives the effect of two chains, charming in shape

and colour, entwined at the wrists;—some rings one on her forefinger—a long opal set in diamonds.

We discuss this and that—her tours, the dangers she has run in her mad expeditions, her big-game hunts, the notorious captive balloon, all her past eccentricities, which she is ready to repeat in spite of her declaration that she is afraid of everything.¹

With realistic wealth of imitative detail, recurrently using certain words, with great facial mobility, she tells stories of South America, of Australia, of encounters with rattle-snakes that fix the traveller with their ruby eyes, of kangaroo hunts in the forest. With gestures that evoke the perils she describes she imitates these beasts, at first peaceful, then prowling savagely among the trees.

She tells me of a frightful journey down a mine which she undertook, in spite of Damala's and Maurice's entreaties, in a coal-basket.

Knowing we are entranced and amused, she lights up as she tells these tales.

Poor Madame de Najac shudders retrospectively at the idea of these terrible dangers, and Sarah, of course, like a naughty school-boy, affectionately insists on making the old lady's flesh creep.

During a lull I compliment Sarah on her bracelets, and express surprise at seeing them for the first time.

"I must tell you, darling, that I had a lot of

¹She was always obsessed by a fear of falling downstairs. Hence her habit of leaning on her fellow actors or on the stage furniture.

jewellery up the spout, and I am gradually redeeming them since I've earned a fair amount. There were about 75,000 francs' worth. I can't see anything bad in saying one has pawned one's jewellery. It's borrowing from the government, and you pay enormous interest. I delight in telling it—it's my form of revenge. And I'm under no obligation to my friends. So there!"

She has slipped down on to the ground in front of the fire, to "warm the small of her back".

Her satin dress swirls round her in gleaming folds.

September 6th.

This afternoon, Boulevard Péreire. Sarah, whilst posing to Frederic (Madrazo, the painter) discussed Fortuny's schemes¹ with us. Very much thrilled, she planned to change the latest scenery of *La Princesse Lointaine*.

Quite suddenly she fell asleep, with her head on her arms, and Frederic in a few minutes did a striking pastel of her.

September 7th.

At nine this morning, when Sarah was due to start for the country to visit Rostand, Frederic and I arrived at her house armed with kodaks. After an hour and a half Sarah appears and says with perfect sincerity:

"I'm punctual, eh?"

She is deliciously dressed—a black hat of light straw, a mauve "frock-coat" over a dress of

¹Designer and producer of Italian materials in Mediaeval and Renaissance designs.

white and cream lace, and pearl bracelets. She smiles and poses at some length for us. Unfortunately it is dark, and the photos will be useless.

September 8th.

I arrive very late for luncheon at the Con-tesse de Najac's. They have already sat down and greet me with shouts. Sarah wrinkles up her nose and says "Oh, Oh!" shaking her knife and fork at me. I apologise, explain, and sit at her left.

She is in very close-fitting black lace, with a black stock and white muslin collar. Her pearl bracelets are twined round her wrists over the tight sleeves, a chain with a reliquary hangs on her breast.

A pleasant luncheon. Lively talk. Sarah, in very good form, raises her voice from time to time and dominates the conversation. Clairin, Saryta, Madame Levy Clairin, and two Viennese make up the party.

We talk of Madame Bischoffsheim's death after an operation. Clairin says to Sarah:

"Ah, Madame, you have disabilities from which we are luckily free."

"Indeed," says Sarah, "indeed—and what about gallstones, which come sooner or later to distress you? And—if I may say so—all sorts of other uncertainties. I gather that these are most tiresome."

She speaks quite seriously and everyone laughs. She eats very little, tasting each course with curiosity. When little casseroles of mushrooms

are served she says, "I'm taking my time, so as to choose the largest".

She helps herself and immediately resumes her conversation, but she has appreciated and considered the dish with the same sureness with which she judges everything, and has left it almost untouched.

We talk of Blowitz, laughing at his monstrous appearance, discussing his life, his profits, his immense power. We even talk of his bathing suit, and Clairin declares that at Trouville he had a bathing suit up to his chin, but that on going into the water the shock of the cold water deflated him and his suit slipped down.

Sarah reassures us peremptorily:

"It's not true. To begin with, he always wears a bathing suit with sleeves and a *sailor collar!*"

We talk of Sarah's lawsuit with the *Comédie Française*. Clairin seems to have followed the case in every detail and questions Sarah on specific points.

She contradicts him and returns to the beginning. He quotes Perrin's arguments. She retorts, "But he lied like a dog." (Why dog?) "This is the true story——"

And she begins a long and detailed account of the celebrated quarrels, starting her story with:

"Perrin was in love with Croizette——"

CHAPTER V

1904

AT BELLE-ISLE—THE SARAHTORIUM—THE STORY OF THE BOA—TENNIS—THE TIGER'S TAIL—AN IMPROVISATION BY HUGO—THEATRICAL REMINISCENCES.

Belle Isle, Tuesday.

I ARRIVED this morning.

A disgusting journey, Quiberon, Le Palais—these stages reminded me of my previous visit here with Marcel and of our various misadventures.

Sarah sent her victoria to the pier, and in this equipage with its two horses I travelled through the purple and gold country through which Marcel¹ and I had driven in a rattling fly.

Shouts and outstretched arms welcomed me. Sarah, wrapped up like a green gauze cocoon, wearing suède gloves, Suzanne Seylor, Madame Hammacher, McClaren, wearing a vast straw hat trimmed with a floating veil (why?), old Geoffrey, Maurice and his wife and daughters all flock round me.

"Come along!" Sarah cries gaily. "Luncheon first. You can spend all the afternoon prinking. There are mackerel *à la Pouchon*. Hurry!"

¹A few years previously I had made a trip here with Marcel Proust.

And in noisy confusion we sit down. The mackerel have been split, salted and dried in the sun. Two hours later they are cooked.

During luncheon Sarah is in tearing spirits. She laughs at everything, touches on hundreds of subjects only to abandon them, announces the arrival of a young poet called Fraudet, who is to read a play—talks of her neighbour Monsieur X. . . ., the owner of the ghastly brick castle whose pitiable mediæval turrets can be seen from the dining-room, and relates sinister stories about the wretch.

After lunch we go into what she has called the Sarahtorium. It is a sunfilled spot where Sarah has had dwarf tamarisks about four feet high planted, among which are placed garden tables and long chairs. The Belle Isle ritual insists upon a midday siesta—a strange siesta during which everyone talks ceaselessly, discussing the newspapers the postman has just brought, pursuing every sort of winged beast, and every moment getting up to mark the hated movements of tourists who, armed with spy-glasses, try from a local knoll to get a glimpse of Sarah Bernhardt. Sarah alone takes her siesta seriously. She closes her eyes, covers her face with a thick veil and from time to time murmurs, "I'm asleep".

Suddenly she wakes and says she's had enough "sleep". There is a long walk by the canal along little paths among the rocks, a long path by the kennel of the "Grand Duke", of course called Alexis, whom Sarah teases through the

bars, saying "Ksch, Ksch" when he turns his dim blind eyes on us. Then to Clairin's studio, a little erection put up specially for "dear Jojotte" near the Fort. It consists of an enormous room, a small bedroom, and a minute dressing-room in which there is a bath in which Clairin takes seaweed baths—there is a cult for sea-weed baths at Belle Isle, people vying in their boasts to one another of its reviving, antiseptic, and soporific qualities.

My room is on the first floor of the fort, level with the roof, furnished in a rustic style.

I unpack, dress, and about seven o'clock go downstairs. I find Sarah alone in the room leading to the dining-room. Two charming light rooms, with painted furniture and big windows opening on to the sea. Violent discussion with Sarah.

She tells me of the boa constrictor she bought in South America—an enormous boa which, according to the merchant, had been fed recently and would sleep for several months. She had brought it to Belle Isle, to keep in the drawing-room and put her feet on after dinner. But the merchant lied. It was a long time since the reptile's last meal, and shortly after the establishment arrived at Belle Isle, while they were playing dominoes, it woke, "famishing", opening a terrific maw and trying to eat all the sofa-cushions. Sarah had only just time to seize her revolver and to "kill the monster there—there on the spot." Gaping, I listen to this tale, which she recites with conviction, and try to tell from

her grey-green eyes whether she really believes she is convincing me.

Suddenly, during dinner, with unusual indignation astonishing to all of us, she begins to abuse the Xs,—whom she hardly knows; fanning the flame of her self-induced anger, she is so violent that I feel I must interrupt her in defence of these people. Feeling the whole matter too trivial, I stopped in the middle of an assertion and resigned myself patiently to hearing the end of the tirade. But Sarah, once more calm and smiling, began to talk of other things.

Wednesday.

A fine morning. Lounging about. Sarah, after a seaweed bath, takes a sun bath on the roof in a kimono and panama hat, a scarf round her neck. She is happy here, relaxing indolently after fourteen months of incessant work.

Having lunched and performed the ritual of the siesta, we get into a waggonette to go and inspect the flowers at a neighbouring villa Sarah has just bought. She gratifies the gardener by her praise and by little pats on the shoulder. On our way back, as the pace exhausts the dogs who are following us, she has the horses slowed down.

Tennis. It's not easy to play tennis with Sarah. She serves well and returns energetically, but as she refuses to budge, the balls have to be placed exactly where she can return them without shifting. Maurice, a fine player, is a past master at this. Geoffrey and Clairin manage fairly well,

but with frequent failures, which rouse great rage.

Naturally I avoid this risk and try working in a little hut kept for racquets, leaning back to rest from time to time.

Suddenly a laugh, Sarah's own laugh, bursts out, goes on. What's happening?

"I have just realised that we three—Geoffrey, Clairin and I—are more than two hundred years old between us. Invalid tennis," she says gaily. And this idea she elaborates in all its comic aspects. She laughs, specifying the age of the protagonists.

Such disregard in a matter so serious to an actress, the most distinguished "youthful" actress of her time, compelled as she is to earn her living, shows a freedom from care as touching as the remark is futile.

A servant brings cold drinks and says there are snails in the kitchen. Despite our protests Sarah has them brought in immediately and eats them with delight. Then she returns to the Fort in her little donkey cart, and we escort her.

Dinner, passionate discussions about nothing. Dominoes. Then, without thinking, I got to the piano and began to sing the Gipsy song in *Carmen*. Maurice dances a Spanish dance, his two daughters imitate him, and I increase the pace. Clairin seizes the stout Madame Hammaecker and whirls her round, and suddenly old Geoffrey—in knickerbockers and muffled in a Norfolk jacket—leaps up and improvises the most astonishing fandango. With incredible "go" he

performs giddy turns, twists his body round, does cartwheels, shaking the lamps, upsetting the chairs. He finishes this mad dance by a "Whew"—very dry and so comic that I leave the piano and roll on the ground with laughter.

Everyone gives themselves up to screams of laughter almost painful, so convulsive are they. We hold our sides, we moan.

Sarah, her head in her hands, weeps with laughter, hiccoughs, sobs. She gasps and lies back, her eyes closed, calms down, then is once more doubled up with mirth.

Thursday.

I spent the morning in Clairin's studio, working a little and talking a great deal with this delicate-minded, magnanimous artist.

I never tire of hearing him speak of Sarah's early days, the days of her famous eccentricities, of her emaciation, her carpets of shot velvet, her bed like a coffin, her ascents in a captive balloon,—in short, the period of Clairin's own portrait of Sarah in white satin with her two dogs. Among other extraordinary things, he told me that for a short time she had a mania to have a tiger's tail tattooed on to her back, and found a surgeon to undertake this operation for a substantial sum to be paid in advance. At last Sarah's friends, alarmed by this whim, protested to this wretch. In the end she gave up this pleasure.

I mention it to her at luncheon. "Quite true," she answers, laughing. "It would have amused me immensely. At times it would have lain concealed under my dress—on the other

hand, at times of anger or elation I should have displayed it proudly, as it were, raising my train like a spear. Really," she adds with great gravity, "it was silly of me to let myself be dissuaded." But I don't believe she is in earnest—indeed, she has often spoken to me of that period of her life, laughing at herself. "I was mad as are all young women, I saw everything out of focus."

Once she said to me: "I was foolish enough to prefer the company of a lot of fashionable idiots to that of the distinguished men who surrounded me. To think that I once left Victor Hugo in the middle of a conversation to join the people at the Jockey Club!"

Concerning Hugo and the little esteem in which she, a young and capricious celebrity, held him, she told me the following tale.

At the time of the revival of *Ruy Blas* at the *Comédie Française* during a scene in which the Chief Lady of the Bedchamber recites these precepts:

—"A Queen of Spain
Must not look out of her window—
The King being absent, the Queen dines
alone,"

Sarah, bored by the tediousness of the scene, hoisted herself on to the great table while waiting for her cue and sat there swinging her legs and assuming a look of exasperation.

Then Hugo, turning to her, said in a most formal manner:

*“ Une reine d’Espagne honnête et respectable
Ne devrait pas grimper ainsi sur une table.”*

“ A Queen of Spain discreet is quite unable
To climb thus freely on the royal table.”

After luncheon an excursion to the Palais. I recall my trip there with Marcel, the penitentiary, the Canal, the Great House of Brittany.

We do some absurd shopping in the “smart” shops. A pleasant drive home alone in the victoria with Madame Maurice Bernhardt. We discuss Sarah and Maurice, melancholy reflections on mother and son by the wife.

Saturday.

The days flow by unvaried, Sarah is always interesting, delicious and at times a trifle annoying.

Sometimes she has individual, beautiful perceptions. Yesterday she was speaking of all the bent heads of young Breton girls at Mass at a penitential festival.

She recalled all these bent heads showing the whiteness at the base of the neck, all the white caps rising and falling in rhythm.

This morning our talk turned on La Duse. “What a lovely head!” said Sarah; “that disdainful mouth, those white teeth, those eyes smiling and wretched. And what charm! A great actress—A pity she is such a *poseuse*.”

About Madame Favart, Geoffrey said “As tiresome as possible, but she had talent.”

“Absolutely none,” said Sarah. “Don’t talk

of that horrible, dark, long-nosed creature. She rrolled her 'rs' like this. Long-waisted, short-legged, hideous hands with even her fingers bellying. Dreadful!"

Guitry she admires unreservedly.

On Mounet-Sully: "He was amazingly beautiful, and what a character! But he liked to play the fool. Sometimes he was quite marvellously good, and at other times—vile. I often said to him: 'In *Hernani*, when I throw myself at you shouting, "You're a very grand and generous lion," remember to receive me and hold me tightly. You know how violent my movements are on the stage, and if you hold me slackly I might fall.' Well, that's what happened. Arm outstretched, I leap forward, and Mounet, thinking of his 'attitude', holds me so badly that I fall down. I was furious, I wanted to kill him. Poor Jean! He was a great poet, a romantic. But at times he wanted to be a realist. At the end of *Ruy Blas*, for instance, when he was poisoning himself, instead of emptying the phial quickly, he began to gulp with realistic noises."

We mention other actors—Mlle. Fargueil—"I don't remember her"; Julie Delaporte—"Charming, individual, but too ugly". Regnier—"His voice and his appearance were against him. But by sheer brains he had become an exceptionally fine actor. He was a unique teacher. He always believed in me, God knows why—I must have been a detestable pupil."

Of Croisette: "What a beautiful creature, but not very intelligent. One evening we went to see

a revue together. There was an imitation of herself and me. We had just 'created' the Sphynx at the *Théâtre Français*. Baron, the actor, was imitating me, and some other comedian was imitating her.

These two men dressed up as women were so hideous, it was all so ugly, so vulgar that, beside myself, I went out, banging the door of the box. But Croisette stayed and was much amused¹.

Of old Martel: "God, how bad he was! He had a snub nose, and so wore a wax one. Once, when we were playing *Zaire* at a matinée on a terribly hot day, I was kneeling before him, my back to the audience.

"He was declaiming a speech, and suddenly I saw his nose melting—I whispered 'Mind! your nose is melting, it will drip on to me', but he didn't understand and looked questioningly at me. 'Your nose, your nose!' Then the fool quickly put his hand to his nose which, being soft, promptly flattened out. The house rocked with laughter. It was odious!"

Sunday.

After luncheon we go into Clairin's studio, as it is less hot than at the Sarahorium. I watch Sarah walking, leaning on her stick. It hurts me to see how she suffers at every step. From time to time she stops to rest on some pretext

¹Sarah, for some unexplained reason, disliked imitations. "I'm not amused", she declared. Once, a very inferior actor of her company having given her an imitation of Guitry in one of his best parts, she said to him, smiling sweetly, "My dear man, what a pity you can't always act like that."

or other, pointing out something in the distance, looking at a flower. Stoically she chatters and smiles and utters no complaint.

Yesterday Clairin whispered to her:

"You are in pain."

"Hardly, Jojotte dear, don't worry."

But sometimes she is obviously in pain.

She has her writing-table and papers brought into the studio and writes very fast. She is working at a play—*Adrienne Lecouvreur*. An odd idea. But she likes the character and doesn't care to act Legouvé's piece any more, she finds it too bad. So she is rewriting it. I say:

"Inferior as it is, this piece brought you great success, as it did Rachel."

"I don't know how Rachel managed, but, my dear, I can make absolutely nothing of it."

In vain I remind her of innumerable fine passages in which she produces memorable effects. Nothing will shake her.

Thursday.

I haven't written for several days.

Various incidents. Dinner at a farm of Sarah's some distance away. We took the food, the servants, chairs, tables, a complicated but very joyous jaunt.

The arrival, stay and departure of René Fraudet,¹ that gifted young poet.

A reading of his play, which Sarah likes and thinks of producing.

Noisy fishing-parties.

¹Now M. Pierre Frondaie

A visit from the "sinister" neighbour, a courteous, placid old man with a big moustache whom Sarah tries to draw with a thousand wiles and great want of tact in order to extract from him quite imaginary secrets.

I have to leave to-morrow.

"He is bored here," Sarah declares in a mock submissive tone. "He is going to mix with a lot of people who don't care for him nearly as much as we do. That's Life. He thinks it will be extremely entertaining, but he will be even more bored than here, and it serves him right."

To-night after dinner she slept on the divan for ten minutes. She has always had this invaluable power of complete oblivion for a few moments in the midst of talk and noise.

It is one of the secrets of her amazing activity. Just now, as she slept, very calm, her head resting on her arm, I envisaged her successively in *Théodore*, crossing the stage in three strides to lock the door, then turning round with an almost feline grace: in *La Tosca*, knife in hand, her eyes looking up sideways, teeth clenched, watching for Scarpia's approach: in *Hamlet*, creeping towards the throne, darting baleful glances at Claudius: in *La Samaritaine*, in the market place, the prey of a sublime ecstasy, with her ringing voice dominating the shouts of the populace.

Imperishable visions such as will be evoked by no other actress.

Quiberon, Friday.

I left Belle Isle this morning. Sarah, in a cloud of fresh muslin, hatless, and her parasol

open, came, leaning on my arm, followed by all the inmates of the "Fort", to see me into the carriage.

"Swear you'll come again next year. Swear it, Reynaldo, it will bring us luck."

And after she had kissed me she added: "I forgive you for going so soon if you promise to work very hard, and especially to come to America this winter. You really must. I've often told you so. It's ridiculous not to take advantage of your success over there. You'll come with me, with us. Tell him he must come, Suzanne. But there, you see, he is still afraid we shall bore him."

I hide my emotion under this chatter and teasing which masks the melancholy of farewells.

The carriage starts, Sarah says to the coachman, "Careful, not too fast". And until we reach the turn in the road I see the raised arms waving, I hear voices calling:

"Au revoir, au revoir."

CHAPTER VI

TO BRUSSELS—IN THE TRAIN—THE WALLET OF
JEWELS—THE BRUSSELS PUBLIC—VISIT TO PRINCE
VICTOR — THE FOUNTAIN — PERFORMANCE OF
PHÈDRE—STUDENTS—EPISODES—IN THE WOODS OF
CAMBRAI

Paris, May 11th.

AFTER a long interval—

Sarah back from America four days ago. Lovely, dainty and vigorous. I have seen her every day, but no time to write.

Yesterday at the Comtesse de Najac's she told us some of the episodes of her American tour. Amazingly vivid and amusing.

Among other things she gave us a detailed imitation of an hypnotic séance. What truth even in her fooling!

She wore a lace-trimmed, rose-coloured dress.

14 May

Yesterday at eleven, departure for Lyons. Never have I seen Sarah so enchanting. A little high, narrow blue and white hat and a white veil drawn tightly over her golden chignon, which she had dressed low. A grey, fur-trimmed cloak, a blue and white foulard dress.

She returned to the subject of "spoken opera", which seems to obsess her. She would like to do

Orpheus. She asks me to think about it, but I am still not very clear as to what her rapid explanations mean, though I feel that as she is so eager about it, since she wants to realize it, there must be something in it.

Brussels—May—Tuesday.

This morning we start for Brussels. At a quarter past eight Sarah is at the Gare du Nord. I am busy taking my ticket and cannot go and help her out of her carriage, and it is only when I go and greet her in the compartment that she sees me.

“Here he is!” she cries. “Look what a fine saloon we have. We shall be very comfortable and we’ll all be very witty. But first I shall sleep for an hour, so as to be *very, very* witty.”

She is wearing a foulard dress, a very tight-fitting coat of light cloth, a straw hat trimmed with a bow of blue and white satin, and a white, flowered veil. Lively, charming, and gay, she arranges her belongings in the rack and round her on the seat; having said good-bye to friends on the platform, she asks us to draw out one of the beds, takes three pillows from a package, then beats them, rearranges them, pulls them about, crumples them up, and finally lies down, her head on her arms, beneath her sable cape. Five minutes later she is asleep, and she sleeps like a child for two hours without moving, undisturbed by our talk, which, although we lower our voices in consideration of her slumbers, is occasionally broken by laughter.

Awake, fresh, and smiling, she declares that she has slept wonderfully, that she feels rested, asks for her "beauty box", passes a powder-puff briskly over her face, rubs her lips with a stick of rouge, puts on her hat, has the bed put away, her pillows packed up, and sits among us full of animation.

She speaks of Coquelin, his simplicity, his vanity, his preoccupation with economy, all the time interspersing praise of his extreme uprightness, his great talent.

"He is magnificent, really magnificent in *Les Précieuses*."

We arrive. Sarah puts on her veil. We get into a landau that awaits us and start for the hotel.

"You will lunch with me."

At the hotel she finds flowers with a card:

"From the students of Brussels."

"I adore students and am always anxious to give them pleasure. I always say that perhaps among them is concealed the great man whose advent we await."

We all mix up for lunch and sit down—Sarah, Madden, Dolley Maxoya, Georges Bourdon, Ullman, and myself. Amusing impatience of Sarah, who is hungry.

"Eggs, eggs, for heaven's sake, eggs!"

She makes threatening movements as the slow and formal waiter turns his back.

With great spirit and extraordinary mimicry she relates anecdotes, among others one of a stupid spiritualistic séance whose chief character is an actress of her company.

Having taken a mouthful of coffee, she bids us farewell and goes to rest.

At six o'clock I go to Sarah and find her ready to go to the theatre. She wears a light dress, her hat and cloak in her hand.

"I have slept well," she says. "Don't eat too much dinner. Take tea, yes, tea, you can have supper with us when we come in."

We set out for the theatre in the landau—Sarah, Dolley, Dominga, and myself, and I carry the great jewel-case on which Sarah always keeps an eye, and which she asks to see every few moments, never failing to say with indifference before strangers or suspicious characters: "As a matter of fact it only contains unimportant papers."

We go up to the dressing-room, where the management has laid down a carpet for Sarah, who says:

"How frightful; it smells of dead rats!"

The dressing-room is hateful, but Sarah, who adapts herself to everything, soon pronounces it perfect.

"Thomas," she shouts in a voice to rouse the dead, "come and curl my wig!"

Thomas, who wasn't on the spot, who was, moreover, a long way off, comes up all flustered, and Sarah, with an enchanting smile and a voice like honey, says to him, "Come, my dear Thomas, there's not too much time."

Amazing the joyousness of this woman whose life has been more active and tempestuous than that of a statesman or a General, who ceaselessly

uses herself up body and soul, who, without counting the cost, without sparing herself or even thinking of herself, pours out her inexhaustible powers and gifts, defying obstacles, dangers, the uncertainties of life and of fate with the same light and heroic gaiety, still feminine in the midst of men and phenomena, but dominating both:—triumphant over malice, criticism, insults, time, illness, depression, emanating life, able to encourage, console, inspire with one winged phrase. Serious and yet exaggerated, severe but sensitive, fantastic, almost extravagant, but gifted with a firmly-rooted common sense and presenting to the dreamer an harmonious whole such as is only found in nature herself, like the sea or the sky, like all that changes with shadow and light and yet remains eternally immutable.

The performance of *L'Aiglon*, to a very full and very smart house, was excellent. Sarah looked particularly slim in the first act, which she played sensitively and quietly. But the Brussels audience and its choking coldness exasperated Sarah, who in the second act uttered her speech about the wooden soldiers much too fast. Coquelin, who, though less life-like than Guitry, shows his dazzling talents as Flambian, was greeted with the same sort of mildly protective approval.

All the same, after each act there was all that this audience, little given to enthusiasm, can give in the way of encores.

Sarah, always taking the right tone, bows

gravely but not effusively and leans on Coque-
lin's shoulder—a happy gesture which unites
French Tragedy and Comedy for the spectator
in their highest incarnation.

During the interval Sarah gently mocks at the
public:

“They make me laugh, these good people. It
is like being judged by a jury. And every time
it's like this. Gradually they thaw, they grow
enthusiastic and can't have enough of you. But
they never have faith in you, and they are
terrified of lightly pronouncing their judgment.
It's screamingly funny.”

Brussels, Wednesday.

This morning, not knowing that Sarah ex-
pected me, I lunched in town. On my return
I found my place laid. Through her closed door
I told Sarah that I had already had lunch.

“That's horrid of you, too disgusting, I told
you you were my guest.”

Another man is there from London. Sarah
wears a white *négligé* with chiffon draperies whose
folds envelop her.

We talk eagerly of La Lucca, whom Sarah
professes to admire enormously (why?); of B's
age; of Patti; of Ternina, “a monster” she
declares, “but a great artist”—etc.

After luncheon Sarah dresses, having arranged
to go to tea with Prince Victor at four o'clock. I
am to escort her so far. At four o'clock I call for
her, but she isn't ready because she meant to
wear black—“a very successful dress she had
only worn once”; but as it had been in a trunk

for some months it had become creased and "ugly", and Sarah, now dressed all in white lace, shows us the black dress, its premature shininess, its creases. She says there's nothing to be done, the dress is "done for". Over her white dress she wears a mauve cloak, the same shape as the one she wore yesterday, and a charming hat she got in America, a pink straw with big pink and blue bows.

We get into the carriage. Encumbered by her jewel-case, she says she will leave it behind, and will only take a pretty little golden box set with rubies, which holds rice powder, rouge for her lips, a mirror, and some cachous.

"If the prince's breath is foul I'll offer him some."

She enjoys the odd names of the tradespeople and queer announcements such as *Hôtel de la Main Bleue* and comments freely and whimsically on all she sees. We arrive, she goes upstairs to the Prince, and as it has turned rather cold we go back to fetch her sables.

On our drive home Sarah sits with her back to the horses so as to have less wind in her face.

As Mademoiselle Dolley has never seen the famous Brussels statue "Manneken Piss" we drive there, Sarah making Rabelaisian comments.

At the hotel, where she takes only a little tea, she dictates several telegrams. (She is anxious about her niece Saryta, who is in bed after a carriage accident.)

Among others, she sends a telegram to the

impossible Madame X—which in spite of my protests she finishes, “Reynaldo wishes to kiss you on the lips”.

To go to the theatre she wears a little hat of black, yellow and white straw trimmed with ribbon.

During the interval the author of a play called *Jeanne Hachette* appears in Sarah’s dressing-room, then some students, and finally Prince Victor.

From the wings I noticed her admirable facial play in the scene with the mirror in the last act.

During supper at the hotel we read bits of *Jeanne Hachette* amidst irrepressible laughter. Sarah, tired out, wishes us good night.

Brussels, Thursday.

At one o’clock I go to Sarah’s room. She is still in her bedroom with a *lingère* choosing lace.

I suddenly hear her voice.

“Good morning, Reynaldo,” and in a minute she puts a hand through the half open door. I slip in my box of roses and hear delighted exclamations.

How touching this love of flowers in Sarah, who in her life has had so many showered on her!

Sarah thus describes Madame M:

“Something of H. G. Wells that I read made me think I saw her, an enormous one-eyed crab with outstretched claws.”

After lunch the author of *Jeanne Hachette* is announced.

An indescribable scene. An interminable visit of the English Ambassador.

A walk in the Cambrai Woods. Sarah wears yesterday's charming hat and the mauve cloak.

Comical episode when Sarah hides behind a tree while I put a new film into the Kodak.

Poses on knolls, groups, etc. We meet Charlotte Wicke. A gay walk home. A hideous woman driving a phaeton. "That awful mug." Talk about La Potocka.

Sarah enchanted with the volume of Madame de Noailles that I brought her. Dinner—then a performance of *Phèdre*.

An admirable first act, absolute harmony, inevitability of line and colour. Grand depth and intensity in *Cenone's* confession, succeeded by almost childish affectionate caresses.

"And wait with awe my swift approaching death."

Splendid grandeur of the movement with which she seizes the sword of Hippolytus.

In the last act I am astonished. I was expecting Sarah's entrance, that entrance I know so well, staggering, suffering, that gait in which each step is pain and exertion, obviously moribund.

What do I see? She comes swiftly down the stage, almost running. Whilst Theseus speaks she flings wide her arms to him, her hands open, trembling fingers outstretched as if to implore him to be silent and let her speak.

But unable to check him, she drops her head on *Cenone's* shoulder, half covering her face with her veil. She only raises her head when he has finished, and with feverish rapidity and a dry

and abrupt tone she cries, cutting the lines short:

“Hear me, O Theseus, short time now remains;
I only, with profane incestuous looks,
Thy son’s chaste honour vainly sought to stain” . . .

She hurries as though afraid she may not have time to confess all. The effect is unexpected and poignant.

She only quiets down at:

“The poison coursing swift through these
my veins
Medea brought to Athens long ago. . .”

And gradually her voice weakens, breaks, is stifled.

“And mists already cloud my failing sight.”

The words seem hardly to be uttered, the vocal chords can hardly sustain them. The last line dies away like the dropping of petals. Her head droops backwards, her mouth half open. The curtain falls.

During the encores I go to her dressing-room. As soon as she appears I go to her, crying: “Your entry—what an astounding notion! When did you conceive the idea?”

“Just as I came on,” she says, smiling. “I suddenly felt it was ‘truer’ that way. Phèdre

hesitates, delays confessing to her husband until the last moment, till she has only a few minutes to live. Then she hurries, hurries, poor woman!"

Madame Grandet, who played *Enone*, said to me, still shaken:

"I had no warning, she dragged me along, carried me away, I didn't know what was happening."

After the performance we go to a party given by the students in Sarah's honour.

A young fellow comes up carrying flowers. He says politely to Sarah:

"Madame, I am very shy."

She answers:

"So am I, very shy indeed."

When we emerge they have unharnessed the horses of the landau. The students, shouting, drag her to the hotel. I feel quite embarrassed at being dragged.

At supper rather vague religious discussion. A huge plate of prawns appears. Sarah bravely plunges her fingers into the dish.

Brussels, Saturday.

I only saw Sarah for a moment before lunch to-day. I had been to get her some flowers, and when I brought them Sarah was in a white wrap, just out of her bath. She seized the flowers.

"They are like your music."

I also show her the snaps that I took yesterday. One is quite charming, and Sarah, very pleased, retires to her room, throwing me an affectionate glance.

I saw her again at four, when she had seen her man of business. She wore the usual white satin tea-gown. For an hour we played a game which has taken her fancy and which she has taught me with, I must say, very great patience. It is called Salta. It is amusing to hear Sarah shout "Salta" in imperious tones. She is like a child in her enthusiasm.

After a light dinner of tea and toast she set out for the theatre, leaving the arrangements for the supper to which she has invited the English Ambassador to her son and Emile. After the theatre back to the hotel.

A crowd awaited Sarah at the stage door. Sarah, Madam Levy, Henry Bauer, and I get into the carriage. Shouts of "Long live Sarah!"

Two young fellows run after the carriage.

"A flower, madame, as a souvenir!"

Sarah smilingly breaks a stalk and gives them one, then turns to me. "It is your flowers with which I satisfied their demands."

At the hotel we meet the English Ambassador, Mr. Phipps, and an extremely English old gentleman, who is, Sarah alleges, one of the cleverest men alive.

We sit down.

Deadly bored by the "clever man". Sarah in great spirits.

Sunday.

I went to buy Sarah a great basket of pansies. I bring it in, having been assured that I was expected to luncheon. She comes in, sees the basket, turns to me.

"That's your doing."

She looks well. Her hair all tousled. She has washed her head, and her tempestuous hair flares in a golden flame.

She immediately insists on putting the basket on the table, and, in spite of her son's protests and mine lest she should spoil the table cloth, she sets about her friendly rearrangement and, as usual, justifies herself.

A very gay luncheon. We talk of Suzanne Dusprès as Gervaise. Coquelin comes in, and I take a snap. Then we go out.

This evening *La Dame*. I slip into the wings just at Marguerite's scene with Père Duval. Coquelin has perversely made up with too much red. He says his speech steadily. Sarah weeps, her eyes downcast. She takes the whole thing so realistically that even I, close by in the wings, am overcome with emotion and think she is weeping, as she has so often wept in this scene. Not at all; she is hardly crying. She comes straight off and laughs and talks with us.

"I catch cold when I cry, so I was careful to-day."

Nevertheless her sobs were marvellous.

A little sparring with Coquelin. Instead of Armand's letter she wrote—"Splendid, my Coq", and on the envelope she wrote, "To Coquelin," while the audience, thoroughly moved, thrilled to her grief.

She returns to her dressing-room to change. Henry Bauer, just arrived by train, goes there to greet her. She emerges in a new dress I have

not seen, without camellias. "Pretty, isn't it? Doucet made it, or, rather, that woman" (pointing to Dominga)" made it out of two Doucet dresses. Didn't you, Dominga?"

It is a yellow tulle dress, gold-embroidered, with a golden belt and a great black butterfly on the breast.

Suddenly: "Do you want to walk on?" she asks Bauer and me. We accept. "Don't laugh, now."

And we solemnly follow her on, to the astonishment of the actors. After the gambling scene, in which we take part, we exchange our views on the house quite unembarrassed, then go off with superb bows and greetings.

Brussels, Monday 11 p.m.

I had no time to finish yesterday, and confine myself to noting that we went for a walk in the Bois de Cambrai, that Sarah was, as always, gay, serious, unexpected. She was in ecstasy over the pine trees, furious with parents who take their children into damp spots. We came in—she had tea and went to the theatre. After the play Bauer, Maurice, and I had supper together. She spoke of Mme. Mardrus, of women poets, breaking off to say she adored fried oysters.

CHAPTER VII

DINNER AT THE ROSTANDS'—*TOSCA*—THREE LITTLE SILLIES—"THE MURDER OF COQUELIN"—*L'AIGLON*. SARAH AND COQUELIN—*TOSCA* AGAIN—LAST VISION

Paris, July 14th.

FREE performance of *L'Aiglon*. Various episodes. Dined at the Rostands' with Sarah.

They ask me to sing, and when I refuse Sarah says, pretending to be annoyed—"I never insist. He won't ever sing to me, because I'm not musical enough."

Then I sit down at the piano.

I sat there for an hour and sang every sort of thing. Rather nervous at first, I soon felt not only at ease but inspired by this exceptional audience that appreciated every accent, every tone.

Sarah sat by me, her elbow on the piano, her cheek leaning on her closed hand. A little behind her Madame Rostand leant forward, delicate and fair, and Rostand, frowning over his eyeglasses, gazed steadily at me, occasionally smiling like a child listening to a story.

At the end of *Adieux de l'Hôtesse Arabe* Sarah seemed deeply moved and had tears in her eyes.

It was the 14th of July, so I wound up with the *Marseillaise*, which inspired them all.

Sarah, her chest flung out, her hand raised, beat time with head and foot, quite informed with the magic of the beautiful old song. "*Marchons—mar-chons*"—She spoke the chorus which I sang.

Monday, December 5th.

Matinée of La Tosca. Before the performance I go into her dressing-room to offer her a little bunch of spring flowers grown goodness knows how in this horrible December weather. She is ready, in, as I thought, a new dress.

"No, my poor darling, it's not new," says Sarah in mock pity. "Not new, no, not at all new," as though to say, "Have you no eyes?"

I slip away, so as not to miss her entrance. However, I do miss it. But I hear the applause.

She plays the first act with great youthfulness, with charming shades of intonation, with delicious and refined touches of comedy which are so well judged they get across even to the gallery. Especially I notice one adorable inflection of voice, body, and intonation; when she has embraced Marco and he has suggested to her that it is wrong before the Madonna, she answers:

"Oh, the Madonna won't grudge it us. She is so kind."

She raises and beautifies this puerile speech with an exquisite movement and intonation.

She leans down and, though speaking to her lover, addresses herself directly to the Madonna, speaking as if to her to make sure of her complicity, with an ingratiating little smile as though someone who could hear was really there.

The yellow dress she wears in the second act is pretty, but no good at a distance. I dislike the velvet rosettes on her breast and shoulder. And her hair is not well done to-day—too wild.

I have never seen her play the third act like this. What is so distinctive is the depth of emotion experienced and reproduced shuddering from her very depths, and when she says, "But I say whatever comes into my head, I don't mind what it is," a burning thrill goes through one. The tears come into one's eyes at so beautiful, so artistic a presentation—true, human, actual.

A terrifying change of expression as she chaffs about Attaventi's fan and suddenly remembers that it is Scarpia who showed it to her.

A marvellous effect with nothing melodramatic or exaggerated.

The fall is admirable—two movements: Crac, Crac—terrible!

In her dressing-room directly afterwards she is exhausted. The act kills her (for ten minutes).

She still weeps. "You know," she says, hardly able to speak, to Madame de Flers, "I sometimes feel in this act that I'm going mad."

She gradually calms down and goes smilingly into the next room to greet, and with a kind word quite overpower, three little girls quite unknown to her who in a letter signed "Three little sillies" asked her to do them the honour of receiving them.

This signature at first annoyed Sarah, and she decided not to see the "little sillies". But I, being curious, went up with Saryta to see what

they were like, and we found three very unpretentious little girls accompanied by their mother. We told this to Sarah, who summoned them and was charming to them.

In the fourth act I noted a fresh detail, her look of diabolical pleasure on perceiving the knife. The scene with the candelabra, the furtive exit, are carried out with an inimitable and magnificent simplicity. She seems to tower when she holds the two torches. And her walk!

Before the fourth act, when her call comes, she leaves her dressing-room alert and gay.

“Now for killing Coq——”

After the act, we discuss Coquelin in her dressing-room. Quite rightly she considers the part does not suit him, and that considering his appearance he should play it as a hypocrite, “whereas he plays the swaggering gallant.” When I said I never saw her look so fierce and so joyous as when she perceives the knife: “I was so delighted to kill off Coquelin”. The end has been changed. Instead of falling off the wall she is shot by the soldiers. The shot is fired, the curtain lowered, and when it rises on the first encore Sarah is lying dead in Marco’s arms.

Sunday.

Matinée of *L’Aiglon*. I arrive just as Coquelin is giving his long speech in the second act, and stand in the wings looking through the crack of a half open door.

Sarah stands listening, her hands behind her back, her head bent a little. Very interesting to

see these two great actors together, or rather this immortal artist and this distinguished performer.

He delivers his speech, showing all his faults and all his qualities. The speech is effective. What freedom she allows him! How well they know the public!

As she leaves the stage I offer some flowers to Sarah, or rather she sees them, for I had put them on a stand.

"What are these delicious flowers? Reynaldo, I'm sure—I recognise his touch."

We talk of Rostand. She always speaks of him with enthusiasm, but to-day with slight bitterness.

Sunday evening.

La Tosca again. Sarah's entrance—a charming device of carrying her bouquet in the crook of her left arm, so that the flowers hide her face. Gracefully amusing when she says suspiciously to Marco: "You were talking to someone. You said 'Pussh wult wult wult.'"

She is astonishingly natural when she says to Marco, who details the Marquise Attavanti's beauties—"Goodness, what a lot of lovely things she has!"

Exquisite details in the last scene.

In the second act it is remarkable all the time how Sarah stresses her position as a hired singer among all these society people. It is a notable accomplishment to keep in the background despite the natural distinction involved by her position and her personality.

How interesting is her performance on the sofa with Scarpia when her hectic speech and feverish movements show how eager she is to get away from the gathering!

The suggestion of the common strolling player which informs her superficial good manners the moment it is a question of feelings, the way she speaks to Attavanti, whom she inadvertently calls "Ass". Her comic impudence to "poor Pasiello" who whispers to her "B natural" and to whom she answers "*Bé mol*" (B Flat).

Her whispered conversation with Scarpia as the Queen stands by the throne.

Her bashful curtseys before she begins her song. The unrestrained impatience when she received the letter which once more postpones her departure.

All this is done with supreme skill and creates an absolutely true psychological portrait.

She finishes by exclaiming: "Well, in that case no more singing," and by a swift escape.

In the third act each shade is noteworthy. Perfection. In the fourth quite sublime. But what a sense of theatrical effect, what accomplished technique in the way in which after Scarpia's murder she moistens the cloth to wipe away the blood on her hand—in which she examines her dress to make sure there is no stain, and looks out of the window, standing lightly on tiptoe!

Her exit is a miracle. Sarah half opens the door, puts her head round to examine the passage. Then her shoulders follow; at last, with

the sinuous movement of a snake, the whole body. The door closes gently, very gently, as the train of her dress disappears——

And as the curtain falls one imagines La Tosca, secret, shaken, creeping along close to the walls, silent as a shadow.