

tation by mild and innocuous processes, with which neither American nor German citizens are wholly unfamiliar. But what we are, perhaps, too apt to forget, or at least not to sufficiently consider, in our enjoyment of the limitless breezy and bibulous benefits of the Central Park Garden, is the fact that the musical entertainment nightly afforded is unquestionably one of the best in quality that has at any time been offered in this City. Mr. THOMAS' compact orchestra, trained by long and united practice to a skill which few similar bodies have attained, affords in each concert a profusion and a variety which abundantly satisfy the wishes of all visitors. The programmes are frequently changed, and are so catholically arranged as to pleasantly appeal to the widest and most diverse tastes. Solo vocalists are not provided, and they are not needed. The stars sing overhead, and that is sufficient, as it ought to be, for everybody. Over one hundred concerts, we believe, have been given this season, and with constantly-increasing success. We are glad to record it. Mr. THOMAS merits the thanks, no less than the congratulations, of the community. It is understood that a complimentary benefit will presently be given to him. So much the better; although how, even under such attractive circumstances, the attendance could be greater than it is on all fair-weather evenings, it puzzles us to imagine. Something might possibly be gained by suggesting that none but thin people attend on the occasion, or by permitting stout visitors to pay a double admission fee—a privilege of which they would doubtless gladly avail themselves, provided the line could be satisfactorily drawn.

A DEFENCE OF THE BLONDES.

The "Shakespeare Scholar" to the Rescue—Two Goddesses of Burlesque.
From "The Age of Burlesque," by R. G. White,
in the August Galaxy.

These performances are so little to my taste that I found one sitting of "La Grande Duchesse" and one dose of Mlle. TOSTEE somewhat more than I could bear; and it was not until "The Forty Thieves" were about sinking into their unsavory oil-jars for the last time that I saw Miss LYDIA THOMPSON and her company, at Niblo's. But going there at a morning's performance, in search of a needed laugh, which I confess I did not get, I was surprised, not only with the merit of the lady herself, and of some of her companions, but with the character of the audience. The latter I expected to find made up of coarse and flashy people; but, on the contrary, it was notable in the main, for simple and almost homely respectability. Comfortable, middle-aged women from the suburbs and from the remoter country, their daughters, groups of children, a few professional men, bearing their quality in their faces, some sober, farmer-looking folk, a clergyman or two, apparently, the usual proportion of nondescripts, among which were not many very young men, composed an audience less fashionable than I had seen in Fourteenth-street, but at least as respectable. And the LYDIA THOMPSON, in whom I had expected to find a coarse, Anglo-Saxon exaggeration of Mlle. TOSTEE, I found one of the most charming comic actresses it had been my good fortune to see. She played burlesque with a daintiness with which few actresses of note are able to flavor their acting, even in high comedy. She was doing hard work, no doubt, but her heart must have been in it, for she was the embodiment of mirth, and moved others to hilarity by being moved herself. It was as if Venus, in her quality of the goddess of laughter, had come upon the stage. And if there was a likeness to Venus in the costume, as well as in manner, I must confess that I saw in it no chance of harm to myself or to any of my fellow-spectators, old or young, male or female. Indeed, it seems rather to be desired that the points of a fine woman should be somewhat better known, and more thought of among us than they have been. They seem to me quite as important, and I think they are quite as interesting, as those of a fine horse; and I should be sorry to believe that they are more harmful, either to taste or to morals. Some of the outcry that we hear against the costume of which the burlesque actresses wear, in the way of their profession, has in it such a tone of personal injury, that it might come from mammas and papas who, having a very poor article of young woman lying heavy on their hands, are indignant that there should be so good and so easy an opportunity of trying it by a very high standard. As to any impropriety in this costume, in its place, that is, seriously speaking, a matter of individual opinion; but if there is any, it is far less, both in degree and kind, than that of the ordinary ballet dancer, with her flying petticoat, alternately concealing and revealing the attractions of her figure, which we have looked at ever since we were children, even in this dear old Niblo's Garden, without a thought of shamofacedness, and very much less than that of the tilting hoops, which lent such peculiar attractions to the "German" in fashionable society only two years ago.

This gayety of heart and overrunning glee, Miss THOMPSON shows even in a greater degree in "Sinbad" than in its predecessors. What an overflow of mirth and humor breaks from her when she takes the auctioneer's stand, at the wife-market, to set forth her own qualifications as a "Girl of the Period!" With what a radiant outbreak of fun does she announce "we are aware of our own awarishness!" and how thoroughly she seems to enjoy that queer word "thunk," which the author has given her for *thought*? I must confess, with proper contrition, that I liked her performance in this part better than much high tragedy that I have seen—better, for instance, than Mr. FORREST in "Hamlet." As to *thunk*, I venture to say that her author probably took that word from a passage in an article on "Words and their Uses," where I used it some months ago, whimsically, of course. But probably neither he nor one or two of the prim purists who scoffed at me for it, knew how old a word it is, and how good authority there is for its use. Here it is, in the famous old satirical poem of "The Owl and the Nightingale," written six hundred years ago, about A. D. 1250:

Me *thunch* that thu for-leost that game
Thu yulpest of thire oye schame:
Me *thunch* that thu me gest an hondo
Thu yulpest of thire oyeo schonde.

And this reminds me of one striking excellence in this company of actresses—the beautiful manner in which they speak English. It is noticeable in all, but particularly in two, one of whom is Miss THOMPSON herself; the other is the second lady of the company, Miss PAULINE MARKHAM, she who has found the long-lost arms of the "Venus of Milo," and whose speech is vocal velvet. It is with a recollection of all the public elocution and private conversation that ever impressed me, that I say that Miss MARKHAM, whose voice and style are not of the heroic or high-tragedy order, speaks the most beautiful colloquial English that I ever heard. More reserved in manner, and less sprightly by nature, I should say, than Miss THOMPSON, (whose part, nevertheless, she took with great success,) her voice and smile give to her presence a rare attraction, that calls to mind the allurements which HORACE immortalized in the closing lines of his famous ode:

Dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo,
Dulce loquentem.

This was apparent in the "School for Scandal," in which she played *Maria*, a part that gives an actress only the opportunity to be quiet, and simple, and lady-like, as she was; but in which her speech was so lovely in manner and in tone, that she made that of all the other women on the stage seem sharp, and rough, and forbidding. If the ladies of our most cultivated society need an excuse for attending the performance at Niblo's, the lack of which they do not seem to feel, they may find it in the benefit which they might derive from listening to Miss THOMPSON, Miss MARKHAM, and their companions, (with one exception, now, however, no longer a member of the company,) as they utter the puns and doggerel of their parts, which are almost as significant and as silly as the words of Italian opera.

On one point these burlesques have transgressed, gravely and without excuse—their dances, some of which, although not to be compared, for voluptuous effect or immodesty, with Gérôme's superb picture, "L'Almée," which hung unrebuked and admired for months in one of the most fashionable resorts in the city, are vulgar and gross—being made so by the lack of any element of beauty in form or spirit. "La Grande Duchesse," "Genevieve de Brabant," and "The Forty Thieves," sinned gravely in this regard, in which "Sinbad" is without reproach. And I will say, in passing, that in the last-named play, the dancing of the member of the Clodoche Troupe, who wears the Normandy head-dress, is really grand. He steps as if he could take in half the earth at a bound, and as if he rose from the ground by volition, rather than by exertion. In this respect he far surpasses any dancer whose performance I remember. The style of his companions is always grotesque and clownish; his is rarely other than severe and simple. The dancing is the most vulnerable part of these burlesque performances, and is worthy of condemnation, even more for its silliness than its indecorum. But what can we expect in a day when the Princess METTERNICH kicks the Emperor's hat off at the TULLERIES, and when a Yankee girl I have heard of, who, and whose friends, would be surprised if told that she, or the society in which she moved, was not perfectly respectable, has boasted of her ability to remove papa's hat in the same manner? Were either of these ladies an actress who went through this performance in public, she would be subjected to disparaging remark of a kind as well as of a degree which she now, in a great measure, escapes. And with some reason; although it must be confessed that, if such an act admits at all of comparison, when done openly and as business, it is less objectionable than when it is private, and must be accepted as an example of the manners of the day.

I have known very few actresses. Although not without opportunities of knowing them, I can reckon my acquaintance among the ladies of the stage almost on the fingers of one hand. It has merely happened so—to my great loss, I do not doubt,—although my limited observation has confirmed what is said by those who have known

many actresses, and known them well, that there is no peculiar charm in their society except a certain freedom from restraint that makes intercourse with them easier than it is with purely domestic women. A clever and successful actress is generally a charming woman, with her womanhood slightly dashed with the open-hearted freedom of a good fellow, and the ease and repose of a man of the world; the womanly weaknesses and graces being, as a counterpoise, a little more pronounced in her than they usually are. But beyond wearing the rite of their sex with this slight difference, actresses are just like other women; as fond of admiration, but no fonder; no more eager to be loved, or covetous of the attentions and the gifts that are tributes to their charms; no more addicted to extravagance in dress or to luxurious living—for which, indeed, they very rarely have the means at their command; no less gifted with all the peculiar virtues—may, the very domestic virtues of their sex; as true in their friendships as other women are, and as pungent in their hatred; as selfish and as unselfish; and as ready to sacrifice themselves to their love or their duty. They are somewhat more frank and simple in their manner than the women of society, and generally, I believe, more generous; readier, as a rule, to give to others and to work for others who have no claim on them but need and their common profession. The services done to each other by actresses, out of pure kindness and good nature, and the help that the successful ones give to the unsuccessful, more than atone for the professional jealousy and envy for which they are noted, but in which they are not peculiar.

AMUSEMENTS.

Musical.

CENTRAL PARK GARDEN.

At this sultry, not to say seething, time of the year, the only public entertainments that can hope for positive success are those in which the opportunities of personal comfort are freest and most complete. In proportion to the consideration bestowed by managers upon the ventilation of their houses, their chances of prosperity rise and fall. A little atmospheric agitation is just now worth all the advertising in the world, in proof of which witness the eagerness displayed in claiming for almost every theatre the distinction of "the coolest in the City." That the play-houses should lose a portion of their customary popularity during such an overheated season, is only natural. Excellent dramatic performances are afforded at more than one establishment, but the incompatibility between intellectual glow and physical sweater is too great to be reconciled in the minds and bodies of any but the most resolute theatrical devotees. Happy the manager, then, who can combine the most priceless blessing of the period, a cool, invigorating temperature, with an entertainment more in harmony than any other could possibly be with what the father of all the English poets calls "The gentle senses and the sighs of Summer." Mr. THOMAS has no occasion to proclaim his concert hall "the coolest in the City." We all know it to be so. We all know, too, that its elements of natural refreshment are susceptible of artificial augmen-