symptoms were concerned, have occurred within a few weeks of each other; opposite decisions have been come to, and we are unable to gather from them by what legal principle or by what principle of any kind they have been inspired. After all, there may be some danger in becoming too independent of "scientific and legal definitions," and in estimating too highly "the good sense of men of the world:" scientific and legal experience counts for something in the progress of the world; the good sense of one age, moreover, has sometimes been the laughing-stock of the next; and when all has been said, there is certainly some advantage, if not in the recognition of general principles, at any rate in an approach to uniformity of practice in courts of justice.

"*Eugene Aram*," *a Psychological Study*. By J. H. Balfour Browne, Esq.

The spiritual history of a man is never without interest to his fellows. How a great man lived and moved and had his being; how he met and faced this cunning, cheating world; how he bore himself to his fellows, and how he accomplished the work that lay to his hand; these are matters which are full of deep interest, of true pathos to men who are amongst their fellows; to men who are striving to live justly and honestly in this present world. Each other life that we come to know and feel with, has not lived for itself, but for us. Other men have suffered that we may be free from pain. The victory of another may be ours through the magic of sympathy. There is a deep perennial truth in this matter of vicarious suffering. We find it illustrated in the sacrifices of all religions, and in the central doctrine of Christianity itself. It is in this aspect that hero-worship is excellent. "We may make our lives divine," and the way to succeed in that endeavour is by means of a thorough knowledge of, a deep and noble sympathy with, that which is divine in our fellow men. The examples such men leave are indeed noble benefactions to the race. A Peabody bequest is a small thing in comparison with the living records of a life well spent. That being so, the value of biography can be understood, and if the infinite significance of a true life of a real man is appreciated, the sorrow which must be felt on account of the rarity of such works cannot but be great. True there is no lack of so-called "Biographies," but these fall far short of the re-

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quirements of the perfect record of a life. In these, for the most part, we find not the life of a man but a number of the circumstances which he lived through. How these modified him, how he moulded the iron of circumstance, for the most part, we hear not.

The true function of dramatic art in its highest aspect seems to be to present us with a living biography. The difficulty which is felt by all writers of lives is to bring the subject of their memoir really before their readers, to create in the mind of the reader the vivid impression that it was a real man who did these deeds—who spoke those words—who felt those emotions; it is, indeed, the work of the highest artist thus to make words body forth the whole vital being of a man. Various expedients are adopted with a view to the attainment of this end. Portraits of the man are given that the eye may help the mind; descriptions of the house he lived in, of the scenes amongst which he moved are given, because it is known that a man is sometimes known by his surroundings, and rightly so, as surroundings become vital if choice or thought has entered into them; but all these, except in the hands of the greatest masters, fail to make us know the man and feel with him. That, of a truth, is the end of biography. In the drama, on the other hand, we are assisted in our realization of character by the circumstance that in it a human being has, as it were, clothed himself with emotions. A man is there before us who appears to suffer or to laugh, and the more thoroughly he can enter into the emotion the less we feel that it is really acting, the higher is his art, and the more excellent is the moral effect upon ourselves. In that way a great actor is a biographer; but the biographer not so much of a man who lived in passions, in emotions, and in will, as of the passions, the emotions, and the volitions which lived through a man. In that way, too, a great actor is a teacher who, by his art, raises us to a higher life; and surely that is true of all art; it is a translation of a man to heaven without tasting of death, it is the sublation of our worldly wants, our petty desires, our selfish greeds, and the exaltation of our nobler nature, of our higher wants, of our excellent aspirations. If that is not a translation like to that of Enoch and Elias we know not what is. But this is effected through our sympathy—our sympathy with the noble and the good, and our loathing of the wicked and the base. Not simply for amusement were plays written, not simply to while away empty, lazy hours did such men as Shakespeare live; but for

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far other and sterner purpose did they exist. He came, as all great men do, as a teacher, and it is just in that quality of teaching that he excels all other men. But if plays were not written with a view to the pleasure of the people, if all art is really in a deep sense didactic, it follows that plays should not be acted simply for the delectation of the audience, but for the benefit of each one who witnesses them. This fact has, to a great extent, been lost sight of in these days, and he who claims a higher function for dramatic art, in these days of Burlesque, than the production of laughter is apt only to excite the ridicule of the too risible world. That it has a higher function we cannot, however, doubt, and are prepared to assert in the face of the broadest grin and in spite of the most ironical cachinnation. That the drama is biographical in the sense we have pointed out seems to us certain. But one thing is to be remembered, and that is that it is only episodically biographical. Biography must trace the growth of a disposition through its various moods; the drama, on the other hand, traces the growth and progress of a mood in a disposition. The whole life of a man is the raw material of the biographer; a small portion of the life of a man, cut out from the rest by the prevalence of certain phases of being, separated from the rest by the emotional connection and association of certain events, is the field of the dramatist. Thus it is episodical biography, but at the same time it is truly biographical. An episode is not understood unless that from which it is a digression is appreciated. The passion of a man is only intelligible in relation to his whole character, consequently the dramatist has these two difficulties to deal with. He has to enable his readers to understand the disposition of the man, and yet he has to dwell almost exclusively on the one emotion, or series of emotions, without allowing his audience to lose sight of the real character of the person who is thus affected. The difficulty of this is, of course, great; and many who have attempted it have fallen miserably short of perfection.

The author of "Eugene Aram," which is at present being acted at the Lyceum Theatre, seems to us to have failed in many respects, and yet it is on the whole a very clever failure. It is a play written for a single actor, and that actor is Mr. Irving. Indeed, throughout it is almost a monologue spoken by Eugene Aram; and the other characters of the play are little more than the figures in a tableau. In this particular there is either an utter failure to perceive the true requisites

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of dramatic art, or an utter want of power of real dramatic creation. Perhaps the absurd exigencies of the modern stage may be Mr. Wills' excuse. But we have graver fault to find with his work. We cannot approve of the choice of the murder perpetrated by Eugene Aram as the subject of a drama. Lord Lytton is in part to blame. He in his younger days chose to write a novel, in which he made considerable use of the story of Eugene Aram, a schoolmaster of Knaresborough, who in 1759 was hung in chains in Knaresborough Forest, after having been found guilty of the murder of Daniel Clarke, which had taken place fourteen years before. The story of this murder, which differed from others very little, was remembered by men on account of the supposed acquirements of the murderer, and through the exceeding ingenuity of his defence, which is said to have been pronounced a work of consummate ability by no less an authority than Archdeacon Paley. There were no redeeming circumstances connected with the murder. It seems to have been perpetrated with a view to obtaining a larger share of the proceeds of a robbery in which he, the murdered man, and a flax-dresser of Knaresborough—Richard Houseman—had been implicated; and, perhaps, with a view of escaping the suspicion of being connected with the robbery through the mysterious disappearance of the man Clarke, who would naturally, under such circumstances, be regarded as the guilty person. Lord Lytton could scarcely make a hero of such a man, and although there is a great deal of ingenuity in his book, it is certainly one of the feeblest he ever wrote.

Mr. Wills is even less historically accurate than Lord Lytton. But the choice of the subject necessitated inaccuracy. No dramatist could make a good play out of such a crime. To affect the audience simply with disgust and loathing is to fail of all real dramatic effect. The nobler sentiments, the better sympathies must be stirred within the audience, the play of emotion must be as varied on the stage as in the world, where the tears of joy and tears of woe are mingled on the same cheek, otherwise the play resembles Whistler's studies in black and grey, which fall so far short of artistic excellence. Consequently both Lord Lytton and Mr. Wills have had to modify facts. The former made grinding, debasing poverty, the reason of the crime; the latter makes revenge for a foul wrong, mad indignation at a wicked and shameful act, unreasoning hatred of a diabolical wrong doer, the cause of the tragedy.

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Both authors, however, deal with the murderer's history at the date of the discovery of the crime, and not at the period of its commission. This method reminds one of the clap-trap of M. Gérôme's picture of Calvary, where the shadows of the three crosses lie in the foreground of the picture, but the crucifixion is itself outside the artist's view. The dark lead-blue clouds hang over Jerusalem; the people who had journied to see the death of Jesus, and the thieves, are wending their way back to the city through the gloomy valley. All these have fallen under the artist's notice, all these are there, but the crucifixion is not. Nothing of it is seen but the shadows of the crosses flung by the lurid light of a sky big with storm. Still people who did not know the province of art praised the picture. "You felt that it was there," they said; and so in this play you feel from the presence of the remorse of Eugene Aram that the crime has been committed, that the passions which led to it have been felt, but there is nothing to tell you so but the shadows.

Mr. Wills' play seems to us to represent something which the author scarcely intended, and for which he therefore cannot have the credit. In Mr. Irving's hands Eugene Aram is a madman. In some parts Mr. Irving is too stagy even to allow us to think that he represents anything real, and we are the more inclined to regret this because in many parts he shows unmistakeable dramatic power, and a careful reticence both with regard to voice and action, which augurs well for his future success. But thinking highly, as we do, of his careful play of features, his calm and clear, although sometimes drawling utterance, and his thorough intelligence, we cannot but deplore such stagy staggering as that which he indulges in before the mirror at the end of the second act, and such blatant rant as he gives way to when describing his murder to Ruth, and when he is himself at the point of death. A good actor, as Mr. Irving in some passages proves himself to be, and a man with his capacity to become a much better actor, ought to avoid the clap-trap expedients of second-rate provincial actors, who choose "Maria Martin, or the Murder of the Red Barn" for their benefit night, and attract rustics who encore the "Combat Scene" from "Macbeth."

Mr. Wills meant to make Eugene Aram a sane man under the influence of remorse; he has succeeded in making him an insane man, or no man at all. The glaring inconsistencies of the play are explicable only on the supposition that Eugene Aram is mad. The first scene represents a gardener making

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wreaths and bouquets in Parson Meadows' garden, in preparation for the marriage of the parson's daughter Ruth to Eugene Aram, the village schoolmaster. A stranger, Houseman, asks the gardener for a pick and spade, and induces him to allow his son to take these tools to St. Robert's Cave. Parson Meadows, on discovering that Houseman, who passes under an assumed name, is interested in mineralogy—an interest he had pretended to explain his request for the spade and the pick—offers him the hospitality of the parsonage; and the gardener, who through a slip of Houseman's has discovered his real name, and who had himself found a gold coin in St. Robert's Cave, thinks that the stranger means to dig for hidden treasure, and determines to watch him. Then there is a lover's interview between Eugene and Ruth. Eugene is an infinitely sad man. Even in the presence of the girl he is to wed on the morrow he cannot forego his melancholy, and he never allows a smile to flit across his face. So much so that Ruth asks him, "Were you ever gay?"

And yet this is fourteen years after the murder—fourteen years after an act which was scarcely unjustifiable, and he is still the slave of remorse, regret, or fear. Yet he must, had he been a sane man, have felt safe, have felt happy. Everything had gone well with him. He was respected. He was loved. His own love had not gone forth in vain, but had found an answer in another pure heart. Everything smiled upon him. But he was mad. He had become the victim of a fixed idea, and that came between him and the girl he loved, between him and the pleasures he might have felt from the honour, the admiration, the respect which surrounded him. That is evident. Whenever Ruth mentions a stranger his suspicions are aroused. He asks questions about him. He has at that time no reason to suspect that the stranger is Houseman, but in the course of the conversation with the girl to whom he is to be married, he incessantly recurs to the subject of the stranger. There is more than the healthy curiosity of a coward who dreads detection, more than the healthy remorse of a great mind for a rash and noble act in this; there is the brooding possession of the man by an idea which tyrannises over him, which is ready to grasp any straw and turn it into a rope for its purpose of self-intimidation.

But there are many other proofs of Eugene Aram's mental aberration. In a healthy mind the mental cause of an act is more persistent than the emotions connected with the occurrence. If the latter live they exist in close relation to the

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former; they are always parasitical, never independent growths. Thus, if a man had loved, and in consequence of the "sweet wants" which love engenders, done some act which had to be atoned for in the mental sackcloth and ashes of blushes and tears, the memory of the repentance would not be dissociated from the memory of the love. Now in Mr. Wills' play, Eugene Aram, loving nobly, seeing the object of his affection cruelly wronged, and basely pillaged, not only of her honour, but, in the miserable meanness of vice, of her little trinkets, is mad with jealousy, and fierce with revenge he finds her seducer and her robber, and he strikes "the human scoundrel, or two legged wolf," according to Mr. Carlyle's phrase, while still enacting a part of the horrible tragedy. Well, we can almost agree with Mr. Carlyle when he says of a man in such circumstances, "The soul of every God-created man flames wholly into one divine blaze of sacred wrath at sight of such a Devil's messenger, authentic first-hand monition from the Eternal Maker himself as to what is next to be done." But Eugene Aram cannot recognise the divinity in his wrath, and goes about blighted, as it were, by the blaze and the glow of his own anger. He never can forget it. Even in the tales he tells the girl he loves, the cave in which he buried the "two legged wolf" plays a part. Always and everywhere the murder and the memory of the murdered man haunt him. But what has become of his memory of his love and jealousy, which led to the outrage? It is not persistent like this insane remorse; it has passed away with the fourteen years of gentle erasing time; even in the circumstances of new love, with the same dalliance with pleasant nonsense, with the same sounds in his ears, the same kisses on his lips, there is nothing to call up the terrible old emotions, and to crown his heart with thorns. It is ever the murdered man that is with him, never the woman that he loved and revenged. But this is exactly the character of an insane emotional condition. It is ever irrationally dissociated from those thoughts, those emotions, which in a healthy mind are its necessary concomitants.

Again, in the scene with Houseman, Eugene Aram shews himself to be capable of dealing with circumstances of the most refractory character with an iron hand. He is cunning and bold. He knows his game, and he plays it. But whenever he is asked to go with Parson Meadows and the rest to view the remains which have been found in St. Robert's cave, he becomes a poltroon and a coward. He indulges in loose,

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rambling talk, and deals with the events as limply as a girl might. This would be ridiculous on the supposition that Eugene Aram was sane. To a sane man who has "nerves of iron, and brain of ice," the mere request to look at a skeleton, which has been filled by the earth of a grave during fourteen years, even although the bones were those of a victim, has nothing so very horrible in it. To an educated man, as Eugene Aram was, the mere looking upon dry bones, although they had once been the clothes-horse of a garment of flesh, is not very terrible. To an insane man, on the other hand, who is by reason of his very insanity superstitious, and who has a diseased remorsefulness, such an invitation was full of horror, and the incoherence which followed the request that he should go with them to see whether in truth it was the skeleton of Daniel Clarke which had been found, was, on the supposition of insanity, not improbable or incongruous. It is a fact that is sometimes overlooked by psychologists that there is a very close connection between superstition and mental disease. Most medical men are familiar with the superstitious belief in remedies which exist in connection with epilepsy; but we might even go further, and prove that almost every mental disease is connected with its own kind of superstition, and, consequently, that the superstitions of men are not without their diagnostic value. The superstition which existed in Eugene Aram showed itself, not only when he was invited to go with the others to view the skeleton, but when, having screwed his courage up, he went and saw the bones, and fled. In the third act he is in a churchyard, whither he has fled. To a timid man, the graves would have been fearful companions; but not to a madman, whose whole mind was concentrated upon the old crime, and the superstitions connected with the raising of those bones, which his hands had covered with the moist soft earth of the cave. Here, however, his conversation or soliloquy is that of a madman. His superstition shows itself, too, for he makes a confession, and seems to think that God, in the starry heaven to which he holds up his face and his hands, will give some sign that his confession has been heard—that his prayer has been answered. And yet this is the wise and learned Eugene Aram, this is the man that all the villagers hold in reverence and respectful love—that the parson admires and praises. No! in truth, it is Eugene Aram, the madman! Even with his last effort he proves himself to be insane. He rises from Ruth's arms, and acts with misplaced vehemence, the tragedy which is the

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cause of his remorse; he raises his arms and strikes as if the head of his victim cracked beneath his fierce blows, and yet it happened fourteen years ago; and this is a scholar and a gentleman who is eking out, as it were, a scant supply of words by too profuse actions. No, again! It is Eugene Aram, who is under the influence of an exacerbation of his mental malady. Other indications exist which would go far to confirm the truth of the opinion we have formed of this play. The death of the hero is unaccounted for, except upon the hypothesis of brain disease, but we have already written more about Eugene Aram than we intended, although we have said less about Mr. Irving than he deserves. His acting in the first act is calm and artistic. In the scene with Houseman he is admirable, and, what is too rare with Mr. Irving, economical of voice and gesture. Some passages in the last act are full of tenderness and pathos, and indicate that he might, with patience, become more than simply an intelligent and face-gifted actor, that he might really be a genuine and powerful artist.

Mr. Wills, although he has failed to produce what he intended, if he did intend to produce a great drama, and although he has produced what he did not intend to produce, if he did not really mean to make a madman the central figure of his play, has produced a play which is in many respects remarkably clever, although it is wanting in almost all the qualities which are requisite to a real drama. It is full of by no means contemptible poetry, and some of the situations are striking and dramatic. He also could do much better. The walls of our picture exhibitions are covered with what are called "pot-boilers," and the man who consents to paint such pictures, if he can do better, is doing a grave injustice to himself, and perpetrating a contemptible cheat on his fellow men. We are half inclined to believe that "Eugene Aram" at the Lyceum is a "pot-boiler." Doubtless it succeeds in making the pot boil, and making the home hearth comfortable. But the author and the actor have better work in them, and we should be glad to see them begin to accomplish it.

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