

Men seem ever to have been sensible of its presence, sometimes as a natural or human agency, at others as a weapon of the supernatural. In its comic role Shakespeare draws this spirit into one vital poetic figure in the character of Puck, or Robin Goodfellow. You will remember how in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" Puck succeeds in setting the lovers at cross purposes, and how, in describing the fruits of his handiwork he says:

"Lord, what fools these mortals be."

This represents a focus on human affairs which is shared for the moment by Harry in our example. As he watches the quarrelling men through the window of the paint shop he is something more than human. He is a god compelling the frenzied dance of Fred and George, and, as he observes them like puppets on the strings of his mischief, he laughs gleefully.

"Lord, what fools these mortals be."

In comedy through the ages we see the Harrys of the world busy with their mischief, setting groups of unfortunate victims at cross purposes. In the comedies of ancient Greece and Rome we find him driving tyrannical fathers into frenzied anger, setting jealous wives storming at crestfallen husbands, upsetting the plans of ardent lovers until they are driven almost to the last extreme of despair. In early sixteenth century England we see him causing dire trouble by cleverly altering the punctuation of a love letter, changing its tenor from one of affection to one of insult. We find him telling lies with a face of brass to an old soul who has lost a precious needle, setting her at loggerheads with her neighbour simply that he might watch them fight and swear in the street. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries he is still at work. His methods are always the same. Only the salient follies of the victims change as civilization advances and manners become more sophisticated. Goldsmith in the eighteenth century gave us a vivid portrait of this comical mischief-maker in the character of Tony Lumpkin in "She Stoops to Conquer." This play is one of the most highly refined of its type, so let us consider it somewhat in detail.

The theme of the comedy becomes set when Tony Lumpkin deliberately misdirects the young hero, Marlow, and his friend, Hastings. Lumpkin, a boisterous and illiterate young squire is seated in his favourite tavern swilling ale when Marlow and Hastings enter. It is night time and the two young men wish to be directed to the house of Lumpkin's stepfather, Mr. Hardcastle, where Marlow is to appear as a prospective for the hand of Hardcastle's daughter, Kate. In the spirit of mischief Lumpkin tells the travellers that they are some distance off their proper route, making it appear impossible for them to reach their destination that night. He directs them to an inn which he describes as one of the best in the county, though with a single blemish in the person of its landlord who, because he has sufficient wealth to be the owner of his inn insists on putting himself upon an equal footing with his guests. This inn, of course, is the very house which Marlow and Hastings are seeking, and the landlord none other than Mr. Hardcastle himself. The results, of course, are extremely farcical. Hardcastle, who has never seen Marlow before, and who has been told that the young man's chief fault lies in his lack of self-confidence when in company, is confronted by a brazen young man who demands to be served with punch before his host has had the opportunity to offer him refreshment, seats himself in the best chair, and insists on selecting his own dishes for supper. It is one of Mr. Hardcastle's foibles to tell stories of the Duke of Marlborough's battles and he begins to relate one of them, confident, no doubt, that a prospective son-in-law, if nobody else, might be relied upon to listen with tact. Instead, Marlow ignores him completely to discuss with Hastings the clothes which they are to wear the following day.

Later, Marlow meets Miss Hardcastle and, believing her to be a visitor at the inn, falls into confusion through sheer

nervousness and stammers and shuffles like a booby not daring even to look the lady in the face. Thus, Hardcastle and his daughter are left with quite opposite opinions of the young man, the father believing him to be an impudent puppy, and the daughter convinced that he is a dumb block-head. Both, however, are agreed that the young man is wholly unacceptable. But Miss Hardcastle gets a different impression of Marlow when she meets him for the second time. According to her father's wish she is now clad in the sober garments of a country housewife and Marlow, who had not the courage to look upon her face at the first meeting, now mistakes her for the barmaid of the inn. A lively passage ensues in which Marlow tries to make love to the girl with all the freedom of the young town-bred spark. The witty Kate is no less capable of dealing with this situation than she was with the earlier one when Marlow floundered helplessly before her. Noting the liveliness of the man she secretly decides to accept him.

Here, you see, Goldsmith succeeds in setting up a train of scenes with characters at cross-purposes all evolving from Tony Lumpkin's original piece of mischief. I have dealt only with that part of the plot which concerns Marlow but this should be sufficient to show how the practice of the classical and refined Goldsmith fits in with our rough general example of Harry, Fred and George. Marlow is twice made to appeal to the sense of the ludicrous in the audience by exhibiting characteristic foibles at a time when he is working on false assumptions. And you will observe that Marlow's foibles lead him towards the extremes of over-confidence and excessive nervousness, both of which extremes are deflated in the farce of the situations in which they are exposed. If one wishes one can draw a moral from the play, which is that one should try to behave equably in all kinds of company. But codified morals are apt to pall beside the satisfying experience of healthy laughter, probably because healthy laughter is one of the most truly moral things of all. Such laughter deflates though it never derides. It corrects folly while it loves the fool, and above all it provides us all with the means for adjustment towards that form of level sanity for which the world longs.

FRANCIS EDWARDS.

Careers for Girls at Schoolgirls' Exhibition.

A SPECIAL CAREERS SECTION is being arranged at this year's Schoolgirls' Exhibition, to be held at the New Horticultural Hall from May 24th to June 3rd, which includes the Whitsun Holiday.

Hospitals in London and the Home Counties are making a strong bid to attract girls to take up nursing as a career. There will be displays from ten Hospital Groups and two Regional Hospital Boards, with continual demonstrations of various aspects of a nurse's work and training.

Nursery nursing will also be well to the fore with composite displays and demonstrations from ten member colleges of the Association of Nursery Training Colleges. Practical demonstrations on this stand will also give some insight into mothercraft training.

Other careers about which girls and their parents can obtain first-hand information from experienced and sympathetic advisers, and at the same time see demonstrations at the Exhibition of the work and training involved, are secretarial, stenotyping, the stage, the Services, occupational therapy, hairdressing, electrical industry, and journalism.

Special arrangements are being made for numerous parties from schools and youth organisations, particularly in London and the Home Counties, although parties are known to be coming from as far afield as Bradford, Birmingham, Exeter and Cardiff.

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