

## OUR CAPTIOUS CRITIC.

## "THE ENGLISH ROSE."

If there is nothing else to talk about we discuss the weather, and when other dramatic themes are exhausted for the moment, we fall back upon Ireland. In good hands a great deal can be done with the sister Isle. The playwright who has used up his cockney sensations—the real meat-pie shop, the practical coffee-stall, the live donkey with a live barrow—has

but to turn to Pat with a mind equal to the occasion and all shall be well. It is the change of scene which is the great gain to the play-goer, more than any radical change of plot. All melodramatic pieces are much alike as to the broad outlines of the story. But even an Adelphi audience grows tired from time to time of seeing the same old streets and squares of London employed for the same purposes by the same characters or nearly so; and to get back once more to the rocky pass

by moonlight, the lone cottage by the sea, and such doings as are traditional to these necessary adjuncts of every Irish drama, is almost like making a new departure. *The English Rose*, by Messrs. Sims and Buchanan, is a very Irish play indeed, if Lever, Lover, and Boucicault can be regarded as representative Irish writers: for the Adelphi authors have certainly paid them a compliment of not venturing far upon ground which one of these has not trodden. There have been discussions about a French original. But really there was no need of one, since to any person who has read Lever and seen Boucicault performed, the four acts of Messrs. Sims and Buchanan appear to happen as a matter of course, while much of the dialogue is quite in the vein of the author of the *Colleen Bawn*. Two or three of the personages, in fact, flow over with the same sort of epigram-

base rival's meanness that Sir Philip surprises the two lovers exchanging their first vows, and it is owing to his taunts that although the heroine is willing to give up all for him, the generous—or cautious—O'Malley declines to take her at the cost of her losing her fortune. There are two ways of looking at this sacrifice of O'Malley, although here again the authors do not say so. Not to dwell upon details, however, Sir Philip receives a hint from Sergeant O'Reilly, a genial member of the Royal Irish Constabulary, to examine Macdonnell's accounts.



unfortunate hero himself. O'Mara has revealed the facts of the murder under the seal of confession, and although his own brother is in jeopardy the good priest does not speak. Not to mention the story by Ouida and the recent Haymarket production, the situation is a common one in melodrama, although



The authors do not tell us how the sergeant knew them to be wrong, but they are so, and the agent fears to face the inquiry. He plots with one Randal O'Mara to waylay and shoot Sir Philip by "The Devil's Bridge," and hopes that some hard words which passed between the hero and the victim will cause O'Malley to be charged with the murder. The villain and the hero have just ridden a steeplechase off the stage, and despite an attempt to physic the latter's horse O'Malley has been victorious. As he rides in after the race he is told of the plot against Sir Philip by the boy Patsy Blake—the typical hanger on and humble protector of all the good personages. Without saying where he is going, O'Malley knocks down

the repository of the secret may not happen to wear priestly clothes. As a matter of fact, the position of the boy, Patsy Blake, in this very piece is almost identical. He knows the facts as well as Father O'Malley, but dares not save young O'Malley because, by delivering up Randal O'Mara, he would injure a protectress of his, Randal O'Mara's sister, Bridget. The trial of O'Malley, like the steeplechase, takes place off the stage with the people in front talking about it. As O'Malley, declared guilty, is being marched away from the court he is rescued by the mob, with Sergeant O'Reilly's connivance. Then outside the chapel by the ocean O'Mara is made to confess anew, by Ethel Kingston this time; and Dickenson, the Whitechapel forger, Macdonnell's tool and accomplice, having been forced to turn Queen's evidence the curtain falls upon the reunion of the lovers with the villain looking on in hand-cuffs. The piece goes very well, although some of the love-scenes and domestic passages are a little long, and familiarity discounts the force of a few of the situations. The rush off on

horseback of O'Malley in the second act is, I suppose, the great sensation. But the ambush at the Devil's Bridge by moonlight is received with much applause, as also are the excitements by the little chapel preceding the villain's downfall. I like myself the third act best, or some of it. There is not much fresh in the treatment of the meeting of Bridget, the Irish girl who has loved O'Malley, and Ethel, whom he brings



Macdonnell, who tries to stop him, and dashes away, all mounted as he is, to the scene of the intended crime. He is arrested for the murder because that is what the authors have him there for, and on evidence which the authors think sufficient is found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. However, before the arrest there is an effective scene with the Knight of Bally-

matic conceits, now poetic, now humorous, as Boucicault lavished on the characters he cared for most. They were very effective upon the stage, but I have seldom met so much wit and sparkle in any single Irishman away from it. I am inclined to think that the writers of fiction give Pat more credit than he deserves in this respect. There are funny Irishmen, no doubt, and they are funniest when a little tipsy. But to fill up a play, or to attempt to fill up a play, with Irish personages all poetical and all witty is as absurd as it would be to take up Sam Weller as a national type and make all the characters go on that way. *The English Rose* is in some sense an agrarian drama. However, Messrs. Sims and Buchanan

do not take sides for or against anyone in particular. The Knight of Ballyveeney has muddled all his property away except a ruined castle. One of his sons has become a priest; the other is the penniless heir of the O'Malley's, the interesting hero. Instead of going into the world or into Parliament or somewhere and making a living, he remains at home eating up his poor old father. This is the truth, although the authors do not say so. The present owner of the Ballyveeney lands is Sir Philip Kingston; he has a lovely niece, Ethel, known among the peasantry as "The English Rose," and a wicked agent,

Macdonnell, who holds the rank of captain. It need hardly be said that the penniless hero and the wicked agent are rivals for the hand of Ethel Kingston, and that as O'Malley is favoured by the lady, Macdonnell hates him with a great hatred. It is by the

veeney. The old man has been summoned to New York to take up a fortune, and on his way to the coast he meets his two sons in O'Mara's cottage. The police and soldiers have followed O'Malley and Ethel hither, but by general agreement it is resolved that the knight shall go away happy. He goes, talking of the bright future in store for everyone, and ignorant of the murder and its effect upon his hearers, which, for his sake, they are keeping concealed. The other O'Malley, the young clergyman, is in a worse predicament even than the



to her for protection; but the incidents of the departure of the old Knight of Ballyveeney belong to the less hackneyed school of drama. The part of O'Malley is played earnestly