

ADVENTURES IN THE ARTS

of course, the splendid appearance of the Duchess of Towers in the first act—all these touches furnish more than a satisfying background for the very shy and frail Peter.

This performance of Barrymore holds for me the first and last requisite of organized conception in art—poise, clarity, and perfect suggestibility. Its intellectual soundness rules the emotional extravagance, giving form to what—for lack of form—so often perishes under an excess of energy, which the ignorant actor substitutes for the plastic element in all art. It has the attitude, this performance, almost of diffidence to one's subject-matter, except as the intellect judges clearly and coolly. Thus, in the sense of esthetic reality, are all aspects clarified and made real. From the outward inward, or from the inward outward, surface to depth or depth to surface—it is difficult to say which is the precise method of approach. John Barrymore has mastered the evasive subtlety therein, which makes him one of our greatest artists. The future will surely wait for his riper contributions, and we may think of him as one of our foremost artists, among the few, "one of a small band," as the great novelist once said of the great poet.