or accessory. His Cromwell tells how Charles cheated, lied, equivocated, shamed against his people; but the two are never confronted, and thus the sensation which the Roundhead play excites depends on most literal, or rather upon Mr. Hignold, and is not diverted from him for more than a few moments. He looks the part well, and plays it well, on the whole, but we cannot be reconciled to the convulsive passion of the Council-scene. Not with grinding teeth, frantic cries, and wild gestures, did the man who prevailed over the awful deliberations which sent Charles to the scaffold, discharge his dread office. All the violence in that scene should be left to Ixion, very well played by Mr. Ryder, whose description of Cromwell's demeanour at the execution of Charles is a good bit of acting, and the words of it is among the most effective in the play.

In each play there is a scene of bitter grief and parting. Its absolute untruth jars with the pathos of the fancied farewell between Charles and his wife. Its probability, its coherence with actual events, go far to deepen the pathos, and excuse the tedium of the parting between Cromwell and his broken-hearted daughter. The young lady who plays Elizabeth Cromwell has no easy task, for she is the heroine of the most unsuccessful and puzzling story ever thrown in as an episode in a drama within our experience. The introduction of Florence Nevell (we never saw the name spell otherwise than Nevell, or Neville before); her father, a frosty old man, like Arthur Griflde in a fancy dress, with the principles of Tragedy the miser, and the politics of the Viceroy of Brag; her lover, Arthur Walsou; and host Garton, a comic landlord,—unusual elements of the plot. Miss Higginson's registration of these stock—more intermissions and blunders, weakening the effect of the really good and sometimes powerful drama, as the unsentimental Eleanor Davys weakens the effect of its rival. All this part of the play would read well, no doubt,—especially as the comic landlord might be skipped, and the love-and-money bits are very well written,—but acted, it is an utter mistake, introducing people in whose destiny nobody can feel the slightest interest, and diluting the "motives" of Elizabeth's character and fate, which ought to have been as single as her father's, and thus to have completed the contrast, which is now a dramatic harmony wantonly strung into discord. A consumptive taint, exaggerated loyalty, supernitious dread, and vain and roxious remorse on account of her father, would break the girl's heart thoroughly enough, without a piling-up of the agony at which we are forced to smile. The inevitable result of this error of judgment is that Miss Higginson's register, while the maiden very ill, while she plays the agonised daughter admirably, except that like Charles II. she is " unicornosly slow about dying, " and the effect of the words she has to speak, though they are eloquent, lofty, and impressive, is in growing peril throughout the death scene.

The part assigned to Cromwell's wife is so completely subordinate. It is a misfortune that the opportunity for the lady who plays it; but she makes something of it, when she is on the stage while the overwhelming General is not. Her dislike to the "big, drangly place" to which she has been transferred from her snug manor house at St. Ives, her weariness of her lofty state, her sense of unfitness for it, and alienation from her husband in consequence of it, the shocked submission with which she bears the tidings of her son's death in battle, her simple request to be taken to some quiet room, "the smallest they can find" (in Whitehall), while the King sits down to a careful, finished piece of acting, evincing self-repression and deference to the ideal of the part which indicates real artistic qualities.

The dresses are ridiculous. Mistress Cromwell would have worn rich sombre materials, in her manor-house days, of plain fashion indeed, but not hideous gear in which the severe panimony, and spidery ugliness, of the modern workhouse and charity-school appear. She should have been robustly clad in a black velvet chamber in a low-necked white satin gown, and the family who would certainly have worn mourning for the eldest son, are made to depute that observance to a waiting-maid who supports Elizabeth's tottering steps, arrayed in a black silk gown of the present fashion, with crappé flounces, while Lady Cromwell wears purple velvet, ermine, and jewels. But these matters of detail,—in reality so important, especially where such stress is laid on the pictureque,—are not the half of the effect. The cold cries of elation, the consmenes besides some on with long hair streaming from under their mornias,—though the first outburst of Oliver's rage in the opening scene is induced by the mention of Pryne,—and in the rival play the King's children are clad in deep mourning in the last scene, though the Queen asks Hunterly expressly whether they know about the event which is impending. A well-read Worth, with a quick eye for details, maintained upon the co-operative principle, would be a beneficial addition to the theatrical organisation of London. It might also be not impossible to get some one to teach 'super's how to wear the clothes which are put on them in the grand tableau. A more sorry spectacle than the finale to Cromwell it would be difficult to see; when all the ambassadors shamble up to present their sovereign's compliments, with a variety of wobbling awkwardness, and the utmost conceived unadaptability to the costumes and the occasion.

In each of the rival plays, there is a scene which reproduces a well-known picture; and in this there is again coincidence and contrast. The picture in Charles the First is of an incident of domestic happiness and royal state,—the King, the Queen, and their son, the Prince, upon the Long Water in Hampton Court. The picture in Cromwell is a mere verbal and abridged conception of Paul Delaroche,—the only French artist who has ever seized the picturesque and tragic sides of English history—Cromwell beside the coffin of King Charles. The strain upon author and actor, the one that he may write, the other that he may play up to the level of the French painter's thought and portraiture, is very great. We cannot say we think that either is quite successful. The subtility is too dilatory, and Mr. Higginson's playing when he departs from the pose of the picture, uses too much gesture and spooks outward,—not with the absorbed concentration with which one would address the still visible dead, looking not yet up and around, and towards the boundless place of the spirit, but at, into, the mortal form. The scene is, however, exceedingly effective, and as an exhibition of character and complex mental activity, Mr. Higginson has done anything which Mr. Willis has done for Charles the First. But a dramatist has not yet arisen to give us the true Cromwell.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

NATURAL SELECTION.

Sir,—Any one interested in the subject to which you allude at p. 49 of your last number, namely, the relative importance in causing modifications of the body or mind, on the one hand of habit or of the direct action of external conditions, and on the other hand of natural or artificial selection, will find this subject briefly discussed in the second volume (pp. 301-315) of my "Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication." I have rather specially devoted myself in that inquiry to the question of aclimatisation, which presents the greatest difficulty of any of the present question; and it may be inferred from these facts, firstly, that variations of a directly opposite nature, which would be liable either to preservation or elimination through natural selection, not rarely arise in organisms long exposed to similar conditions; and secondly, that habit, independently of selection, has often produced a marked effect. But it is most difficult, as I have said, for my own part, to say one word as to the relative discriminative of the two processes. Both tend to concur, for the individuals which inherit in the strongest manner any useful habit will commonly be preserved.

Take, as an instance, the fur of quadrupeds, which grows thicker in the individuals living far north; now there is reason to believe that weather acts directly on the skin with its appendages, but whether this be so or not, it is clear that the effect ought to be attributed to the direct action of a low temperature, and how much to the best protected individuals of many generations having survived during the severest winters. I have made many observations and collected many facts, showing the potent influence of habit and of the use or disuse of parts on organic beings; but there are numberless peculiarities of structure and of instinct (as in the case of sterile stenter insects) which can gradually acquire a habitual and inherited habit, or through the direct action of the external conditions of life.

I am, Sir, &c.

Dorn, Bexhamen, Kent, Jan. 11, 1873.

CHARLES DARWIN.

THE FARM LABOURERS OF THE WISBECH DISTRICT.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE "SPECTATOR."—]

Sir,—I purpose in this letter to give you the result of careful local inquiries that I have recently made with respect to the condition of the farm labourers of the Wisbech district.