

**PELLEAS AND
MELISAND; AND, THE
SIGHTLESS; TWO PLAYS**

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Pelleas and Melisand; and, The sightless; two plays by Maurice Maeterlinck

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MAURICE MAETERLINCK

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PELLEAS AND MELISANDA
AND
THE SIGHTLESS.

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1911

PELLEAS AND MELISANDA,

AND

THE SIGHTLESS

TWO PLAYS BY

MAURICE MAETERLINCK.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY LAURENCE ALMA TADEMA



Legislative Council
Ontario
1911

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TO THE READER.

The following translations were undertaken for a twofold reason, and that a selfish one: because it is joy to live awhile very close to the thought of another, when that other is a light-giver: because it is joy to place within the reach of certain of one's fellows what one believes to be admirable and good.

Yet, in offering to those who have not read the original, an English version of two of Maurice Maeterlinck's plays, I feel as one that, having marvelled at a rose in the garden, should poorly fashion its image in paper to give to his friend. —I should have preferred to place the volume in your hands without so much as a word of apology for its many obvious and more or less inevitable shortcomings; but the laws of the "Scott Library" forbid the silence I desire, and oblige me to add a few prefatory words.

TO THE READER.

Maurice Maeterlinck was born at Ghent on August 29th, 1862; his published works are as follows:—

SERRES CHAUDES (*a small volume of verse*),
1889.

LA PRINCESSE MALEINE (*a prose drama in five acts*), 1890.

LES AVEUGLES (*two prose dramas in one act, entitled respectively "L'INTRUSE" and "LES AVEUGLES"*), 1890.

L'ORNEMENT DES NOCES SPIRITUELLES (*translated from the Flemish of Van Ruysbroeck, and preceded by an Introduction*), 1891.

LES SEPT PRINCESSES (*a prose drama in one act*), 1891.

PELLÉAS ET MÉLISANDE (*a prose drama in five acts*), 1892.

ALLADINE ET PALOMIDES; INTERIEUR: LA MORT DE TINTAGILES (*three short prose dramas published in the same volume*), 1894.

LES DISCIPLES À SAÏS ET LES FRAGMENTS DE NOVALIS (*translated from the German and preceded by an Introduction*), 1895.

A translation of one of the masterpieces of

TO THE READER.

English literature should perhaps be added to this list; a tragedy of John Ford's, adapted for representation by the "Théâtre de l'Œuvre" last winter, under the title of "Annabella."

As regards the future, we may expect in the autumn of this year a new volume, entitled "Le Trésor des Humbles."

Beyond this, it seems to me that nothing need be said. The bulk of Maurice Maeterlinck's work has been written in prose, but he is pre-eminently a poet, one who—profoundly conscious of life's mystery—seeks to draw near the unapproached, to see the unseen, to hear the unheard, to express the inexpressible.—If full and fair judgment of a poet's work depended on the intelligence merely, it might be profitable for one who knew it well to take it carefully to pieces, to consider the beauties and the blemishes of its workmanship, and, clearly ascertaining the cause of every effect, thus help others to a rightful understanding of the whole. But a poet is, of all men, he that draws nearest to the soul of things; and in seeking to understand

TO THE READER.

what concerns the soul, nothing avails but the soul itself.

We live within the shadow of a veil that no man's hand can lift. Some are born near it, as it were, and pass their lives striving to peer through its web, catching now and again visions of inexplicable things; but some of us live so far from the veil that we not only deny its existence, but delight in mocking those that perceive what we cannot.—And yet we know and acknowledge that our perceptions of things material and positive are bounded by the nature of our senses.—If you and I were standing on a height together, we both should be able to realise that the grass was dewy at our feet, that the wind blew from the west, that the sky above us was cloudless and serene. Yet, beyond the village in the valley, it might chance that you saw nothing clearly, neither the silver river, nor the spire half-way up the hill, nor the misty peaks beyond. And whilst I stood gazing at what for you existed not, the passing swallow's highest note, the shrill cry of the grasshopper, a hundred

TO THE READER.

insect-voices at our feet, might reach your ears and never pierce my silence. Nor, if we spent the whole day there, seeking to share perceptions, should I be able to make you see, nor you to make me hear, beyond the limits of our senses.

The soul has senses as the body has; and it seems to me that the work of a poet—so he walk hand in hand with truth, revealing unto us as best he may the face she shows him—asks to be accepted or rejected in silence. For the nearer he stand to the veil, the keener his ears to catch life's whispers, and the more vibrating his sensibility to the analogies that bind together the seen and the unseen, the more impossible it must become to weigh the value of what he gives us, since the only proof of its truth is the comprehension—here or there, partial or entire—of some similar or kindred soul.

It has been affirmed in print, by one possibly unconscious of his own malformation, that Maurice Maeterlinck is a hopeless mental cripple; it has also been written that a certain work of his is a masterpiece pure and eternal, sufficient of