THE NEW PLAYS

"The Silent Witness" Human in the End.

BY CHARLES DARNTON

BLOOD-AND-CORPUSCULAR DRAMA worked its slow but sure way at the Longacre Theatre last night in "The Silent Witness," Otto Hauerbach's first venture into playwriting without music. And so science moves on in the theatre without the aid of Augustus Thomas!

Mr. Hauerbach's play grows out of a prologue—and you never can tell what a prologue means until it has led up to the inevitable distress, not to say suffering, of middle-aged persons. In this case Helen Hastings hears that Richard Morgan has lost his life while saving others in a college fire that has happened at a most unfortunate time for her. She goes to a Colorado ranch without unnecessary delay, and eighteen years later her son goes to college. It's all rather awkward, to be sure, but by chopping wood the boy is in a fair way to finish his college course when certain insinuations made by a fellow student who wears a wrist watch bring about a fight. Young Bud Morgan, as he is called, has the upper hand, and the cowardly lad falls dead against a log upon which bloodstains are found. A blood test shows that the victim had suffered from pernicious anemia, and accordingly his death is taken to be the result of accident by the jury that acquits Bud.

All this is conscientiously developed by the author for the sake of the mother, who calls herself a widow and has given her son his father's name. The fact that the father is the district attorney confronted with the duty of prosecuting the case gives the play its chief dramatic quality. But the active work has been placed in the hands of an assistant, who tortures the mother in an attempt to learn the boy's history. This situation and the fight between the lads give the play its vital interest. But its human quality is felt most strongly when the father convinces the boy that he wishes to help him out of his trouble.

The technical weakness of the play is redeemed in the end by the sincerity of the author and the human quality of his chief characters. In spite of his accusation that a district attorney is likely to be more intent upon establishing a record for convictions than seeing that justice is done, in order to advance his political ambition, Mr. Hauerbach clears the father of any such suspicion and has the assistant prosecutor driven out of the office. Yet, except for the scene in which father, mother and son figure, the play is rather tedious.

However, it must be said that "The Silent Witness" is an agreeable novelty after the many finger-print plays we have endured. But it is given more to talk than to action, and so for the most part it is tedious.

Emelie Polini, first as the distraught girl and then as the desperate mother, made the most of her emotional possibilities, though she was not altogether successful in conveying the sense of maternal love. Henry Kolker was stilted as the father except for the moment when he put his arm about the boy and assured him of his devotion. The best acting was achieved by David Higgins in the role of a simple old gardener. Another good bit of character work was done by Mrs. Jacques Martin as a friendly old woman. Donald Gallaher was a manly young chap who used his fists so well that no one could doubt the result of the blood test he underwent.

"The Silent Witness" proves at least that blood will tell. If this interests you, I leave you to find your way to the Longacre.

J. L. MARCELLUS DEAD.

Brooklyn Banker Expires in Mount Vernon After Operation.

John Lawrence Marcellus, eighty-six years old, President of the Brooklyn Dime Savings Bank, died in the Mount Vernon Hospital Wednesday night. He had been operated on for an intestinal disease.

Born in New Brunswick, N. J., Mr. Marcellus was admitted to the New York bar in 1855. He was a director of the Lawyers' Title and Trust Company of Brooklyn and was prominent in banking, legal and Masonic circles there. He was "member No. 1" the veteran of the Atlantic Yacht Club. He lived at No. 818 Park Avenue, Manhattan.

CONCERTS AND MUSIC.

Madison Sq. Garden. Tues. & Fri., 8.15 P.M. CIVIC ORCHESTRAL SOCIETY, Inc. WALTER HENRY ROTHWELL, Cond.

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39TH ST. THEA., near B'way. Evs. 8.15. Matinees Wed. & Sat., 2.15. YVETTE A Musical Comedy in 2 Acts, with Notable Cast.

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Information at Desbrosses St. Pier, New York. Tel. 4141 Spring.

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