"The Sign on the Door" at the Republic

"Forbidden" at the Manhattan Opera House.

"Adam and Eva" at the Longacre.

Stage's Weeping Sisters Have Joined Dry Forces; Real Tears Seldom Seen

Tiny Handkerchief Suffices for Emotional Actresses of To-Day.

By Charles Darnton.

WHERE are our great emotional actresses? This question occurred to me at the opening performance of "The Famous Mrs. Fair," when Blanche Bates, caught in the momentary storm of feeling that an ape over the mother with the return of her daughter, sought desperately for a handkerchief, turned her head as she hastily dabbed at her eyes, and then faced about again half-apologetically, as though to say: "Please forgive me, dear friends, but you see it's like this—I have children of my own."

It was not like that in the days when highly emotional actresses held sway and wept so copiously that a single handkerchief would have meant merely a drop in the bucket. They might easily have been suspected of carrying laundry bags. The stage, like the country, has gone dry, except for a tear dropped here and there.

The "wets" gained control of the boards some twenty-five years ago, with Clara Morris as their leader. Ada Gray, in "East Lynne," had been industriously laying the dust for a number of years, but it was Miss Morris who first gained country-wide recognition for her lachrymal ability. Some discerning critic discovered that she shed real tears in "Camille," and then another critic, not to be outdone in enterprise, fixed the exact time at which the downpour occurred. It was after the interview with Armand's father, if my recollection isn't blurred, so that the advertisements might have read: "SEE Clara Morris cry at 9.45." Anyway, the electrifying news spread like an Ohio river flood, and, as Mark Twain said of the weather, everybody was talking about it, but nobody doing anything about it. In fact, there was nothing to do but let Clara Morris cry her eyes out. To make sure that no deception was being practised upon a sympathetic public, I rented a pair of opera glasses one night, climbed to the gallery and scrutinized the celebrated actress searchingly. N-n-n-o. Her eyes were sad, but dry. Twenty-five cents for opera glasses—I'd been taken in, humbugged. Then the miracle happened! Tears were being shed—there was no mistake about it. Slowly but surely, they coursed down the agonized face, from both eyes—there was nothing small about Clara Morris—and left furrows in the greasepaint. There was tremendous applause, in which I joined with such enthusiasm that I dropped those precious opera glasses and broke them.

Those were the good old days! Later on the art of weeping became so common with actresses that it attracted little attention. Margaret Anglin used to cry generously, but now, except for summer excursions into Greek tragedy, she is merry and bright. Nance O'Neil, a really great emotional actress at moments, has not stirred us since that memorable outburst in "The Lily." Jane Cowl comes along at intervals like an April shower. Ethel Barrymore can cry, but like Miss Bates, she fights against it. Lenore Ulric rages like a young and well-trained tigress.

Sarah Bernhardt was at her best when raging through a scene, yet she never found herself at a loss for tears. Her familiar wide-flung gesture was usually followed before the curtain by an eye-wiping exercise. For the dry grief of the incomparable Duse there were no words—only a deep, poignant heartache.

Belasco will tell you that David Warfield is an actor with a tear in his voice. Warfield has also the trick of calling this tear to his eye. He can cry over a game of pinochle—even when he isn't losing.

But to return to the tender sex, it must be granted that tears alone do not make an emotional actress. The modern tendency is to get away from them, to act with the brain, as Mrs. Fiske does so admirably. Our leading actresses are slipping into comedy, and so Grace George, for one, has developed into a brilliant comedienne. But there's such a thing as overdoing it. The serious play will always have its place in the theatre in spite of the fatuous person who, blandly argues: "There's enough trouble in real life without going to the theatre for it." If everybody took this view such plays as "Hamlet" and Romeo and Juliet" would have been buried long ago.

But the fact remains that the sob sisters of the stage have become pathetically few in number.

'The Blue Bird' Sung First Time At Metropolitan

By Sylvester Rawling.

MAURICE MAETERLINCK, from the centre box of the horseshoe at the Metropolitan Opera House on Saturday night, was a spectator at the world premiere of his famous creation, "L'Oiseau Bleu," set to music as an opera by Albert Wolff. The house rose to him as he entered and stood while the Belgian, French and American anthems were played. After the third act, he came before the curtain and was acclaimed in traditional American fashion. The performance was for charities sponsored by the King and Queen of Belgium, the President of the French Republic and the promoters of the Three Big Sisters Organizations (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish) for Milk for American Children. From one source and another some $40,000 was raised. As a gala occasion it was one of the coldest within memory. So much for the obvious facts.

It is my misfortune that I never saw the play. Whatever comments shall follow, therefore, are based upon the book, the music, and the production as an opera. With such sumptuous settings, such splendidly painted scenes that never were on sea, or land, such wealth of color and material in costuming far beyond the dreams of former directors long since relegated to the classic shades, and such groupings and movements, all commanding admiration even when aesthetic taste may take exception, triumph should have been assured to Mr. Gatti. It wasn't. The pity of it that such accessories were wasted! for Mr. Wolff had had set before him an impossible task. Mr. Maeterlinck's fairy story is one for grown-ups, not for children. It involves consideration of the deeper philosophies of life. It looks backward and forward, obliterating time, and space, and dimension. It is calm dissertation. Music can play no part in illuminating the differential calculus, or a debate in the Senate on the League of Nations, or the new found theory of relativity. It must have for subject such vital emotions as love, reverence, devotion, pity, sorrow, hatred, revenge—the essential passions—to give it power and application.

Mr. Wolff, I have said, set for himself a well-nigh impossible task. That he recognized it, the gossip flitting through after rehearsals, which I did not attend, would seem to bear out. He cut his score ruthlessly of what appeared to him music unilluminative of the text. After the dress rehearsal, he sacrificed even the overture, leaving only a few bars before the curtain. He had no child's fairy story with which to deal, such as Humperdinck had in "Hansel and Pretel," with genuine childish fancies, real human pathos, folk songs and traditional religious hymns and prayers. His fairies were metaphysical fairies hung about the figures of the children to proclaim profound philosophies of life. After the preliminaries of a boy and girl's dreaming on Christmas Eve what could any man do with a dog, and a cat, and baking bread, and sugar, and fire, and water, and goodness knows what inanimate things brought to life and to articulate speech.

In the Land of Memory scene Mr. Wolff found opportunity for melody, of which he was quick to avail himself. In the Garden of Happiness scene there was another. In the Farewell Tyltyl's song was exquisite. Wherever he could, in fact, the occasions all too rare, Mr. Wolff clothed the sentiment in befitting musical colors. But it was in the interludes that Mr. Wolff really expressed himself. In those the composer was able to obscure the author by the power of his own imagination and to epitomize whatever there is of sentiment in the play in language of musical cadence, penetrating as well as beautiful.

Not a few of the elders and most of the younger members of the company were in the cast, and they played their parts worthily. Raymonde Delaunois as Tyltyl, the boy dreamer, the principal character in the development of the play, aside from the philosophies involved in Mr. Maeterlinck's creation, in spite of some shortcomings as to voice, was admirable. Mary Ellis as his sister Mytyl, with little to sing and much to look, was astonishingly good. Leon Rothier and Louise Berat as the grandfather and grandmother, gave exquisite impersonations. Flora Perini as Light, a stunning picture; Frances Ingram as Night, Jeanne Gordon as the Fairy, Florence Easton as The Maternal Love, Robert Couzinou as the Dog, Margaret Romaine as the Cat, and Gladys Axman as the Joy of Understanding, and the host of children, trained by Rosina Galli, deserved especial mention.

Mr. Wolff, with his forelocks dishevelled by the strenuousness of his conducting, was called before the curtain with the principal singers many times. So was Boris Anisfeld, who was sponsor for the scenic production. After the third act Mr. Maeterlinck was called out several times to get his share of the plaudits.

THIRD 'MIDNIGHT WHIRL' THE MOST PRETENTIOUS OF THE ENTIRE SERIES.

The new Morris Gest "Midnight Whirl," the third of the series, opened at the Century Grove, on the roof of the Century Theatre, Saturday night before an audience that might have been called a living Broadway Blue Book. So eager was Broadway to welcome this new midnight show that Manager John Henry Mears found it necessary to put in extra tables. It was a merry crowd and it saw a merry performance.

Julian Mitchell staged the production, George Gershwin furnished the music, and the lyrics were written by Bud De Sylva and Mr. Mears. Prominent among the entertainers were Helen Shipman, Bernard Granville, Annette Bade, Bessie McCoy Davis, James Watts, George and Dick Rath and Bennett and Richards. The numbers were all tuneful, the girls pretty and the costumes and scenery gorgeous. In one scene Annette Bade and a dozen girls distributed real doughnuts among the people in the audience, and immediately, almost without exception, the recipients sunk eager teeth in the crullers.

Bessie McCoy Davis presented a dance fantasy called "Time-House Nights," in which she appeared as a Chinaman. James Watts was seen in a brief burlesque of "Aphrodite," called "Aphrantha." The Raths won volumes of applause with their acrobatic work, and Bennett and Richards in blackface proved funny. Of course, Bernard Granville did his ankle-breaking dance. He also sang several good songs, as did Messrs Bade and Shipman. The show is built along new lines and is the most pretentious of the series.

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