

THE THEATRE

THE PLAYGOER

WEAK PLAYS FROM STRONG NOVELS.

Why, asks a vexed soul, why, when you see a dramatized novel, do you insist upon keeping the book in mind at the expense of the play? Why not consider the play as a play, and leave the novel out of the question altogether?

Excellent interrogator, when you are considering the weather, why do you consider it as weather merely, and leave the sun out of the question? If "Oliver Twist" is on the stage shall the audience find it as easy as the playwright to forget Dickens and his novel? Hath not a dramatizer hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions, even as a novelist hath? Possibly, but too often there is room for doubt. Anyhow, some folk having authority about the theatres seem bent on trying to prove that the nature of man is divided into two classes, human nature and theatrical nature, and that it's the latter to which the present must be adjusted. This is a famous mirror. Again there is room for doubt.

Doubts, indeed, multiply as the theme is considered. Do dramatizers ever read the novels they dramatize? Do the persons who purchase the dramatizations? Does one or do both understand the book and the purpose of a dramatizer? Possibly, sometimes. But again doubt. If you take a novel and squeeze out its meaning, and throw the meaning away, and put on the stage a few incidents captured from the chapters, a few characters altered to suit the taste of the deceiving gods, and then snatch a little dialogue from the pages, letting it fall from whatever mouth it possibly can, speak from the principal salaries in the cast, why, then you "dramatize" Jones's book, or declare that your play is "founded upon it" according to the fashion of the hour. But why bother with Jones? Why mention him or his book? For no other reason in the world than that he and his novel have already attained enviable publicity, by which, of course, you hope to profit.

There is this difference between dramatizers and dramatists: The former distort and the latter enlarge and strengthen it.

The vexed interrogator who asks, "Why consider the book when the play's the thing?" thought he had the objector on the hip. He sent his sharpest shaft with a twang that split the air. "What about Shakespeare?" he cried, expecting the objector to tumble in the dust. "Shakespeare borrowed from books, from old tales, old plays, histories." To be sure, and man borrowed electricity from the universe; he doesn't generate, create it, but in harnessing it, employing it for the service of his fellow humans, he proves himself the possessor of a creative and imaginative power sanctioned by custom and tradition. He is an adapter and a user, a developer. He borrows, but his energies do not pause with borrowing. He repays with interest, having developed what he borrowed and added. The dramatizer does this, not the dramatist. Shakespeare did it. The dramatizer did not weaken another man's plot, purpose or achievement; he enlarged, enriched, "created"; what he did became peculiarly his own. When you see, or think of, Hamlet, Othello, Lear, Macbeth, As You Like It, you are not in the least conscious that the "original" plays, histories, legends from which Shakespeare dug his people, nor about the "original" people themselves. Shakespeare makes you forget these. You think only of his work. But your dramatizer does not make you think of the work on which he has based his play. He does not make you think of the dramatist who was not a dramatist and, if Broadway will believe it, was even something of a poet.

Septimus Dix found Wiggleswick's Jimmie useful for killing motifs. One has no desire to kill motifs, but if they would come from the dramatist's hands upon novelties whose intentions are quite as good as their own, and whose works considerably better, there would be more peace in the land. If a dramatizer must dramatize (and perhaps he must—the passion seems incurable), if he must borrow a book's name and credit to the author's fame, why not put up with a which rest between the covers; and why not, before all things, be true to the purpose of the book? But all that the dramatizers seem to see is a "story," or a part of one, which, by hooking and crooking, can be adapted to the exigencies of the stage. The exigencies of the stage, if your talent is inferior to the author's it doesn't matter, you can peg away somehow.

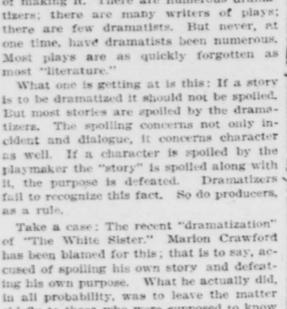
There have been "dramatizations" this week which must have made whatever gods there are weep for pity for inflicted pain. Now, if instead of a "dramatization" of a novel, you are content with the declaration that the play is "founded on" the novel, the essential fact is not altered—you have gone to the novel for your ideas, and you have made your own nature under the novelist's cloak. It is your task then to make the play better as a play than his novel is as a novel. If you can do this you can compel the novel readers in your audience to forget the book, or remember it only to praise your play. And if you can make a great play on the theme nobody will quarrel with you on the ground of unfairness to the original. But if your play is only an ordinary play, or is mediocre; if it has no reason for existence apart from the book; if it does not make the spectator forget the book, or convince him that it is better than the book, you have confessed yourself a borrower, or at most a trafficker in other men's goods, and the case is not altered, if your royalties are large.

"Do theatre audiences read books?" asks the interrogator whose vexation of spirit caused this morning's column. Who shall answer him? This question in its present form is unanswerable, and was probably meant to be so. Has a considerable portion of a given audience read the novel with which the dramatizer is supposed to be dealing? Put the query in that form, and if any considerable portion of the audience laughs in the wrong places, "dilates with the wrong emotion" when the playwright fragments contradicts his novelist—well, you can draw your own conclusions. What the interrogator really meant was—if he will permit the interpretation, and if he will not permit it the interpretation must be made anyhow, for lack of evidence to the contrary—what he meant to ask was: "Has the theatre relation to literature? That depends upon what you mean by 'literature,' and how far you can go toward forcing, or persuading, the theatre to recognize the relationship. If by 'literature' one understands you to mean a recorded expression or interpretation of life, then the answer must be that the theatre now has quite as

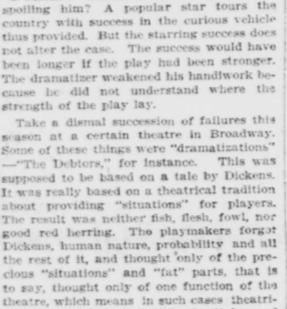
THAIS LAWTON. In "Strife," The New Theatre.



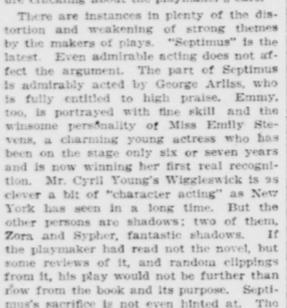
JULIE OPP. In "Herod," West End Theatre.



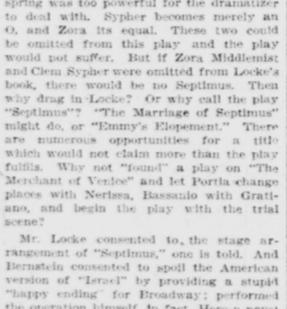
EMILY STEVENS. In "Septimus," Hackett Theatre.



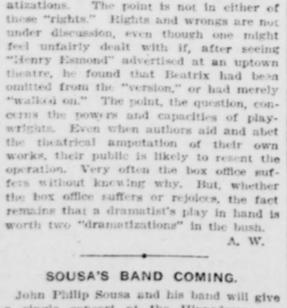
ALICE FISCHER. In "The Fourth Estate," Wallack's Theatre.



ELSA RYAN. In "The Belle of Brittany," Daly's Theatre.



LEW FIELDS. In "Old Dutch," Herald Square Theatre.



JOHN GLENDENNING. In "Divorce," Lyric Theatre.



ADOLPH MESSNER. In "The Chocolate Soldier," All the Musical Plays.



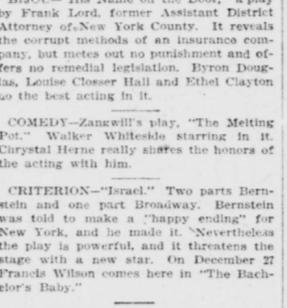
MAJESTIC—Fifth week of Bert Williams in "Mr. Lode." Lyric Theatre.



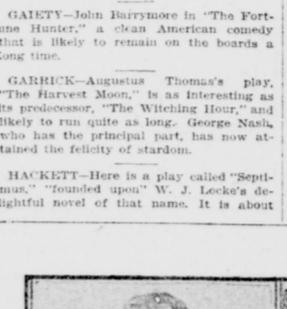
NEW AMSTERDAM—Genee, Adeline Genee. What more need be said? This delightful dancer appears in a piece called "The Silver Star." If it were called "The Elmetalle Theory" it would be much the same. But why discourse of these things when there is Genee?



NEW YORK—A volcanic outburst of Colman. It is called "The Man Who Owns Broadway." Of course some name had to be given to it. The fond millions to whom George Cohan is as an inspired find in these Colmans eruptions the highest reward of earthly life. Queer, but true.



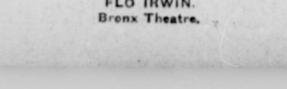
VARIETY HOUSES. ALHAMBRA—Bronxians will come here to see Edward Abeles, who starred in "Brewster's Millions." He has a one-act play called "Self-Defence." Will H. Murray and Blanche Nichols will lead "A School for Acting." Maggie Cline will sing her popular Irish songs. Frederick Bond and Fremont Benton will expose their "Awful Dad."



AMERICAN—Last week of Harry Lauder—that is enough to draw the crowds. But Harry can't act all the time, and so William Morris has these helpers-out: Paul Nicholson and Miss Norton, in "Ella's All Right"; Sam Spira, English pianist; the seven Perezoffs, jugglers; Caron and Herbert, comedy acrobats, and Davis and Walker, singers and dancers.



BRONX—It is not necessary to tell what the performers here will do. It is sufficient to announce them: Gus Edwards, Flo Irwin, the Imperial Musicians, Bozeman Ward, the "Swat Milligan" company, Burdette, comedian; and Wendy Rice, Hebrew troupe, Conley and Arthur Rigby. The usual Sunday concerts.



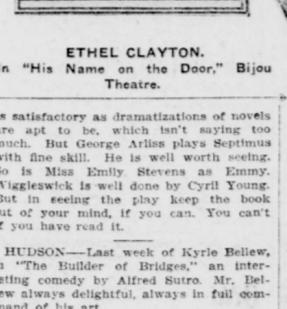
EDEN MUSEE—Admirers of "Tom" Paine will find him here among "The World in Wax." The Hungarian Band plays.



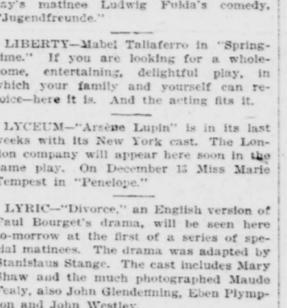
HAMMERSTEIN'S VICTORIA—Frene Franklin and Burt Green top the list here in new songs. The Six Musical Cuttings will have a family reunion. Howard and North will be "Back at Wellington." Ward and "The Terrible Judge." Other performers are Andy Rice, Hebrew comedian; Port and Russell, funny men, singers and dancers, and Hastings and Wilson, comedy acrobats. Sunday concerts afternoon and evening.



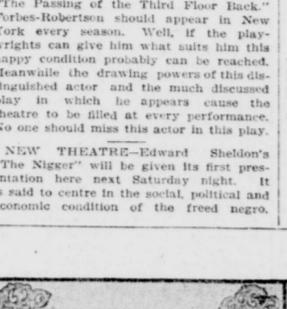
HIPPODROME—Like a Thanksgiving basket filled to overflowing with good things is this popular playhouse. Not satisfied with three great spectacles—"A Trip to Japan," "Inside the Earth" and "The Ballet of Jewels"—the managers are giving the public a brand new circus, made up of a "daredevil diver," who will leap from the top of the dome seventy-five feet to the water; Miss Fay Thompson, equestrienne; Thaler's novelty circus; Ella Bradner and Frederick Derrick, equestrians; the Lorch family, acrobats, and many others.



KEITH & PROCTOR'S—Visitors here will see or hear "The Forty-Five" and "The Forty-Five," which M. Edmondson, dancer, W. C. Fields, juggler; Nellie Nichols, in song talks and talk songs; James Barry and wife, "At Hensford Corner"; the Cadets of Gascony, in grand opera songs, and Lyons and Yosco, with harp and guitar.



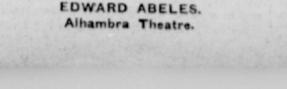
PLAZA—The Four Mortons will make fun here. Billy Dillon will sing a few of the thousand songs he is said to have in his voice box. Willa Holt, Wackerfield, Willie Hoppe, Midgey and Carlisle and the Ishikawa Japs will complete a varied bill.



BERNHARDT A PLAYWRIGHT. Miss Sarah Bernhardt, while at her seaside refuge in Belle Isle last summer, wrote a bright little vaudeville, which will soon be produced at her theatre, with Miss Jeanne Rolly in the leading part. Bernhardt has not yet decided upon a title for a new play, which is, however, completed. It is the story of a great poet, married too young, and who is faithless on one occasion to his wife. This solitary lapse of fidelity convinces him that he loves his wife more than his transient companion. But the wife has discovered the fault and makes reconciliation impossible.



FLO IRWIN. Bronx Theatre.



EDWARD ABILES. Alhambra Theatre.



WILLIAM DILLON. Plaza Music Hall.



THE PLAYGOER

THE COMING WEEK

NEW PRODUCTIONS.

Monday Afternoon, Nov. 29.—At the Lyric Theatre, "Divorce," Stanislaus Stange's version of Paul Bourget's drama. Mary Shaw, John Glendenning, John Westley, Eben Plympton and Maude Fealy are the chief players.

Saturday Night, Dec. 4.—"The Nigger" at the New Theatre. This is Charles Sheldon's play. Guy Bates Post, Annie Russell and Ben Johnson have the principal parts.

COMEDY AND DRAMA.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC—Last chance to see "Fidd in Pull" here. And everybody knows that it is worth seeing. Next week Henrietta Crossman, in "Sham," her last season's play.

ASTOR—"Seven Days." This is funnier than the funniest play you ever saw or imagined.

BELASCO—Farce, called "Is Matrimony a Failure?" It has been played here for something like four months.

BIJOU—"His Name on the Door," a play by Frank Lord, former Assistant District Attorney of New York City. It reveals the corrupt methods of an insurance company, but remedies out no punishment and effect no remedial legislation. Byron Douglas, Louise Closser Hall and Ethel Clayton go the best acting in it.

COMEDY—Zankwill's play, "The Melting Pot." Walker Whiteside starring in it. Chrystal Herne really shares the honors of the acting with him.

CRITERION—"Israel." Two parts Bernstein and one part Broadway. Bernstein was told to make a "happy ending" for New York, and he made it. Nevertheless the play is powerful, and it threatens the stage with a new star. On December 27 Francis Wilson comes here in "The Bachelor's Baby."

EMPIRE—John Drew, of course. And, of course, in "Instantaneous George." Both, by the way, successful. Play "Frenchy," without suggesting much that is French beyond the names. Expurgated, but not excessive. Only three weeks more of R-and-of-Drew.

GAITY—John Barrymore in "The Fortune Hunter," a clean American comedy that is likely to remain on the boards a long time.

GARRICK—Augustus Thomas's play, "The Harvest Moon," is as interesting as "Septimus." "The Witching Hour," and likely to run quite as long. George Nash, who has the principal part, has now attained the felicity of stardom.

NEW THEATRE—Edward Sheldon's "The Nigger" will be given its first presentation here next Saturday night. It is said to centre in the social, political and economic condition of the freed negro.

MUSICAL PLAYS.

BROADWAY—No particular reason why "The Midnight Sons" should not shine for another seven months.

CASINO—Sam Bernard in "The Girl and the Wizard." The sort of thing Broadway adores.

DALY'S—Frank Daniels, it is said, intends to devote the rest of his life to dazzling English musical comedies. After all, he can do but one at a time. "The Belle of Brittany" is the one he is doing now.

HERALD SQUARE—"Old Dutch." A musical farce with Lew Fields in it. Alice Dovey is charming.

KNICKERBOCKER—"The Dollar Princess." Several popular players in the cast.

THE FRENCH STAGE.

"Jarnac" a Successful Historic Drama.

Paris, November 27.—"Jarnac," an historical drama in five acts by MM. Leconte de Lisle and Jehan Gravelle, which was brought out the other night at the Odéon, takes place during the most picturesque period of the Renaissance—the close of the reign of Francis I and the beginning of that of Henry II. The action passes at Compiègne, Saint-Germain, Rambouillet and Fontainebleau. The scenery, costumes and mountings are fascinating. Jarnac, hitherto famous as a count of the treacherous "court de Jarnac," has recently been whitewashed by M. Franklin, one of the curators of the National Library, who shows that the hero of the famous duel with La Chataigneraie, which took place in the presence of King Henry II and the whole court at Saint-Germain, was a noble hearted man and by no means a villain, but a victim. The Duchesse d'Etampes, favorite of the old King Francis I, is a younger woman than Diane de Poitiers, the favorite of his son, the Dauphin, afterward Henry II. Jarnac, who has an intrigue with the Duchesse d'Etampes, is forced to marry Louise, sister of the Duc de Nemours, in order to quiet the suspicions of Francis I. But La Chataigneraie, attached to the husband of the Dauphin, is in love with Louise, and had even gone so far as to intrust to Jarnac the mission of demanding her in marriage on his own behalf. La Chataigneraie, furious because, as is quite natural, he supposes that Jarnac has betrayed him, and incited by Diane de Poitiers, who also hates Jarnac because satisfied with her own charms, he deserted them for those of the Duchesse d'Etampes, grossly insults Jarnac. The Dauphin takes up the quarrel and also exasperates Jarnac. Consequently La Chataigneraie, the most skilled swordsman in France, challenges Jarnac to mortal combat, as is prescribed by the Dauphin. Francis I forbids the duel. Francis dies. The death scene in the chateau of Rambouillet is admirably presented. Henry II succeeds to the throne. The first thing he does is to order the duel to take place. The spectacle is superb. The King, with Diane de Poitiers at his side, is seated on a throne. Marshals at arms on horseback, the Grand Herald of Normandy on a white charger, armored courtiers and ladies of court ladies witness the duel. Jarnac and La Chataigneraie have for their weapons both swords and daggers. During a fierce bout, Jarnac, holding for an instant the sword of his adversary motionless by a violent parry from his own sword, slips forward and with his dagger hamstringing La Chataigneraie. Upon this rather obscure and flimsy theme the authors have succeeded in embroidering a remarkable reconstitution of the court of Henry II, which gave full satisfaction to the audience of the Odéon. Desjardins made a superb Francis I, and the two royal favorites, the Duchesse d'Etampes and Diane de Poitiers, are given a grand performance. La Chataigneraie, Desjardins, and Mme. Grumiaux. There is but slight trace of the melodramatic cape and sword notion of Dumas and Sardou in this play. It is the application of realistic methods to historical drama, and its success is well merited.

Mme. Sarah Bernhardt is indicated. Each night after the performance of "Le Couard de Nemours," the principal part of which will be played by Mme. Lauberte. The comedy passes amid the ballrooms, with an occasional dive into the slums of Paris, with now and then an ascension into the salons of the haute-finance.

"La Revanche d'Ève," the broad, frothy farce in three acts by MM. Edmond de Launay and Paul Ivoi, which was brought out at the Palais Royale, is brimful of the episodes, mishaps, surprises, mistakes of persons, infidelities and intrigues that for the last century have made the little theatre of the Palais Royale a veritable house of mirth. The farce, no better and no worse than "Le Couard de Nemours," is well played by clever and pretty actresses and finished actors. The plot, which is a very risky one, turns upon the adventures of a noble's wife, who, in seeking to protect the purity of a maiden daughter, herself narrowly escapes perdition in a whirlpool of love vivres, professional lecherie, cavalry officers and frenzied Bohemians.

STUYVESANT—Frances Starr in "The Eastward Way." This play will leave New York three weeks hence.

WALLACK'S—"The Fourth Estate" still running. Just escapes being a play with a powerful grip. It had a silly ending when first produced, and now it has none at all. But the curtain falls. Drury Lane might make a strong melodrama on this framework.

WEBER'S—"The Climax" has reached the top and is coming down. It will finish on December 27. "The Goddess of Liberty," a musical play, will follow it on Christmas evening.

WEST END—William Faversham in "Herod."

COLONIAL—Mlle. Dazie will be seen here in the pastime, "L'Amour de l'Artiste."

Edmund Stanley and others will sing in a one-act musical comedy, "The World in Wax." The sort of thing Broadway adores.

DALY'S—Frank Daniels, it is said, intends to devote the rest of his life to dazzling English musical comedies. After all, he can do but one at a time. "The Belle of Brittany" is the one he is doing now.

HERALD SQUARE—"Old Dutch." A musical farce with Lew Fields in it. Alice Dovey is charming.

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