

# THE THEATRE

## THE PLAYGOER A PLEA FOR HISSING.

Rebuke the Claque, Banality and Bestiality.

Two plays silly beyond belief, satirical beyond endurance, were recently produced in this city at theatres hitherto of good repute. One of these plays was announced as having been written by a powerful moral uplift. The first night revealed it as a pretentious, ridiculous and puerile concoction of long words and lechery. So strange a mixture had never been seen. The thing was ridiculous for its stupidity, offensive by its foulness. A self-respecting audience should have hissed it from the stage. The mixture was an affront to the intelligence of persons who are capable of appreciating any form of literature above the grade of the dime novel; it was an insult to all clear-minded folk who had gone to the theatre for the purpose of witnessing the first production of a new play. The "powerful moral uplift" was a stinging rebuke under which a theme of long drawing boardness was manipulated for three hours in the public view. The play was almost unanimously condemned by the press. Then the management, stripped of its mocking pretensions, threw away its hypocritical claim to any "moral uplift," and on the third day advertised the show as "Naughty, but nice," and "The fastest thing in New York."

Mr. Wilton Lackaye was reported on Wednesday morning as saying in an interview with a Milwaukee newspaper: "There are commercial managers who say 'after us, the deluge.' There are some who really see that on the stage and love their calling. The moving picture shows have robbed us of our galleries, and the indecent productions, with their imported ideas, have robbed us of our respectable box attendance. Unless people begin to stand in America together, there is no support good, respectable productions, something noble may happen to the theatre."

The purveyors of stupid, flabby or indecent plays may retort that people who do not like their entertainments are entirely at liberty to stay away from the theatre without making a fuss. That is a usual form of comment upon the objection. But it does not help the matter in the least to require the intelligent and self-respecting public to make way for the shallow and the superficial, the lovers of the morbid and the indecent. The drama suffers, but little do the offenders care as long as they may make money. "After us, the deluge."

If American audiences would learn the gentle art of hissing, the condition of our stage might be cleaner, and its exhibitions more intelligent. There is much to be said in favor of the hissing. The recipients of his hiss do not enjoy it, but they would get from it a clearer point of view than they now gain by the silent submission of audiences to any drive and uncleanness that managers, authors and actors choose to thrust before them. The hiss, when practised with discretion, need not necessarily be a personal attack, need not necessarily be a rebuke to individuals; but, at any rate, it can be an expression of a wholesome dissent. But hissing is not practised by audiences having no serious regard for the drama, no genuine love of dramatic art. It is not even practised by American audiences affronted with foulness. Our first night audiences contain some percentage of persons with discriminating minds with a sincere regard for the theatre as an artistic, a civilizing influence, but how large that percentage happens to be is a matter which never asserts itself in any way. It is patient to the verge of timidity and permits itself to remain unheard while a clamorous clique made up of noisy parasites of the management, the authors and the actors shrieks its delight over the sheer inability of a producer to blaring vulgarly or its gross indecency, or over all three.

If one spectator has the right to applaud banality, vulgarity and badness, another has an equal right to express his resentment against the theatre's insult to his intelligence, his taste, his decency. Of course the persons affronted by the stage spectacle can leave the house, but the persons responsible for the brainless, blatant or bestial exhibition on the stage care little for that kind of resentment, since they have received the spectators' money and will not refund it. There is a tradition that the displeasure among our audiences unfold their eyebrows and silently steal away. But, whatever may have been the case in former times, no general experience supports this tradition nowadays. Comparatively few persons withdraw from the house before the performance is ended. Nearly every one sees the thing out with an all too patient endurance. Americans do not like to make themselves "conspicuous" in a crowd by expressing dissent from the opinion of the majority, or from the opinion of a considerable minority. They patiently submit to any insult which a theatrical manager may impose upon their good nature, and because they submit with a patience which is too amiable to be wholesome the stage is continuously disgraced with "presentations" which are inept when they are not vile, and often are both scandalous and brainless.

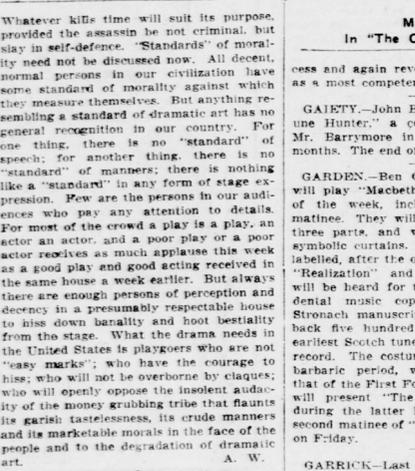
Nobody will deny that there is a tasteless public, and nothing is gained by ignoring the existence of a public which floats over its head. When these multitudes roar with glee, why should not the self-respecting public hiss? A vigorous hissing might bring to their better senses, if they have any, the exhibitors of lechery and stupidity. The exhibitors are that for a while at least, the purveyors of grossness and indecency would rail in the police and demand the election of the dissentients. But a sturdy, self-respecting public should stand upon its rights in the matter, and purveyors would soon be compelled to realize the contempt in which they are held by clean and fairly intelligent minds. Hissing is needed in our theatres, and needed all the more because we are unaccustomed to it.

If hissing affords some protection against bestiality and vulgarity on the stage, it also gives some help against drowsiness and banality. But hissing implies that the hisser has some standard of conduct and of artistic perception which the hissed do not begin to approach. An audience which regards the theatre as merely a marketplace for time-killing amusement will not hiss—will not take the trouble to hiss.

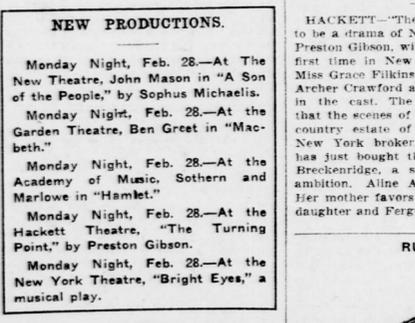
FLORENCE FISHER. In "The Melting Pot," West End Theatre.



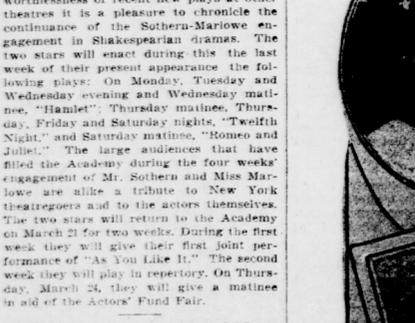
E. H. SOTHERN. In "Hamlet," Academy of Music.



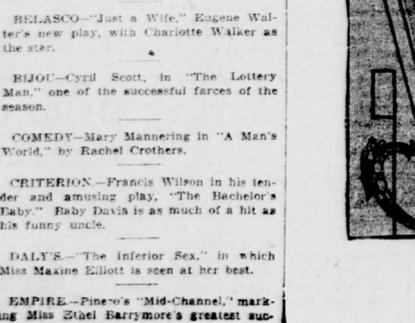
MARY NASH. In "The City," Lyric Theatre.



IRVING PLACE. The German Theatre.



ADLINE BOYER. American.



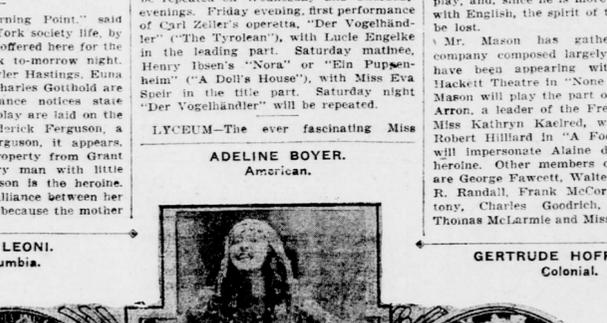
JOHN MASON AND KATHRYN KAELRED IN "A SON OF THE PEOPLE," THE NEW THEATRE.



FORBES-ROBERTSON. In "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," Maxine Elliott's Theatre.



GERTRUDE HOFFMANN. Colonial.



RUBI LEONI. Columbia.



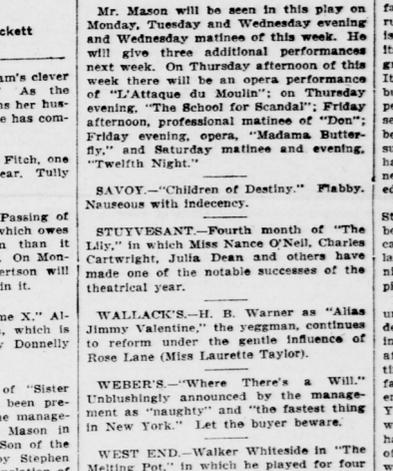
IRENE FRANKLIN. Keith & Proctor's.



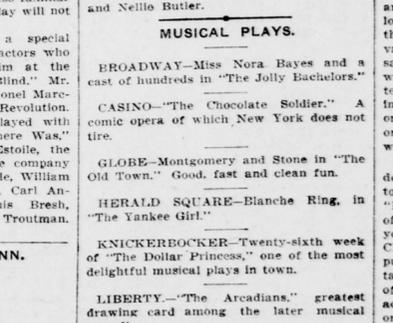
Cecil Lean and Florence Holbrook. In "Bright Eyes," New York Theatre.



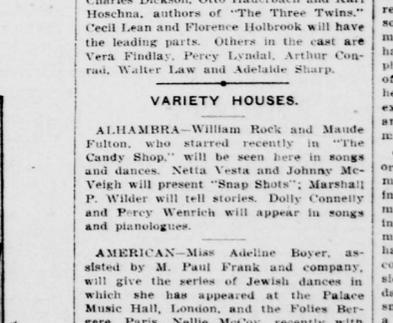
JULIA MARLOWE. In "Hamlet," Academy of Music.



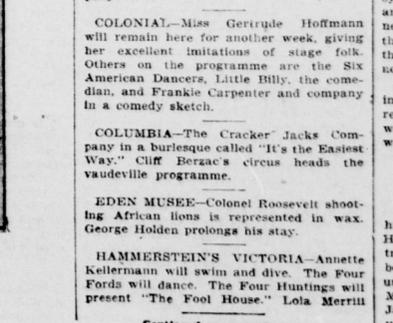
MAXINE ELLIOTT'S. "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," a play which owes more to Mr. Jerome, the author, than it does to Mr. Forbes-Robertson on Monday, March 7, Mr. Forbes-Robertson will celebrate his 50th performance in it.



NEW AMSTERDAM—"Madame X," Alexandre Bisson's morbid drama, which is drawing crowds. Miss Dorothy Donnelly has the leading part.



NEW THEATRE.—In place of "Sister Beatrice," which was to have been presented here to-morrow night, the management will introduce Mr. John Mason in Sophus Michael's drama, "A Son of the People," an English version by Stephen Ivor Szinyeyi of a German translation of the original Danish. But Mr. Michael, the Danish author of the original, has been in New York during the rehearsal of the play, and since he is more or less familiar with English, the spirit of the play will not be lost.



## TAKES EXCEPTION

Bliss Carman Thinks Americans Appreciate Good Dancing.

To the Editor of The Tribune:  
Sir: Mr. Smalley's article on dancing and dancing in Sunday's Tribune, if not very encouraging to artists nor very complimentary to New York, is nevertheless full of pertinent considerations and a welcome contribution to criticism in an unfrequented field. No doubt New York follows London in matters of art, as London follows Europe. But I cannot feel that it is quite as dull and insensible to beauty and art as Mr. Smalley's article would lead one at first to suppose. It seems to me there are reasons for believing that New York audiences have a sufficiently alert and ready appreciation for such arts as dancing and drama when these are brought to their notice. His arraignment, to my mind, falls more accurately upon the press, whose critical duty in this respect might perhaps be a little more intelligently fulfilled.

For instance, although we have had a good deal of admirable dancing in New York theatres in the last year or two, Mr. Smalley's own letter from London is the first serious word on the subject that I have seen. Not long ago I picked up a copy of one of our most prominent and excellent periodicals to read a paper on Miss Duncan. Miss St. Denis and Miss Genee. It was a signed article, and I anticipated the pleasure of at last finding some rational treatment of this fascinating art. But if I expected anything more than a rapid interview, written with all the pitiable facetiousness of the usual sensation monger, I was sadly disappointed.

Perhaps it should be said in extenuation that dancing has been banished from the recognized company of the fine arts for many years, at least in Anglo-Saxon cities, and that therefore very little reasonable attention has been paid to it, and almost nothing has been formulated as to its laws, its possibilities, its relation to other arts of expression or its value in an educational way. These things are all to seek. It is hardly fair to expect a literary or dramatic critic to be able to give an understanding judgment on a subject which is so difficult and so unexplored. Dancers themselves know almost nothing of the sources of the power or of the laws of expression governing their arduous but beautiful art.

I cannot see that Miss Duncan, Miss Allan, Miss St. Denis and Miss Genee have not had all the triumphant success they could rightfully expect. If Miss Duncan failed to fill her houses for any prolonged run, it was not quite because the public is dull. The truth is, her dancing for all its classicism is monotonous. One soon grows tired of variations on a single note. It is pleasant to watch a great, leisurely butterfly floating on the sensuous air with perfect freedom and poise, but the inconsequence of his motion leaves something to be attained before we could call him a consummate artist. If Miss Duncan could have added some meaning to her art, she need not have sailed away in a disappointed mood, as she did the other day.

So, too, it might be pointed out that Miss St. Denis fails of the greatest success, not because of people's indifference, but because of a fatal lack in her own work—a lack of heart, of spirit, of meaning. And so it is with Miss Genee. She moves through her pictures without a soul.

It happened to me to be present at a unique matinee on Saturday last in Mendelssohn Hall, where I listened to a most interesting lecture on poetic dancing and afterward watched some of the most beautiful dancing I have ever seen. And so it is with the other dancers. The entertainment has appeared in any New York paper. That seems culpable, and would seem discouraging if I did not recall having seen some of the first performances of "Everyman" in the same beautiful hall, when Miss Matheson gave her wonderful interpretation of that old play, and when there were not half a hundred people in the house.

On Saturday I heard a most luminous analysis of the art of dancing and the philosophy underlying expressive motion—thoughts that would have been of priceless value to any actor or art critic, and then saw several "travelling" dancers, who were called evidently intended for us by teachers, but given with a fine spirit and intelligence by young women who appeared on the programme as teachers of dancing or of physical training, and whose success with the audience was unmistakable.

My thrilling moment, however—the keen delight of discovery which carried me back to that other wonderful afternoon of "Everyman"—came with the final number of the programme, when I saw appear a young girl who was billed as Mirrah Chesler, but whose name I have not seen in public before. She gave a series of Oriental barefoot dances, somewhat of the order of performances to which we have been accustomed of late, but with a brilliant originality and abandon all her own.

In the first place, her dances were superior in composition to anything that I have seen hitherto. They meant something and they were stirring; they told a story; they revealed and conveyed emotion. They were something more than mere exhibitions of muscular proficiency and gracefulness; they had purpose and an informing spirit which placed them legitimately among the works of fine art and took hold of the hearts of her audience. It was not the finish of her execution that I admired, but her splendid and expressive responsiveness to every demand of the theme she was portraying.

Others of her contemporaries may equal or perhaps surpass her in technical achievement. Of that I am hardly a judge. But in fine and sympathetic intelligence, in dramatic instinct, in beauty and bewitchment, in plasticity and freedom, she is more remarkable than any other dancer that I have seen. She did not give a mere literal copy of Eastern dances—she gave expression to the spirit of the Orient. In her dark, youthful beauty, with her unusual smile and her radiant personality, she was a living and eloquent embodiment of the young soul of the Far East.

That such a lovely performance could be the product of any modest and unexplored system of training seems incredible enough, and a sufficient guarantee that we have no need to go to Europe for our dancers; but that it could take place within a stone's throw of Broadway and yet be entirely unnoticed is more unbelievable still.

I offer my homage to little Mirrah Chesler in assurance of the day when she shall be recognized as one of the great artists in that wonderful art of truth telling, the drama without words.

BLISS CARMAN.  
New York, Feb. 27, 1910.

## THE COMING WEEK

- NEW PRODUCTIONS.**
- Monday Night, Feb. 28.—At the New Theatre, John Mason in "A Son of the People," by Sophus Michaelis.
  - Monday Night, Feb. 28.—At the Garden Theatre, Ben Greet in "Macbeth."
  - Monday Night, Feb. 28.—At the Academy of Music, Sothern and Marlowe in "Hamlet."
  - Monday Night, Feb. 28.—At the Hackett Theatre, "The Turning Point," by Preston Gibson.
  - Monday Night, Feb. 28.—At the New York Theatre, "Bright Eyes," a musical play.

## COMEDY AND DRAMA.

- ACADEMY OF MUSIC**—In view of the northwesternness of recent new plays at other theatres it is a pleasure to chronicle the continuance of the Sothern-Marlowe engagement in Shakespearean dramas. The two stars will enact during this last week of their present appearance the following plays: On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening and Wednesday matinee, "Hamlet"; Thursday matinee, Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, "Twelfth Night"; and Saturday matinee, "Romeo and Juliet." The large audiences that have filled the Academy during the four weeks' engagement of Mr. Sothern and Miss Marlowe are alike a tribute to New York theatregoers and to the actors themselves. The two stars will return to the Academy on March 21 for two weeks. During the first week they will give their first joint performance of "As You Like It." The second week they will play in repertory. On Thursday, March 24, they will give a matinee in aid of the Actors' Fund Fair.
- ASTOR**—The amusing players of "Seven Days" are still in quarantine here, where the public seems disposed to keep them for months to come.
- BELASCO**—"Just a Wife," Eugene Walter's new play, with Charlotte Walker as the star.
- BOJOU**—Cecil Scott, in "The Lottery Man," one of the successful farces of the season.
- COMEDY**—Mary Manning in "A Man's World," by Rachel Crothers.
- CRITERION**—Francis Wilson in his tender and amusing play, "The Bachelor's Baby." Baby Davis is as much of a hit as his funny uncle.
- DALY**—"The Inferior Sex," in which Miss Maxine Elliott is seen at her best.
- EMPIRE**—Pineo's "Mid-Channel," marking Miss Ethel Barrymore's greatest success and again revealing H. Reeves Smith as a most competent and finished actor.

Whatever kills time will suit its purpose, provided the assassin be not criminal, but slay in self-defence. Standards of morality need not be discussed now. All decent, normal persons in our civilization have some standard of morality against which they measure themselves. But anything resembling a standard of drama in a play, an actor or an actor, and a poor play or a poor actor receives as much applause this week as a good play and good acting received in the same house a week earlier. But always there are enough persons of perception and decency in a presumably respectable house to miss down banality and root bestiality from the stage. What the drama needs in the United States is playgoers who are not "easy marks"; who have the courage to hiss; who will not be overborne by claque; who will openly oppose the insolent audacity of the money grubbing tribe that flaunts its garish tastelessness, its crude manners and its marketable morals in the face of the people and to the degradation of dramatic art.

**GAITEY**—John Barrymore in "The Fortune Hunter," a comedy which has kept Mr. Barrymore in New York for many months. The end of the run is not in sight.

**GARDEN**—Ben Greet and his company will play "Macbeth" during the first half of the week, including the Wednesday matinee. They will present the tragedy in three parts, and will give each part six symbolic curtains. The three parts will be labelled, after the old manner, "Ambition," "Realization" and "Retribution." There will be heard for the first time here incidental music copied from the famous Stronach manuscript, the melodies dating back five hundred years. They are the earliest Scotch tunes of which there is any record. The costumes will show the old barbaric period, while the text will be that of the First Folio, abridged. Mr. Greet will present "The Merchant of Venice" during the latter half of the week. The second matinee of "Everyman" will be given on Friday.

**GARRICK**—Last week of Ode Skinner in "Your Humble Servant." On Wednesday, March 2, Miss Hattie Williams will introduce "The Girl He Couldn't Leave Behind Him," a farce adapted from the German.

**HACKETT**—"The Turning Point," said to be a drama of New York society life, by Preston Gibson, will be offered here for the first time in New York to-morrow night. Miss Grace Filkins, Cuyler Hastings, Euna Archer Crawford and Charles Gotthold are in the cast. The advance notices state that the scenes of the play are laid on the country estate of Frederick Ferguson, a New York broker. Ferguson, it appears, has just bought the property from Grant Breckenridge, a solitary man with little ambition, a solitary man with little ambition. Aline Anderson is the heroine. Her mother favors an alliance between her daughter and Ferguson because the mother

**HUDSON**—William Collier in "A Lucky Star," good, clean farce containing barrels of laughs.

**IRVING PLACE**—The German Theatre. This is the schedule for the week: Monday night, special performance before the Frei Volksbühne, of this city. Tuesday night, first time in New York of Hermann Bah's comedy, "Der Meister" ("The Master"), to be repeated on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. Friday evening, first performance of Carl Zeller's opera, "Der Vogelhändler" ("The Tyrolean"), with Lucie Engelke in the leading part. Saturday matinee, Henry Ibsen's "Nora" or "Ein Puppenheim" ("A Doll's House"), with Miss Eva Sasin in the title part. Saturday night "Der Vogelhändler" will be repeated.

**LYCEUM**—The ever fascinating Miss

**ADLINE BOYER.** American.

**RUBI LEONI.** Columbia.

**GERTRUDE HOFFMANN.** Colonial.

**IRENE FRANKLIN.** Keith & Proctor's.

**MARCELINE.** Hippodrome.

Mr. Mason will be seen in this play on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evening and Wednesday matinee of this week. He will give three additional performances next week. On Thursday afternoon of this week there will be an opera performance of "L'Attaque du Moulin"; on Thursday evening, "The School for Scandal"; Friday afternoon, professional matinee of "Don"; Friday evening, opera, "Madama Butterfly"; and Saturday matinee and evening, "Twelfth Night."

**SAVOY**—"Children of Destiny," Flabby. Nauseous with indecency.

**STUYVESANT**—Fourth month of "The Lily," in which Miss Nance O'Neil, Charles Cartwright, Julia Dean and others have made one of the notable successes of the theatrical year.

**WALLACK'S**—H. E. Warner as "Alias Jimmy Valentine," the yeggman, continues to reform under the gentle influence of Rose Lane (Miss Laurette Taylor).

**WEBER'S**—"Where There's a Will," Unblushingly announced by the management as "naughty" and "the fastest thing in New York." Let the buyer beware.

**WEST END**—Walker Whiteside in "The Melting Pot," in which he played for four months at the Comedy Theatre. The cast includes Florence Fisher, Grant Stewart, John Blar, Sheridan Block, Leonora Von Ottinger, Louise Muldener, Henry Vogel and Nellie Butler.

**MUSICAL PLAYS.**

**BROADWAY**—Miss Nora Bayes and a cast of hundreds in "The Jolly Bachelors."

**CASINO**—"The Chocolate Soldier." A comic opera of which New York does not tire.

**GLOBE**—Montgomery and Stone in "The Old Town." Good, fast and clean fun.

**HERALD SQUARE**—Blanche Ring, in "The Yankee Girl."

**KNICKERBOCKER**—Twenty-sixth week of "The Dollar Princess," one of the most delightful musical plays in town.

**LIBERTY**—"The Arcadians," greatest drawing card among the later musical comedies.

**NEW YORK**—First performance of "Bright Eyes," a new musical play, by Charles Dickson, Otto Hauerbach and Karl Hoschna, authors of "The Three Twins." Cecil Lean and Florence Holbrook will have the leading parts. Others in the cast are Vera Findlay, Percy Lyndal, Arthur Conrad, Walter Law and Adelaide Sharp.

**VARIETY HOUSES.**

- ALHAMBRA**—William Rock and Maude Fulton, who started recently in "The Candy Shop," will be seen here in songs and dances. Netta Vesta and Johnny McVeigh will present "Snap Shots"; Marshall P. Wilder will tell stories; Dolly Connelly and Percy Wenrich will appear in songs and pantalogues.
- AMERICAN**—Miss Adeline Boyer, assisted by M. Paul Frank and company, will give the series of Jewish dances in which she has appeared at the Palace Music Hall, London, and the Folies Bergere, Paris. Nellie McCoy, recently with Miss Genee in "The Silver Star," will dance. Also "Consult the Great" Joe Welch, and Fred Karno's London Comedy Company.
- COLONIAL**—Miss Gertrude Hoffmann will remain here for another week, giving her excellent imitations of stage folk. Others on the programme are the Six American Dancers, Little Billy, the comedian, and Frankie Carpenter and company in a comedy sketch.
- COLUMBIA**—The Cracker Jacks Company in a burlesque called "It's the Eastest Way." Also "Consult the Great" Joe Welch, and Fred Karno's London Comedy Company.
- EDEN MUSEE**—Colonel Roosevelt shooting African lions is represented in wax. George Holden prolongs his stay.
- HAMMERSTEIN'S VICTORIA**—Annette Kellermann will swim and dive. The Four Fords will dance. The Four Huntings will present "The Fool House." Lola Merril

Continued on seventh page.