

The Theatres



MRS FISKE COMING TO THE EMPIRE THEATRE IN SUNDAY PATRON FEB 26



CYRIL SCOTT IN "THE FATTED CALF" AT DALY'S THEATRE

THE PLAYGOER

A Wilderness of Theatres—New Version of "Killing the Goose."

Dr. Dressler, of the National Board of Education, declared this week that "the American people are eye-minded," and he cited the tremendous popularity of the moving picture business for illustration of his opinion or discovery. The moving pictures, he is reported as saying, divert popular attention from all forms of art. Perhaps he said "other" forms of art. Well, the taste of the free and enlightened voter, his wife and progeny may be left to take care of itself in accordance with hallowed custom. Anyhow, what is to be done about it? Everybody knows that the moving picture has become, so far as patronage is concerned, a serious rival of the theatre. It has cleared the galleries, at any rate, and the managers of playhouses are deploring the disappearance of a considerable and profitable portion of their public. Season by season now, the galleries of most of the principal theatres in New York are empty. But, excepting in one or two cases, the prices of tickets are not reduced. In many theatres the balconies are half, and less than half, filled. But, excepting in one or two cases, the prices are not reduced.

Perhaps the managers are not yet convinced that there are too many theatres and too many inferior entertainments. Some of the theatre folk do not conceal their apprehension of a further and even more startling diminution of their hold upon the affections and the incomes of the public. They can be heard lamenting that the callings of the actor and the playwright will be doomed when the moving picture has the phonographic attachment of which so many wondrous have been prophesied. "When that day comes nobody will pay to see a play," they moan. Everybody will buy seats for the phonographic-phonographic reproductions of plays which are performed before photo-cameras in Jersey City or Hoboken. Acting will die, dramatic authorship will perish and dramatic critics will disappear from a planet which has no further use for them. For the latter consumption many theatre folk would even now sacrifice everything excepting their engagements.

But this pessimistic outlook upon the future is born of a small faith in the present. The most skeptical are they that traffic in acting, while they have the least belief in it as anything more than a trade and the least knowledge and appreciation of it as an art. There are quarters in theatredom where the mention of "art" meets only with derision. "Talk business" and you are welcome; talk "art" and you are scorned. "I have the greatest mentality in New York," belittled a manager not unknown to a certain sort of fame, when an actor ventured the opinion that his own way of playing the part for which he was billed was appropriate and effective, as indeed it was. "I've the greatest mentality in New York, and I tell you if you don't do this thing my way you'll get — out of here." The managerial language was really stronger; strong enough to break the press—if an attempt were made to print it.

"Say, how long would it take you to grow a mustache?" asked another manager of a leading man.

"Weeks. And then it wouldn't be the right kind. My mustache is stubby. But didn't it occur to you that I can buy one?"

"Hell! You're no type. Nothin' doin'. We want types here."

Managers of this "type" know as much about dramatic art as a monkey knows about trout fishing. And they pull long faces when they hear about the coming of the photo-film drama, unless they have plans for "getting in on the ground floor."

It is as absurd to suppose that the prospected coming of the photo-film will destroy the arts of acting and playwriting as it ever was to suppose that lithography, photography and halftones would destroy the art of painting, if anybody ever really supposed such a calamity possible. But if the new and dreaded invention kills off half the theatres, the conditions which surround the arts of acting and dramatic authorship will be improved. It is conceivable that there will be better acting and better plays. In the existing state of affairs the theatres are killing acting and retarding the development of dramatic authorship. The colossal army of mediocrity is depicting public confidence in the theatre.

New York has far too many theatres. The statement is familiar, but ineffective as mere statement. The rate of increase for the present year is one new theatre for every two months. To-day there are thirty "producing" houses which may fairly be included among the first class. Next month there will be one more. Next season there will be six more. In all the United States there are

not enough good actors to supply these theatres with first class companies. In all Europe and the United States there are not dramatists enough capable of supplying them with good plays, for it must be borne in mind that these theatres are also sources of supply for other theatres throughout the land. Mediocrity, therefore, comes to such rescue as there may be.

Acting is an art. Perhaps the truth is better expressed in this form: There is an art of acting, and some actors understand it. But, however that may be, playgoing is getting to be a difficult business, more difficult than shopping, although it is said, and commonly believed, that a large portion of the community regards shopping as an amusement. If you go once a week to the theatre it will take you all the season to visit once each of the "producing" theatres. If you go twice a week through the season you will probably consider yourself an enthusiastic supporter of the drama. If you go three times a week there should be an inquiry into your mental condition—assuming that you pay for your tickets and that you go the rounds of the playhouses.

Some ingenious statistician has reported that there is a new playgoing public every five years. That is only another way of saying that the theatres require only five years in which to wear out your interest in plays and acting—an appalling confession to be heard by those who are responsible for the reign of mediocrity in the theatrical world.

A large proportion—nobody knows how large, but it must be a very large proportion—of the support of the playhouses in New York comes from persons who select their evening or matinee entertainment on chance. The daily advertisements give them no guidance beyond the name of the star and the name of the play. Does anybody care to know who wrote the play, or where, or whether a play by this author or that is to be seen? The theatrical announcements yield no reply. It is possible that the number of play patrons who distinguish between Augustus Thomas and John Smith, between Pinero and Xerxes Robinson, is not enormous. Ask any ten persons who bought seats for a performance last night the name of the author of the play. Perhaps one of the ten will answer correctly and promptly. Perhaps more could give the answer if the particulars were not generally concealed. They are given on the programmes, but programme lore seems not to dwell in the mind. And, after all, the point is that persons who seek such information are not otherwise assisted to it by the managers, unless in the furtive literature of press agents.

Nor is the public always assisted by advertised excerpts from the writings of dramatic critics. Too often these excerpts are misleading. Phrases are sometimes quoted without regard to the context, and made to do duty as a favorable opinion which the critic may never have written and never implied. The words were in his article, but in no such connection as the theatre may ask the public to believe. Recently The Tribune was quoted as declaring a remarkably poor play "remarkably fine," although the critic had found nothing in the piece to praise. The quoted words were in his review, but in an entirely different connection. Yet a representative of an important personage in the theatrical world did not disdain the use of misrepresentation with the hope of attracting patronage to his house. Happily the play met with quick failure, as it and the delusive bubble deserved.

Choosing from the "attractions" presented at thirty theatres is not an easy, nor, often, a reasonably conducted act on the part of persons who do not assiduously inform themselves of the turns in theatrical affairs. With very few exceptions the name of the theatre means nothing, nothing that concerns the kind or quality of entertainment sold at its box office. The name of a star may have been drawn from a wood yard, if the



CHORUS IN THE BALL SCENE OF "THE OPERA BALL" AT THE LIBERTY



RODOLF LINK IN "THE MEYERS" IRVING PLACE THEATRE FEB 19



ADELE BLOOD IN "EVERYWOMAN" AT THE HERALD SQ THEATRE



BESSIE CLAYTON ECCENTRIC DANCER WITH THE WEBER AND FIELDS 'JUBILEE Co.



MADGE TITHERADGE IN "A BUTTERFLY ON THE WHEEL."



PAMELA GAYTHORNE IN "THE BIRD OF PARADISE."



LATEST PHOTOGRAPH OF J.M. BARRIE, AUTHOR AND PLAYWRIGHT

New and Old Theatrical Attractions for the Coming Week

COMEDY AND DRAMA.

Academy of Music.—"The Heir to the Hoohar," Paul Armstrong's Western play, will form the week's attraction and will be played by the favorites of the Academy's stock company.

Belasco Theatre.—David Warfield, in David Belasco's play, "The Return of Peter Grimm." Some of Belasco's most subtle work as a stage magician appears in this play.

Casino Theatre.—Max Reinhardt's wordless play, with musical accompaniment, "Sumurun." An Oriental episode, staged and costumed in the manner of the new naturalism.

Century Theatre.—"The Garden of Allah," a dramatization of Robert Hichens's novel. Desert scenery and sky effects, unusual.

Collier's Comedy Theatre.—Scottish players in Graham Moffat's sprightly comedy, "Bunty Pulls the Strings." Molly Pearson as Bunty gives a vigorous, humorous characterization of a housewifely young woman with string-pulling proclivities. Vera Polonow has the part of Susie Simpson in place of Jean Caddell.

Criterion Theatre.—Louis Mann in "Elevating a Husband." Although Ethel Barrymore and her company in Barrie's "A Slice of Life" and Davies' "Cousin Kate," comes to this theatre on February 26, Mr. Mann is negotiating for another theatre and is making every effort to stay in New York, to the extent of threatening to pitch a tent in Long Acre Square and play in that—which would be novel and even interesting if the weather should suddenly moderate.

Daly's Theatre.—To-morrow night Cyril Scott in Arthur Hopkins's "optimistic comedy," "The Fatted Calf," in which theories about mental suggestion are overcome by common sense. Frank Hatch and May Milroy are in the cast.

Empire Theatre.—Ethel Barrymore in a new one-act burlesque, "A Slice of Life," by J. M. Barrie, with Ethel Barrymore,

John Barrymore and Hattie Williams. Preceded by Miss Barrymore and company in a revival of "Cousin Kate." On February 26 Mrs. Fiske and the Manhattan Company will present "Lady Patricia," by Rudolph Bester. In the supporting company are Lester Faber, Shelley Hull, Henry Stephenson, Ernest Stallard, Cyril Young, Lewis Howard, Emily Fitzroy and Maud Gilbert.

Fulton Theatre.—Elsie Ferguson begins to-morrow her tenth week in New York as Dolly Madison in "The First Lady in the Land." Here is a distinguished success won on merit. Rarely has great merit been the accompaniment of great charm. But here are exquisite charm and high comedy acting of the highest order. Here, too, a clever and amusing play, a comedy that is distinctly American in the best sense of that comprehensive word—a play and an actress that people go to see again and again. Miss Ferguson's art is not only exquisite, but it reveals to those who can see a possession of power. No figure on the stage has ever been more delightful than Dolly Madison, as Elsie Ferguson plays her. Miss Ferguson's 100th performance in New York of this captivating part will be given on Saturday evening, March 9.

Gaiety Theatre.—Augustin MacHugh's melodramatic farce, "Officer 666." Wallace Eddinger and George Nash play with spirit the parts of a millionaire and a burglar.

Grand Opera House.—Monday night Chauncey Olcott will begin the third and last week of his engagement of "Macaula," a romantic Irish drama by Rida Johnson Young. The play has been staged by Henry Miller. There are, of course, many melodies and songs interspersed throughout the action of the play.

Harris Theatre.—"The Talker," a new drama by Marion Fairfax, with Tully Marshall in the leading part.

Herald Square Theatre.—Return for the Lenten season of Walter Browne's morality play "Everywoman," with practically the same cast which was seen in New York

last year and for a few weeks at the beginning of the present season. Adele Blood is now taking the part of Everywoman in place of Laura Nelson Hall, who went to London to play there in "The Easiest Way."

Hudson Theatre.—Last week of Miss Simone in Maurice Donnay's drama, "The Return from Jerusalem," a psychological play of racial antagonism. During the week of February 26 Miss Simone will be seen in Rostand's "La Princesse Lointaine," prepared for the American stage by Louis N. Parker, under the title of "My Lady of Dreams."

Irving Place Theatre.—To-morrow night Adolf Link in Fritz Friedman's comedy "The Meyers." This play has had great vogue in Germany, where it has been played for over a year.

Knickerbocker Theatre.—Edward Knoblauch's colorful Oriental play, "Kismet," with Otis Skinner in the part of Hajj, the beggar. A Jewish production in scenery and costume. Mr. Skinner's work very interesting.

Liberty Theatre.—Marie Cahill in "The Opera Ball," an operetta adapted from the German by Sydney Rosenfeld and Clare Kummer. The score is by Richard Heuberger. Miss Cahill's offhand comedy has again won favor.

Lyceum Theatre.—Last week of Margaret

Anglin in A. E. W. Mason's comedy, "Green Stockings." H. Reeves-Smith and Maude Granger are in the cast.

Maxine Elliott's Theatre.—Novel and interesting play, "The Bird of Paradise"; scene, the Hawaiian Islands, to which the spectators seem transported—a pleasing experience in these chill days. Very good acting, and, in Laurette Taylor's case, a quite remarkable impersonation. Decidedly a play to be seen. This is the first New York production of Oliver Morosco, the well known California manager. It is so well done in all respects that New York will be eager to see whatever he puts on next.

New Amsterdam Theatre.—Last week of Eugene Walter's four-act play, "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine," with Charlotte Walker. A special production of "Oliver Twist," with a carefully chosen cast, will be given on February 26. In the cast will be Nat Goodwin, Lyn Harding, Constance Collier, Marie Doro and other prominent players.

Playhouse.—George Broadhurst's popular play, "Bought and Paid For," continues to attract large audiences to the Playhouse. The original cast of players, all of whom were unusually well chosen, has not been changed.

Republic Theatre.—W. C. De Mille's new drama, "The Woman," an up-to-date play, whose scenes are set in startlingly realistic style and with details not usually thought of in stage productions.

Thirty-ninth Street Theatre.—Lewis Walker's production of "A Butterfly on the Wheel," with Madge Titheradge in the cast. A play that has aroused considerable interest, partly for itself, partly on account of its acting, and largely on account of the skill and care used in its production.

Wallack's Theatre.—George Arliss, in Louis N. Parker's drama, "Disraeli." A play that affords George Arliss the most distinguished role of his career. So far

this piece holds the record for the longest run of the season.

West End Theatre.—A last week in New York of "The Million," the racing farce that has spent a season at the downtown theatres. The cast and production are unchanged.

MUSICAL PLAYS.

Astor Theatre.—Last week of Raymond Hitchcock, in "The Red Widow." A popular musical play.

Broadway Theatre.—Weber and Fields's jubilee revival in "Hokey Poky" and "Bunty, Bolls and Strings." The jubilee company includes Weber, Fields, Lillian Russell, Fay Templeton, William Collier, Bessie Clayton, John T. Kelly and Frankie Balley, all of the old Music Hall days, and George Beban, Ada Lewis, Helena Collier, Garrick and Charles Mitchell, newcomers to the organization. The Weberfields reunion has been the unique event of the present theatrical season.

George M. Cohan's Theatre.—George M. Cohan's popular musical piece, "The Little Millionaire," has developed Cohanites the city over.

Globe Theatre.—Eddie Foy, in "Over the River." The cabaret scene, beginning to-morrow, will be presided over by T. Roy Barnes, of vaudeville fame. The popular music hall dances of the wiggy variety are danced by M. Maurice and Mlle. d'Harville.

Lyric Theatre.—The romantic opera, "Little Boy Blue." Gertrude Bryan has made herself popular in the leading role of a Scotch lassie.

Manhattan Opera House.—Minstrelsy holds sway for a week, under the leadership of Lew Dockstader, who is bringing his own trained minstrel company.

Park Theatre.—"The Quaker Girl," a musical comedy, with Ina Claire and Clifford Crawford.

experience, or but an indifferent thing indifferently performed. At any rate, he must choose between the thirty, and next season he must choose between thirty-six!

Consider the case in another way. Classifying the principal theatres in Manhattan as "producing," "one week" and "variety," the following figures appear:

	March, 1912	Next season
Producing	21	30
One week	3	4
Variety	12	15
Totals	36	49

This was the count yesterday. What will it be to-morrow morning? A. W.

STAGE NOTES.

"In Berlin Mr. Lee Shubert purchased a new play, named 'The Five Frankfurters,' which in due course he will produce in the United States," says the writer of The Drama of the Day in "The London Daily Telegraph." In order to avoid misapprehension in Coney Island and other artistic centres, it may be explained in advance that "The Five Frankfurters" are the five brothers Rothschild, of the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

Of all the plays under the stars "Othello" is to be Sir Herbert Tree's next production. The announcement calls to mind W. G. Gilbert's famous remark on the first night of Tree's Hamlet at the Haymarket Theatre, in 1821: "Funny without being vulgar." It is said that Laurence Irving may be the Iago. Phyllis Neilson-Terry is to be the Desdemona.

Eden Phillpotts is another of the novelists to dramatize a book of his own. His story called "The Secret Woman" is being made into a play. An English critic says: "It should call forth acting powers of an ordinary kind, and the actress who is chosen to undertake the character of Mrs. Redvers will be fortunate indeed if she succeeds in realizing its possibilities to the full."

Margaret Anglin is now planning to produce Mr. Sheldon's new play, "Egypt," next season.

Of Martin Harvey's experience with "Giddeus Rex," which Max Reinhardt produced for him recently at Covent Garden Opera House, "The London Globe" says: "It has been proved to the clearest of all demonstrations, the box office, that the Greek tragedy at Covent Garden is 'what the public wants.' We are bold enough to imagine that a little more Greek and a little less Reinhardt would not jeopardize the success of a subsequent venture."