

THE PLAYGOER

The Sagging Season Brings Its Reflections — Managers, Theatres and Plays.

Manager A. of New York, says that Chicago is "a great producing centre for plays," in which case you wonder why he doesn't encourage the building of theatres there and incidentally aid in preventing in our own packed island an oversupply of playhouses.

The season sags, so far, at least, as new productions are concerned, although, to be sure, Charles Hawtreys and Charles Brookfield arrive to add spice to its last month. Just why the facile Brookfield comes, or is announced, for the spring excursion is not clear.

The week has passed without an announcement of another new theatre. Sadness must brood over the building trades, which have of late been sustained with stout hopes and contracts.

And of the interested, and the semi-interested, a large proportion talks with more or less eloquence and reads with more or less eagerness about the plays. To acting little heed is given, possibly because comparatively little acting is to be seen.

Why should the gentlemen engaged so busily in the work of encumbering New York with new theatres deplore the scarcity of real plays and real actors? Why should they raise the familiar wail that the theatrical business is a gamble?

The playwrights are busy enough—alas! too busy. Their ink floods the continent. The actors are busy, either in attempting to embody the playwrights' dreams of living creatures or in seeking engagements. The audiences are by no means as busy as they were.

But the public has no interest in the theatrical business. And it has no interest whatever in dramatic art. If a "good thing" that it can recognize

AT THE THEATRES



HAIJ KNEELING BEFORE THE WAZIR'S THRONE, THIRD SCENE, "KISMET," AT THE KNICKERBOCKER THEATRE.

comes its way, very well; if not, why worry? There are individuals who care more or less—some of them care a great deal—for dramatic art, but in greater New York are there enough of them to fill one theatre for a week? Doubtful.

And of the interested, and the semi-interested, a large proportion talks with more or less eloquence and reads with more or less eagerness about the plays. To acting little heed is given, possibly because comparatively little acting is to be seen.

Why should the gentlemen engaged so busily in the work of encumbering New York with new theatres deplore the scarcity of real plays and real actors? Why should they raise the familiar wail that the theatrical business is a gamble?

The playwrights are busy enough—alas! too busy. Their ink floods the continent. The actors are busy, either in attempting to embody the playwrights' dreams of living creatures or in seeking engagements. The audiences are by no means as busy as they were.

But the public has no interest in the theatrical business. And it has no interest whatever in dramatic art. If a "good thing" that it can recognize

Dramadrome, and simultaneously produce three plays on three stages in one arena, if only to relieve New York of overpressure; or if only to go New York overture, or if only to go New York overture.

THE COMING WEEK.

NEW PRODUCTIONS.

Monday night, April 15, at the Maxine Elliott Theatre, Charles Hawtreys in "Dear Old Charlie," a farce by Charles Brookfield.

Monday night, April 15, at the George M. Cohan Theatre, Blanche Ring in "A Wall Street Girl," a musical play.

COMEDY AND DRAMA.

Academy of Music.—The resident stock company will present "Pretty Peggy" during the week, beginning with a matinee tomorrow. The 1,000th consecutive performance by this organization will be given on Tuesday evening, April 16.

Astor Theatre.—"The Greyhound," by Paul Armstrong and Wilson Mizner. Drama of thick plot and quick action.

Belasco Theatre.—Last three weeks of David Warfield in David Belasco's "The Return of Peter Grimm."

Berkeley Lyceum.—Messrs. Oland and Burt, presenting "The Father," from the Swedish of August Strindberg.

Century Theatre.—"The Garden of Allah," desert play, from Robert Hichens's book of the same name. Interesting stage manipulations.

Collier's Comedy Theatre.—Graham Moffatt's comedy, "Bunty Pulls the Strings," with Molly Pearson as a captivating Bunty. One of the most popular successful plays of the season.

Criterion Theatre.—Louis Mann, in "Elevating a Husband."

Daly's Theatre.—Lewis Waller, in "Monsieur Beaucaire." Charming romance capably acted by Mr. Waller and his specially chosen company.

Empire Theatre.—The centenary production of "Oliver Twist," with notable cast, including Nat Goodwin, Constance Collier, Lyn Harding and Marie Dora.

Fulton Theatre.—Walker Whitehall, in "The Typo," a play from the Hungarian of Menyhert Lengyel, striking and interesting.

Gaiety Theatre.—Augustin MacHugh's farce, "Officer 666," with Wallace Edginger and George Nash. Bright farce.

Grand Opera House.—Return for a two weeks' engagement of George M. Cohan's successful comedy, "Get-Rich-Quick Wallingford," with the original company.

Harris Theatre.—"The Talker," by Marion Fairfax, with Tully Marshall in the leading role.

Hudson Theatre.—H. Kellert Chambers's play, "The Right To Be Happy," in which Dorothy Donnelly and Edmund Bredse have leading parts.

Knickerbocker Theatre.—Edward Knoblauch's Oriental play, "Kismet," with Otis Skinner in the part of Hajj, the beggar, crowds the house every night.

Liberty Theatre.—Henry Miller, in A. E. Thomas's comedy, "The Rainbow."

Little Theatre.—John Galsworthy's play, "The Pigeon," at evening performances and at the Saturday matinee. At the Tuesday, Thursday and Friday matinees the programme will consist of Charles Rann Kennedy's one-act play, "The Terrible Meek," and "The Flower of the Palace of Han," translated from the French of Loyal by Mr. Kennedy. Edith Wynne Matthison takes part in both plays offered at the special matinee.

Manhattan Opera House.—Return for a week of John Mason in "As a Man Thinks," Augustus Thomas's powerful play. Mr. Mason is supported by the original company.

Maxine Elliott's Theatre.—To-morrow night Charles Hawtreys, the well known English actor, will present the farce "Dear Old Charlie," which Charles Brookfield some years ago adapted from the French for the London stage.

Playhouse.—George Broadhurst's popular play, "Bought and Paid For." A unique play of the times.

Republic Theatre.—Last week of W. C. De Mille's "The Woman," a realistic sketch of political life at Washington.

Thirty-ninth Street Theatre.—Lewis Waller's successful production of "A Butterfly on the Wheel."

Wallace's Theatre.—George Arliss still gives his distinguished impersonation of the famous English diplomat in Louis N. Parker's successful drama, "Disraeli."

West End Theatre.—One more week of Oliver Morosco's production of Richard Walton Tully's Hawaiian play, "The Bird of Paradise."

MUSICAL PLAYS.

Broadway Theatre.—Weber and Fields's jubilee company in "Hokey Pokey" and "Bunty Pulls the Strings." Hokey Pokey is different every week, with the introduction of novel scenes from former sketches given at the old music hall.

Casino Theatre.—Last week of Felix Albin's comic opera, "Baron Trenck." Unusually charming music.

George M. Cohan's Theatre.—To-morrow night, for the first time in New York, Blanche Ring will appear in "A Wall Street Girl," a musical comedy, with music by Karl Hoschna. The book is by Margaret Mayo, Edgar Selwyn and Norman Harwood. Miss Ring is supported by Harry Gillfill. Among the principals are William F. Carleton, Clarence Oliver, Maude Knowlton and Florence Shirley.

Globe Theatre.—Eddie Fox, in "Over the River," with a popular cabaret scene, to which new features are constantly being added.

Lyric Theatre.—Last week of the romantic opera, "Little Boy Blue," with tuneful music.

Moulin Rouge.—"The Winsome Widow," a musical offering based on Hoyt's "A Trip to Chinatown." The music has been written by Raymond Hubbell.

New Amsterdam Theatre.—Last week of "The Man from Cook's," a musical comedy from the French of Maurice Ordonneau.

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

JUNGLE PICTURES AT LYCEUM. Beginning on Monday evening, April 15 at the Lyceum Theatre, the Paul J. Rainey African jungle picture lectures will be given. The pictures illustrate in detail the expedition of Paul J. Rainey, the well known Cleveland millionaire, who penetrated the most inaccessible portions of Africa in search of big game.

Mr. Rainey employed in his endeavors the aid of one hundred American dogs. These dogs were first trained in hunting big game in the cane brakes of Mississippi and Louisiana. The story of the achievements of these dogs is told in a series of motion pictures. Among the many pictures taken is that of the water hole, which is said by Professor Osborn, president of the American Museum of Natural History and dean of the Faculty of Pure Science at Columbia, to be the greatest contribution to natural science of the last decade.

Elephants, rhinoceri, giraffes, deer, zebra, monkeys, etc., are seen to come down to the water hole to drink and bathe at the neutral ground. As the pictures are displayed a lecturer—a member of the expedition—will explain them in detail and will tell the circumstances of the expedition.

THE IRISH PLAYERS. The Abbey Theatre players, accompanied by Lady Gregory and W. B. Yeats, have arranged to perform in London during the whole month of June, and they will also visit Cambridge, Oxford and Manchester. They will return to the United States after the Presidential election.

A VARIED CAREER

Sidney Valentine's Experiences in Fight for Recognition.

Sidney Valentine, the well known English actor now playing in "The Pigeon" at the Little Theatre, came to America for the third time last fall, expecting to stay only eight weeks. He left "The Ogre," Henry Arthur Jones's new play, done in London in the fall, at a moment's notice to play in the American production of "The Butterfly on the Wheel."

When the tour of that play was abandoned he booked passage home, and was about to sail when Lewis Waller decided to put on "A Butterfly on the Wheel" in New York. The actor scored decisively as the prosecutor in that play, but when Winthrop Ames put John Galsworthy's comedy, "The Pigeon," into rehearsal for the opening of the Little Theatre Mr. Valentine was secured for the role of Timson, the broken down old "babby," in which he will be seen for the rest of this season at the Little Theatre.

Mr. Valentine's first visit to America was made in 1889 with Charles Wyndham—not with the Kendalls, as has been previously published—when Wyndham opened the Tremont Theatre, Boston, with "David Garrick." They played in New York at Palmer's Theatre.

In the winter of 1895-'96 Mr. Valentine came to this country a second time, with Sir Henry Irving on this occasion, opening in New York in "Macbeth" at the Abbey Theatre. As an instance of how quickly theatrical nomenclature changes in New York and how absolutely the name of a theatre may pass from memory Mr. Valentine tells this incident. On arriving in New York last fall he was talking with a well known actor and a newspaper man, and mentioned that on his last previous visit he had played with Irving at the Abbey Theatre. The American actor and the newspaper man told him that he must be mistaken—that there was no Abbey Theatre in New York, and they couldn't recall that there ever had been one, and told Mr. Valentine that he must have forgotten the name of the theatre where he played. Mr. Valentine, however, insisted that he was not mistaken, and was able to locate the theatre from memory as somewhere between 25th and 40th streets on Broadway. He could recall the drug store on the corner by the theatre, and from that they finally located the theatre. It is now known as the Knickerbocker Theatre.

Mr. Valentine had an active career in English theatricals, having appeared with most of the well known stars of the day. On his return to England after his second trip to America he was "loaned" by Sir Henry Irving to Frederick Harrison and Cyril Maude to appear at the Haymarket as Richelle in "Under the Red Robe," and remained with them for five years. This affair of being loaned by one manager to another has become a usual experience with Mr. Valentine, and is only one instance that he has ever returned to the manager who loaned him—and that was in the case of Charles Frohman, who wanted him for a production of "A Butterfly on the Wheel" in Chicago. While at the Haymarket he appeared in "The Marriage of Convenience," "The Manoeuvres of Jane" and many other plays of that period. "The Manoeuvres of Jane," Mr. Valentine says, was received with absolute contempt by the press of London. The play was so utterly condemned that the managers were in a hurry to take it off, and a new play was put in rehearsal on the next afternoon, but the audience at the second performance was appreciative and it was decided to give the play a chance. The result was, as every one will remember, that it ran for the entire season to excellent business.

At the end of five years Mr. Valentine was loaned to Martin Harvey, who was producing a dramatization of F. Marion Crawford's "Cigarette Maker's Romance." Later he joined Fred Terry and Julia Neilson, appearing in "Sweet Nell of Old Drury," and was afterward cast for the Arab Sheik in the first London performance of "Ben-Hur." He has played Brabantio with Forbes-Robertson in "Othello" and the Nilghai in Rudyard Kipling's "The Light That Failed."

Sidney Valentine then essayed management. He first produced "Clyde Kilchrist,"

"The Climbers," in which he played the part of the husband, a part created in this country by Frank Worthing. "The Climbers" did not make the impression in London that it did in New York, and was taken off after a short run. Mr. Valentine then returned to the Haymarket, appearing in a one-act play which he dramatized from a short story, called "The Widow Wood." The little play met with great success, and he presented it by command before King Edward at Windsor Castle. He appeared at the Garrick Theatre for some years in "The Walls of Jericho," "The Morals of Marcus" and other plays with Arthur Bourchier, producing the plays and acting in them. He next played the part of the father in "The Telfer," with George Alexander, then David in "What Every Woman Knows," the husband in "Madame X" and Manson in Charles Rann Kennedy's "The Servant in the House." Later he became a member of Charles Frohman's repertory company at the Duke of York's Theatre, appearing in all of the plays put on at that theatre. Afterward he appeared with Gerald Du Maurier in "Nobody's Daughter," which was done here at "The New Theatre," then with George Alexander in "The Witness for the Defence," and was playing in "The Ogre" when he was induced to come to America for the present visit.

In his early stage career Mr. Valentine had probably more unique experiences than fell to the lot even of the American barnstormer two and three decades ago. After first essaying the stage at the age of seventeen, when he had been forced to return home because the manager kept decreasing his salary until it reached half a crown a week, or 25 cents, he answered an advertisement in the London theatrical journals of a manager who was then touring Wales. His reply seemed to please the manager, and he was instructed to join the company. He found the manager receiving tickets at the door, and when he announced that he was Mr. Valentine he received with frowning looks, for he did not know the appearance of an experienced actor, as his letter to the manager had indicated. He was given two rather long parts and told

to come prepared to rehearse them the next day, with the evident intention of being dismissed on the spot. Mr. Valentine, however, thought that he must learn the roles, and set to work that night, and was letter perfect in them when the manager rehearsed him the next day. But his ability to learn parts alone probably would not have guaranteed his continuing as a member of the company; he possessed a dress suit, and that was the clincher. Dress suits were rare in the company, and there were many roles which required the actor to appear in evening clothes. The possession of this suit was also the means of giving Mr. Valentine, at this very early age, many roles which are usually intrusted only to older and more experienced actors. Whenever a role required the actor to wear evening dress Mr. Valentine was cast for the part. Consequently, the actor spent the greater part of his time playing villains.

"If I hadn't owned that dress suit," said Mr. Valentine, as he was removing his make-up for the part of Timson in "The Pigeon," at the Little Theatre, "I should probably have returned home discouraged at my failure on the stage. I might have taken up another profession instead."

His year's tour through Wales was a unique experience. The company did not once play in a theatre during the whole year. There were no theatres in these smaller towns in Wales. They played in town halls and lodge rooms—any place where there was an auditorium and a platform which they could use as a stage. The scenery consisted of drops and side pieces, and the dressing rooms were arranged on each side of the platform by hanging curtains, the women dressing on one side and the men on the other.

In one town they were unable to give their first performance as the town hall had nearly disappeared in a snowbank and they were unable to dig a passage into it in time for the performance.

In spite of the hardships of the year's tour in the smaller towns in which they appeared, the manager came out with a fair profit, for he had made a reputation for himself for producing good plays, at least competently cast, and the annual engagement of his company was looked forward to. Mr. Valentine left the company at the end of the year because the manager put on a pantomime. After considerable urging he consented to appear in the pantomime for a week or two, but was dissatisfied with that kind of entertainment, and soon joined a stock company in Liverpool, Scotland, where his experiences were as varied and unique as those he had in Wales. A short time after that he secured an engagement in London, and from that time on his career has been one of steady progress and recognition.

MR. WALKLEY AND HORRORS. The immediate effect of Mr. Forsyth's play has been to turn us into fanatical believers in the theatre's mission to amuse, amuse, nothing but amuse, says A. B. Walkley in "The Times," London. The effect will wear off, but not before we have forgotten this horrible story of horrible people in horrible London lodgings—the blind, peevish, evil old woman, the neurotic but the insufferable cad of a business man, the dying, weak-minded criminal, this was Hester's circle; unhappy Hester, who sold herself for bread to the cad Franks, so soon as her husband James, the weak-minded criminal, had died, and then saw Franks murdered by her neurotic son Seth with the best of motives—of defending his mother, and saw her evil, peevish, blind old mother-in-law, Agatha Cayle, denounce the boy to the police. Fortunately for Hester and for our immediate interest in any kind of drama but the most frivolous console her and marry her; but when, raising a polite objection, she told him that he came too late, we felt that for us, too, the little gleam of sunshine (the removal of all that horrible crew) had come too late. Mr. Forsyth has written his play conscientiously and carefully; but he has made the mistake of overdoing the sordidness, the meanness, of his story and his characters, and has never once lifted his play into any larger air.

ANOTHER REJANE. Mlle. Alice Rejane came to the Alhambra with a big Continental reputation as a dancer deeply learned in the arts of pose and movement. Her success with her first London audience was immediate, as is an English paper. An old-world Spanish dance, a modern waltz, a Citane dance, and a measure on the toes provided range of opportunity enough, and each in its way was wonderfully attractive. Mlle. Rejane is young and very charming, and her name will be placed high among the great dancers who have visited the Alhambra.

STAGE NOTES. Louise Woods, of "The Greyhound" now playing at the Astor Theatre, is one of the latest of theatrical folk to be converted to vegetarianism. She eats but two meals a day, one at midday and one at night, and both are a combination of fruit, nuts, grain and vegetables. If these dietary, squirrel-like dishes can support a real live actress through a season of stage life, G. B. S. must be right in referring to four bananas as a sumptuous meal.

In speaking of the strain upon the actor of a first night performance, Nat Goodwin once said: "A first night is a horse race that lasts three hours."



JOHN MASON IN "AS A MAN THINKS," AT THE MANHATTAN OPERA HOUSE.



CHARLES HAWTREYS IN "DEAR OLD CHARLIE," AT MAXINE ELLIOTT'S THEATRE.