

SIGNS OF SPRING IN THE PLAYHOUSES



MARIE NORDSTROM
in
"THE CHARM OF ISABEL"
at the 39th ST. THEATRE



EUGENE O'BRIEN and MOLLY MCINTYRE in "KITTY MACKAY" at the COMEDY



LUCILE CAVANAUGH in "THE WHIRL OF THE WORLD" at the WINTER GARDEN

PLAYS AND PLAYER

"Potash & Perlmutter" and the American Invasion—Ferdinand Gottschalk's Debut—John Merritt.

By HECTOR TURNBULL.

The success of "Potash & Perlmutter" in London appears to have struck something very like terror to the hearts of a few of the dramatic writers in that city. The critic of "The Standard," in a recent article, is particularly moved. He fears that the overwhelming popularity of American comedies and American comedians points to an extinction of the "clean English comedy and good English drama." First deploring the fact that the music halls have already begun to present "Potash & Perlmutter" dialogues, he predicts that England is threatened with "an avalanche of German-American idiocy," and dialect plays in general.

Here follows a portion of the plea to all loyal Englishmen: "It requires a glossary, anyhow, for most people, especially the vast majority who have not travelled in America, to understand much of what is said by the funny mantle merchants at the Queen's Theatre. And, besides, is there not at present just a little too much of this drawing upon America for London's amusement? Nearly every performer at the music halls is a comical American of some sort or other. We have had ragtime songs ad nauseam and our ballrooms vulgarized by one-step dancing. Is there no chance to return to healthy English humor? The early days of the London music halls had 'Lion Comiques' and 'Perfect Comedians' who were often a little vulgar in their wit, perhaps, but, at least, it was English vulgarity, and the money to the man went into English pockets. "And English comedy? Is there nobody who can give us something purely of London, like 'Caste' and the never-to-be-forgotten 'Eccles'?" "English playwrights and comedy prose and song writers please think about it. Awake, England!"

Of course, it is rather sad to contemplate that ominous chink of English sovereigns in the alien pocket, but they have their fun and pay their money. The source of their fun, however, appears simple to trace. It is not that this avalanche of dialect plays, tango-filled musical shows and comedy in the music halls bears any particular label showing its place of manufacture. It is merely that the humor or sentiment involved is international. The English, as well as others, find in this "avalanche" just that sort of human caricature, vulgar or otherwise, that they relish. The sentiment and humor in the characters of "Potash & Perlmutter" are quite as apparent and engaging to the "mantle merchants" of London as they are to our own "cloak and suiters." We, ourselves, managed to extract a vast amount of fun for a long time out of "Bunty," and this country is not yet overrun with Scots.

What really stirs in the breasts of these purists of the theatre and what, more than Potash, has brought forth this cry of alarm against dialect plays, is the sore of Bernard Shaw's "Bloody" still rankling. This outrageous word is barred, but horror upon horror, "The Standard" announces in the same article that it is to be blankly immortalized in a new Alhambra production called, forsooth, "NOT (—) LIKELY." The blank, of course, stands for the sanguinary bomb which Mr. Shaw heaved at the English sensibilities a few weeks ago in his "Pygmalion." And when Shaw makes an English Cockney girl talk in such an unheard of manner is it any wonder that the critics turn and rend the American playwrights for their evil influence?

Some enterprising moving picture concern would present an entertaining film if they could follow Jack Merritt with a camera through his day's work. Jack, or Mr. John Merritt, lives a dual existence to the rest of a theatrical world. This few know him as "Jack, the Ice Boy," when they see him as the Peri at the gate of Mr. H. H. Frazee's offices. The same few know him as Mr. John Merritt, the actor, when they see him in the first act of "A Pair of Sixes" at the Longacre. But, if we mistake not, an enthusiastic public will some time know him as John Merritt, author of "The Handsome Baronet."

the truth about this unassuming youth. That was when we were presented with a card bearing the words, "John Merritt, Esquire, Actor and Assistant Publicity Man of 'A Pair of Sixes.'" We were then informed that he felt that he had been neglected by the newspaper men, and wished to have his history and picture blazoned to the world. Later he came into notice by nearly losing all three jobs for rehearsing an original proposal and suicide scene while the play was going on. In explaining the affair to his employer it developed that he was merely overzealous and wished to try out a scene of his own writing while there was a leading lady available.

As this is in the nature of a theatrical announcement, we will make the features of the forthcoming production public with pleasure in Mr. Merritt's own words:

"Listen. I got a scream. It's goin' to knock 'em right out of dere seats. Listen. Dere's a duel and a shipwreck in de first akt, but owin' to dat dame screamin' de other night and crabbin' my proposal scene dat's all de furdur I got. Now, I got to work out dese events when I gets a chance, and with all my jobs I don't get much chance. I nearly killed dat guy who's going to play my part in 'Sixes' on de road, and is stealing all my original stuff, but doin' it I worked up an idea for de duel scene. So, you see, I'm progressin'. It won't be long before I'm rollin' past my name on de billboards in my car. Listen, get de name in de paper



GABY DESLYS in "THE BELLE OF BOND STREET" at the SHUBERT THEATRE

sure, will you? 'De Handsome Baronet.'"

Well, there it is. "The Handsome Baronet." And any one who wishes to see a melodrama growing by scenes and progressing by thrilling incidents may keep his eye on Jack Merritt. Just stay in sight of his flaming head, however, for any closer is hazardous. He may suddenly conceive an idea for a little murder to liven up a scene.

Ferdinand Gottschalk, whose finished playing in the role of the broken down, cadging gambler in "The Truth" at the Little Theatre, is perhaps the most interesting piece of acting in the comedy, began his career in rather a novel manner. Just after his graduation from college he managed to get into a heated row with his father, who had a fiery temper. The father finally became so angry at the cool attitude of his son that he ordered young Mr. Gottschalk from the room. Swinging on his heel and trying to carry the dismissal off with good grace, the young fellow looked so utterly comical that his father was forced to burst out laughing. "After that," said Mr.

Gottschalk the other day, "I felt certain of my ability to cut some sort of a figure as a comedian. For any chap who could make my father laugh when he was in a temper by simply walking off, must be able to make an audience laugh from the stage."

FLORENCE REED

Young Actress Is Unsatisfied with Stage Conditions.

That German philosopher—he must have been a German—who once wrote a book to prove that woman is incapacitated for all intellectual activity through her congenital inability to think clearly and succinctly had never met Miss Florence Reed. In fact, he couldn't very well have met Miss Reed, for he lived very long ago, which was not the case with Miss Reed. Miss Reed, as all New York knows, is the young woman who is now playing the part of the young Russian Jewess in "The Yellow Ticket" and who has by her impersonation put herself fairly and squarely in the front rank of our younger American actresses.

A Tribune representative called on Miss Reed last week, in her apartment, at the Hotel Richmond. He wanted an interview, but Miss Reed had told him over the telephone that since one newspaper

had printed two columns all about what she did not say regarding the different ways to fascinate a man, she was rather doubtful about newspaper publicity. But The Tribune man assured her that his interview would be very serious, and all about Art with the capital "A," and Miss Reed finally consented to take a chance. And this was how The Tribune man came to be admitted, and to show how very serious he was the first question he propounded was this:

"Miss Reed, are you satisfied with the present condition of the American stage?" And the young actress flashed back her reply:

"No, I am not!" Then, fearing The Tribune man would think her a Cassandra, she hastened to add that she did not want to appear to pontificate, but that she thought she could explain.

"You see, our public is a youthful one, and its idea of an actress is one of whom it can be continually saying, 'Isn't she sweet!' 'Isn't she lovely!' 'Isn't she a dear!' That, at present, appears to be the general mentality of our audiences. In Europe it is so different. There it is: 'Isn't she wonderful!' And between these two points of view, or, rather, points of feeling, there is, alas! a long, long journey. Now, I am practical, and I realize that until I have become supreme I must give the public a good deal of what it wishes; but I can tell you that as soon as I become famous enough and have made enough money to be able to do it I am going to act the parts that I want."

"Another great weakness in our theatre, and one which absolutely stultifies so many promising actors and actresses, is the manner in which they are forced to act always the same type of character. When an actress makes a success in one part, for some unconscionable reason managers think she must ever afterward appear in such parts. That versatility should exist appears to many of these managers as contrary to the order of nature. Now, I for one simply refuse to be bound down in this way. I made my first great success in a drunken scene in a farce comedy, in 'Seven Days,' whereupon I was at once put down as a farce comedy actress of drunken scenes for all eternity."

"Fortunately, I had a will, and I proceeded to smash such delusions by several seasons of carmine adventures. I played in 'The Typhoon' and in 'The Master of the House.' Once more I was pigeonholed. I was to go through life wrecking lives and generally raising hub. Again I revolted, but when Mr. Woods had the courage to put me in 'The Yellow Ticket' in a part which summed up the idealism of the Jewish race, he was told frankly that he was crazy and would ruin his play. But I appear to have fooled them all again, and I hope to be able to continue to fool them until I am a gray haired old woman."

"But, after all, we mustn't theorize, for theorizing kills creation. What we must do is get up and do and if it is in us it will come out. The great thing is never to stay satisfied and always remain true to the basic truths of art. How many fine talents have been ruined by their possessors abandoning the primal simplicity, the foundations upon which all good acting must rest, and continually exaggerating certain traits in their personalities until they have no personalities left. An actress should always be sincere. Sincerity will always prove the best and truest friend in acting, as in life."

And as The Tribune man took his leave this was the note that remained in his mind. Truly, he had not been false to his promise—it had been a very serious interview!

ORCHESTRA AT THE LITTLE.

The Little Theatre has now acquired an orchestra. It is the Little Theatre Quartet and plays between the acts. It plays in the auditorium, however.

ONE NEW PLAY

Deals with the Difficulties of a Lady Who Couldn't Say No—A Revival.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR THE WEEK

ON MONDAY EVENING:
At the Garden Theatre, "The Shepherd King," by Wright Lorimer.
ON TUESDAY EVENING:
At Maxine Elliott's Theatre, "The Charm of Isabel," by Sidney Rosenfeld.

The Emmett Corrigan Producing Company will present the Biblical drama by Wright Lorimer, "The Shepherd King," at the Garden Theatre for two weeks, commencing Monday. The performances are given under the auspices of the United Catholic Works, which is an organization of all the leading charitable, social, philanthropic and educational Catholic societies in New York. It was founded two years ago at the suggestion of Cardinal Farley, and has devoted itself to raising funds for charity and for other work.

The company, which has been specially engaged and drilled by Mr. Emmett Corrigan, is headed by William Farnum, and in his support are Robert McWade, Edward Mackay, Edna Archer Crawford, Virginia Hadley and many others. There is also a chorus of forty voices and a large ballet, many of the old Biblical songs will be rendered, together with the scriptural music and dancing.

"The Shepherd King" has not been seen in New York for a number of years, but when first produced here it ran for sixteen weeks at the Knickerbocker Theatre.

"The Charm of Isabel," by Sidney Rosenfeld, will have its first public performance at Maxine Elliott's Theatre on Tuesday evening, being put forward by William A. Brady, Limited. A full dress rehearsal of the comedy was given before an invited audience at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre two Sundays ago, where it was developed that the principal charm of a young woman consisted in her inability to say no in crises where the decisive negative would have preserved her from embarrassing complications. In these circumstances the charming Isabel was wont to resort to the subterfuge of flight, which accounted for her sudden appearance in the bosom of a dyspeptic yet stately New England family following an adventure with an over-ardent Frenchman in Paris. In the sedate rural surroundings of her new abode the young lady with acute tendencies toward the affirmative became the centering figure in so many vexatious domestic upheavals that in desperation she added the missing word to her vocabulary and conquered her little world. Miss Marie Nordstrom impersonated Isabel upon this occasion, quite evidently to Mr. Brady's complete satisfaction, since she is retained for the public career of the play. This is also true of Albert Brown, who then appeared, and will now recur as the impetuous Frenchman; Ned Sparks (formerly the day clerk of "Little Miss Brown"), and Isabelle Evesson. Others in the cast to be revealed on Tuesday evening are Florence Gerald, Julia Varney, Felix Krembs and William Carleton.

"LEAP YEAR LAND."

"Leap Year Land," a new comic opera, by Kenneth and Roy Webb, will be produced for the first time at Wallack's Theatre on Tuesday night, May 5. The piece is described by its authors as a "suffragette opera," as the action takes place on an imaginary island where women lays always ruled. Roy Webb,

who has written the music for the "Leap Year Land," is probably better known as a winner of golf prizes than as a composer of music. He has, however, already achieved considerable success in previous productions made in collaboration with his brother. He is twenty-five years old, said to be one of "the youngest composers in captivity." One performance will be given, the proceeds to be devoted to charity.

STOCK AND ONE WEEK HOUSES.

One of the interesting features of Rupert Hughes's farce, "Excuse Me," which will begin an engagement at the Grand Opera House to-morrow night, is the hold-up scene. The tension is allowed to last but a short time, as the carelessness of a highwayman gives opportunity to a quick thinking and acting man among the passengers and a minute later the comedy resumes full sway. Included in the company is Willis P. Sweetman in his original role of the Pullman porter. Wednesday and Saturday matinees will be given.

Owing to the success of the dramatic spectacle, "Everywoman" at the Bronx Opera House, where it is concluding an engagement of one week, Henry W. Savage has arranged with Messrs. Cohan and Harris to continue the performance for a second week, beginning Monday. The cast is entirely satisfying, and includes a dramatic ensemble of over 150 people and a special symphony orchestra of twenty-five musicians.

"A SCRAP OF PAPER."

The Empire Theatre is so pressingly needed this week for day and night rehearsals for the John Drew-Ethel Barrymore company in Sardou's "A Scrap of Paper" that it will remain closed to the public until next Monday night. Only in this way can this especially interesting representation of one of the most ingenious of modern comedies be made ready by Monday week, May 11. By then the play will be just about ready for public presentation, because the rehearsals were slow in commencing owing to the necessary continuance of Mr. Drew's tour in "The Tyranny of Tears" and "The Will," and Miss Barrymore's tour in "Tante"—neither of which could be curtailed. Splendid comedy parts, falling easily within the styles characteristic of Mr. Drew and Miss Barrymore, are the interesting opportunities afforded these well-known stars by "A Scrap of Paper." But this coming Empire Theatre John Drew-Ethel Barrymore season is a very temporary plan—inevitably ending with the coming of the hot weather—and probably impossible of repetition in any other subsequent season, because Mr. Drew and Miss Barrymore will again head separate organizations directly "A Scrap of Paper" closes. However, each artist by then will have satisfied long cherished ambitions to appear together in the one-play.