

# AFFAIRS OF THE WEEK IN THE PLAYHOUSES



RICHARD BENNETT AND ADRIENNE MORRISON IN "MATERNITY" AT THE THEATRE.



PAULINE FREDERICK IN "INNOCENT" AT THE STANDARD.



CHARLES CHERRY AND ELSIE FERGUSON IN "OUTCAST" AT THE LYCEUM.



JOHN DREW IN "ROSEMARY" AT THE EMPIRE.

## PLAYS & PLAYERS

### Something About the New Prize-Winning Play—Notes and News.

By HECTOR TURNBULL.

Modern stage settings are generally presented with such fidelity to real life environment that theatergoers have ceased to wonder at the magic by which the great number of objects used to produce the impression are secured and put so swiftly into place. Time was when the use of continuous side walls, with real doors that opened and shut, elicited great admiration, and the "dressing" of a stage with more chairs and pictures than were actually needed by the action commanded more interest than the play itself. The "box set" and elaborate dressing of Boucicault's "London Assurance," when that transportive composition was first produced in the British metropolis, won place in theatrical annals largely by virtue of such realism. But times have changed, and rare, curiously-contrived "properties"—as the movable objects about a stage scene are generally called—create no furor.

Yet there are frequently very commonplace things in a stage scene, seemingly without function other than to provide that illusive thing called "atmosphere," that, apart from the play in which they appear, have intensely interesting histories. And the more exacting a producer is in having his properties so-so, the more numerous are these curious records. Therefore, that Winthrop Ames answers to this description, is probably the reason his production of "Children of Earth," the American prize play by Alice Brown, which is to be presented for the first time in New York Tuesday night at the Booth Theatre, is singularly full of little stories that ordinarily would pass unsuspected by first nighters.

"Children of Earth" is a thoroughly American play, the scenes being laid in present day New England; so it would not seem that there should be difficulty in getting the necessary props. Yet, securing family relics is not an easy task, certainly not in New England, where the disintegration of the home is all but sacrilege.

In the opening act will be seen a rack of resplendent pewter. One piece of this was contributed by Miss Brown, the author, from her family personal collection. It is a pitcher, and has been an heirloom in her family for generations. Other parts of the set have come from various New England homes, and a platter in particular, were gathered from New England china on the strength of friendships, for these were not for sale.

Across the fireplace is a pair of billiard balls, each in the shape of a soldier with a gun, "sawnt" fixed, and the uniform, with tall hat, betraying the service of King George III. These and other actually held fire logs before the grate in America, in the thirteenth century, in the thirteen colonies, in the days of the old Massachusetts home. The poker and tongs are of later date, as is the turkey wing used to brush the hearth, and their history is consequently of more interest.

Then come the chairs, correct in every detail. Some come from Pittsfield, Mass., and others from a farmhouse in Rutherford, N. J. One, of the mid-Victorian hickory variety, was made by a New York gentleman in whose room it had stood for many years.

The three oval old-time rugs were, oddly enough, made by sightless weavers at the New York Association for the Blind, of which Joseph H. Choate is president and the wonderful Helen Keller vice-president. This task was quite in line with their regular duties, for they make a specialty of manufacturing rag carpets. But in order to give these a worn appearance, when they came fresh from the makers they were placed inside the stage entrance to Mr. Ames's Little Theatre, where the company and stage crew of "A Pair of Silk Stockings" the attractions there, trod upon them during their frequent goings to and fro. Thus within a brief time these properties were given years of wear.

Of the big clock, which "has never been turned back," the history is quite interesting, despite its brevity. As this dial is so placed that it faces the audience, it must be "practicable"—that is, an actual, working timepiece. But it so happened that the property man, in misunderstanding the intended position, and secured an old, worn contrivance that had plenty of atmosphere, but no works. Of course, the error was promptly discovered by Mr. Ames, who personally ordered my name displayed with here on all announcements, and by the end of the week she had begun to consider me as a co-star. The honor of such a position with so eminent a

player would have been enough to make any actor famous, but Mme. Bernhardt was not satisfied. She said I had talent, and for that reason devoted hours and hours every week to the perfection of every detail in every scene I had with her. We continued to play together for three seasons, and summer before last our pleasant association had to come to an end.

"Madame had accepted a play in which the juvenile part did not suit me, but that did not deter her from showering more favors upon my head. With a splendid schooling in every trick of the stage which I had learned from her, with the knowledge that she had unbounded faith in my ability and with the flattering compliment that she liked my personality and appearance, the great French actress paid me the highest tribute which she could bestow upon any actor. I was invited to occupy her playhouse in Paris—the Theatre Sarah Bernhardt—and there appear as a star and direct the plays for the season before the most critical of all playgoers, a Parisian audience.

"During all of our visits to this country I was imperturbed by many members of the press, friends and managers to become an English-speaking actor, and it was again Mme. Bernhardt who spurred me on to accomplish the task. With six months in which to prove it could be done, I had a tutor with me constantly, and then I tutored in English under my own management in London a play called "Doan Gray." It was a failure. Still Mme. Bernhardt lent her encouragement. She bade me to go to New York—it was there that the idea of becoming identified with an English-speaking part took root. So, armed with dozens of letters of introduction from Madame, I set sail, and just a year ago made my debut in the role of Ramon in "Maria Rosa."

"No one," concluded Mr. Lou-Tellegen, "can quite understand what it means to a foreigner in a strange land, before a strange audience, in a strange language, to go through such a first night. That is, no one who has not had the terrible experience of feeling that to falter in one word or syllable might spell failure. My nervousness worked overtime throughout every rehearsal, and just as I was about to leave my first night for the theatre on that first night in New York a boy handed me a cable message. It was from Mme. Bernhardt, spurring me on to do those things in English which she herself had taught me to do so well in French.

"I intend to leave The Oasis in charge of a caretaker hereafter," declares Miss Dressler. "Just at present I am in quest of a country home nearer New York, preferably one up in Westchester County. Any improved place that is spacious and roomy and has plenty of shade trees will be appropriate. I intend to carry out some personal ideas about beautifying a home, one of which is to have my name spelled out on the front lawn in letters of geraniums, pansies, daisies and wild roses. Flowers have always been my particular hobby, and I might say modestly that I am somewhat of a connoisseur of floral specimens.

"There's nothing so exhilarating and restful as the simplicity of country life. It is a recreation that is always worth while. I would much rather don a sunbonnet and a gingham frock and stroll around in a vegetable garden than attire myself in a dazzling evening gown and prattle myself hoarse behind the footlights. But the stage is my profession, and, since I derive my income from such work, I believe in it thoroughly and always exert myself to the utmost when appearing at a performance.

Miss Dressler's principal income from The Oasis this winter is a box of farm products which she receives at the Hotel Astor twice a week. In this box there are always two pint jars of maple syrup, a pound of New England fruit cake, two dozen eggs and a rasher of sugar-cured ham.

BURTON HOLMES'S LECTURE. Burton Holmes thinks that England's rural regions have more romantic charm and more appealing picturesqueness in her towns and villages than any other country in Europe. So impressed was he with what he saw while motoring in Great Britain last summer that he decided to make "England" the subject of the initial travelogue of his series this season. Strangely enough, while Mr. Holmes has lectured on London in former seasons, in all the twenty-one years of his travel-talks he has never devoted a travelogue to England, the country of historic cathedrals, quaint villages, beautiful lakes, of the university cities of Oxford and Cambridge, the rich-in-torquid land of Shakespeare.

Not only will Mr. Holmes portray the England of peace time, but will also

by means of stirring motion pictures and colored dissolving views show her the country in the throes of mobbing her land and sea forces for the present great conflict.

A new orchestra featuring stringed instruments has been engaged by Joan Sawyer to furnish the regular evening programme of dance music for patrons of the Persian Garden. These musicians also play the compositions for Miss Sawyer's own ballroom exhibition dances. Several motto boards, with inscriptions from the various writings of Omar Khayyam, have been added to the general scheme of interior decoration at the Persian Garden, and for the 1915 winter season souvenir menu cards have been designed. Miss Sawyer dances at each Saturday night the Harcourt and also every afternoon.

"INNOCENT" AT THE STANDARD. Pauline Frederick and the original Eltinge Theatre cast in George Broadhurst's play "Innocent," from the Hungarian by Arpad Pasztor, will be the attraction at the Standard Theatre, Broadway at 19th st., for the week beginning to-morrow night, under the management of A. H. Woods. The supporting company includes John Miller, Kenneth Hunter, Hardee Kirkland, Frank Kemble Cooper and others. The usual Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday matinees will be played.

"CASTLES IN THE AIR." Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Castle appear nightly in an exhibition repertory of their latest ballroom dances at "Castles in the Air," atop the 44th Street Theatre. The programme of entertainment at this new rendezvous begins at 11 o'clock each evening, and continues until 2 a. m., at which time patrons who have been admitted to membership in the Castle Club may adjourn by elevator to the rathskeller under the theatre and continue their dance enjoyment without interruption until daylight.

UNA CLAYTON IN "MILK." Una Clayton's dramatic playlet, "Milk," which was given a private performance at the Maxine Elliott Theatre several weeks ago, is to open at Keith's Theatre, in Providence, on January 11, and will be seen shortly in New York. In this act Miss Clayton plays Dooley, a little mother of the slums, and is said to give a fine comedy performance of the sort in which she excels.

"CHEZ MAURICE." Maurice and Florence Walton give exhibitions of their own modern dance evolutions during each evening's programme of diversissements at "Chez Maurice." The dansants are given every Saturday afternoon, beginning at 4:30 and continuing until 6:30 o'clock.

WITH THE BURLESQUERS. Harry Hastings's Big Show will be seen at the Columbia Theatre this week offering a two-act burlesque called "On and Off the Earth." The principal members of the organization include several of the most widely known performers in burlesque.

IRVING PLACE THEATRE. "Kinder," a new comedy by Herman Bahr, will be the offering of the German Stock Company, at the Irving Place Theatre, on Tuesday night, January 12. The famous actress, Mrs. Reilly, will be the star, and other notable names will be in the cast.

THE FRENCH PLAYERS. The Theatre Francaise will give this week "Le Secret de Polichinelle," by Pierre Wolff, one of his best plays, and in which Mr. Benedict will be the star. The play is a comedy of manners, and is full of amusing incidents and character great pathos. On Friday the company will give "La Poudre aux Yeux," and on Saturday "L'Anglais Qui Tué Le Parle." The play will be given for the literary matinee. H. Lichtenberg, the well known professor, sent here as an exchange professor at Harvard, will give a short lecture after the play.

MAIDS OF PEKIN IN "CHIN CHIN" AT THE GLOBE.



## NEW PRODUCTIONS

### John Drew to Appear in "Rosemary"—Granville Barker's Plans.

Ethel Barrymore has made it possible for Charles Frohman to bring John Drew into New York for eleven night performances and four matinees of one of his earliest, most popular and best remembered successes, "Rosemary," a comedy in which Mr. Drew achieved success eighteen-odd years ago on the very stage where it will again be acted next Tuesday night. Everybody remembers something of "Rosemary," as the piece was the beginning of the John Drew following. It made a Miss of Miss Maude Adams and it gave Miss Ethel Barrymore, the original Priscilla, her first stage parts. The piece had previously been produced by Sir Charles Wyndham on the other side, where its success was just as great as here.

"Rosemary" was first acted as a new generation of playgoers has sprung up, and to these new theatergoers "Rosemary" will have the full value of a novelty. Alexandra Carlisle will play Dorothy in next Tuesday night's performance. Mrs. Thomas Whiffen will play Mrs. Cruickshank, Harry Harwood will appear in his original part of Captain Cruickshank and Hubert Druce will act Professor Jogram.

An interesting event is scheduled for Tuesday evening, when Winthrop Ames will present "Children of Earth" at the Booth Theatre, New York. "Children of Earth" is the New England drama by Alice Brown which won the \$10,000 prize offered by Mr. Ames for the best American play by a native author. It was unanimously chosen from among no less than 1,646 manuscripts, in a contest inaugurated late in March, 1913, which was as justly celebrated for the fairness with which it was conducted as for the unprecedented liberality of the award. In it everything was done to insure equality of consideration; and the committee of judges, Augustus Thomas, Adolph Klauer and Winthrop Ames, constituted a triangular viewpoint which was at once technical, critical and practical.

With the announcement of the winner, on June 1 of the year just past, "Children of Earth" was described as a serious modern play of New England life. Little is added to that by the present announcement, beyond the statement that Alice Brown has fulfilled her primary obligation as a dramatist by finding something to say, her study being a searching and unbiased analysis of the New England conscience, expressed in a woman so firm in that upright strength widely admired in American character that it stands dominant in a great gallery of memorable creations. And the reason is that there is no adequate description of this figure save that detailed by Alice Brown in her remarkable play. Not the least of Mr. Ames's efforts to provide "Children of Earth" with a mounting that will show it off to full advantage has been directed toward

Mr. Granville Barker, the noted theatrical producer of London, will produce in Wallack's Theatre during the week of January 13 a series of most interesting plays. The season will be under the management of Miss Lillian McCarty and Mr. Barker. "Androcles and the Lion," which never has been presented here, and in which Miss McCarty, as Lavinia, and O. P. Heggie, as Androcles, are having created the parts in the original production of the play in London—will be the opening attraction, in conjunction with the unique play, "Married a Dumb Wife," the English translation of which has been made by Professor Curtis Hildesheim Page, for many years of the faculty of Columbia University.

Other plays of the series which will be introduced into the programme early in the engagement are Mr. Barker's much discussed production, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Bernard Shaw's "The Doctor's Dilemma," and Granville Barker's "The Matrua House."

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