

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE

Our Plays in Paris

"Thirteenth Chair," as Played by Rejane, Lacks Some of the Thrills Which Were Present in the New York Production

By HEYWOOD BROWN

THEY call it the "Treizième Chaise" in Paris, and Rejane plays the part of the medium which Margaret Wycherly is acting in this country. The famous Frenchwoman is excellent in some of her scenes, but she cannot resist the temptation of poking fun at the play now and again. Indeed, she plays for comic effect almost throughout the melodrama, and the author certainly intended that the comic values should be incidental. To Parisians, accustomed to Grand Guignol horrors, even the murder in the first act of the "Thirteenth Chair" seems mild enough. The play is a moderate success, although most French theatregoers whom I knew regarded it as rather naive. Rejane does her most brilliant work early in the play. Her entrance is remarkable. She emphasizes the feebleness of the old woman much more than Margaret Wycherly did. The recognition scene is capably played by Rejane, but Monna Delza, who plays the part of the daughter, is by no means as able as Katharine La Salle. Mlle. Delza is a famed Paris beauty, but very much of a stick. Harrison Hunter could also give points to his French successor, Tarride, who plays the detective in an explosive manner which certainly is at variance with the author's intention.

The production as a whole does not compare to that of New York, because in war time Parisian managers are forced to make what shift they can behind the scenes, with a one-legged soldier or two, some youngsters and others ineligible for army service. Judging from performances, all the expert electricians are away at the front.

"Her Husband's Wife," of A. E. Thomas, under the title "La Femme de son mari," was produced during the summer, but failed to catch on. Our old friends, Potash and Perlmutter, are back for the second time and doing well. Max Dearly plays Potash, and while he is amusing, he fares the part a great deal more than Barney Bernard, and doesn't get much out of the scenes where Potash should seem something of a hero to the audience.

GABY DESLAYS and Harry Pincer are playing in a big revue which is all French except for the King of Harry Pincer. One is almost inclined to suspect German propaganda in this production, for Gaby's partner, who now unbuttons his sport shirt one rung lower than ever before, is billed throughout Paris as "Harry Pincer, the American." Except for a few weeks after the arrival of the first unit of the American expeditionary force, French revues have not gone in very heavily for musical comedy patriotism. The Gaby show, however, fairly shrieks with Allied loyalty. I noticed a Tommy sitting at the bar one matinee, all set for a drink. Just as he raised his glass to his lips the Gaby chorus girls came prancing down ladders in an effect familiarized at the Hippodrome and maneuvered themselves into a Union Jack while the orchestra played "God Save the King." The Tommy jumped up and stood rigid, at attention. At the last note he sat down and reached for the glass again, but already the girls were marching into the tricolor, and the "Marsellaise" caught him with his glass half raised. Again did the well-disciplined soldier stand at attention, nor did he have a chance to relax, for "The Star-Spangled Ban-

ner" came hard on the heels of the French national anthem. He had his drink at last, but it might be noticed that he gulped and did not follow the usual leisurely habit of the English. It was evident that he feared the orchestra might yet do something for Serbia, Italy, Montenegro or Siam.

France has its own Reinhardt, and at the Théâtre Antoine every aisle is a runway for the entrance of characters. Gemier is producing a symbolic patriotic play, called "Les Butors et La Finette." This is the only play in Paris which makes any attempt to provide elaborate stage decoration.

The stage comes right down to the orchestra in a flight of steps, and most of the big moments of the play are acted within a few feet of the audience. Gemier's theory is that one foot forward in front of the curtain line is worth an advance of four feet back of that line. It is his desire to break down, as far as possible, the barriers between audience and actor. He purposes to produce "Hamlet" soon, and in the play-within-the-play scene he intends to step down from the stage and take one of the aisle seats. As like as not, he will nudge his neighbor, with a "Voilà" or a "Regardez," and point to the performance of the travelling players. He has already produced "The Merchant of Venice," in which he took some bold liberties with the text, and in particular added a Ghetto scene, filled with rumblings and murmurs, to indicate that there is something brewing in Jewry. Simone is Gemier's leading woman and plays far better in French than she ever did during her English speaking seasons in New York.

Schuyler Ladd, who played the Daffodil in "The Yellow Jacket," is a sergeant with the American army in France. In addition to his military duties he finds time to act a little, and appeared as the hero in a play by Private Alexander Woolcott, dramatic critic of "The Times." The play dealt with life in New York after the war, and it was performed with great success in several army camps. The mere reference to the blaze of lights on



Miss Barrymore and the men who will support her in "The Off Chance"

Fifth Avenue caused tears and several doughboys broke down when one of the characters spoke of Delmonico's.

One of the most touching moments in a popular sentimental play recently produced here occurs when the lumberjack hero says, "I see it," and the heroine ever so gently teaches him to use "I saw it."

Eleanor Robson recently returned to the stage for one night only in a shift given before American soldiers in Paris.

To our mind "The Gipsy Trail" is the best production that Arthur Hopkins has made. The play is as light as anything of Clare Kummer's, but plotted, too. If it lacks something of the whimsicality of Miss Kummer, that is more than made up for by the possession of a coherent story. Such a play requires careful casting, and Arthur Hopkins has done well by his author. The only possible objection is that some will find Roland Young rather more attractive than Glendinning, who is his successful rival for the hand of the heroine. The play has the best performance by a youngster which I remember ever having seen, and also just about the best grandmother who has been heretofore recently. Frank Longacre is the youngster and Effie Ellsler the grandmother.

In Vaudeville

PALACE—Carter De Haven and Florence Parker, Bessie Clayton, White and Haig, Elizabeth Brice, Clark and Hamilton, Ryan and Lee, Gladys Hansen, Loyal's dogs and others.

ALLIANCE—Laura Hope Crews, Millership and Gerrard, Jack Wilson, Franklin Ardell, Frances Kennedy, Hickey Brothers, Ford and Houghton, and Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Darrow.

COLONIAL—Gus Edwards' "Band-box Revue," Frank Carter, Mason and Keeler, Reine Davis, James J. Morton, Dorothy Brenner, Francis and Ross, Valentine and Bell.

RIVERSIDE—Blanche Ring, Van and Schenck, William Gaxton, in "Kisses"; the Ford Sisters, Harry B. Watson and Jere Delaney, in "Rubeville"; Morris and Campbell, Dooley and Nelson, Brenck's Bronze Statue Horse, and Jack and Cora Williams.

ROYAL—Evelyn Nesbit, Lee Kohlmar and company, Duffey and Inglis, Flanagan and Edwards, Grace De Mar, Charles Irwin, Rose and Moon, and the Taylor Trio.

LOEW'S AMERICAN—"Sherman Was Right," George Armstrong, Clayton Maclyn and company, in "The Bet"; the Four Lyres and others.

NEW PLAYS THIS WEEK

THURSDAY At the Empire Thursday evening, Ethel Barrymore, in "The Off Chance," a comedy by R. C. Carton.

At the Winter Garden Thursday evening, "Sinbad," a revue by Harold Ateridge and Sigmund Romberg, with Al Jolson. Presented by the Shuberts.

At the Empire Theatre on Thursday evening, February 14, Miss Ethel Barrymore will be seen in "The Off Chance," the second play of her present season at that house.

The new play, which is a bright and witty comedy by R. C. Carton, author of "Lord and Lady Algy," "Liberty Hall," "Mr. Hopkinson" and a dozen other pieces that have been presented here and in London with marked success, is in direct contrast to "The Lady of the Camellias," and in it Miss Barrymore will have a comedy rôle of the kind in which American theatregoers like to see her best.

The scenes of the play are laid in England and the leading character—Miss Barrymore's part, of course—is an amiable, sharp-tongued woman of the world who devises an ingenious trick (the "off chance" of the title) to bring about a reconciliation between her young daughter and the latter's husband, who has got himself entangled with a pretty dancer.

To support Miss Barrymore in this piece the Charles Frohman Company has assembled a remarkable cast, which will include Cyril Keightley, E. Lyall Swete, John Cope, Edward Emery, Albert Gran, Thomas Loudon, J. M. Troughton, Eva Le Gallienne, Marcelle Roussillon, Clara T. Bracy, Cecilia Radcliffe and others.

Al Jolson's new starring vehicle "Sinbad," will be disclosed at the Winter Garden Thursday night, February 14, affording the latter institute of frothy fun and frolic the excitement of a "first night"—the twenty-third in the history of the house.

The book of "Sinbad" is by Harold Ateridge and the music by Sigmund Romberg. The "black-face nightingale," however, had a hand in the preparation of both. While there has been no effort to adhere to "The Arabian Nights" narrative of the intrepid sailor with any particular fidelity, it is said to have been followed in very much the same way that "Robinson Crusoe, Jr.," resembled the original story when Jolson appeared in it, two years ago. There are two acts and fourteen scenes, arranged along the familiar lines of extravaganza construction, with no suggestion of the

Thursday matinee Marivaux's "La Surprise de l'Amour" will have its first performance of the week, and on Thursday evening "Les Frères Karamazov," by Jean Copeau and J. Croux, will be played.

Friday evening the double bill of "La Traversée" and "La Poil Carotte" will be repeated. Saturday matinee, February 16, "La Surprise de l'Amour"

will be given, and the Saturday evening performance will see the second repetition this week of "Les Frères Karamazov."

On Sunday afternoon, February 17, at 3 o'clock, the last concert of the season of the Instruments Anciens will take place.

Now on the Boards

Astor....."Why Marry?"
Belasco....."Polly With a Past"
Bijou....."Girl o' Mine"
Booth....."Seventeen"
Broadhurst.....

"The Madonna of the Future"
Casino....."Oh! Boy"
Century....."Chu Chin Chow"
Cohan....."The King"
Cort....."Flo-Flo"
Cohan & Harris....."A Tailor-Made Man"
Cohan....."Washington Square Players"
Criterion....."Happiness"
Fitzinger....."Business Before Pleasure"
Empire....."The Lady of the Camellias"
Forty-eighth Street....."The Love Mill"
Fulton....."Billeted"
Harris....."Success"
Hippodrome....."Cheer Up"
Hudson....."The Indestructible Wife"
Gaiety....."General Post"
Globe....."Jack o' Lantern"
Greenwich Village Theatre....."Karen"
Knickerbocker....."Josephine"
Liberty....."Going Up"
Longacre....."Yes or No"
Lyceum....."Tiger Rose"
Manhattan....."Old Lady 31"
Maxine Elliott....."The Eyes of Youth"
Morosco....."Lombardi, Ltd."
New Amsterdam.....

"Cohan Revue of 1918"
New Amsterdam Roof,
"The Midnight Frolic"
Norworth....."Odds and Ends"
Park....."Seven Days Leave"
Plymouth....."The Little Teacher"
Plymouth....."The Gipsy Trail"
Princess....."Oh, Lady! Lady!"
Republic....."Parlor, Bedroom and Bath"
Shubert....."Matinee"
Thirty-ninth Street....."Blind Youth"

In Brooklyn
ORPHEUM—Stella Mayhew, Hobart Bosworth and company, Dooley and Sales, Maud Earl and company, Lo Roy, Talma and Bosco, Lydell and Higgins, the Midnight Rollickers, Nella Allen, and Paul and Mae Nolan.

BUSHWICK—Orris Holland and Edwyna Boyd, in "On the High Seas"; Wyna Dockstader, Josie Heather, E. E. Clive and company, Mazie King, the Three Chums, Helder and Packer, "Norinne of the Movies," Athos and Read.

One Week Stands

Columbia....."Circus in Town"
Loew's 7th Avenue....."The Masquerader"
Majestic....."Mother Carey's Chickens"
Montauk....."Hamilton"
Standard....."A Successful Calamity"
Bronx Opera House....."Turn to the Right"



Emily Stevens and Frances Underwood in "The Madonna of the Future"

The Puppet Renaissance

The Romance of the Quaint, Impish Marionettes That Live, Move and Have Their Being in Supernatural Spheres

By Alexander Pierce

The Tyrians and Trojans were all silent; that is, the ears of all the spectators hung on the mouth of the interpreter of the show, when, in the first place, they heard a loud flourish of kettledrums and trumpets within the machine and then several discharges of artillery, which prelude being soon over, "Gentlemen," cried the boy, raising his voice, "we present you here with a true history, taken out of the chronicles of France and the Spanish ballads; it tells you how Don Quixote delivered his wife, Melisandra, that was a prisoner among the Moors in Spain, in the City of Sansuena, now called Saragosa.

"Some of those idle people, that love to pry into everything, happened to spy Melisandra as she let herself down from the balcony of the tower, and ran and gave the King notice of it; whereupon he straight commanded to sound an alarm, and now, mind what a din and hurly-burly there is, and how the city shakes with the ring of the bells backward in all the mosques!"

"There you are out, boy," said Don Quixote; "the Moors have no bells; they only use kettledrums and a kind of shawms, like our waltzes or hautboys; so that your ringing of bells in Sansuena is a mere absurdity!"

"Nay, sir," said the showman, "if you stand upon these trifles with us, we shall never please you. Don't be so severe a critic; are there not a thousand plays that pass with great success and applause, though they have many greater absurdities and nonsense in abundance? Let there be as many impertinences as notes in the sun, no matter, so I get the money."

"Well said," answered Don Quixote. "And now, sir," quoth the boy, "observe what a vast quantity of glittering horse comes pouring out of the city in pursuit of the Christian lovers; what a dreadful sound of trumpets and clarions and drums and kettledrums there is in the air. I fear they will overtake them, and then will the poor wretches be dragged along most barbarously at the tails of their horses, which would be sad indeed."

Don Quixote, seeing such a number of Moors, and hearing such an alarm, thought it high time to assist the flying lovers; and starting up, "it shall never be said while I live," cried he aloud, "that I suffered such a wrong to be done to so famous a knight and so daring a lover as Don Quixote. Forbear, then, your unjust pursuit, ye base-born rascals! Stop, or prepare to meet my furious resentment!"

Then, drawing out his sword to make good his threat, at one spring he gets to the show, and with a violent fury lays at the Moorish puppets, cutting and slashing in a most terrible manner; some he overthrows and belabors others; maims this and cleaves that in pieces.

This impressionistic description of a puppet play is shot through with the satire of Cervantes. Don Quixote beginning as a carping critic, yields gracefully to the showman's plea that

nothing else matters so long as he is permitted to make money. The reference to the legitimate stage was undoubtedly a clincher. Finally, losing himself in the dramatic spectacle, the Don yields to the familiar impulse to take an active part.

Socrates once asked a puppet showman how he managed to make a living. The impresario replied that by portraying the follies of society he never failed to fill his sack with coin. People are apt to regard puppets as toys for the amusement of children, but their charm appeals to all who have been fortunate enough to retain any simplicity of heart. In times past they have reflected, or even preceded, transformations in the theatre and in society itself.

A renaissance of the puppet play, begun on the Continent some ten years ago and followed in England, is making itself felt in America. Puppeteers are operating in several cities, and now Tony Sarg has aroused the interest of the New York public by invading the Norworth Theatre, in Forty-eighth Street, with his marionettes, which represent the last word in the art today. Beginning with next week, the troupe of marionettes will hold full sway at the Norworth, with regular evening and matinee performances.

This is not the first time that puppets have usurped the acting stage. During the decadence of Greek drama they reigned supreme in the theatre. In England they enjoyed a great vogue when the drama was proscribed by the Puritans, and in Germany they gained no less universal currency in the seventeenth century when the church excommunicated actors and drove them into other professions. Goethe derived the idea of Faust from a puppet play about Dr. Faustus, and the puppet showmen profited by re-creating his drama to their own uses. In 1794 the Prussian government interdicted the puppet plays for propagating revolutionary doctrines.

But all this is straying from the bewitching entertainments of Tony Sarg. The first of three pieces on his programme is "The Three Wishes," an old play, accredited to one F. Pecci. The other two are "The Green Suit" and "A Stolen Beauty and the Great Jewel," both by Mrs. Hamilton Williamson.

It is a mistake to criticize puppet plays as drama. The field is entirely distinct. A great dramatist wrote a powerful play for marionettes which he called "The Death of Tintagiles." It failed of due effect when given by puppets, but proved its worth on the acting stage. The fact that puppets can act is the thing to emphasize, and Mr. Sarg stresses the special feats in which they can shine conspicuously. These are represented in his present programme by the portly man who

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Lionel Atwill and Miss Gornel in "The Indestructible Wife"



"The Little Teacher" (Mary Evans) and her admiring lumberjacks (Curly Cooksey and Edward G. Robinson) are off for France



Margaret Dale in "Oh, Lady, Lady!"