

# CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE



Selwyn and Co. present Francine Lorraine in "Double Exposure"



Beatrice Nichols and Ralph Morgan in "Lightnin'"



Marjorie Rameau and Pedro de Cordoba in "Where Poppies Bloom"



Mitzzi in "Head"



Julia Dean in "The Woman on the Index"

## TWO PLAYS

By Heywood Brown

TWO interesting plays came to town last week. "Why Worry?" may be still a third, but this is written in midweek, as Sunday newspaper exigencies demand. "Under Orders" is by far the most workmanlike drama produced this season. It is even better than "Friendly Enemies," itself an adroit exercise in technique, whatever its deficiencies in sincerity.

Berte Thomas, an English actor, has succeeded admirably in his task of writing a play for two players. It would be useless to deny that the strain of the effort shows at times. After all, Thomas did not keep his play to a couple of players because he needed no more, but partly, at least, for the sake of the novelty. And yet in the best act of the play the audience is almost certain to forget that the play is a novelty. Here there is no need for anybody else in the world except the two figures on the stage who are gripped in a most tense dramatic situation. It is rather more to say that Berte Thomas has devised the best act of any war play seen here in two seasons than that he has written the best act for two players.

And the act can stand the comparison with all the rest. It is thrilling from beginning to end. Part of the credit should go to Shelley Hull, who does a most competent and compelling bit of acting. It is something for an actor to play the part of a German soldier and not make him an absolute caricature. Another act suffers exceedingly from Hull. "Under Orders" begins with a good scene between a mother and her son, who is off to the front. The mother, played moderately well by Edie Shannon, is trying hard not to break down during the parting. Her son is endeavoring to keep up her courage by a show of seeming unconcern. Hull has misinterpreted this mood into sheer condescension, and he is altogether lacking in any boyish suggestion.

"A Very Good Young Man" is not skilful at all in the way in which it is put together. It is a rather badly built play, and yet it should command more interest than "Under Orders" and more than many another better polished play now in New York. After all, it does catch something from life. That is a relief. Never are plays in general so true to theatrical conventions as in war time. The very act of squeezing battles and national emotions into hand-boxes tends to conventionalize them. "A Very Good Young Man" does not observe life accurately throughout. At least, it is not accurate in the sense of being realistic. Much of it is caricature, but that does not prevent it from being authentic. Somebody has called the play Goldberghian. Now, the cartoonist of "The Mail" certainly does not draw people just as they are, and yet his material has a direct relation to life. It may be a fault of Martin Brown's play that not all the characters are seen from the same angle. Some of them are not caricatures. His hero and heroine are drawn pretty faithfully. But such criticism is a bit finicky, for little drama is written in which some figures are not drawn with a broader stroke than others.

Being human at heart, "A Very Good Young Man" is perhaps the most amusing play in town. Only rare geniuses can make up funny things out of their head. The everyday run of theatrical craftsmen is funniest when he is transforming something which he has observed into stage form.

Somebody thought that Ruth Findley was lackadaisical in "A Very Good Young Man." We thought her performance much the best in the company. And we think so still. There is a deep suspicion in our mind that any actor or actress who fails to shout is always in danger of the accusation of not trying hard enough.

In a recent review we maintained that inebriety was a difficult subject for dramatic purposes, because as a matter of fact the drunken man is usually much more amusing to himself than to anybody else. As a rule, humor demands that its subject should not be introspective. We failed to note an exception. There is no denying the humor of purely visual inebriety for stage purposes. When we wrote our review we had forgotten Leon Errol. In the serious moments when a roisterer is trying to do something or get some place he can readily be amusing. It is only when he consciously

## Plays and Players

Taylor Granville has revised "An American Ace," the melodrama which was seen at the Casino Theatre, and will present it in vaudeville at the New Brighton Theatre this week. In its original form it ran three hours. This schedule has been reduced to one hour and fifteen minutes. Granville saved a lot of time by dropping the first act altogether.

Frank Bacon has acted in other people's plays for thirty years. All the time he was nursing one of his own. To-morrow evening at the Gaiety Theatre his dream of years will be realized with the production of "Lightnin'," which Winchell Smith wrote from the actor's idea.

Something of a record in producing is being made by Leon Errol, who is directing four new productions at the same time. The first is "Look Who's Here," a new musical comedy for Nora Bayes. Also, he is rehearsing a new musical comedy by George V. Hobart for C. B. Maddock, and two other short musical plays for the same manager.

George Nash, who plays Police Commissioner Drake in "The Blue Pearl," was a member of Joseph Jefferson's company for several years. Mr. Nash says: "I have always regarded him as one of the founders of the modern school of acting. Mr. Jefferson was in advance of his times as an actor. As a disciple of naturalism on the stage he was almost alone for many years."

Lubovska, the dancer in "Everything" at the Hippodrome, although a Russian, is essentially Latin in temperament and training. She was brought up in Mexico City. She has danced with Ruth St. Denis, and for several seasons has been featured in vaudeville.

Julia Heinrich, the well known soprano, who will sing with the Society of American Singers at the Park Theatre beginning September 23, has changed her name. She is now Julia Henry.

## Booking Berlin

Richard Henry Little, famous dramatic critic and war correspondent, who is now in the Y. M. C. A. service, visited Morris Gest at the Century Theatre yesterday to say good-bye before sailing to join his unit in active service in France. Mr. Little ceased being a dramatic critic when "The Chicago Herald" was recently purchased by "The Chicago Examiner," and at that time Mr. Gest offered him a position as advance agent for "Chu Chin Chow" touring this season.

When Mr. Little called on Mr. Gest yesterday at the Century Theatre and announced that he was about to join the American army, Mr. Gest again offered him a position as his agent. "I will engage you right now as my advance agent to go ahead of the first American show that the firm of Elliott, Comstock & Gest sends over to France, which is 'Experience.' As fast as General Pershing gets across the Rhine and toward Berlin our company will follow up behind the firing line. I am going to try to have the honor of presenting the first American play at the Royal Opera House in Berlin after they change the name of the theatre there to the American Theatre. I want you, Mr. Little, to be my advance agent and attend to all details when my American company goes to Berlin."

Mr. Little promptly accepted the engagement and took \$1 on account to bind the contract.

## "Over Here" at Fulton

Oliver D. Bailey has decided to call his new play "Over Here." It will open at the Fulton Theatre in the first week in September.

## Many Plays on List of Cohan and Harris

Subsequent to the production of "Three Faces East," Anthony Paul Kelly's play of the Secret Street, at their West Forty-second Street Theatre, Cohan & Harris announced their definite plans for new productions during the season of 1918-19. These include:

Leo Dietrichstein in an original play in three acts, entitled "The Star," by Mr. Dietrichstein and A. E. Thomas; "David's Adventure," a whimsical play in a prologue, two acts and epilogue, by A. E. Thomas, based upon the story of "The Driftwood Adventure," by Leona Dalrymple; "The King's Double," a dramatic musical play, book and lyrics by Stephen Ivor Szinney and William Carry Duncan, music by Anselm Götzel; Chauncey Olett in a new play.

"Mrs. Hope's Husband," a dramatization by George M. Cohan from Gelett Burgess's novel of the same name; "Queen," a dramatization by George M. Cohan from Henry Sydney Harrison's novel of the same name; "Three Live Ghosts," a comedy in three acts, by Frederic S. Isham; "The Beautiful One," a musical play, book and lyrics by Renold Wolf, the music by Louis A. Hirsch.

A new musical play, as yet unnamed, book by Roi Cooper Megrue, music and lyrics by Sergeant Irving Berlin; "Look Upon the Prisoner," a comedy drama, in three acts, by Rita Weiman, and "Irene O'Dare," a comedy in three acts, by James Montgomery.

## "Girls De Looks" Ready

"Girls De Looks" is the title of the new burlesque organization which will be presented by Barney Gerard at the Columbia Theatre to-morrow.

## New Plays This Week

MONDAY—At the Republic, Marjorie Rameau in "Where Poppies Bloom," by Roi Cooper Megrue; a play in three acts, described as a drama of love in France. In Miss Rameau's company are Pedro de Cordoba, Lewis Stone, Percival Knight, Will Downing and others.

At the Gaiety, "Lightnin'," a comedy in a prologue and three acts, presented by Winchell Smith and John L. Golden, sponsors of "Turn to the Right." The leading player is Frank Bacon, last seen here in "The Cinderella Man," whose resemblance to Joseph Jefferson, frequently remarked, is heightened by his new rôle. In the company with Mr. Bacon are Ralph Morgan, Thomas McLarnie, Harry Davenport, Paul Stanton, E. J. Plankall, Sam Coit, George Thompson, Sidney Colburn, Beatrice Nichols, Jessie E. Pringle, Jane Oaker, Bessie Bacon and many others.

TUESDAY—At the Bijou, "Double Exposure," by Avery Hopwood, presented by Selwyn & Co., with a cast including Janet Beecher, John Cumberland, Francine Lorraine, John Westley, J. Harry Irvine and others. This is Mr. Hopwood's first farce since "Fair and Warmer," and concerns the disturbance caused in two lately peaceful young families by the advent of an Indian Yogi, who exchanges astral bodies from one household to another.

THURSDAY—At the 48th Street Theatre, "The Woman on the Index," by Lillian Trimble Bradley and George Broadhurst, presented by Mr. Broadhurst, with Julia Dean, Amy Ricard, Alison Skipworth, Eurenice Blair, Camilla Dahlberg, Lester Lonergan, George Probert, Lee Baker, Walter Ringham, Harry Hadfield, Henry Miller, Jr., George Le Soir and T. Tamamoto in the cast.

At the George M. Cohan, Mitzzi, in "Head Over Heels," a new musical play by Jerome Kern and Edgar Allan Wolf, the theme of which is taken from a story by Nalbro Bartley called "Shadows." Mitzzi is the "top-mount" girl of a troupe of travelling acrobats. In the supporting company are Robert Emmet Keane, Charles Judds, Dorothy Mackaye, Gertrude Dallas, Royd Marshall, Irving Bebe, the Runaway Four troupe of acrobats, and many others.

## "She Took a Chance" To Be Presented Soon

Klaw & Erlanger's second musical comedy production for the new season will be "She Took a Chance," which will be presented at the Apollo Theatre, Atlantic City, on September 9. Henry Blossom has written the book from Fred Jackson's farce, "A Full House." The score is by Oza Waltron.

The company includes Dallas Wolford, May Vokes, Wanda Lyons, Mary Millburn, Eleanor Gordon, Ben Linn, Alfred Gerrard, Charles Olett and William Sullivan.

## Yaphank Show Stays On

On account of its great success "Yip! Yaphank!" will continue at the Century Theatre this week. This is the final week for the big soldier show.

## Hilliam in the Frolic

"British Columbia" Hilliam in a piano talk will appear in the "Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic," beginning to-morrow night.

## Record for Baby Boo

Baby Boo, the elephant at Luna Park, has broken a record this week for eating peanuts.

## Vaudeville

PALACE—Eddie Foy and all the little Foy will be the headliners in a sketch called "Somewhere in New York"; Van and Schenck go into their second week with new songs and pianologues; Lester Sheehan and Pearl Regay bring a distinctive new dance. Other features are Maud Lambert and Ernest R. Ball, Florence Ames and Adelaide Winthrop, Herbert Clifton, The Act Beautiful and the Asahi Four.

RIVERSIDE—Joseph E. Howard, well known composer, will present his new "Song Bird Revue" as a sequel to the "Musical World Revue" of last season. Ethelyn Clark and a large company will assist him. Dolly Connelly will sing new songs. The Barr Twins will have Grace Doro at the piano. Other acts are Ben Ryan and Harriet Lee in "Hats and Shoes"; Eddie Dowling, Boston's Riding School, Donald Kerr and Edie Weston, Bollinger and Reynolds, and the news in moving pictures.

ROYAL—Nonette, the gypsy violinist and singer, will share the top line with George Whiting and Sadie Burt. Nonette will have Dave Jordan at the piano. Whiting and Burt have a new edition of "Songsayings." Other features are "Jazzland Follies," Lillian Fitzgerald, Julia Nash and C. H. O'Donnell in "Three G. M."; Adrain and company, the DeWolf Girls, Georgette and Capitola, Bissett and Beatty, and Hector, the mind-reading dog.

LOEWS AMERICAN—Three headliners, Trovelli, in an original ventriloquist specialty, "The Aspiring Chauffeur" Tom Davies and company in "Checked-out" and Captain Barnett and son, midjet entertainers, will have the first three nights of the week. Other acts are Bradley and Wheeler, Raines and Goodrich, Barnold's Dogs, Kemp and Hollinson, and Doris Kenyon in "The Street of Seven Stars," a picture from Mary Roberts Rinehart's novel of the same name. The vaudeville programme for the last half of the week will include "The Whirl of Girls," "Putting on Airs," Mumford and Thompson, Schoen and Walton, Manetti and Sidilly, and Emmet and Leady, and the picture will be Norma Talmadge in "Her Only Way."

NEW BRIGHTON—"An American Ace" by Lincoln J. Carter, condensed from the four-act play which was presented at the Casino Theatre earlier in the season, will be the headline feature. In its new form, the play has eleven scenes and requires fifty persons to present it, with twenty speaking parts. The leading rôles are played by Taylor, Granville and Laura Pierpont. Marie Nordstrom will sing a group of songs written for her by her sister, Frances Nordstrom. Other acts are Ralph Dunbar's Tennessee Ten, Bob Hall, Senor Westony, Santi, Rivers and Arnold, and the Gladiators.

BUSHWICK—Hugh Herbert in a new comedy sketch, "The Question," by Aaron Hoffman, will be the feature of the bill. Henry Bellitt will have a condensation of "The Only Girl," book by Henry Blossom, music by Victor Herbert, offered by a company of ten.

## JOSEPHINE MEYER

When Arthur Hopkins, who would rather be unconventional in his stage direction than President, was casting "A Very Good Young Man," Martin Brown's unconventional comedy with which the Plymouth returned to life last week, he scanned his memory for an actress who might be able to give an unhackneyed portrait of a Greenpoint Irish mother. After trying one or two he remembered Josephine Meyer, erstwhile Washington Square Player, and that his memory was a happy one is evidenced by Miss Meyer's performance.

Like many of the valiant group of explorers in the uncharted seas of the dramatic novelty which left its impress on the American stage in spite of its brief existence, Miss Meyer was a dilettante in several spheres. She wrote pieces for the magazines—still writes them, for the matter of that—was the author of a book for boys called "The Green C," drew as a sideline and was mightily interested in the theatre.

It was this last named interest that finally determined her career. Miss Meyer was a close friend of Philip Moeller and Eddie Goodman, two other inspirational spirits of the late lamented Players, and often they went to see the Abbey Players, from Dublin, when they came to the city, and talked and dreamed of the fun they might have with a little playhouse of their own.

None of them ever dreamed then that some day they would have one.

When the day came and the Bandbox was a reality there was a scurrying among their set for players to fill the parts in the first bill. Thus it came about that Miss Meyer was assigned to the rôle of the Mother in Maeterlinck's "Interior," a Hooverized sort of part, in which she spoke no line and had only two movements, although she was in full sight of the audience throughout the playlet. Shortly before the opening something happened to the actress who was to play one of the rôles in "Licensed," and Miss Meyer was also drafted for that.

Subsequently she appeared in "Overtones," "Moondown," "The Bear" and "The Clod." It was in this last grim slice of life that she did her most compelling work, in the character of a drudge. This portrait still stands as one of the best bits of acting in the history of the Washington Square group.

After the organization transferred its base to the Comedy Miss Meyerial to give up acting because of her health and latterly she was the theatre's play reader. Always she took pains to write encouraging notes to aspiring playwrights whose efforts were rejected. She wrote so many of these she felt sure she will always have a friendly reception at the hands of any audience, no matter what the merit of her acting.

## Sweets to the Sweet

Blanche Sweet has been away from the screen for a year and a half, just the same length of time that we have been keeping track of the stars in the film firmament, so that accounts for our never having seen her. We should add "before," for now we have seen her, not just a black and white shadow of her, either, but a pink-cheeked, golden-haired Blanche, fresh from the Coast.

It was our intention when we saw Miss Sweet to ask her if that was her real name, and then when we did see her we talked of so many other things that it escaped our mind. But we are quite sure that it isn't, now, since we have seen her, it suits her so well that it never could just have happened. It must have been selected by someone with a sense of congruity.

Blanche Sweet has the whitest skin, and hair that is a cross between gold and silver. She isn't very pretty until she smiles, and then she is beautiful.

"I'm only in the city for a few days," said Miss Sweet, "and then I'm going back to the Coast to begin 'The Unpardonable Sin.' That doesn't sound like a very laudable ambition, does it, but that is the name of my new Rupert Hughes picture, you know."

"I feel that my rest has done me a world of good, for I had worked without a vacation for a number of years—just one picture after another. When I first retired I said it would be for only a month. Then when the month was up I liked playing so well that I decided to allow myself another month, and by that time I was quite spoiled. I just loafed and enjoyed it, and I never wanted to go back, until suddenly one

day all of my old ambition returned, and now I feel absolutely indefatigable."

"I am under the management of Harry Gerson, you know, and have just finished my first picture, 'The Hushed Hour.' I don't know what it means any more than I know what the unpardonable sin is."

Miss Sweet is here in New York to buy gowns! Could anything be more delightful? Fancy being turned loose on Fifth Avenue and told to buy a lot of clothes, and then to realize that you weren't doing anything wickedly extravagant; that you had to have them in your business, anyway!

But Miss Sweet says that her favorite shop is a certain one on the corner of Thirty-sixth Street. It is the home of sweets, too, and how she does love them! We saw her eat one maple layer cake with nuts, one raspberry ice and one green thing with pistache icing and yet she continues to tip the scales at one hundred pounds net.

"I might wind up by saying something banal about sweets to the sweet, but we think we shall save it for the head."

## Naturalized Singers May Join Chorus

The response to the announcement that the Society of American Singers chorus for its season at the Park Theatre (opening September 23) would be recruited among young artists desirous of experience has been overwhelming.

The original announcement made it imperative that all singers, even to the choristers, should be American born, but at the earnest solicitation of various individuals William Wade Ellis, president of the Society of American Singers, said to-day: "We have decided not to limit our chorus to American born, but to engage American citizens or citizens of our Allies. We will engage experienced chorus girls to do special work in connection with the ballet. We want young dancers, and would be glad to hear from those who have been looking for their great chance."

"We are also ready to engage chorus men, with or without experience, not subject to the draft and not of alien enemies."

"In the case of the chorus we do not believe it is a wise thing for untrained voices to sing in opera choruses, but it will not harm any well trained voice to be in the chorus."



Irving Berlin in "Yip! Yip! Yaphank!"