

# CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE



## A List of Some Plays Which Deserved Credit

By Heywood Brown

The theatrical season of 1918-19 seems to us to have been a pretty good sort of season. We can't remember that many great plays were produced, but then there never are many great plays. On closer consideration there were none at all last season. But the season was not wasted, for all that. "The Jest," with the two Barrymores, was, or rather is, one of the finest productions which New York has ever seen. The crafts of stage producer, actor and scenic artist have seldom been combined so shrewdly and to such good effect. Bonelli's play, although not great, is vivid, interesting and violent.

It was this last quality probably which brought the piece such enormous success. Until the coming of "The Jest" the theatre had by no means caught up with life. Although this was a period in which millions of people had suddenly been thrust out of all peaceful pursuits and into a very welter of action, the theatre lent on its mild, tepid way. That was natural enough in France and England, where the violence of life was so prodigious that relief in the theatre was imperative. But since the war in America ran a much shorter course the need for relaxation was not so great. Indeed, it was probably grossly exaggerated by theatrical managers. People by no means had their fill of action. Indeed, it may be noted that a good many writers in America, both editorial and otherwise, are still of the mind that the end came too soon. Nor is this feeling confined to writing men. Unquestionably, there were a number of fighting men in the ranks and above who wanted to go on with it. They had felt their strength and power, and were only too eager to drive the profane. The war ended before it had ended in America. Of course, numerous exceptions should be noted, but even after all these have been granted a large public is left which has not yet come out of the notion of thinking of life in terms of the most strenuous physical action. Playwrights are mistaken in serving their mild and sentimentalized version of warfare to this public.

The book publishers, wiser for once than the children of the bright lights, showed much more acumen in gauging the public taste. Among the biggest successes of the book world were Guy Empy's "Over the Top" and Henri Barbusse's "Under Fire." The point of view of these two had nothing in common, but they did share the spirit of savagery. "The Jest," of course, was written long before the war, but it was the one play of the season which let blood flow freely. It cut across the stage like a great purple sea. It crowded all the violence and passion possible into four acts, and yet it was more than a mere blood and thunder thriller, because the gesture which it was able to make above all this welter was undeniably one of beauty, if not of fitness.

Barrie achieved some rare things in "Dear Brutus," among them being the opportunity which he provided for Helen Hayes, but the comedy seemed to us to mark a falling off from "A Kiss for Cinderella." It did not play fair with its theme, and it had passages of Barrie at his gushing. For ourselves, we shall always count the scene where Lob speaks to the flowers and fondles them as among the most unpalatable sweets of the theatre. However, there are flights and fancies in the Barrie piece which most certainly entitle it to a place among the good plays of the season.

We think Rita Wellman's play, which failed, "The Gentle Wife," among the best. And "Lightnin'" belongs because of the central figure and, perhaps, because of the shrewd way in which old materials are utilized. Beyond the central figure it can claim no originality of theme or person.

Clare Kummer did not succeed with "Be Calm, Capilla," but it seemed to us the brightest of her whole series of light comedies. Roi Cooper Megrue's "Tea for Three" combines highly skillful dialogue with some good play building. This is one of the few light comedies which succeeded. "The Saving Grace," which was almost as good and which was played better, had a comparatively short run. "The Woman in Room 13" was our favorite melodrama of the season. Benavente's "The Bonds of Interest" was a pleasing novelty, and Ervine's "John Ferguson" had some fine work in it in spite of a number of irritating literary affectations. "I Love You" was our favorite farce, but it must be added that this school of drama was somewhat below the average in merit.

The rating of the season's comic operas is far once absurdly easy. Nothing approached the Cohanized "Royal Vagabond."

**Walter Hampden's Son**  
**Player Queen in "Hamlet"**

Because of the illness of the portrayer of the part of the Player Queen in the last two performances of "Hamlet," it has been played by Paul Hampden, the twelve-year-old son of Walter Hampden. This is the first time since Booth that this part has been played by a boy.

**"I Love You" Moves**

"I Love You," William Le Baron's new farce-comedy, will move from the Booth Theatre to the Forty-eighth Street Theatre to-morrow night.

It is a curious phenomenon of the modern drama of England and of Ireland that there should be so strong an undercurrent of social, nationalistic or political views expressed through the medium of the play. St. John Ervine, the author of "John Ferguson," now playing at the Garrick Theatre, resembles Shaw and Galsworthy in that he has been noted for his interest in the burning questions of Irish and English political and social life, and almost throughout his writings, these problems have formed the background of his art.

I first met Ervine several years ago at the West London Parliament, one of the oldest London debating societies, where you men of all political parties met together at the old Marylebone Town Hall, and debated the questions of the day. Ervine at that time sat on the Socialist benches, since we had no Irish party, and with him were Blanco White, Schloesser, and other younger men prominent in the Fabian Society. This group formed part of the Fabian Nursery, the younger writers and would-be politicians, who sat and worshipped at the feet of Shaw, Wells and sometimes Chesterton.

I remember Ervine as a slightly built young man, then about twenty-seven years old, with curly, fair hair, and a rather reserved manner. He did not often speak at our debates, but when he did his views were always well reasoned and scholarly, never passionate and emotional, like so many of his Irish colleagues. Our debating society was modelled on the lines of the British Parliament, and it gave us an opportunity of airing our own views and listening to others, so that we early became interested in political reforms and current matters of government. Perhaps one of the reasons why English and Irish plays and novels are so much more vital than our own is because the leading writers of those countries do not try to divorce themselves from the realities of life around them, as do so many American authors, but muster an understanding of the



## St. John G. Ervine

The following sketch of St. John Ervine, the young Irishman whose play, "John Ferguson," has made such an extraordinary impression through its presentation at the Theatre Guild at the Garrick Theatre, is written by Laurence Langner, himself a well known playwright and a founder of the erstwhile Washington Square Players. Mr. Langner is the author of the brilliant series of satiric plays presented by the Washington Square Players, among them "Licenced," "Another Way Out" and "The Family Est-"

political and social conditions, and express the truth fearlessly in their writings. Adding to this deep insight into human character and motives, great plays and novels are written.

"John Ferguson," while less nationalistic than other plays of Ervine, is perhaps the only modern play in which the fundamental teachings of Christianity are weighed against social conditions, and this without one word of propaganda or discussion. Through the medium of a strong, gripping story, which holds its audience breathless, we are shown how little sympathy we have as human beings, with an ideal which we have endeavored to live up to through the centuries. Dealing with a story which may be read from time to time in almost any newspaper in any country, St. John Ervine makes of this story, by bringing out its spiritual values, an adventure into the world of truth. "John Ferguson" compares only with such plays as "A Doll's House," where the power of the dramatist conveys a great modern truth through the natural action of the characters when faced with an overpowering phase of life.

The success of "John Ferguson" shows that the Theatre Guild was justified in its faith in American audiences; that they want the truth; that they are tired of make-believe and nonsense. They have come through the war with a desire to know life as it is and to master it, tired of having been pawns in the world's great battle. The Theatre Guild wants to present plays by American authors fashioned out of the rich texture of modern American life, vital plays dealing with human beings and human relations. There is a vast audience awaiting such plays, and to their presentation the Theatre Guild has dedicated itself.

Mr. Tyler Assists at An "Interesting Event"

Exactly thirty years ago there was a certain very young man who had recently "broken into" the theatrical business and who was employed as the advance agent for James O'Neill. The latter was playing in Chicago and the young advance agent was stopping at the same hotel. What English novelists of a certain type used to call "an interesting event" was about to occur in the O'Neill household and the advance agent found himself routed out of bed early one morning by the actor with a request that he summon a physician. He ran down the street, half dressed, and with great difficulty succeeded in arousing a medical man. An hour or two later a baby boy was born and when the christening came in two weeks, he was named Eugene G. O'Neill.

In the thirty years that have elapsed since then the young advance agent has become one of the most important producing managers now serving the English-speaking public, and the baby boy has become one of the most promising playwrights in this country. Last Thursday the manager, who is none other than George C. Tyler, signed a contract for the production of the young author's newest play, now tentatively called "Chris Christophersen." It will probably be eventually called plain "Chris" and will be produced early next season. It will probably be the first long play of Mr. O'Neill's to be presented. Another management announced the production of a second long play a year ago, but it has not yet seen the light.

"Chris Christophersen" is said by the few who have been privileged to read it to be a masterly study of the effect of the sea upon those who fall under its spell. The central character is a middle-aged Scandinavian sailor who

hates the sea because of the sorrows, trials and tribulations which it has brought him and who yet feels within his soul a love for his mystery and for the wild, adventurous life that those who serve it lead. He has sworn that he will never sail before the mast again, but he compromises with his hatred by becoming the captain of a coal barge. The story develops around his great love for his young daughter, English reared and finely educated, and the call within him urging him to sail the seven seas again. It is said to be a play full of vivid character studies. The central character, that of Chris himself, should provide one of the

## New Plays This Week

**MONDAY**—At the Liberty Theatre—George White's "Scandals of 1919," a musical revue, will have its first production. The book and lyrics are by Arthur Jackson and the music is by Richard Whiting. The piece is in eighteen scenes. In the cast are Ann Pennington, Mabel Withee, Yvette Ruget, La Sylphie, Ethel Delmar, Dorothy St. Clair, Lois Leigh, Ona Munson, George White, George Bickel, Lester Allen, Al Sexton, Bennett and Richards, Lowell B. Drew, Larry Beck and James Miller.

## Gala List of Stars For Lambs' Gambol

The auction sale of seats for the Lambs' Annual Gambol to be held at the Manhattan Opera House on June 8 will take place at the Hudson Theatre on Tuesday afternoon, June 3. William Collier, George M. Cohan, Augustus Thomas, James O'Neill, Elnora Corrihan, Will Rogers, John Philip Sousa, Frank Tinney, Jefferson De Anza, and a good many others will show their individual skill as orators at the auction.

This year's Gambol promises to be an event of unusual magnitude. Besides the names above mentioned, famous names on the bill will include John Barrymore and Lionel Barrymore, Joseph Santley and Frederic Santley, Hassard Short, George Nash, Thomas Corrihan, Dodson Mitchell, Edward Milton Royle, Edmond Breece, Leo Carrillo and Herbert Cortell.

Skits written and staged by George M. Cohan, Hassard Short, William Collier and George V. Hobart will be among the features. John Philip Sousa heads the list of conductors and composers who will direct the music, among whom are included Raymond Hubbell, Gustav A. Kerker, Silvio Hein, A. Baldwin Sloane, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin and Percy Wenrich.

## Mlle. Dazie on the Technique of Toe Dancing

Toe dancers are made, not born. It is in this respect that toe dancing differs from the other arts.

Mlle. Dazie, who has just finished a season of fifty-two consecutive weeks in vaudeville, says that in the several years which she has devoted to dancing she never has stopped practising for more than a period of a few days.

"When people come to the theatre," she said, "and are amused, or enjoy the grace of the dancer, and perhaps remark in careless fashion about the variety and intricacy of the steps, little do they know of the hours and hours of practice which have gone to the perfecting of these apparently simple manoeuvres. Dancers have a routine—a method of procedure—which they follow invariably. There are five or six basic steps and motions, and these can be put together and blended in a variety of sequences and combinations, but if taken apart and examined separately they resolve themselves into the primary and fundamental leg and arm motions."

"Toe dancers always practise in a room which contains a railing, and while practising they rest their weight upon it."

"The average time which an experienced dancer gives to these exercises is an hour a day. This includes the arm exercises which are done separately. The arms play a highly important part from two points of view. First, without the aid of the arms balance is maintained with great difficulty; second, proper arm motions, of course, greatly enhance the gracefulness of the dancer. No matter how beautifully a dancer may manage her feet or how perfect her technique may be, if she does not make graceful arm motions she can never be really great."

When one stops and considers that actors and actresses have merely to go upon the stage and do their bit, whereupon they are finished till the next night, the difficulties of toe dancing and the tireless efforts which must attend the toe dancer's art can better be appreciated.

## Bronx Exposition Open for Summer

If the large crowds that swam and made merry in the pool which was officially opened for the season on Memorial Day at the Bronx Exposition Amusement Park is any indication, this, the largest pool in the world, promises to become one of the most popular attractions during the balmy days of summer at this novel amusement park.

The pool is drained and filtered every day. Real ocean sand has been imported, and this, together with a mechanical contrivance which produces waves, gives the pool a real ocean effect. Victor's Military Band furnishes the music.

## Performances Resumed at Duncan MacDougall's Barn

Duncan MacDougall announces that "Crainquebille," by Anatole France; "The Tinker's Wedding," by J. M. Synge, and "The Gollywoog's Control," by Duncan MacDougall, will be played on each Friday, Saturday and Sunday evening during June at his Barn, 17 East Fourteenth Street.

## AMUSEMENTS

**EMPIRE** (Drew at 14th St. Box 820) **LAST 8 TIMES** Charles Frohman presents **WILLIAM GILLETTE** in **DEAR BRUTUS**

**LIBERTY** West 42 St. Klaw & Erlanger Mgrs. Eves 8:15 Mats Wed & Sat 2:15 **TO-MORROW NIGHT** **GEORGE WHITE'S SCANDALS OF 1919** A MODERN MUSICAL REVUE LA SYLPHIE, ETHEL DELMAR, DOROTHY ST. CLAIR, LOIS LEIGH, ONA MUNSON, ANN PENNINGTON, MABEL WITHEE, YVETTE RUEGET. AL SEXTON, BENNETT & RICHARDS, LOWELL B. DREW, LARRY BECK, JAMES MILLER, GEORGE WHITE, GEORGE BICKEL, LESTER ALLEN and 50-BEAUTIFUL SCANDAL MONGERS-50

**HENRY MILLER'S THEATRE** 124 W. 43rd St. Eves 8:15 Mats Thurs & Sat 2:15 **"WARRANTED A RIOT"** Times THE NEW MUSICAL FARCE SUCCESS **Sa Sa Sucille** Book By FRED JACKSON "A COMIC UPROAR" American THE FETCHINGEST CHORUS IN TOWN "TEE OODLE UM BUM BO" THE SONG THAT STOPPED THE SHOW World

**COHAN & HARRIS THEATRE** West 42nd St. Eves 8:15 Matines Wed & Sat 2:15 **ZIEGFELD'S 9 O'CLOCK REVIEW** BEST SHOW IN TOWN **THE ROYAL VAGABOND** A COHANIZED OPERA COMIQUE

**CRITERION** 110 W. 42nd St. Eves 8:30 Matines Wed & Sat 2:30 **3 WISE FOOLS**

**LYCEUM** 14th St. nr Broadway Eves 8:30 Matines Wed & Sat 2:30 **316 to 323 TIMES** DAVID BELASCO presents **DADDIES**

**LONGAGRE** W. 48th St. nr Broadway Eves 8:30 Matines Wed & Sat 2:30 **THREE FACES EAST**

**BELASCO** West 44th Street Eves 8:30 Matines Wed & Sat 2:30 **DARK ROSALEEN** A COMEDY OF IRISH LIFE

**KNICKERBOCKER THEATRE** 110 W. 42nd St. Eves 8:30 Matines Wed & Sat 2:30 **7TH BIG MONTH** JOHN CORT'S NEWEST, BIGGEST AND BEST MUSICAL COMEDY **LESTER**

**REVERSID** 110 W. 42nd St. Eves 8:30 Matines Wed & Sat 2:30 **IRENE FRANKLIN** HARRY WATSON, JR. HALE ELINORE & WILLIAMS. NINA PAYNE & CO. AL HERMAN MIGNON AND OTHERS.

**B-F KEITH'S PALACE** BROADWAY AND 47th STREET **OUR CLEVEREST SHOW WOMAN—ARTISTE AND PRODUCER EXTRAORDINARY** GERTRUDE HOFFMANN In a series of Dances and Impersonations revealing her marvelous versatility SPECIAL STAGE SETTINGS—AUGMENTED ORCHESTRA. "Miss Hoffmann is the super woman of the American Stage"—Press. FEATURE EXTRAORDINARY J. FRANCIS DOOLEY & SALES CORINNE In Their 1919 Edition of "WILL VER, JIM?" EXTRA ADDED ATTRACTION **HARRIET REMPEL & CO.** In A Playlet of Romance, "TARRYTOWN," by Tom Barry. EXTRA ADDED FEATURE **OFFICER VOKES & DON COLLINS & HART** IN THEIR NOVELTY SHIRAZE. **O'DONNELL & BLAIR** TED DONER JACK ALFRED & CO. In "The Piano Tuner." Something New In Singing in A Novelty Ball, "Sailor." ENGAGEMENT EXTRAORDINARY **EMMA CARUS** MUSICAL COMEDY STAR