

CHRONICLE AND COMMENT OF THE STAGE



Olga Petrova, *New Brighton*



Gilda Gray in *"The Schubert Gaieties of 1919"*



Fay Bainter in *"East is West"*



Lillian Berse in *"Sweeties"*



Beatrice Nichols in *"Lightnin'"*



Adela Vivero, *Spanish Opera* in *"Dreams of Three"*



Gertrude Vanderbilt in *"Listen Lester"*

Bertha Mann in *"The Crimson Alibi"*

Problem of Returned Soldier Only Scratched

By Heywood Brown

The problem of the returned soldier presents a good many interesting dramatic possibilities and so it is not surprising to find the second play of the new season, "The Five Million," of Guy Bolton and Frank Mandel, dealing with this subject. Dealing with the theme, we should add, incidentally. The authors are not innovators. They are content to find background, subplot, and a good deal of dialogue in the returned soldier, but it can hardly be said that his problems are vital to the plot. Certainly, the wrongfully suspected hero was known before the war as was the girl, whose loyalty was tested by the absence of her betrothed.

As happens often in the American

theatre the one distinctly novel theme which the authors have hit upon is treated incidentally and farcically. There is a whole play, of any mood you like, in the problem of the soldier who returns from the war to find his wife has filled his job above his capabilities and intends to go on with her work in spite of his return. Mandel and Bolton have used this for a humorous scene or so, but they have not been content to let their plot rest very heavily upon it. We rather think that they feared to place too much dependence upon the situation because it was new. After a man has loaned the tracks of the theatre he is under a constant temptation to use old material because he knows that when properly presented it cannot fail

of that excellent army newspaper "The Stars and Stripes" as typical, it would seem that the heroic attitude and the sweeping gesture were the last things in the world which the American soldiers ever thought of adopting. There was, to be sure, a touch of swagger in the American army in the late months of the war, just as there is in every nascently successful military machine, but the men did not swagger about their ideals, but about their efficiency. It is entirely possible that there were times when American soldiers compared the A. E. F. most favorably with the armies of the Allies as a fighting machine, but we do not remember that any American soldier ever boasted of the superior purity of his motives as compared with those of the Tommies or the poilus. That was left entirely to the statesmen and, perhaps, to playwrights, although this particular thread of sentiment is not exploited in "The Five Million" so far as we can remember.

There is, however, one directly class-conscious appeal made in the play to the members of the A. E. F. which may or may not be popular, but is not entirely consistent with that public welfare which every playwright should have in mind when he decides to desert art for the sake of propaganda. The play drives home with a good deal of persistence the suggestion that if the soldiers only organize and stick together as a political unit they can become the ruling class in this country. Judging from the usual reaction one receives from any soldier when he suggests to him the possible chance of Pershing or Wood or any military candidate, the army is not prepared to see any direct relationship between military and governmental efficiency. "Look what the soldiers did for Grant!" exclaims one of the characters in "The Five Million," and we deplored the absence of any character who might have

retorted: "Yes, and look what Grant did to the United States!"

The appeal of "The Five Million" rests chiefly upon its humor. Much of this is genuinely amusing, we think, even if it is practically all manufactured dialogue. Even the constant recourse to formula does not throw it out of court, for it is at any rate ingenious and inventive dialogue.

In Vaudeville
PALACE—Eddie Foy, "Fiesta Espanol," Friedlander and Berse, in "Sweeties"; Bert Fitzgibbons, Arnaud Brothers, Mayo and Lynn, Kharum, "Color Gems."
RIVERSIDE—Lucille Cavanagh, Marion Vadie and Ota Gygi, Bonita and Lew Hearn, Bernard and Britov, J. C. Nugent, Bernard and Duffy, Hoey and Lee, Curzon Sisters, Wilfred du Bois.
ROYAL—Jack Norworth, Mme. Doré's Celebrities, Beatrice Morgan and com-

pany, Langford and Fredericks, Ashley and Skipper, Lee Hawkins, Jennie Middleton, Johnny Clark and company, Delano and Pike.

LOEW'S AMERICAN—"Somewhere in France," "Who's Who?" Pearl Sindelar and company in "A Pair of Jacks"; Chyo and Chyo, Cook and Vernon, in "Sister Susie"; Mme. Lee, "Summer Girls and Fall Guys," Constance Talmadge, in "The Veiled Adventure," and D. W. Griffith's "True Heart Susie," with Lillian Gish.

in Brooklyn
BUSHWICK—Four Marx Brothers, Larry Reilly and company, Ryan and Henly, Burns and Frabito, Arthur Havel and company, Al Raymond, Hughes Musical Duo, Gaston Palmer.

ORPHEUM—Byams and McIntyre, Rigoletto Brothers, assisted by the Swanson Sisters and company; Lois Josephine and Leo Henning, Ben Welch, Wilton Sisters, Joe Towle, Alfred Latell, assisted by Elsie Vokes; d'Armore and Douglas, Felix and Fisher.

NEW BRIGHTON—Olga Petrova, Ruby Norton and Sammy Lee, Al Herman, Seabury and Shaw, O'Donnell and Blair, A. Robbins, Kranz and Lassalle, Tamaki Duo.

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