

# EIGHT NEW PLAYS FOR NEW YORK THIS WEEK



Jeanne Eagels in "A Young Man's Fancy"

Barney Bernard in "His Honor Abe Potash"

Henry Beresford in "Boys Will Be Boys"

Ruby Norton and Andrew Forbes in "Nothing But Love"

Alberta Burton in "Five O'Clock"

Vivienne Segal and Nellie Graham-Dent in "The Little Whopper"

Muriel Martin-Harvey and Percy Hutchison in "The Luck of the Navy"

E.H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe in "Hamlet"

Helen Westley in "The Faithful"

## Bearing on the Barrymores, The Three Scratch Players Of the American Stage

By Heywood Brown

This is a Barrymore year. Not only are three members of this famous theatrical family now playing in New York, but all are in parts which afford opportunities for the fullest display of their powers. Ethel, John and Lionel hold a tradition in common, but their art is highly individualized. There is no family manner or method. The mere fact of relationship does not make comparison any easier than usual. For our part, Lionel Barrymore's last act in "The Copperhead" seems to us the finest of modern Barrymore achievements. We were moved by this particular performance more than by anything in which we have seen John Barrymore or Ethel Barrymore, not even excepting her gorgeous performance in "Déclassée." But we have no right to generalize because our data is incomplete; we did not see John Barrymore in "Justice."

We rather think that John Barrymore is the most versatile member of the family. Certainly between Anatol and Gianetto there is just about the widest range which can be crowded within the walls of a theatre. We are also of the opinion that John can probably bring a greater pace and force to any single scene than his brother or sister.

There was, for instance, that fine moment of towering rage in "Redemption" in which he cursed courts and judges. In such a scene, we think, John Barrymore is preeminent.

On the other hand, Miss Ethel Barrymore is much more richly endowed with what, for default of a better word, we must call sympathetic appeal. If the three Barrymores were ever cast together in a play as characters of conflicting interest Ethel would have no trouble at all in working up the audience to such a pitch that it would lynch John and Lionel so that they might have her way. Nobody in the theatre walks so surely on the thin line which divides the things which make you cry and the things which make you laugh. Often she can make her audience do both at the same time. Even with the most commonplace lines in the world she can gain such an effect, for in her voice are suggestions of things which are gay and those which are not so gay. Given lines of real beauty and true emotional suggestion, as in "Déclassée," and she can tear the very heart out of you. Reader, if you ever write a play in which a woman is called upon to sit and talk with somebody or other about the dear dead past, by all means move Heaven and earth to get Miss Barrymore as your star. She is not to be equalled in these scenes of half humorous sentiment.

However, it would be unfair to give the impression that her work must be compressed within such limits. Certainly, she plays a scene of much different mood in the first act of "Déclassée," and plays it superbly. Here she is forceful, direct and very swift. However, we think we are correct in saying that parts of any gigantic heroic gesture are somewhat beyond her scope. We would not cast her to play Judith, for instance, or Medea. But when it is assumed that there are definite limits to the scope of Miss Barrymore's acting, it gives us no help in determining her worth as compared to that of her brothers, who seem to us rather wider in their range. At least we think John Barrymore is. All this is incidental. No player's greatness or lack of greatness depends on his versatility just so long

as he is not absolutely throttled by his limits. Any player play requires within moderately wide boundaries, and surely Miss Barrymore's are as wide as that, remains great even if he or she cannot play a nine-year-old child one day and a grandmother the next. Some very indifferent stock actresses are just as good in one sort of part as another. There is not necessarily any merit in that.

We are therefore back where we started with these three Ethel, John and Lionel, nor are we going to be so foolish as to risk any dogmatic assertion as to which is the leader of the family. If we say that John is the most versatile we suddenly remember that Ethel has a much finer voice. Or again if we say that John has a greater talent for realistic portrayal than either of the others we are also reminded that he is not as shrewd and imaginative as Lionel in discarding those things which may be true but are not effective.

It is interesting to compare the death scenes in "Déclassée" and "Redemption." From the point of view of fidelity of detail, of course, everything is in favor of John. You may remember John's agonized animal like leap after he shot himself while Ethel, with a broken back dies beautifully puffing cigarettes and sipping champagne. To be sure, the moods of the plays were quite different and any attempt at faithful realism on Miss Barrymore's part in "Déclassée" would be quite destructive of the mood of somewhat scented sentiment which this particular scene of the play requires. We might wish that she had made some more definite effort to convey the fact that while a Varick might die as game as any one else could also feel pain as well as a commoner. On the other hand, we rather think that John's terrific fall in "Redemption" was wrong, since it diverted the attention from the main fact that the man was dying to the detail of how he died. And yet our criticism is a little forced, for while we thought that the death in "Déclassée" was somewhat unreal, we were profoundly moved by it, moved even more than by John Barrymore's death in "Redemption."

After all much the simplest way and much the most truthful is to let our own feelings in the matter is to say that the three Barrymores are the scratch players of the American theatre and let it go at that.

The present theatrical season seems to us an unusually good one as far as it has gone. We feel absolutely safe in recommending "Clarence" to all theatres. It is excellent entertainment without being special. You ought to see it, you must see it and the fact that attendance is a duty will not prevent you from having the time of your life. "Déclassée" should also be on the theatregoer's list. Here is one of the most striking and appealing performances which New York has seen in seasons and seasons. Miss Ethel Barrymore is absolutely at her best. The play in some respects harks back to a school of drama which most of us thought was gone. It is at least a first cousin to "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." Any of us who thought that theatrical but full flavored drama of this sort was dead were quite mistaken. The play holds the interest throughout with the single exception of a few ill-directed moments at the beginning of the second act. The dialogue is unusually deft and effective. There are two shows which you should not miss, and it seems to us that you ought to find time for "Moonlight and Honeyuckle," an exceedingly adroit light comedy played pleasantly. "Adam and Eve" is more conventional, but first-class entertainment. And from the successes of last season there remains "The Jest." That makes five well worth while plays for theatregoers, and if you are among those inveterate amusement seekers who want no open afternoons or evenings you can add the serious "John Ferguson," which is a good play in spite of a certain amount of pose, and the frivolous but amusing "Nightie Night," not forgetting our reliable friend "Lightnin'" with Frank Bacon's beautiful performance. That makes eight shows which should be enough for anybody's week.

## Here Is a Playwright Who Says He Believes in Dramatic Critics

If "The Dancer," the new play at the Harris Theatre, is "frothy" and some say she is—her creator is not. Edward Locke, author of the piece, is a mountain of a man and must weigh close to three hundred. He looks the picture of a big, bluff and hearty English squire, with his frank blue eyes, his ruddy cheeks and his grizzled mustache and "sideburns."

"I believe in the critics," was Mr. Locke's astounding opening to the interview; "I think they are a great help to authors—and to playgoers. They are, through years of training in the art of criticism, able to see

the flaws which might never appear to the prejudiced eyes of the fond father of a literary child.

"I know my mind is creative rather than critical and experience has told me I do not always know what the public, or even the managers, want. I have written forty plays and but six have been produced, although I have not spared myself the work of offering them. Of the six produced two have been failures and three successes; it remains to be seen how the last will turn out, but the audiences are large and seem to enjoy the performance. As you know, my plays, 'The Climax' and 'The Case of Becky,' were big successes and are still doing well.

"Well, believing in critics, as I do, I was broken-hearted when I saw that some of the reviewers did not like 'The Dancer,' and I said to my friends: 'That settles it. Another fiver!' But so far, as I said a moment ago, the playgoers seem to approve of it. I got some very good advice from some of the critics and changes have been made which improve the piece. For instance, the elaborate and difficult dance, which no one but an unusually expert dancer could accomplish with

success, has been eliminated. Miss Locke, who plays the title role, does not pretend to be a dancer, and she should not have been asked to attempt such a dance. It made her frightfully nervous throughout the opening performance and her dramatic work was not nearly so effective as it is now."

"What do you do when you are not writing plays?"

"Play golf and try to convince the managers they want to produce my plays. Both of these pastimes keep me out of doors. I think an author needs the open."

## Many Openings and a Revival Mark the Coming Week

**MONDAY**—At the Garrick Theatre, the Theatre Guild will present John Masefield's Japanese play, "The Faithful." In the cast will be Helen Westley, Augustin Duncan, Rollo Peters, Henry Herbert, Walter Geer, Michael Carr, Mary Blair, Julia Adler, Milton Pope, Henry Stillman, Adolph Link, Walter Howe and Boris Korlin.

At the Casino, Abraham Levy will present "The Little Whopper," a musical comedy, book by Otto A. Harbach, music by Rudolf Friml and lyrics by Bide Dudley. In the company are Vivienne Segal, Sydney Grant, Harry C. Browne, W. J. Ferguson, Lotta Linthicum, Nellie Graham-Dent and many others. Anton Heidl is the musical director.

At the Shubert Theatre, E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe will appear in "Hamlet," the second of their Shakespearean revivals.

At the Fulton, "Five O'Clock," a comedy by Frank Bacon and Freeman Tilden will be presented.

At the Belmont, Pollok, McKettrick & Burke will present "Boys Will Be Boys" by Irvin S. Cobb and Charles O'Brien Kennedy.

**TUESDAY**—At the Manhattan Opera House F. Ray Comstock and Morris Geat will present Clifford Mills' London success, "The Luck of the Navy," with Percy Hutchison heading a large company.

At the Bijou, A. H. Woods will present Barney Bernard in his first starring vehicle, "His Honor, Abe Potash," by Montague Glass and Jules Eckert Goodman.

At the Lyric, Maddock & Hart, a new producing firm, will present "Nothing But Love," a new musical play, book and lyrics by Frank Stammers and music by Harold Orlob. In the cast are Ruby Norton, Clarence Nordstrom, Marion Sunshine and Stanley Ford.

**WEDNESDAY**—At the Playhouse, George C. Tyler will present "A Young Man's Fancy," a new comedy by John T. McIntyre, a writer of fiction. Jeanne Eagels and Philip Merrivale have the leading parts.

## Zoe Akins, Author of "Déclassée," Hands the Palm to George Cohan As Great American Playwright

By Rebecca Drucker

The first Wednesday matinee was proof that Ethel Barrymore had matched the success of her brothers in the past. Her witty dramatic criticisms for "The Mirror" when she was eighteen her first book of poems appeared in London and was warmly received by London reviewers.

After a few years' residence abroad she came to New York and explored Washington Square and Fifth Avenue and the suburban life of Broadway. "The Marginal City," that first verse fragment of Broadway life, which the Washington Square Players produced, is oddly blended in that mood of realism and poetry which she saw New York "Papa," that ill-fated play, Miss Akins' second one in New York, last fall only a week at the Little Theatre. Opinions of the play broke into two violently contrasting expressions—either that it was the most inane twaddle or that it was the rarest high comedy, and neither faction would qualify the opinion by so much as a hair.

"Déclassée" first took shape in her mind as a genre comedy, a satire of the odd, froged types who mystify us as exist about New York hotels. But as Lady Helen Haden came to life, it became dazzlingly plain to her creator that only Ethel Barrymore could play her, and she revised the whole of her original story to fit the character. For distraction from her absorption with the theatre Miss Akins has dashed off "Coke Upon the Water," a satire on crime, and every once in a while she puts a stroke or two into a real novel.

"They have said, you know," I offered as a lure, "that your 'Papa' is derived from the British and the 'Coke' from Pinero—they are not really American."

"I don't see why not—I know my America as well as any one."

But her social sympathies are not so much characterized as Middle Western," I asked.

"It is characteristically of my place. Sophisticated people are amazingly alike the world over—in St. Louis as in New York, in New York as in Paris. I have known odd and varied people in many places—cosmopolites in villages and rustics in cities. People don't always mind their surroundings in color—that is the saving thing about life."

"Of course, I am influenced by the great European dramatists, but then we have a few great American dramatists by whom I am influenced, too. For instance, I think Mr. Cohan a great dramatist. He is as masterful a technician and sees character as surely as any dramatist and has a higher quality of perception into life, than when we should quarrel with Mr. Cohan for not having that, since we have a few great American dramatists by whom I am influenced, too. For instance, I think Mr. Cohan a great dramatist. He is as masterful a technician and sees character as surely as any dramatist and has a higher quality of perception into life, than when we should quarrel with Mr. Cohan for not having that, since we have a few great American dramatists by whom I am influenced, too. For instance, I think Mr. Cohan a great dramatist. 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