THEATERS — MOTION PICTURES

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MUSIC AND ART

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The Stage and Its People

Nora Bayes and Al Roberts in "Her Family Tree" WHITE STUDIO

ALFRED CHENEY JOHNSTON PHOTO

Helen Mellette and Marie Dressler in the "Passing Show of 1920"

IRA D. SCHWARZ PHOTO

Marie Wells in "Jim-Jam-Jems" OLD MASTERS PHOTO

Carol McComas in "Miss Lulu Bett" WHITE STUDIO

Beatrice Milner in "New Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic" SPEER PHOTO

As We Were Saying—

By Heywood Broun

IT IS interesting to contrast St. John Ervine's "Mixed Marriage," playing at the Bramhall Theater with the same author's "Jane Clegg," seen here last season. The growth in the artistic stature of the dramatist is chiefly notable neither in the conception nor the development of a problem, but in the solution. "Jane Clegg," the later work, ends as it must end. Accident is not a factor in the completion of the story. But "Mixed Marriage," after moving through three acts in close step with logic, suddenly falls away to mere death by musketry. And it is quite evident that it ends in this manner simply because Ervine was not ingenious enough to think up anything better.

Consider the problem which has been spun for the characters in "Mixed Marriage." A Protestant boy and a Catholic girl fall in love and decide to marry in spite of the protests of the boy's father. At length a point is reached where the girl must either give up her man or bring on a bitterness of religious bigotry which will break the strike in which all the people in the play are engaged. The boy and the girl refuse to make the sacrifice. Old Mr. Rainey deserts his post as peacemaker between Protestants and Catholics and makes a violently provocative speech to a meeting of Orangemen. The strike fails, as the workers desert the cause of labor to war among themselves about religion. Eventually riots break out and the girl is shot and killed when a squad of troops fire upon an unruly mob.

This tragedy does not rise inevitably out of the problem. The difficulty and danger of mixed marriage cannot be said to lie, generally, in the possibility that one of the persons entering into such a union will be shot. Indeed, Mrs. Rainey definitely states the problem involved, early in the play, but Ervine neglects to follow up her hint. When Hugh first tells his mother that he loves Nora and means to marry her in spite of the fact that he is Protestant and she Catholic the mother makes no objection, but she does seek to impress upon him that he must make up his mind to face some perilous decisions. Hugh seeks to pass off the whole question lightly with the remark: "Aw, Ma, half the religion in the wurl' is like a disease that ye get from yer father. I'm a Prodesan acause you an' me da are Prodesans, an' Nora's a Cathlik acause her parents wur Cathliks; and you and he are Prodesans acause you da and ma were Prodesans and they were Cathliks acause their parents wur Cathliks. I'd like a time til come when a man wus a Cathlik or Prodesan acause he felt in his sowl it wus the right thing til be."

"Ay, indeed," answers Mrs. Rainey. "But, man, Hughie, whin ye come til bring up yer childer it's quare how ye don't think like that. It's all right for you an' her—ye're separate, ye see—but it's different with childher. Ye can's say, this chile's me and that chile's her. They're jus' like as if ye wur both lamped together. It's very difficult."

And, probably, for the very reason that it is very difficult, Ervine said no more about the true heart of his problem, but went on to loose rifle fire and shoot down his heroine in time to end the play. It seems to us a rather lazy and conventional ending for a fine play. He has learned better in the years since he wrote "Mixed Marriage." The quiet parting scene which brought "Jane Clegg" to a close had an intensity and a power which transcended artillery.

In writing about Ervine the realist it is well to bear in mind that for all his gift to make people use true talk and to behave as rational human beings he lets no opportunity for situation escape him. It is no dull and drab realism. The process of selection has gone on, all unobserved by audiences, and Ervine succeeds thereby in making true things fully as exciting as fictional ones. Few modern dramatists have written better acting parts. Even the dramatists of an older school, who put rapiers into the hands of their heroes, treated them no more handsomely. Indeed, Ervine is not even a simon pure realist in his choice of materials. "John Ferguson," for instance, had all the elements, or at least many, of conventional melodrama. Once more we had the mortgage and the grasping landlord and the stern old father and the wronged daughter. But they were not conventional figures when Ervine got through with them. They looked not unlike the folk we had seen before many times, but there were significant differences in speech. They talked so easily and simply that we were persuaded to accept them as real, and when we took them it was only natural that we should take their story too.

Somewhat the same magical process occurs in "Mixed Marriage." Here is nothing strikingly original in plot, and surely Ervine is not the first or the last dramatist to portray a woman who looks upon all men as children, a woman whose love for her husband is largely maternal affection. We would not even contend that he had not let the figure get away from him at moments into the boggy ground of sentimentality. But he brings her bravely out. He has not been content to sketch a type. Careful observation and the portrayal of small detail have gone to the creation of a woman. The part is savored with humor. Nor should another vital difference between Mrs. Rainey of "Mixed Marriage" and the all-too-familiar saintly mother of the modern drama go unremarked—Mrs. Rainey is played by Margaret Wycherly.

Marilynn Miller Discovers Her Voice

THERE was once a notion that a voice was a gift and that a person had it or didn't have it. Developments of the last two seasons have revealed the fact that now and again a player may suddenly go out and acquire a voice if his need is sufficiently great. There was John Barrymore, who grew one overnight to play in "Richard III," and now Miss Marilynn Miller has gone and found herself a singing voice to help her out in "Sally."

In previous seasons it was customary to remark whenever Miss Miller began to sing, "Don't you think she's a wonderful dancer?" All that has been changed. She is still a wonderful dancer, to be sure, but now she also sings exceedingly pleasantly in a small but sweet and well trained voice.

At the Hippodrome

Thousands of children, holiday-making, will come to the Hippodrome this week to see Charles Dillingham's pageant "Good Times." Besides the Futurity race, depicting Man o' War's victory, introduced last Monday, there will be other features. Margaret McKee, whistler, will make her début in the Toyland scene, and Powers's elephants will introduce a baseball divertissement.

At the Columbia

Barney Gerard will present Watson and Cohan in "Girls de Looks" as the attraction at this home of burlesque. It will run for a week and there will be an extra midnight show on New Year's Eve.

'Beggar's Opera,' by John Gay, Ushered In Musical Comedy

WHEN old John Gay, poet and ballad writer, and one of the brilliant circle of wits and men of letters of the eighteenth century, following the suggestion of Dean Swift that "a Newgate pastoral might make a pretty thing," wrote "The Beggar's Opera," he could have had little idea of the length of time his work would survive; nor that after nearly two hundred years audiences would still find the humor rollicking, the situations interesting, the characters lifelike, and the story amusing.

Until its revival in London last season, and its further revival by Arthur Hopkins at the Greenwich Village Theater, beginning Wednesday night, this old play, like many others of a bygone age, lay virtually unknown to all save those especially interested in dramatic literature. Few know, even, that it had been one of the favorites of our early Colonial theaters, or that it had been given here in New York less than seventy years ago.

Yet it proved to be an important step in the progress of the stage, and blazed a new trail which has led down to our modern musical comedy. Lavinia Fenton, the original Polly of the piece, who overnight became the toast of the town, as the pioneer invader of high-life circles set the pace for a long line of stage favorites when she captured a ducal coronet and retired into private life at the end of the run of sixty-three nights.

It was, however, in breaking the hold of tradition-bound Italian opera, and paving the way for plays with sturdy English music, that Gay rendered his greatest service. John Ireland said: "Gay must be allowed the praise of having attempted to stem the Italian liquid stream, . . . of having almost silenced that absurd, exotic Italian opera, which previous to this was the grand pursuit of the fashionable world. He drew up song against sing-sing, and to the soft sonneteering stanza of Italy opposed the nervous old ballads of England."

Gay was accused of having written a parody of Italian opera, but there is little to uphold this contention though there has been much discussion, pro and con, of the subject. The fact of his having put the word "Opera" in the title means nothing since it was the custom of the day to apply that name indiscriminately to any and all kinds of theatrical productions. It is probable that he used it more to indicate that his new piece was provided with songs than for any other reason. This is all the more likely to have been the case, since it was not intended, originally, to have

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Stage Gossip

NORA BAYES promises a chorus made up exclusively of chorus girls for "Her Family Tree," in which she will come to the Lyric Theater to-morrow night. Assurances are made there is neither a countess, a society girl, a school teacher, a sociological worker nor a sculptress among those in the "merry merry." The singing comedienne outlined her policy to the press agent with the show at the beginning of the short road tour preparatory to the New York opening.

"We've departed from the usual a great many times in this play," she said, "so let's do it again and have no stories about girls leaving their luxurious Riverside Drive homes or fleeing all the way across Russia and the East Side to join my chorus. These girls are just hard-working, self-respecting chorus girls and nothing else, and every one has been a chorus girl before, or she wouldn't be here."

Miss Bayes evidently believes in calling things by their proper names.

Gone will be the gesticulating, white-gloved, baton-waving musical director when the Shuberts present "The Passing Show of 1921" at the Winter Garden on Wednesday evening. He will be present, of course, but invisible to the audience, according to new seating arrangements for the orchestra which are now being completed in the theater. It has been decided that the musical director, although he plays an important part in the production, detracts too much from the stage and really appears as the dominant factor in spectacles musical and dramatic.

"The innovation is one I have long had in mind," says J. C. Huffman, who staged the latest Winter Garden production. "It has always seemed to me that it was the poorest sort of stage art to have a man in evening dress the central figure in, say, a scene in ancient Egypt, which had been designed by a famous artist and which was filled with gorgeous costumes worn by the best players obtainable. Yet that was the practical result.

"The theater is the home of illusion. It aims to present an illusion of life as it is lived somewhere on the globe. But with a conductor standing on a pedestal to make himself more conspicuous than the play, the illusion flies out of doors."

Eighteen years ago Fred Stone, who now is appearing at the Globe Theater in "Tip Top," and his late partner, David Montgomery, found themselves in their dressing room with an hour to spare and nothing in particular to do. One of them, Stone does not remember which one, suggested a game of hearts. To make the game four-handed, William Macquinn, musical director of the Montgomery & Stone show, and Willie Kerschell, Stone's dresser, were asked to join. The game hasn't been finished yet, but it looks very much like a victory for Macquinn. Still, the cards have been running against him for the past two years, and Stone has been nipping steadily into Macquinn's big lead.

From 7 to 8 o'clock every night the game of hearts wages in Stone's dressing room at the Globe. With the exception of summers, when Stone rests, the game has been played every night of the eighteen years with the exception of a period of about three weeks, several years ago, at the time of the death of Montgomery. Then Charles Mast, stage manager of the Globe, took Montgomery's place and assumed his score, and the game went on. Kerschell has been the scorekeeper since the first game, and each Saturday night solemnly announces the low man on the week's play. He buys the card deck for the next week's games. This is the extent of the gambling upon what is probably the longest card game ever played.

Yesterday the Capitol Theater did its share of Christmas entertaining for the crippled and orphaned children of the city. Next Wednesday morning 4,000 children will attend a special performance given for them at the Strand Theater, and all week, starting yesterday morning and continuing until the morning of January 1, there will be a theater party for New York's orphans and poor children, given by Hugo Riesenfeld at the Rivoli Theater. S. L. Rothafel prepared a special program for the 5,000 children who were present, including the first Prizma feature production, "Heidi," and a Christmas pantomime danced by the Capitol ballet corps. Managing Director Joseph L. Plunkett of the Strand will present Charles Ray in "Nineteen and Phyllis," an Edgar comedy entitled "Edgar's Saw," a Christmas Frolic and Santa Claus (himself). Each child will receive a package of candy, purchased from a fund given by Mrs. Julius Goldman. Mr. Riesenfeld's party will be the biggest of the week, extending over eight days, a thousand children attending each morning at 10:30 o'clock. Bird S. Coler, Commissioner of Public Welfare, will have charge of the distribution of seats among the various charitable institutions. A Chaplin comedy, "The Immigrant," a Chester comedy, Mutt and Jeff in a cartoon comedy, a slow motion reel and "Babyhood," a gathering of pictures of children from all parts of the world, will be some of the screen features. Miriam Battista, the child actress, will appear in person, and there will be Christmas music and dancing.

Art Is Stage Asset, Asserts Author of "Woman to Woman"

COUPLING art with the commercial theater seems paradoxical, but that is precisely what Michael Morton does. Whether the commercial managers think as does this British playwright is another question, but at least Mr. Morton supports his theory with a formidable array of facts.

What the manager describes as a highbrow play is, in the opinion of the author of "The Yellow Ticket," nothing more nor less than an artistic play, and he claims that art, with respect to the drama, is the box office's greatest asset.

"An artistic play is a play which is done in the right way, a play which deals with real life, real people and real atmosphere," says Mr. Morton. "Beautified by a touch of imagination, it is made art. All this is inspired by a higher intelligence than the ordinary, and it is this higher intelligence that a commercial manager sniffs at, because he thinks it is above the heads of the crowd. I think he is wrong. Take the press, for example. It molds public opinion, and the leading articles, written by men with a higher intelligence, are a guide to the crowd, which generally follows the way that is pointed out to them by the higher intelligence. The crowd must understand this higher intelligence or it could not be swayed by it. For the same reason, why should not the crowd be attracted by a play full of thought, sometimes reflecting life as it is, sometimes as it should be? That is why I say that an artistic play is, to my mind, more commercially valuable than a crudely constructed, crudely written play by a mind of the lower intelligence."

Michael Morton is making his first visit to America since 1913 to supervise rehearsals of his new play, "Woman to Woman," which will be produced by A. H. Woods, who also produced "The Yellow Ticket" more than six years ago. Between "The Yellow Ticket" and "Woman to Woman" Mr. Morton wrote nothing for the theater.

"Reality killed imagination during the war," he explained. "One couldn't think of plays. I am glad that my latest effort is to be produced by an old friend like Mr. Woods. 'Woman to Woman' is a very modern play—a woman's play, as the title indicates. I hope that when women come together, as men do, for a heart to heart talk with their own standard of honor, as men have, that the expression 'woman to woman' will come naturally to their lips, as it does to the stronger

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Yuletide Plays

AN OPULENT Santa Claus has been more than lavish in his bounty to the theater this week. Seven new productions bulge the Yuletide pack, to say nothing of a brimming cornucopia of extra matinees with the children's festivals tossed in for lagniappe, enough surely to give Christmas a cheerful countenance.

Monday night is crowded with good things, including the opening of "Miss Lulu Bett" at the Belmont Theater, Nora Bayes in "Her Family Tree" at the Lyric, Fritz Leiber in Shakespearean repertoire at the Lexington, the new bill of the Provincetown Players in Macdougal Street and the Viennese operetta, "When the Lark Sings," at the Manhattan Opera House. On Wednesday evening "The Passing Show of 1921" is presented at the Winter Garden and "The Beggar's Opera" is revived at the Greenwich Village Theater.

The dramatization by Zona Gale of her story, "Miss Lulu Bett," will be the second production by Brock Pemberton, who first appeared as a producing manager last August with "Enter Madame." Since its publication last April "Miss Lulu Bett" has run through several editions and has been accepted by literary critics as one of the most important novels of American life. When Mr. Pemberton secured the dramatic rights he prevailed upon Miss Gale to make the stage version, feeling that she alone could preserve the full flavor of the book. Although she is the author of several playlets, this is Miss Gale's first long play.

Arthur Hopkins's production of "The Beggar's Opera" is the same arrangement of John Gay's opera which was presented last spring in London. It has been adapted with additional scenes by Arnold Bennett and Nigel Playfair and with new settings and additional music by Frederic Austin. The London production was made by Mr. Playfair, who has come to America to attend the Hopkins presentation. Both the cast and production have been brought from London.

Nora Bayes has provided an excellent supporting cast for her second managerial venture, "Her Family Tree." This is a fantastic musical comedy, dealing in humorous fashion with the theory of incarnation. Miss Bayes appears as the central figure in episodes as recent as last autumn and as remote as the Deluge.

Fritz Leiber, who for fifteen years has been associated with Julia Marlowe, Robert Mantell and others distinguished in the Shakespearean field, begins his stellar engagement at the Lexington with "Hamlet" on Monday night. On Tuesday he will give "Julius Cæsar"; Wednesday matinee, "The Merchant of Venice"; Wednesday evening, "Macbeth"; Thursday, "Hamlet"; Friday, "Julius Cæsar"; Saturday matinee, "Romeo and Juliet," and Saturday evening, "Richard III."

Children will not lack for entertainment designed especially for their benefit during the holidays.

Three sets of matinees have been arranged for them. At the Longacre Theater on Monday and Tuesday afternoons the pupils of the Professional Children's School will present a trio of playlets and several tableaux posed by Ben Ali Haggin. The playlets are "The Princess Winsome," by Annie Fellowes Johnston, directed by Mrs. Louis V. De

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New Theatrical Offerings of the Week

MONDAY—At the Belmont Theater Brock Pemberton will make his second production of the season, presenting "Miss Lulu Bett," a dramatization of her own novel of the same name by Zona Gale. In the cast are Louise Closser Hale, Catherine Calhoun Doucet, Carrol McComas, Beth Varden, Lois Shore, William E. Holden, Brigham Royce and Willard Robinson.

At the Lyric Theater Nora Bayes will present herself in "Her Family Tree," a musical play. Al Weeks and "Bugs" Baer wrote the book and Seymour Simons the lyrics and music. Supporting Miss Bayes are Julius Tannen, Al Roberts, Frank Morgan, Florence Morrison, Una Fleming, Thelma Carlton and others.

At the Lexington Theater Fritz Leiber will begin a two weeks' engagement in Shakespearean repertoire, starting with "Hamlet" to-morrow evening. Some of the supporting cast are Kirby Marshall, Katherine Sayre, Virginia Bronson, Pauline Crell, Louis Leon Hall, John C. Hickey, Wallis Roberts and John Burke.

At the Manhattan Opera House Mrs. Oscar Hammerstein will present for the first time in America, a Viennese operetta by Franz Lehar, "Wo Die Lerche Singt" ("Where the Lark Sings"). It will also be presented Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday matinee. New Year's Eve and New Year's Night Lecocq's "Girofle-Girofla" will be revived.

At their theater in Macdougal Street the Provincetown Players present their second bill, playing two weeks, Sundays included—a two-act play by Eugene O'Neill entitled "Diff'rent," and a farce by Lawrence Vail entitled "What D'You Want"?

WEDNESDAY—At the Winter Garden the Shuberts will present "The Passing Show of 1921," with Willie and Eugene Howard in the stellar positions. Marie Dressler and Harry Watson are featured. Harold Atteridge wrote the book and lyrics and Jean Schwartz the music. J. C. Huffman staged the production, which is in twenty-two scenes. There are twenty-six musical numbers.

At the Greenwich Village Theater Arthur Hopkins presents "The Beggar's Opera," by John Gay. The cast: Arthur Wynn, Charles Magrath, Percy Heming, Alfred Heater, Arnold Philbeam, Pitt Chatham, Lena Maitland, Sylvia Nelis, Dora Roselli, Nonny Lock and Edith Bartlett.