

POST-LENTEN THEATRICALS.

FLOWERS OF AMERICAN DRAMA THAT BLOOM IN THE SPRING.

THE "STRENGTH OF THE WEAK" A Tragedy and Its Negation—A Crane Play—Francis Wilson's Serious Role—"Arms and the Man"—Shaw and the Cost.

Can anybody tell why the American drama is a flower that blooms in the spring? As often as the buds begin to shoot in Madison Square, and the grass begins to green in Bryant Park, and the sporting shops put up their awnings, and the show windows—all reminding one that the world is also a stage—the native playwright blossoms forth in the theatres of Broadway, endeavoring to make us still believe that the stage is the world. The pessimist replies that it is because the hard-hearted manager regards the native playwright as what the vaudeville houses call a chaser—that lugubrious subterfuge by which they empty their seats to conceal the fact that they do not even a continuous performance can go on forever. But believe it in an Easter mood, I prefer to believe that it is because the manager is an optimist, and finds the season of rebirth most fitting for the drama of the future. The spring poet carols his song of hope in spite of grip, bronchitis and a liver turned awry. Why should not the spring critic be equally brave and cheerful?

In "The Strength of the Weak" Mesdames Alice M. Smith and Charlotte Thompson show an instinct for a vital theme and a courage in attacking it of which few of their brother playwrights are capable; and in addition to this they display no inconsiderable vivacity of observation and wit. They have built their play about the thesis that a woman who has sinned has the same right to social rehabilitation as a man, and have spiced it with shrewd strokes of satire upon current manners and morals. They even take note of the fact that it is the sweet woman playwright who most delights to dabble in the mire of passion and sin, and they make their heroines fight against art that "leaves a bad taste in the mouth." If they were as well equipped with constructive logic as they are with audacity and sprightliness, the result would have been more successful, and as the play stands it commands the most serious analysis.

In its defect, as I see it, is that it has the amazing effect of first proving and then disproving its thesis. For myself, though by no means an anarchist in morals, I vastly prefer the proof to the disprof. Pauline's sin, to use the author's able phrase, has been the result of the innocence of ignorance. In extreme youth she fell a victim to a much older man whom she respected and believed to be her friend. Matured in mind and in spirit by the experience, she resolves to assert the same right a man would have to live down her youthful error, and is already a successful novelist when she falls in love with and is loved by a manly and generous young man. The question is whether her self-rehabilitation will stand the test of love as it has of life.

Now if the authors had been bent on rigidly proving their thesis of equal rights they would have made Pauline marry her first lover, and have Richard, as the boys say to Richard's right unclean—as the boys say of jackknives when they swap them—just as a man might do in a similar case. The strongest intellectual and dramatic possibilities lay along this course, but it would have been difficult, if not altogether impossible, thus to develop the theme without sacrificing sympathy for the girl and perhaps also probability. For, the dictionary moralist to the contrary notwithstanding, a man's temptations are stronger than a woman's, and his safeguards of instinctive purity weaker. Pauline tells the whole truth, simply and courageously, and after a struggle between love and pride Richard forgives her. The logical end of the problem is the triumph of repentance, love and forgiveness.

What is particularly admirable in the play is the fact that it is distinctly American. In no other country, as far as I know, are men so little given to asserting the right to the old Adam in them, or to demanding that their wives shall be without the old Eve. The American husband is, as he is sometimes called, an angel face and a baby lamb; and sometimes no doubt his lamblike angelicity is the result of moral and spiritual conviction. Neither is our social organization as parasitical as Maxim Gorke was—and not without reason—come to believe it. It does not need a Cal. Mann man to guess that the woman whose scarlet neckerchief Pauline's look like baby pink, and who yet maintain to-day the commodity known as social position. With a little more perspicuity, skill and knowledge of life it would have been as possible to demonstrate the strength of the weak—the strength of loyalty and love—as clearly as Dumas demonstrated his case of *me-la* against the Gallie beast—woman—much more clearly, as it seems to me.

One reason for not doing this is that it would take a master to give the result that play a strong dramatic appeal. And that is perhaps the *raison d'être* of the last act of Mesdames Smith and Thompson. In the moment of Pauline's triumph she had lived with her under an alias, is Richard's father, and the revelation drives her to despair and suicide. Now, in the return of the penitent in hand there is no reason why the man should have been the boy's progenitor; and the chances in life are about twenty million to one that he would not be. The tragic ending, in short, is achieved by the most violent coincidence. The fourth act overflows with what should have been a thesis play or the order of *Le Drame aux Femelles*, which Dumas himself asserted to be not a problem play but a youthful sentimentalized romance of the co-resist.

It must be added that "The Strength of the Weak" evinces no great dramatic powers either as a thesis-play or as a romance. Dramatically and emotionally it is as flimsy as it is facile. The scenes, not unattractive in themselves, are contrived to afford incidental prettiness and irrelevant comedy rather than to set off the main dramatic development. Most of the incidental characters are quite unnecessary, and even the passages that should be strongly dramatic are lacking in steady climactic development and weakened by an excess of talk. The best quality of the play is a certain reality and simplicity of tone that somehow survives its manifold futilities, and in conjunction with the boldness of the subject and the intelligence, even brilliance, of many of the lines, gives promise of better things to come.

Mrs. Florence Roberts, who makes her metropolitan debut as Pauline, has no extraordinary physical endowments, and her manner unfortunately suggests Mrs. Fiske—a fact which is no less against her even if, as is asserted, she has never seen her prototype. She is not without the exaggerations of method which are associated—perhaps unfairly—with the West-

era circuits where she has hitherto been chiefly known; but she can be no doubt that she has her command a power of simple and very real emotion which is rare on the local stage. To get her full measure as an emotional actress it is necessary to see her in a far bigger and more consistent role; but like "The Strength of the Weak" she suggests far higher possibilities.

For an actor to attempt the legitimate who has all his life accustomed himself and his audience to mere fun making is so difficult as to be well nigh impossible; but in his new curtain raiser to "The Mountain Climber" Mr. Francis Wilson has done this with a surprising measure of success, and in a part which is not only legitimate but pathetic to the verge of tragedy. *Marlotte*, the central figure of "The Little Father of the Wilderness," is, as the programme puts it, "a heroic Jesuit priest" who has served the Church in America with as conspicuous courage and success as Frontenac has served the State. On his return to France he is summoned to the presence of the King, Louis XV., and arrives at Versailles full of reverence for the Throne, and with a not unnatural hope that he is to be rewarded for his services to his country. However, he has been summoned to decide a light-hearted bet as to the height of Niagara; and in addition to the pain of seeing the court in its most flippant mood, he is himself scorned and ridiculed by the King, who has never heard his name. While he is still there, however, Frontenac enters with retinue of leatherstockings and Indians to receive ample titles and rewards for his military service. As *Marlotte* is stealing away, he is rebuffed by the King, and his retinue see him and fall prostrate in reverence. The King learns who the little father is, and the heroic services he has rendered; and in a revulsion of generous shame bestows upon him (much desired) bishopric.

The thematic possibilities of the story are obvious, and the authors, Austin Strong and Lloyd Osborne, have handled them with uncommon skill. The simple minded father arrives at Versailles with a rustic cap, for all the world like *Old Lavatch's Glibbo*, and is at once an object of derision. It is a bit of invention as natural as it is simple, and in the highest degree dramatic, in that it presents the character and the situation to the audience at a single stroke. The king has wagered that Niagara is four miles high, and when *Marlotte* assures him that such is not the case, cynically questions whether he has ever seen the falls. "Sir," the little father answers, "I held the first mass on the King's behalf, and he has given me the essence of the drama is flashed upon the mind. Equally striking and happy is the scene in which the powers of France in the wilderness—Indians, pioneers and soldiers—fall at the feet of the little father. These are details, to be sure, but they are the sort of details that make the difference between the not uncommon knack of selecting a good pattern for the stage and the very rare gift of making it genuinely dramatic.

Mr. Wilson's resources for the portrayal of such a character are greater than might be supposed. Even in the irresponsible rollicking of "The Mountain Climber"—a performance which seemed to me least of all legitimate—there is a latent yet pervasive note of plaintive amiability, a quaint and penetrating charm. It is in these qualities, I venture to say, much more than in his splendidly done dodging and his tumblings, that he owes his hold upon the public; and they are precisely the qualities needed to give color and depth to *Marlotte*. Mr. Wilson turns them to admirable account. His simplicity of mind is authentic, his pathos has the pang of real tragedy.

He is less fortunate, however, in forgetting old tricks than in learning new ones—or, what is perhaps even more difficult, in making his audience forget them. His attitudes and gestures are, as always, restless and pliant, and inevitably they recalled the very different parts and effects of past decades. The one great quality which his *Marlotte* lacks is plastic simplicity and repose.

Mr. Wilson will probably agree that Joseph Jefferson was the greatest of American critics of acting, and no doubt recalls one of his favorite anecdotes—of the occasion when Booth asked for a frank and unsparring criticism of his method. Jefferson answered: "I speak, of course, from the memory of some years—that Booth gestured too much and in inopportune moments. Next to his voice, he said, the actor's greatest resource in enforcing the lines of his author—and at the same time the means which is most likely to fail of effect across the footlights—is facial expression. A stride, a shifting of the shoulders, even a wave of the hand, is likely to catch the spectator's eye and make the effect of motions of the soul as evidential as his lips and lineaments. He advised Booth never to move in a moment of tense emotion except for a definite and carefully considered reason.

It is true that all meats are not for all men—the best of rules may be broken for any good reason—but in Mr. Wilson's case, I venture to say, there is a special and powerful reason for avoiding movement and gesture. He is not yet sufficiently skilled in impersonation. The qualities which are characteristic of the part he is playing, so that more than anything else they suggest his own personality, and the idea of it which is fatal to the effect he is aiming at.

Of Messrs. Broadhurst and Dazey's new Crane play, "An American Lord," no much to be said except that it is a Crane play, and therefore no better or newer than it ought to be. The character of the crusty and mellow, explosive and sympathetic American is what it always has been, and nothing more. If ranking him a rabid anti-Britisher who falls heir to title and estates in England and whose children fall in love with English aristocracy and receive a semblance of novelty, but only a semblance. The Anglo-American theme is one of the oldest on the modern stage. It is true that it has always been treated in its most obvious and least significant aspects. But it is lamentably true that the present play makes no progress toward intelligence and originality. Still as Crane plays go it is not bad, and is to be welcomed as bringing before the public again an actor whose performance is as wholesome and sympathetic as his methods are artistic.

The acting of Bernard Shaw presents a problem which as yet, so far as I know, has received at best only a partial solution, and Arnold Daly's production of "Arms and the Man" at the Lyric is calculated to make confusion twice as confounded. With all his brilliant Irishman's pretence of seeing things as they are, his dramatic methods verge constantly upon farce, and not infrequently arrive quite patently at that destination. In the present piece the several characters are presented sometimes in one aspect, sometimes in the other; and in a single scene some of them act simply and with truth, while others go quite wild.

bit of drama as can be found, until *Arms and the Man* is talked about her father's life and her own. The measure of dialogue which Shaw has been at pains to justify with documentary evidence of Bulgarian manners, but which, nevertheless, is common on our stage, remains farcical. It never fails to let down the dramatic tension, and—what is of quite as much moment—the sense of integrity of character. *Sergius* appears as a study of the modern youth whose ideas of life are modelled upon the operatic tenor, until he degenerates into a Palais Royal hero flirting with the serving maid, and detected by his fiancée, *Bluntschli*, being the embodiment of the attitude Shavian, is more consistently maintained, but in the end breaks down in the scene of the inventory, in which he matches his possessions in horses, coaches and table linen with those of his rival. The dialogue may not, as Mr. William Winter has twice intimated, be limited to the old Anglo-French farce, as "Used to be" in the original, but it is not less farcical. Those earnest souls who still perplex themselves with discussing the nature and measure of Shaw's sincerity might get a clue from the integrity of his dramatic point of view. He keeps himself well in hand until he is called upon to portray normal emotion or to deny himself a joke.

Hitherto the interpreters of Shaw's comedies, when they have tried, in taking them seriously, to present them as they are, it seems to me, errs in the opposite direction. Mr. Daly keeps for the most part to the modesty of nature—if the phrase may be applied to a Shaw hero—but occasionally strides and shouts. Never having seen *Manfred* in the part, I can only guess at a comparison—which could hardly, however, fall to be odious. Mr. Daly's performance is distinctly less solid and spry than that of the English actor in the part. Miss Cheryl Hume as *Raina* seems to lack for fortissimo; but she has the best opportunities of the play, and, with her sympathetic personality and prevailing intelligence in method, makes much of them. As *Sergius*, Aubrey Boucicault has the most difficult and perplexing task of all, but that is no reason why he should leap about as he does in the last act like a monkey on a stick. Frequently his costuming is better than that of the other parts; the play is one of Shaw's best, and holds the audiences at the Lyric—audiences of considerable size—in the heaven of delight from start to finish. It is easy to pick flaws in Shaw, and easier to cavil at his interpreters; but it is very hard indeed to find plays that afford more fun for playgoers who refuse to check their brains in the costume.

Mr. Gaylord Wilshire forwards to me this message, signed G. B. S.: "Tell Gay to tell Cobbin that the description of Tanner in 'Man and Superman' is not, as Corbin supposes, a description of me, but a very close description of H. M. Hyndman. Of course it's necessary nowadays to look thirty-five years ahead to his acting. He is a fine actor, but he is a little slow to make the description fit, but Gay will recognize it at once. It is absurdly unlike me—the frock coat alone ought to have made the mistake impossible." Not being acquainted with Mr. Shaw, or even with his lack of a frock coat, I was misled by the report that the actor who played Tanner in London followed the makeup directions (which Mr. Lorraine ignores), and was generally recognized to be the living image of the author. A big man, with a beard and mustache, having colored hair, slender, restless, energetic, a Socialist, possibly a little mad, a megalomaniac who would be lost without a sense of humor—there are two such men in England. Happy England! Happy in possessing them, but happiest in being able to tell them apart by a frock coat. JOHN CORBIN.

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NEW PLAY OF AMERICAN LIFE.

SYDNEY ROSENFELD'S "THE OPTIMIST" AT DALY'S.

Mrs. Fiske to Give a New Short Play at a Series of Matinees at the Manhattan—The Proctor Stock Company in a New Version of Story of "Joan of Arc."

"The Optimist," a new comedy of American life, by Sydney Rosenfeld, will be produced at Daly's Theatre to-morrow night. The Optimist of the play is *Norman Gray*, who, having failed in early life to win the woman he wanted, turns to helping others, among them the brother of the woman. His effort to help the younger man's broken heart at last brings him back his own early love. The scenes of the play are in and about New York, and to the quartet of young lovers and middle aged lovers Mr. Rosenfeld has added a number of characters which promise entertainment. In the company are J. H. Gilmour, Lizzie Hudson Collins, Wallace Edinger, Charlotte Walker, Thomas A. Wise, Martin Alsop, Gerald Griffin, John E. Ince and Anna Stannard.

Mrs. Fiske will appear in a new rôle on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons at the Manhattan Theatre. She will present three one act plays, in two of which she will have a leading rôle. "A Light from St. Agnes" and "The Eyes of the Owl," she has been seen before. The third, "Dolce," is by John Luther Long, and is new to New York. John Mason appears with her in this little comedy. On Friday afternoon Mrs. Fiske will give the same bill for the benefit of Bide-a-Wee Home for Animals. On evenings and at the Saturday matinee "Charley's Aunt" will be the attraction at this theatre.

The Proctor stock company at the Fifth Avenue Theatre is to present to-morrow night a new play, "Joan of Arc," with Amelia Bingham as Joan. In addition to the full strength of the company a number of extra players and singers have been engaged. An elaborate production is promised.

Maude Adams in "Peter Pan" at the Empire Theatre has passed the 300th performance. The *Berberie* play will stay the season out at this theatre.

At the Hudson Theatre William H. Crane is appearing in the farce comedy "The American Lord." In this play Mr. Crane plays a type of character in which he has for many years pleased theatregoers.

Francis Wilson at the Criterion Theatre has added to the farce "The Mountain Climber" the one act comedy "The Little Father of the Wilderness." As a little French priest who has done missionary work in the wilds of Canada Mr. Wilson has ventured into new fields.

"The Rollicking Girl," with Sun Bernard and Hattie Williams, begins to-morrow night at the end of its four weeks at the New York Theatre.

Arnold Daly's production of George Bernard Shaw's "Arms and the Man" at the Lyric has done much to win out the memory of "John Bull's Other Island" and "Mrs. Warren's Profession."

"The Social Whirl" at the Casino bids fair to keep that house open for a long time. The company includes Adele Ritchie, Ross and Fenton, Blanche Deyo, Maude Raymond, Frederic Bond and other favorites.

"Brown of Harvard" is in its third month at the Princess, where the play of college life has steadily grown in favor.

TRICKS TO WIN BALL GAMES.

SLICK PLAYS THAT HAVE BEEN WORKED WITH SUCCESS.

Often Unsportsmanlike, but That Doesn't Always Count Among the Professionals—Bill Lange's Strange Base Running—How the Only Kelly Cut the Base.

Tricks worked with such exceeding speed as to deceive the umpire, the opposing team and often practically every one on the ground, have been pulled off again and again by clever ball players, and many of them have won games. It is strange that the stories of such tricks are confined to a few men. Whether that is because only a few turned such tricks or whether all the clever tricks were attributed to them, just as all the funny stories are attributed to notorious story tellers, no one knows; but the greatest of the tricks are attributed to Mike Kelly, Jimmy McAleer, Pat Tebeau, Billy Hamilton, Comiskey, Tip O'Neil, Tommy McCarroll.

Tricks are pulled off almost every day—little ones, often unimportant—except in professional games, in all that counts. It is boldness and quick thinking and acting that make them possible, and however one can feel about the sportsmanship of the player who turns the trick, he cannot but admire the cerebral celerity of the player.

Dalrymple, the old Chicago star, once won a game by one of the cleverest tricks ever pulled off. He was playing for the Chicago club against the St. Paul team. It was in a game against Philadelphia, when the pennant fortunes of the team seemed wavering. The game was close and went into extra innings with the score 5 to 5, and both teams fighting for every inch of ground. The eleventh inning began with darkness descending over the field—with the score still a tie.

Chicago scored one run and the Philadelphia crowd which had the last bat, was shouting at the umpire to call the game on account of darkness; but he refused, and the Quakers were sent to bat. Two men were retired and then a single and a double suddenly changed the aspect of things.

With men on second and third and a big hitter up, Chicago's chances grew dim and they began delaying and fighting for time. Still the umpire was obedient. The ball was pitched. The batter swung. There was a crack and the sphere went flying out to left centre. It was lost to sight in an instant. The crowd did not know whether it was a home run or a line fly.

Two players went tearing toward the plate. In that instant Dalrymple stood still, shoved both hands above his head, waited a moment, then he turned and threw something into his pocket, and turning ran to the clubhouse, while the crowd roared over Chicago's victory.

The English pantomimist Fred Walton will be the star attraction at Hurtig & Season's to-morrow. Mr. Walton will appear in "Cassidy's Dream" and will be supported by a company of six. The Kaufman family, bicycle riders, the Marco Twins, George H. Wood, Monroe, Meek and Lawrence; Rice and Cady, and the three Westons complete the bill.

At Hammerstein's the act heading the bill is the Fays (John T. and Eva) who will present a "thamaturgical exhibition." Mrs. Fy will answer questions propounded by people in the audience. Offered by the Fays are Clotilde and her eight miniature girls, James J. Corbett and company in a one act playlet and Vesta Victoria.

Tony Pastor's list includes Klein, Ott Brothers and Nicholson, Miss Estelle Ward and company in "When a Cat's Away," Lew Hawkins, Post and Russell, Irene Franklin, Mile, Naomi Echarde and Clifford and Hall.

THE PEPTOL CO.

1,800,000 PEOPLE IN NEW YORK TOO THIN

The Latest from Battle Creek—Forty-five per cent of the people of New York are too thin for their height. Thirty per cent have more flesh than they can carry comfortably. Only twenty-five per cent are normal—neither too thin or too fleshy.

The latest news from Battle Creek will interest the 1,800,000 residents of New York who wish to add flesh. A recent announcement states that a new food—Peptol—increases the weight from 6 to 10 pounds in less than two weeks. Some remarkable results have been reported. A professor of international fame in an eastern university increased 5½ pounds in six days. A Chicago man, who had been refused by insurance companies on the ground of underweight, gaining at the rate of two pounds a week.

A Chicago lady who has weighed 120 pounds for ten years has put on two and three-quarters pounds of flesh in a few days and reports steady gains. These few incidents are mentioned from a hundred cases where the new food has been tried. Peptol resembles honey in appearance and taste. It can either be eaten as honey is eaten, or mixed with water and taken as a drink. It cannot be purchased through the regular sources of trade at present. The demand has been so great that the makers are unable to supply the trade.

Any thin person in New York can get a supply of Peptol from Battle Creek direct. Send one dollar and two pounds will be shipped, transportation prepaid, with the understanding that if you do not gain in weight the money will be refunded at once your word suffices. Peptol is sold by all druggists. Every ounce of flesh added is health insurance. Booklet on request. Address: THE PEPTOL COMPANY, Dept. A42, Battle Creek, Mich.

run bases I marvelled that so many second basemen failed to touch him. He had a queer slide, but in my opinion, the base runner simply failed to put the ball on him when it looked easy.

One afternoon in Kansas City I found out the secret of the runner's success. We were playing ball game and I was at second when Lange rapped out a hit. He laughingly yelled for me to watch out, as he was going to try to steal. I saw the ball hit the ground. Rittrider threw him out for a foul ball. Lange then started to apply it to Lange when suddenly something happened. I remember thinking that I was watching an instant later lighted on my back and sat up to see Lange grinning with his hand on the base.

AGAIN HUNG DOWN HERBACK. Golden and Other Colored Hair to Be Worn That Way. Three summers ago at Newport many of the young women when walking, driving, playing golf or tennis wore their hair in two braids down the back.

This fad was the subject of much discussion among the older women, says *New Idea*; but it was finally decided that it was a good idea and extremely beneficial to the hair and that there was no reason why a young girl in her teens or early twenties should not wear her hair in a braid if she wanted to.

At Palm Beach, Fla., this fad was revived last winter and many of the young girls are now wearing their hair in braids. This summer it seems that it will be even more popular. The braids are usually tied with bright colored ribbon to match the color of the gown; the hair is worn over a pompadour in front and tied at the top with a bow of ribbon, so that this girlish way of doing the hair can be made very becoming.

Hard to Kill an Ant. From the Scientific American. Ants are really very long lived, considering their minuteness. Janet had a queen under observation for ten years, and one of Sir John Lubbock's ants perished in her fifteenth year.

ALCOHOLISM IS A DISEASE

The causes for alcoholism are legion. Intelligence, social surroundings, the need of stimulation to an overworked brain and a thousand other things are factors in its causation. The disease is always the same, an insidious physical disease that gradually but steadily saps the manhood, the vitality, the brain and the will, and finally results in insanity or death.

Oppenheimer Treatment

Is an absolute cure for alcoholism and drug addiction. It strikes at the very root of the disease by restoring the normal equilibrium of the system and destroying the craving for liquor or drugs. The strictly scientific basis upon which it is founded and has also been carried over to give it a standing both with the public and the medical profession. It is a new and strikingly effective alcoholic craving, by means of this treatment, is absolutely removed.

12 to 48 HOURS and the patient is permanently restored to a normal condition. There is no detention from business, no suffering, no injections, no bad after effects. Strong testimony to its responsibility is furnished by the Board of Directors.