

SIR CHANNING DRAWS BLADE

AND SMITES LUSTILY FOR THE DAMSEL IN DISTRESS.

Mr. Pollock's "Secret Orchard" an interesting, well wrought play that dares to have a happy ending in spite of "Artistic" conventions—Author Absent.

Channing Pollock has girt on his harness, mounted his sturdy typewriter, and setting his spear at the rest, dashed into the press of knights, there to do his duty as the champion of the Damsel in Distress. Critics knights may break their spears upon him all to pieces, he may be forced to avoid his typewriter (as Mallory would say), and fight with naked blade. But right lusty buffets will be given back upon every helm in his path. And sure it is that the Damsel will be proclaimed eventually fit to walk and sit among the true ladies of the land and all such do keep within the marriage ring or the bounds of the Vestal hearth.

All of which, being interpreted, means that Channing Pollock has dramatized "The Secret Orchard" with a happy ending and his play was shown at the Lyric Theatre last night, where it met with deserved and pronounced favor, especially the happy ending. Mr. Pollock, to be sure, was not there. His exploits are narrated elsewhere on this page. And the representative of one of our uptown contemporaries (who sat in row C) fell asleep and became audible. But everybody else was interested by the drama, at times absorbed in it, and ready at the close of each act to agree that Mr. Pollock has made a marked stride forward in his chosen art, that he has not mistaken his destiny.

For first and foremost in dramatizing the novel by the Castle he has made a string of episodes from a book but a wrought, coherent play. The present writer never read the novel and he isn't ashamed of it either. But from all accounts it was not a pretty thing, and it ended with a mess of suicide and debasement. Mr. Pollock's play, handling the same material, ends with life, forgiveness and hope.

Every step which leads to this ending is clear and intelligible to every spectator, whether he has read the book or not. Perhaps, so radically does the ending depart from that of the Castle, Mr. Pollock's play deserves to be considered not a dramatization at all, but an independent work. In either light, it reflects credit on its author; it marks a distinct growth in his powers.

"The Secret Orchard" belongs to that type of drama in which the heroines are born, not made. It is the old, old tale of seduction, in this case the seduction of a young and pathetically innocent girl, Joy, by the Duke of Clump, and her subsequent adoption by the unsuspecting wife of the Duke, who worships her husband as the soul of honor. The play begins with the entrance of Joy into the Duke's chateau, where he of course recognizes her.

His efforts, aided by those of his wife's guardian (who also loves her to keep the knowledge from his wife, even at the awful price of playing the cad and scoundrel a second time, and the eventual discovery, hastened by Joy's confession that she is not pure, for the grandeur of the drama, wherein a cousin of the Duke's, a young American naval officer, is the protagonist of health and the hope of the happy ending. For he loves Joy.

It is his request to marry her that precipitates her confession. And it is his affirmation in the last act that he loves the woman he loves and doesn't care a damn for the past which cuts the tangled knot. And it was he who was the hero in the hearts of the audience.

In telling this story, quite obviously a tale demanding delicate treatment yet one alive with the possibilities of drama, Mr. Pollock has avoided vulgarity, he has been as tender of the people who blush when spades are mentioned as was possible under the circumstances. And he has conducted his narration with clear cut, persuasive, at times picturesque dialogues through situations that are fluent, cleverly contrived and culminating in the third act in a climax of force and pathos.

The character of Joy, which of course dominates the play, is drawn with tenderness and sympathy; that of the Duke, a vile seducer of melodrama, in his action postulated with a charity that wins conviction for his remorse, and makes him a man, not a lay figure of conventional fiction. The thing he has done would be in life far more unforgivable than Joy's sin in yielding to him, yet Mr. Pollock has left hope for them both—the one in the love of a good man, the other in the love of a good woman. To forgive is not to forget, nor does Mr. Pollock say it is. But after all, the love which cannot forgive and trust eventually to forget is pretty poor love. And the ending which says so, instead of forcing crude quarrels between lover and seducer, instead of bringing about the easy solution of lead pills, is more helpful and, in this day and generation, more logical.

The acting of the play, while it was never bad, was never very good and quite for no detailed comment. Miss Josephine Victor as Joy, with a personality which quite fitted the pathos of the part, was perhaps the most effectively emotional. Indeed, she who is likely to be heard from again. Mr. Courtenay played the Duke and suggested the reality of his remorse, his better side, without making it at all plain to the other side ever got the upper hand. Frank C. Bangs, an honored veteran, lent the dignity and sweetness of his years to the part of the Canon of the Cathedral. His acting, almost without exception, forced the note a little, were lacking in the ultimate touch of style which conveys the sense of complete reality.

New Water Effect at the Hippodrome.

In the winter carnival which closes the beautiful spectacle of "The Four Seasons" at the Hippodrome a new water effect was introduced last night. After the freezing of the tank and its glistening surface is filled with water and merry-makers under the glow of a midnight sun the ice gradually recedes, fountains send streams of water into the air and a great torrent rushes out over the ice, reaching up to the knees of the dancers. A waterfall is also thrown from the elevation over the dancers on the lower section of the stage, making a weird effect as they dance behind a veil of illuminated water.

Journal Not to Return to the Metropolitan. Marcel Journet, who has been for the last seven years one of the basses at the Metropolitan Opera House, will not be a member of the company after this season. He signed yesterday a contract by the terms of which he is to be the first basso at the Grand Opera in Paris for a term of five years, beginning next October.

The Seagoers. Sailing to-day by the White Star liner Oceanic for Plymouth, Cherbourg and Southampton: J. Frank Aldrich, Albert Kessler, the Hon. John Phillips, Col. A. V. de Pederneras, Military Attaché to the Brazilian Embassy, and Dr. J. F. Leys, superintendent of the Colon Hospital.

Arrivals by the Red D liner Philadelphia from Venezuela and Porto Rico: Surgeon C. F. Stokes, U. S. N., who is going to San Francisco to fit out a hospital ship for the use of the battleship fleet; Capt. Frederick W. Coffin, U. S. N., and Lieut. H. W. Dempwolf of the Revenue Cutter Service.

AT THE TWO OPERA HOUSES.

"Il Barbiere" at the Metropolitan and "Carmen" at the Manhattan.

The Monday night subscribers of the Metropolitan Opera House had an opportunity last night to enjoy Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" as it is now performed. Authorities of high degree, with a knowledge of operatic history extending back over at least four years, have pronounced this to be the most admirable presentation of the delightful opera buffa ever given in New York. Perhaps if Manuel Garcia could come back out of the past he might have something to say about that performance of 1826. But he is gone. His son is gone. Ferranti and De Vivo are gone. There is no one to tell us about that performance.

But let the dead past bury its dead. Lablache used to sing Dr. Bartolo, La blache, a stupendous basso, a great comediant—but no matter. Patti used to sing—but she also is another story, and to tell the truth she is less missed than others. Mme. Sembrich still is with us and even when she has a bad cold, as she evidently had last night, she can still sing the music of Rosina charmingly and she is always a vivacious comediant. In the lesson scene she sang the Strauss waltz "Voce di Primavera."

Boni was very happy as Alvaro, acting with humor and a really lovely beautiful style. Mr. Campanari's Fazio is not as unctuous in song as it used to be, and Mr. Barocchi, whose name was inadvertently omitted from the account of last week's performance, is a singularly wooden, dull and tiresome Falalo.

Mr. Chlapnik, the elongated Russian basso, repeated his broad travesty on the role of Don Basilio. He spared the audience nothing. He sang the "Columina" aria quite as well as he could, but his performance and was cheered to the echo by the gallery and the railbirds. He blew his nose with his fingers and evoked laughter from stalls and boxes. Neither Lewy Field nor Joe Weber has yet thought of this style of comedy. However, it was said many years ago "De gustibus non est disputandum" and later "Chacun a son gout." If that is the sort of thing Metropolitan Opera House audiences like they must be permitted to do so.

At the Manhattan Opera House last night the performance of "Carmen" which has been heard there so often, was repeated. Mme. Brossier-Giamoli, specialist in the impersonation of the wretched gypsy, was at her best and Mr. Dalmore was heard again as Don Jose, of which role he is one of the best interpreters ever engaged in this city. The other members of the cast were efficient and a large audience expressed its approval in no doubtful manner.

ANOTHER GIRLY SHOW.

"A Knight for a Day." Encouraged by Success Elsewhere, Comes to Wallack's. A Chicago success, encouraged by its reception in the middle West, came here for a rehearsal at Wallack's Theatre last evening. In its re-enactment it is known as "A Knight for a Day," and Raymond Hubbell is its ruse-mist and Robert B. Smith its jester and jingle forger.

And don't forget Gus Solikie, who staged the piece. Stage managers don't usually get much credit outside the printed programme, but if "A Knight for a Day" pleases a fickle, fickle public for any great length of time Mr. Solikie will have to saddle as much of the responsibility as anybody.

"A Knight for a Day," in fact, is one of those stunts in which the chief ingredients are girls, plummy phellows, lively tunes that are sometimes melodious, electric lights, dancers deft or frantic, horseplay and then more girls. These are all stirred up by the stage manager and are thoroughly sprinkled with a shiny, glittery compound called rantomme. Experience has shown that Broadway likes this sort of a show if it is sufficiently well accompanied with some new kind of a spice calculated to tickle that jaded palate of which so much is heard.

In the stew served up at Wallack's there is plenty of spice that last night's audience appeared to like. The girl incident in particular was employed in a variety of ways that were variants on models seen before. Not a soul ever got through with a song without its being illustrated by the chorus and, truth to say, this complication was not always wholly avoidable. Still, much of the music was likeable and a songlet to be based on the principle announced in one of the songs.

The critics may sneer, but the thing you like most is to whistle as you walk out. Several sprightly persons are included in the cast. John Slaven, the famed comedian, with May Volkes, an admirable impersonator of slavey parts, furnished most of the horseplay, and a good deal of the printed programme, especially a military drill executed by the pair.

Sallie Fisher, identified with memories of "Deerie," did all the real solo singing there was, and sweetly, too. There were several encores for her singing of the song called "My Very Own," and one couldn't help wishing that the chorus would let her make it so. The piece is full of very busy dancing, the acrobatic pony ballet doing the bulk of it. These diminutive persons do some really surprising stunts, with all the precision of automatons. They are attractive dollies too. Prominent in the audience was Channing Pollock, whose play, "The Secret Orchard," was having a first New York performance further uptown. Mr. Pollock explained his presence so far downtown by saying that he had come in to see a really good show.

Miss Kitty Cheatham's Holiday Matinee.

Miss Kitty Cheatham has announced her annual holiday matinee of songs and sayings for children and "growtups" at the Berkeley Theatre, in Forty-ninth street, on Friday afternoon, December 27, at 3:15. Miss Cheatham returned recently from a successful season in England with a programme that is distinctive, her own and entirely new. It includes a number of children's classics set to music, old-fashioned melodies and short recitations to piano accompaniment.

"The Chimes of Normandy."

The Aborn opera company began last night its last week of its present stay at the Lincoln Square Theatre. "The Chimes of Normandy" was the offering. Milton Aborn appeared as General Estelle Wentworth was Terrence and Kitty Nice Perlo was Serpentine.

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