

SHAW PUZZLES THE CRITICS

WHAT DOES HIS PLAY "GETTING MARRIED" MEAN, THEY ASK.

Described as merely a brilliant conversation on the stage—Bernard Shaw says it is a Good Play and Tells What "Pinnero's "The Thunderbolt" is a Disappointment.

LONDON, May 18.—The greatest dramatist and the greatest conversationalist in England each treated the public to a new play this week. The dramatist disappointed one audience and his critics, and the conversationalist alternately perplexed and enraged the other, which is probably just what he intended to do.

In Pinnero's play, "The Thunderbolt," produced at George Alexander's Theatre, the drama is built around a provincial family in a small town. This is becoming a favorite theme of his, though he has never yet achieved the marvelous picture of narrow-minded English provincial life which Granville Barker produced in his "Voyage Intermarriage."

Pinnero locates his family in Singlehampton. In place of the hypocrisy and Pharisaeism of the "His House in Order," greed of gold and consequently of social advancement are characteristics of the Mortimores in "The Thunderbolt." All the principal characters are etched deep in acid. From the first moment when they are gathered together in front of us we know what manner of people they are.

First there is Brother James, the oldest and most important member, in his own opinion; a purse proud, domineering man, the Napoleon of Singlehampton, whose horizon is bounded by the borders of that peacefully respectable borough. Then there is Anne, his wife, whose outlook is still narrower since it does not extend beyond the four walls of Ivanhoe Villa.

Next there is Stephen Mortimore, the proprietor of a local newspaper, the "Times and Mirror," whose sole interest in life is summed up in his feud with his rival quill driver of the "Courier." His wife Louise is a shrewish woman whose waspishness is only limited by the narrow radius of her sphere for making mischief and trouble.

There is also Rose, who since her marriage to Col. Poring has posed as a woman of fashion in London, but has retained singular tenacity all the smallness and pettiness of her provincial mind and her unbending family pride. Finally there is Thaddeus Mortimore, an amiable, weak kneed man who has affronted the family dignity by marrying the daughter of a grocer and further lowers his prestige by pursuing the humble calling of a teacher.

After this the lady has another long conversation, this time with the Bishop, who sent him the platonic love letters and finally she caps the climax by going off into a sort of conversational trance in which she utters a series of disconnected phrases, poetry and Gospel and voices such a mixture of brilliant and hopelessly confusing and confused ideas as only a Shaw could produce.

The attitude of the critics was much the same as that of the audience. They felt that Shaw's play was a masterpiece. Some said that surely G. B. S. must have overreached himself this time, for his play meant nothing at all. It was a mere jargon of words, and the play was too long and absolutely inconclusive as reached as to Shaw's views or those of any of his characters.

The conversation in the piece was brilliant and varied indeed. The science of comparative religion, the creed of asceticism, the British army, the English gentleman and the peculiar fancies of the modern Bishop are some of the topics which are touched upon with a light touch and a good deal of humor, but the give and take of "words, words, words" reminded one, as Mr. Courtney said in the Daily Telegraph, of a sort of intellectual boxing match.

For once the critics have done exactly what I said they would and said exactly what I thought they would in respect to "Getting Married." They have not only sent their wives for it, it is really a good play and a woman's play.

When the play is over again they will have the greatest admiration for it. The only trouble is it is too short. Any sensible playgoer will be disappointed when the play is over and he will say to himself, "I wish it were longer."

The whole explanation of their criticism of the play is that they were unanimous in liking the first act best, the second act much less and the third act not at all. They want to know what I mean by the first act being the best. The first act is a comedy which they understand and like, the second act is sociological comedy, which they do not understand or like, and the third act is a piece of poetry, which is simply Chinese to them.

POEMS WORTH READING.

The Heart and the Soul. The heart is a tender woman. Warm with the dew and wine of a casual holiday man. And a pity all divine.

The Weaver of Dreams. The poet, when I sought the method of his art and begged of him his secret to impart, said: "Color, rhyme and rhythm, chord on chord, and every magic that may touch the heart, these, these are mine. This is the poet's part."

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

A few days ago while looking over a just dealer's book of small arms, I found a copy of a valuable pistol which at first appeared to be one of the most valuable of the kind. It was a Remington-Union, No. 1, and I found certain marks on the barrel—these evidently had not been noticed by the dealer, as the usual coat of rust covered the barrel.

The piece was referred to William Coventry, a collector of this city, an interested student of the type of small arms of a valuable collection. It proved to be of a make quite new to him, and he examined it with interest. He has collected to make this report on the piece.

I have sent over to Africa to a friend who is familiar with the language spoken universally on the continent a clipping of the above, and he has returned with a translation of the same into the African language. It is inconceivable that they are mutilated English.

So, last I asked a workman of the loom: "What is the secret of the Orient? What is the magic that its weaving brings?" "The color," once again this dreamer said, "is the all the melody of the Orient, and don't expect too much from it. It doesn't bear thinking about."

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