

# WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE THEATRES



HENRY MILLER AND RUTH CHATTERTON IN "THE RAINBOW"

Kollett Chambers may not show in "The Right to Be Happy," which was seen last week at the Hudson Theatre, the advance in craftsmanship that his admirers hoped he had made, but he knows his New York better than he did in the days of "An American Widow." In that clever little play there was a woman of fashion who had her four in hand drive up to the door of her house on Riverside Drive and wait for her there. Now Mr. Chambers makes his heroine speak rather scornfully of the necessity of figuring on the West Side society page in a Sunday newspaper. She is supposed to be of Knickerbocker stock, which is a tradition opposed to the general impression that the families of that origin now conspicuous are but little less extinct than the dodo. Knickerbocker descent on the other hand does not seem to have done all that it might for this very modern heroine.

She is supposed to be in the employment of a modern captain of industry, who uses her position in the world of fashion as a means of finding out what her important friends intend to do in a way of business that may interest her employer. It is not indicated definitely until the last act that she has been the mistress of this rough diamond. It is not in the least necessary to the development of the drama that she should be. The nature of her occupation is sufficiently unusual to entitle her to at least the suspicion of those who know of it.

Most of the spying which she does for this captain of industry is not rendered any less disagreeable by the fact that she spies always on her friends. Only one definite instance explains the equivocal character of her occupation. She tells of a visit to a friend in Baltimore which enabled her to discover the financial stability of the Southern Rubber Company which ultimately resulted in the merger of that organization with that of which her employer was the president. Then in order to discover what sort of an invention occupied the philanthropist she ultimately married; she called him in to give her expert advice concerning her dead father's library.

All this is occupation of rather a dubious nature even if its purpose be to support a sister in society and a mother who has a voice with a tear in it and a quaver like a suddenly matured soubrette and a brother who will persist in keeping in danger through his speculations with other men's money. The audience at the Hudson Theatre on Monday night found sufficient explanation in these phases of her life to explain the conduct of the captain of finance toward this aristocratic young woman who had entered his service so willingly. He might well have referred to her contemptuously in view of the services she performed so profitably for him.

It is unfortunate for the character of the trust president that he was not shown in any light that might have revealed what was good in his nature. And there must have been something good about him, else there is no excuse for the heroine's affection for him, and without some affection her relation to him was quite without excuse. There are indeed few traces of the fine effects of race about this young woman and the trust official opposed to her as what may be accomplished by true heartedness and simple faith, is altogether a bad lot. So neither may be considered as a genuine type of the two opposing classes to which they belong.

The idealist who invented the substitute for rubber and thereby led to the parting of the young woman and her employer is perhaps the truest of the characters in the play. He is at least true to the stage. He represents virtue. He loves a young woman, and the fact that she has been the mistress of another man does not serve to turn him from her. He pities her and loves the poor, and is courageous enough to defy the captain of industry in his moments of most violent physical excitement. He is plainly classified, therefore, in the mind of the spectators and they are grateful for it. Such clarity is a relief when there are two such inconsistent and baffling human beings as those played by Miss Donnelly and Mr. Bressa contrasted with her.

Were there some opportunity to see some of the traits in the part of this captain of industry that are talked about it might be more possible to discover what the heroine could ever have loved in him. She seems painfully deficient in the qualities that would have made her a representative daughter of the potrooms, and although her right to happiness is a point on which the play insists, she seems to be enjoying life rather well so far as its material pleasures are concerned. She is certainly able to wear smart hats and frocks, and her outbursts appear quite above reproach. Then she has a butler and draws checks for \$2,000 without any ap-

parently severe drag on her bank account. So after all for the poor man's daughter she appears to be doing well.

Barring a certain indecision as to the entrances and egresses of the flower decked drawing room in which the action of the play passed, for there is but one scene in the three acts of "The Right to Be Happy," this Knickerbocker family seemed a fairer representative than some others. William A. Brady had one in "Mother," in which the head of the household made pie in the drawing room and cut out the children's clothes there. In another play that leaned rather heavily on the Knickerbocker descent of its principal figures one of them had a past of some kind in Brooklyn. Yet so long ago as the year in which Herman Viele wrote his charming book of New York life called "The Last of the Knickerbockers" there was said to be no more of them left. Brander Matthews, who tried to create them for William Crane, went back to the originals and named Peter Stuyvesant his hero. Mrs. Wharton, posing some admirable photographs of the least noble aspects of metropolitan social life in "The House of Mirth," and showed how little the Knickerbocker survived as a social figure here. In spite of Mr. Chambers's fondness for this historic type in "The Right to Be Happy" his plays show in other respects considerably more knowledge of his New York.

What is an American musical farce? Some might answer "The Man From Cook's." How native it is examination will show. Maurice Ordonneau, who wrote the play on which it is founded, is of course French. The rest of the collaborators are American enough, even if they are at work on material which bears no relation to our native land. "The Man From Cook's" could not possibly be considered American in the sense that "Forty-five Minutes From Broadway" is or as the Hoyt plays used to be. They were something more than American in fulfillment.

They started from an American idea and they were devoted to making fun out of national traits. They did not rest so firmly on a foreign basis as the latest specimen of its kind. For so far as its scenes and incidents are concerned "The Man From Cook's" is altogether foreign. "The Pink Lady" is another equally exotic product which, as far as its creators were, was American only in the nationality of Charles McClellan, who lives abroad and remains a most contented specimen of the expatriated American. Both Ivan Caryl, who composed the music, and Georges Bers, who wrote "Le Saityre," on which the work is founded, are foreigners. So there was no excuse for calling "The Pink Lady" in any important particular American.

The public seems to be wholly unprejudiced as to the source of any musical farce so that its quality be of the best. For years London rejected all Viennese operettas when they were most popular here. A certain natural prejudice was held responsible even for this artistic hostility and it was not long before "The Merry Widow" conquered London that this prejudice still had its force. The earlier output of Millocker, Von Suppe, Strauss and their contemporaries never appealed to London audiences and few of them were indeed ever tried there. Now they have become more prosperous, although there is not the same freedom from prejudice against anything made in Germany that exists here.

Possibly the purely American products have some advantage over any importations, however excellent. George M. Cohan, Charles Hoyt—they are able to provide amusement that may be racy of the soil. But some recent successes means an essential factor in the form of all musical plays is so elastic that scarcely any sort of fun is alien to them. Perhaps a certain patriotic pride may prejudice professional judges of such pieces—if such a really heavy responsibility rests on any shoulders—in favor of the home made article. But the public seems equally cordial to all of them. It insists only that they be in the classic bromide good of their kind. So it is possibly excusable to depart at this point

from the solemn task of deciding whether or not "The Man From Cook's" is a work of native origin or not.

It is evident, however, that there has been a change in the taste of the public for its leading figure in the present performances of operetta. There were days in which this was always a comedian. Francis Wilson, Jefferson De Angella, De Wolf Hopper, James T. Powers, the funny men, at one time had all the honors of publicity. In those days there was scarcely a speech left to any other character in the performance. Francis Wilson used to make his operettas like monologues, in which he was occasionally interrupted by the chorus or the other characters to perform something, such as a soprano solo, for instance, which it was physically impossible for him to do. The others followed the same plan. Who can forget De Wolf Hopper when in the days of "El Capitán" and its predecessor, "Wang," there was no other entertainment allowed than that which he supplied?

Mr. Wilson has dropped out of musical performances, and he has found his admirers loyal, while the change in the taste of the public for its protagonist, as the learned love to describe the principal actor, has placed these other entertainers in less conspicuous positions. It is the rather polite youth with slender figure, grace as a dancer and possibly with some little voice who is more likely to be selected by the shrewd manager now as the dominating figure in the musical play. If his opportunities are extended until he preponderates as the comedian used to the public will weary just as soon of him as well. There seems less danger of that change, however, since such roles are not capable of the rather appalling padding which the old fun makers used to indulge in.

Then there is a change in the taste of the public for its feminine heroine who appears in the musical play. It is mainly important that she should be beautiful and girlish. Extreme skill in acting would rather disqualify her for success, since American audiences want to be amused only by its actresses who are not in the first place beautiful. If Marie Dressler was not a genius of fun that could double up any audience with laughter there would of course be no possible chance for her on the stage. Yet were she as beautiful as Julia Sanderson it would not be necessary for her to have a trace of talent. In this respect our audiences resemble those of London. There was never a less gifted lot than the fair and slender beauties that prevail in London musical plays. Yet they are much more admired than the possessors of talent in acting ever would be.

The singular invitation of the manager who invited the newspaper writers about the theatre into the Criterion the other afternoon to witness the performance of a rather an interesting melodrama must indicate a change of heart on the part of these impressionable theatrical. Matinee performances in this city have rarely been productive of any important results although there is quite a respectable list of the plays performed first in this way in London and later successful in the regular bills. "Bunty Pulls the Strings" was the most recent instance of this kind of introduction to the London public.

Here managers think that only a certain kind of introduction makes a play successful and few of them would ever risk a matinee experiment with any property that seemed valuable. It is more than probable that the young authors of "The Bargain" were able to pay for the pleasure of seeing their play acted. They have some more reason to be satisfied than some authors. Managers who receive plays in the future from them will be inclined to look upon their work with more favor

collected intentions and a smaller degree of achievement. It has been some years since a manager of the German playhouse has thought it worth while to take trouble to put forward recent products of the German stage. Yet both "Glaube und Heimath" and "Frühlings Erwachen" came to a hearing at the Irving Place during the last season. It cannot truthfully be said that either Schoenherr's tragedy of peasant life or Wedekind's exotic study of childhood in Germany was put before the American public in its best light. Both were far beyond the material resources of the theatre, and it is doubtful if there were enough fine actors to present the best that the dramatists had put into their plays. But the attempt to show that Germany still boasts of a stage that produces something besides musical plays and diluted Palais Royal farces was creditable to Mr. Amberg.

The German theatre in this city must be a serious problem. It was always most successful in the memory of some of those acquainted with the later history of this transplanted institution when the greatest amount of capital was invested. The better the actors and the more liberal the expenditure the larger the audiences used to be. It was certainly not economical to have Agnes Sorma and Rudolf Christian acting together in "Königskindler," but there were always large audiences to greet these players and any of equal distinction. It may be true that there are fewer interesting works coming from the German playwrights and there may not be many distinguished actors to select from for this city. But there are men and women on the German stage today who are of incomparably higher artistic status than this city has seen, with the exception of Ernst von Possart, in years.

It is of course true that German immigration has all but ceased to increase the

company. The better the actors were the larger was the audience. That was probably due to the willingness of others than the very old and the very young to buy tickets to see really fine performances. Then there was a time when Americans used to find a visit to the German Theatre worth while.

## PLAY FROM A WELLS NOVEL

A Dramatic Version of "Kipps" Is Seen in London.

H. G. Wells's popular novel "Kipps" has been acted at the Vaudeville Theatre in London. That there was a drama in such a story never seemed evident to some of its readers, but here is the character and his associates at last on the stage. Few popular books nowadays escape the voracious adapter. It is interesting to observe that he always acts with the consent of the novelist. The author is evidently willing to travel as far as the adapter in the search for royalties, whatever may happen to the spirit of his work.

Rudolf Besier, who is understood to have made the adaptation, has taken the incidents of the middle part of the book, changed them here and there and added dialogue of his own. He introduces various explanatory matters in the first act, which passes in the drapery shop at Folkestone. The scene is realistic, yet there is missing the suggestion of an actual shop. That is not life at the Shaftford emporium, the sordid, rushing, soul destroying business in the book. Ann Parnick, Kipps's little sweetheart in the boy and girl days at New Romney, comes to buy print dresses. Helen Walsingham, the neat young gentlewoman to whom Kipps has lost his heart at the wood carving class at the local improvement institute, comes also to distribute tickets and buy chiffon. Harry Catterlow arrives, not to break to Kipps the news that he is a missing heir but to spy out the ground for that backsliding young man who, having made a night of it, has been locked out.

Kipps is smuggled in, but does not escape the eye of Shaftford. Kipps and Ann meet in the country and later Kipps and Helen Walsingham, though before the latter meeting Chester Coote has come. Coote has not his position of the firm of solicitors which administers the estate of Kipps's grandfather. Coote is a matter of fact legal emissary, bringing news of Kipps's windfall, which has grown in the dramatizing process from \$100,000 to \$250,000. One perceives a great deal of conventional dramatization in this too ingenious act, which ends with the bewildered Kipps rushing out to buy champagne in which to celebrate his departure from the store.

The second act is not so theatrical, but the movement is thin. The ineffable Coote instructs Kipps—now installed in the house left him at Folkestone—in the pignors of nice people. Catterlow, mostly intervenes in these exercises. Helen Walsingham, with her mother, is also there. There is a little effective angling on her part for the admiring Kipps, only too ready to be caught, and there is also a good deal of comedy when the awkward, flustered Kipps finally upsets his cup as a dramatic climax. There follows the garden party where Kipps has a preliminary shock in encountering Ann as the housemaid. The party gives opportunity for exhibiting some of those pretty types whom Mr. Wells is known to regard as human nature. They serve, at all events, an amusing purpose, and in their way Kipps's social lapses are also amusing. But Kipps is now less worried about his clothes and his manners than about the joint proximity of Ann and Helen. Ann gathers that Kipps is engaged to Helen, and down goes the tea tray with a crash. Kipps stands petrified until Coote forcibly carries him off to the garden.

Kipps, however, returns to Ann, and persuades her for the moment that only she matters to him. But the fact of Kipps's publicly announced engagement dawns on the rather slow mind of the girl, and Coote, visiting Ann below stairs in his ardor for Kipps's matrimonial

## ATTRACTIONS AT THE THEATRES THIS WEEK

No New Production Is Offered—Low Fields Gives a Benefit This Evening.

### NOVELTIES IN VAUDEVILLE

Garden Theatre Becomes a Permanent Home for the Klemencolor Pictures.

The new comedy by John Galsworthy, "The Pigeon," which Wintthrop Ames opened at the Little Theatre, has made friends among the New York theatregoing public. Its naturalness, the quiet whimsical nature of its humor and its fidelity to the human side of life are exactly suited to the little playhouse. Special matinees consisting of the Chinese drama, "The Flower of the Palace of Han," and Charles Rann Kennedy's new play, "The Terrible Meek," are given on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday afternoons. Edith Wynne Matthison and Frank Reicher have the principal roles in the little play from the thirteenth century Chinese author, and Miss Matthison, Sydney Valentine and Reginald Barlow are the only three actors in "The Terrible Meek."

"The Right to Be Happy" enters upon its second week at the Hudson Theatre. Dorothy Donnelly gives a forceful performance and Edmund Bressa, the other featured member of the company, again displays marked ability.

The fourth week of Walker Whiteside in "The Typoohoo" at the Fulton Theatre begins to-morrow evening. The play, dealing with Japanese life, is one of the dramatic novelties of the season. Mr. Whiteside gives a powerful performance of the Japanese secret service agent who is sent to Berlin by his Government on a secret mission of serious importance.

"The Rainbow," at the Liberty Theatre, is proving to be the biggest success in which Henry Miller has been seen in New York in many seasons. The human note sounded by the play has awakened a warm response from New York's theatregoers, and Mr. Miller's acting in the role of the father stands out as an artistic character portrayal. "The Rainbow" will continue at the Liberty for the remainder of the season.

Klaw and Erlanger's presentation of Ouis Suisener in "Kismet" continues to fill the Knickerbocker Theatre. The adventures of the beggar in Bagdad have interest as a story and the scenic effects are responsible for a separate appeal.

"The Bird of Paradise," Richard Watson Tully's spectacular drama of Hawaii, is at Maxine Elliott's Theatre, where it has been popular since its removal from Daly's. Guy Bates Post, Theodore Roberts and Laurette Taylor are the principals in the company.

David Warfield and the other members of the Belasco company will celebrate the 20th performance of "The Return of Peter Grimm" at the Belasco Theatre on Thursday evening.

"The Woman," which David Belasco is presenting at the Republic Theatre, will soon begin its eighth month there. It will remain at the Republic until the end of the season.

Louis Mann in the comedy drama "Elevating a Husband" at the Criterion Theatre is the part of an incorrigible husband. Emily Ann Wellman and Mme. Cottrelly are in his supporting company.

The Liebler production of "Oliver Twist" with its cast composed of Nat Goodwin, Marie Dora, Constance Collier, Lynn Harding, Fuller Mellish and Olive Wyndham is now continuing its run at the Empire Theatre.

George Arliss has what he considers his most interesting part in "Disraeli." He has been appearing in the play by Louis N. Parker at Wallack's Theatre since early in the present season.

The Liebler Company which leased the Century Theatre for the presentation of "The Garden of Allah," is well satisfied with the experiment of making the big playhouse the home of dramatic spectacle and is planning another production of the same kind for next season.

Few actors have ever appeared oftener



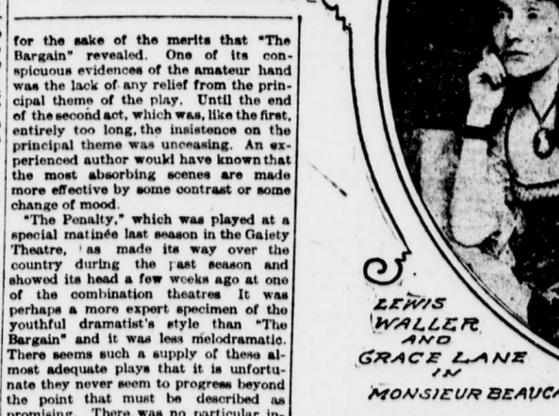
JOSE COLLINS AND MARTIN BROWN IN "THE WHIRL OF SOCIETY"



JANET DUNBAR IN "THE RETURN OF PETER GRIM"



OTIS SKINNER, ELEANOR GORDON IN "KISMET"



LEWIS WALLER AND GRACE LANE IN "MONSIEUR BEUCAIRE"

public of the German theatre in this city. At times it seems as if its audiences were made of only two classes. These are the very young, who have not yet learned to understand the plays of the English theatres, and those who have arrived in this country at an age which makes it impossible for them ever to learn to understand English. Surely this is not a large nor profitable public for any theatre manager. He may well be fearful of excessive expenditure. Yet the fact remains that the appearance of the Irving Place Theatre has always seemed to bear a very direct relation to the quality of the

future, finds her ready to sacrifice herself to the social Moloch of which Coote is high priest. But she and he have been re-acknowledged without Kipps, who explosively throws over Coote, conveniently eliminates Helen from his arrangements and returns to his allegiance to the little girl who went gathering sea poppies with him. Mr. Besier leaves Kipps with his fortune unembellished, and Catterlow vanishes into thin air, out of which he need not have been embodied. Reviewers have decided that comedy worthy of the book it is not, but as far as on a somewhat higher plane it may do very well.

In a part that has Lewis Waller in the title role of "Monsieur Beaucaire," in which he is now seen at Daly's Theatre. His record at present is more than 200 performances.

Mr. Waller is also responsible for "The Butterfly on the Wheel," the divorce drama which is being played at the 39th Street Theatre under his management. The English actress Madge Titherton is at the head of the company.

"Bunty Pulls the Strings" is nearing its 20th performance at the Comedy Theatre. Only one change has been made in the company since the comedy had its