

AT THE THEATRES THIS WEEK.

TUESDAY.
BRANDLEY LYCEUM—"The Father," by August Strindberg, the Swedish dramatist.
THURSDAY.
MOULIN ROUGE—F. Ziegfeld's production of "A Winsome Widow."

Charles Frohman inclined to the belief that Gaby Deslys had been the most notable success of the theatrical year, although this important visitor had to share her honor with the native dancer who made the cabarets famous and is now embellishing a musical farce on Broadway.

American theatrical managers do not make an effort to put the taste of their clients in a flattering light. Perhaps that one who spoke of the low state of our theatrical entertainments in London was thinking of the amount of money that Mlle. Gaby drew for her fortunate American managers, but she was the single actress of the winter to add any appearance of veracity to his utterances.

It is no longer an easy matter to provide entertainment for all the audience in a theatre. What the first ten rows may enjoy will bore the few spectators in the balcony and probably keep the gallery altogether empty. The quality that makes for great success in a play must appeal to every variety of taste.



LEE BAKER IN "THE GARDEN OF ALLAH."



EMMY WEHLEN IN "A WINSOME WIDOW."



PAULINE LORD IN "THE TALKER."

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE THEATRES



PAMELA GAYTHORNE, RUSS WHYTAL AND FRANK REICHER IN "THE PIGEON."



STELLA HOBAN IN "THE MAN FROM COOK'S."



in the history of the theatre at any period under its new or its old name, and there is a pleasant relief from the necessity of going into their pocketbooks to meet even these expenses. So there seems nothing to make Mr. Tyler seem so much disgruntled with conditions in this country.

There are other showmen who would have said that the most striking phenomenon in amusements during the current season had been the success of the kinemacolor. It barks at the door of half the theatres in New York and already has made rather a triumphant tour of the outlying playhouses. It is quite true that the institution did not live up to its first promise.

Its success during the first winter that this device has been exhibited here has already put a serious difficulty in the way of the other moving views that are exhibited without the advantage of color. What the ultimate effect of this deficiency in the older processes may be it is not possible to tell now. It will assuredly have the effect of putting the black and white pictures, however important their subjects may be or however well executed the films may have been, into a secondary place.

be compelled to struggle valiantly. In the meantime there is no possibility of denying that this is distinctly the year of the kinemacolor. Its possibilities seem inexhaustible if they are developed in future years as they have been since the colored pictures were first attempted. Even from the viewpoint of the showman, the kinemacolor as an incident of the theatrical year seems more important in its bearing on amusements in the future than the pulchritudinous apparition of Mlle. Gaby.

The lack of influence of the drama eagles in this country which would never attract the amount of attention they do but for their utter utility in accomplishing the purpose for which they were presumably organized, may readily be understood from the action of one of the Boston branches of that precious organization. It issued a bulletin commending "Pre-servant Mr. Panmure" but refused to commend "Baby Mine," which was playing there simultaneously. Now of the fine quality of certain episodes in Piner's comedy there can be no discussion. Piner at his worst is the finest dramatist writing in the English language to-day.

to-day. Some of these were in "Pre-servant Mr. Panmure," which must have suffered from the defect which Gustav Freytag would have diagnosed as lack of importance in its motive. There was little or no interest in the mind of the audience as to whether or not a governess had been kissed. This inadequacy of the theme of the comedy probably accounted more than anything else for its failure with the New York public. It certainly failed, for it took a comedy by the greatest dramatist writing now in our language to draw the smallest audience for three weeks at the Lyceum Theatre ever contained.

"Baby Mine" on the other hand is frivolous entertainment of an altogether harmless character which has delighted hundreds of men and women in this country as well as in England. Naturally it has pleased in Germany, which is not surprising in view of the rather German character of the piece, which might well have originated there. Four companies are acting the piece this year and they will continue to act it next season. On the other hand, the Piner comedy fell so far short of public approval that its American career will end after a few performances in Boston and the cities of Canada.

Robert Hichens said that the dramatic oratorio was like the man running behind the crowd and calling it to follow him while it kept straight on its own way in spite of his suggestions. If that is the position of every commentator on the drama who does not make any distinction between the quality of the work submitted for his description, what is to be said of the practical effectiveness of a judgment which refuses to recommend what has been proved in the theatre as simple and harmless amusement for thousands of persons? Possibly the highest indorsement would not have sold ten tickets to "Baby Mine" during its Boston engagement. But its possibilities of any practical value may well be understood by the policy which suggests the recommendation of a drama of English life which has been

swiftly rejected here and the refusal to say a word in favor of an American farce which has practically conquered the world. There are some persons who believe that the comedy of Arthur Piner is deserving of commendation and the writer is proud to be among them. On the other hand, it should not be praised at the expense of other works that deserve praise as admirable specimens of their class.

Beethoven Tree's next revival at the Haymarket Theatre in London is to be "Othello." It is popular to speak patronizingly of the plays of Shakespeare as they are produced by Mr. Tree, and to emphasize the advantage of the beauties that are offered to the eye over all the other features of these performances. Yet it is something for a city to possess at least one manager who is sufficiently interested to maintain some academic standard. With all that Julia Marlowe and E. H. Sothern are doing for the American stage, it is no longer possible to speak in praise of the manner of their productions. The latest was "Macbeth," and there was scarcely a feature of that revival which went a step beyond what Charles Kean did so many years ago in London. Certainly there has been some sort of advance since that period. The New Theatre production of "A Winter's Tale," with its pretence of Elizabethan simplicity was superior to the inept pretentiousness of those painted shields and garlands and draperies which recalled such a remote period of theatrical decoration. Mr. Tree has not yet allowed Gordon Craig to mount one of his plays. Perhaps as Mr. Tree is now the foremost London actor of the day, and Mr. Tree easily the most noted stage manager of his time, it would seem just that Mr. Craig should have the opportunity to do in his own country what he has already done with so much success in other countries. But there is no intimation that he is to have any hand in the forthcoming production of "Othello." Perhaps when it comes to reviving "Macbeth" again, Beethoven Tree will turn to Mr. Craig, who

has some decided opinions as to the way of best conveying the impressions of that tragedy which are generally more comprehensible than some of his other theories. In the meantime London is to be congratulated on the possession of a theatre devoted to the production of Shakespearean plays as Mr. Tree is doing them. Even if their performance does not always fill the old timers with delight they are at least able to take pleasure out of the scenery, while not even that delight remains for us in New York. Perhaps after a while some of the newer theories of production will affect our own theatre and we will be having some of the artistic influences which are spreading on the European stage.

They are not altogether new for the sense of taste and beauty and appropriateness is not a new faculty. There have been actors quite capable of using mise en scene with the sparing hand of Max Reinhardt and yet creating effects quite as beautiful. Sarah Bernhardt did it one afternoon at the Knickerbocker Theatre when she decided to play Phedra after short notice and there was no time to prepare special scenery. There was a blue background of ocean, a stone bench and several columns that had survived the defeat of Jean Mounet-Sully. These were sufficient, for in the centre of the stage, with its boughs bending over the bench, the actress placed an oleander tree, apparently in full bloom. Its pink blossoms lit up the green foliage, and by this simple means there had been established just the feelings of the scene which the stage manager was seeking. Yards of canvas and carpenter's structures built to the rafters could not have done more to suggest the beauty of the Greek landscape and put the audience in the right mood for the mythological poem. Of such is the genius of the artist always when by the least expenditure of effort the truest results are attained.

Whatever the beauties of the Beethoven Tree revival of "Othello" may be, it is fairly sure that they will be some

what more modern in character than anything that American managers have yet given us. Recent commentators on English stage history have been claiming that the credit for bringing the stage into some sort of relation with archaeological correctness did not begin in France with the dramas of Victor Hugo and the senior Alexandre Dumas, but was to be found before this period in some of the productions made by John Kemble at the Haymarket Theatre in London. The Earl of Guilford wrote a play called "The Kentish Barons," in which the absolute deference to the dress of England of the period of the drama was enough to make the spectators smile when they should have been much more serious in their feelings. It was John Kemble who began the reformations which were destined to lead ultimately to the style of stage decoration against which the world is revolting to-day.

Of course Vincent Crummies and his pump were the inevitable sequence of the work begun by Capon, who seems to have accomplished his best results with interiors which in many cases he copied exactly from the original rooms. And it is of course not with interior views that the stage is to-day concerned. Mere copying is all that is in such an instance required. It is in producing the effects of out of doors that stage managers are to-day interested. As exact reproduction is beyond the medium of the theatre, suggestion by means of the forces that the theatre possesses is the aim of intelligent workers on the stage to-day. Capon must have been for his time an intelligent and enterprising worker, since authorities who have seen some specimens of his work preserved in the Shakespeare memorial at Stratford have been impressed with its qualities.

After its beginning in England the effort to make plays correct in relation to the manners and costumes of this period continued, although some occasional efforts of the same kind in Paris attracted attention to that city. It was at his Theatre Historique, unfortunately not of very

long duration, that Alexandre Dumas first interested Parisians in the exact reproduction of a mediæval epoch. In the production of a mediæval epoch, in sixteenth century life was satisfying enough to delight the public, and in the same spirit of fidelity to its original period was the performance of "Le Chevalier de la Maison Rouge." The Theatre Historique was not, however, intended to have long existence, and its doors were never opened again on such accurate reproductions of the life of an earlier period.

In the meantime the English stage had continued in the line of progress indicated by Kemble and his associate Capon. Charles Kemble, Macready and Phelps, paid to the matter of mounting before attention it had never received before and the link between Henry Irving of our own time and this earlier period of the drama is of course Charles Kean. His Shakespearean performances at the Princess Theatre, which extended over a period of nine years, were the inevitable predecessors of the famous nights at the Lyceum Theatre, although the Bancrofts, who intervened between these two dynasties, added a new note to the theories of English stage decoration. Just how serious were their contributions to the art of the theatre may be understood from the fact that there had never been a room with a ceiling and a real door on the stage until "Cassius" was produced in 1857. It was the elegance of their interior scenes that made the comedy and saucer drama of the Robertson dramatic significant in the history of the English theatre's decorative phases.

What Henry Irving accomplished familiar to many of this generation and the success of his efforts as a stage manager has its influence in leading one to regard the old school, if one may so call it, of scenery and costume in the same light that one must regard the acting of that period. The men and women who exaggerated the worst qualities of the old rhetorical school, who strutted, declaimed and mouthed, should never be taken as representative of what the best of the old acting was. Edwin Booth was assuredly an actor of the old school, but there is no period of the past which would not have delighted in his genius. Probably much of the old scenery was not nearly so bad as some of the old acting, and what seems most deplorable to the present generation was all probably just as trying to the taste of the discriminating among those who saw it first. Certainly there was nothing in the stage pictures of Henry Irving that was not a delight to the eye, although his scene painters did treat their work as if it were a gallery picture they were painting and not a graphic work of quality and imagination and a poetic mind back of the Irving plays, and there was need of a period of the world in which these qualities could not atone for the defects of a period. They are powerful enough to inspire any artist to rise above the limitations of his school and his time. Much that has come since the days of Irving has seemed more old fashioned and more at variance with the laws of taste. According to present day ideals, archaeological accuracy is not unimportant but a negligible quality in the composition of any stage scene. Whether or not it represents the spirit of the poem is much more essential to its perfection.

So far the commercial managers have shown themselves altogether indifferent to any of the newer movements in the art of the theatre. Perhaps they are discouraged by the uncertainty almost even the leaders of the new movement. It would indeed be difficult to find anything definite in the ideals of Gordon Craig, as he explains them, while the reports of his production of "Hamlet" at the Theatre of Arts in Moscow are meant to be taken seriously. Max Reinhardt's "Hamlet" with its stiff and unyielding obsequiousness to the ideals of art nouveau of the most virulent type, which of all styles of decoration seem least suited to such a play—was about as false to all ideals of taste as the most conventional designs of stage managers and scene painter ever could be. With such extravagant and erring leaders before their eyes, it is not surprising that the managers have not had time to investigate this new field.

One cheering prospect consoles the heart of the news that ten more theatres are now in process of erection in this city. There seems a certainty that they will serve only as substitutes for those playhouses which have yielded to the advances of the "movies." Practically three New York theatres have been pulled off the theatrical map during the present season. It does not often happen that playhouses are torn down. New ones more adapted to the new character of the quarter are found for them. The Union Square theatre still stands in the place