

SPRINGTIME in the PLAY HOUSES

AUGUST STRINDBERG ARRIVES



EVELYN PEERBOM IN "A BUTTERFLY ON THE WHEEL."



CHARLES HAWTREY IN "DEAR OLD CHARLIE."



GRACE LANET IN "MONSIEUR BEAUCAIRE."



JEANETTE HORTON IN "BARON TRENCK."



BLANCHE RING IN "THE WALL STREET GIRL."



OLIVE TEMPLE and ELLE NORWOOD IN "A BUTTERFLY ON THE WHEEL."

AT THE THEATRES THIS WEEK
MONDAY
MAXINE ELLIOTT—Charles Hawtrey in "Dear Old Charlie."
COHAN Theatre—Blanche Ring in "The Wall Street Girl."
LYCUM—Paul Rainey's African hunt pictures.

There should be comfort in store for the audiences that take delight out of what has been described as the "high-brow," for it is by no means so nearly exhausted as there had been reason to believe. The failure of any recent revival of that public which used to rally in some measure to these pieces shows how completely that bubble has burst. It was not alone in New York that the failure of the Drama Players to attract any attention to "The Lady from the Sea" was so complete as to bring out the smallest receipts which the Lyric Theatre had known in many a year, but the experience of the company in Chicago with this drama was the same. So there seemed until Tuesday night little opportunity for supporters of these exotic efforts in the theatre to find any new inspiration to enthusiasm. This enthusiasm, whatever its inspiration may be, is always likely to expend itself in talk more than in action. Yet occasionally there were some admirers of this sort of drama sufficiently moved to buy a ticket.

Now there is the prospect of a wave of Strindberg drama in comparison with whom the Ibsen is hopelessly young. "The Father," which was seen last week, proved to the audience gathered in the Berkeley Lyceum an interesting product. When it is offered to audiences composed of the same public that gained some fictitious appearance of success for the plays of Henrik Ibsen there should be cause for great rejoicing. In comparison with the heroine of "The Father" Hedda Gabler with all her pure coquetry seems a dancing ray of sunshine and Dr. Rank with his talk of decaying bones and oysters under the inspiration of Nora's switching stockings is a medieval puer compared to the outspoken Laura when she sets out to make her husband believe that he is not the father of her child. There should be a carnival of simple dramatic delights at the Berkeley Lyceum for those who revel in the decadent, pathological and abnormal in their dramatic fare. For there are four more plays by Strindberg promised to this fortunate public. How sad to feel that the tendencies of the author are said to be at their best and that no subsequent play will ever disclose another Laura.

She is such a dear, this Laura who deliberately makes herself appear unchaste and faithless to her marriage vows in order to keep the affection of her daughter altogether in her own hands. She even drives her husband to insanity and then to death in her relentless determination to gain preponderance in the control of the child. How she does this has already been told. Her suggestion that he may not be the girl's father greys on his mind until he hates her. When he questions her again as to its truth she makes his inquiry the ground for accusing him of insanity. When in his fury he hurls a lamp at her there are grounds for incarcerating him in his rooms and when he draws an unadvised pistol on the child who is about to be taken away from him there is no further excuse for keep-

ing him out of the insane asylum. The woman who seems, for some reason which the drama does not make clear, to have ceased to love her military husband has condescended to intense hatred of the sex could be built that the figure of this bitter, saturnine, implacable woman who was unfortunately not presented at the Berkeley Lyceum the other night with all the physical allurements that must have made her more potent in her influence on the man who was her victim.

Into this play there must of course be read the history of the author's life. Authorities on the subject tell us that just such an unhappy marriage drove August Strindberg into the insane asylum which sheltered him for several years. The woman that the play calls Laura was his wife and the child about whom the action revolves was his daughter by one of the living happily in Stockholm. Now she is living happily in Stockholm. What ever that first wife may have done to him he has paid the debt splendidly. He has made a character which may dispute the right of *Cousine Bett* to be the wickedest woman in fiction of any form.

The faithful servant who will at first not consent to put into the straitjacket the man she has reared from boyhood and then is willing to do so for fear that others might cause him pain is another portrait. This is said to be a tribute to the memory of his mother, who is the controlling force of womanhood in the play. As a matter of fact Strindberg and his brothers were born out of wedlock and their mother was a servant, while the father was a man of education.

"The Father" remains nothing more than a picture of certain incidents in the life of its author it may be regarded as an interesting study. But it is not to be said to possess the faintest note of international interest. Its application must be confined altogether not only to Sweden but to the Strindberg family.

The extreme leanness of the play helps it to impress its horrors on the audience. The struggle of the military husband to ward off the weakening of his powers which comes through the fear that his child is illegitimate and the skilful plotting of the woman who has learned to hate one another is a condition which must be accepted more or less on faith is another technical credit of the play. It is, however, more strongly indicated than the reality of the wife's unfaithfulness. Her reference to that is rather casual to have such far reaching results. But the Strindberg theatre in its purely artistic aspect must be studied in a play of less personal characteristics than "The Father."

The playing of "The Father" was serious and sufficiently expert to give the play its value even if there was nothing added to its qualities by the actors. Rosalind Ivan emphasized relentlessly the disorders of the mind of the wife, who might have been somewhat more plausible had she possessed greater physical allurements. Miss Ivan illustrated her characteristics

with naturalness and intelligence and no intellectual phase of this superwoman was omitted from her performance. She was, however, altogether cerebral. While this may be the predominating nature of the play, it would not have been so powerful without some more appealing feminine quality. Miss Ivan did not suggest these characteristics and they were the most difficult in all probability to reveal. Warner Oland is an actor of evident seriousness and he plainly understands the character of the military hero driven to insanity by the woman who has come to hate him. But he is scarcely heroic enough in physique to suggest all that the rôle entails. So much is curious and inconceivable in the condition of the American stage to-day that even David Belasco's occasional analysis of the trouble with his actors cannot explain everything that seems to cry for orientation. In Germany Emanuel Reicher, an actor of such talent and dignity as few men in the American theatre to-day, has frequently played the *Captain* in "The Father" and delighted in the opportunities that it affords. But it had to wait in this country for an almost unknown player to select it and give the work under the disadvantages inseparable from any produc-

tion in the Berkeley Lyceum. Wilton Lackaye could have acted the part well, but he preferred to devote his talents and his company at the Bijou Theatre to such foreign imitations as "Caucus sa Vie." Managers are reluctant enough to depart from the beaten path, and it usually happens that actors are unwilling to exhibit any more originality even when they have the opportunity to do so. Sometimes they do the theatre a service, however rarely that may happen. It is not in the least improbable that "Candida" would never have been noted here but for the enterprise of Arnold Daly, who found a part that suited him and produced the play. Richard Mansfield, who had been attracted to Bernard Shaw after "Arms and the Man," accepted "Candida," but soon learned in the progress of the rehearsals that the leading part was not suited to his rather inflexible methods. It was then that the play dropped into oblivion and might have stopped there but for the desire of Mr. Daly to find a part that suited him.

How different would be the career of such plays in this country were there the vogue of a popular name attached to them! The theatrical expert would answer that William H. Crane appeared

in a drama by Octave Mirbeau called "Business Is Business," which had been a notable success at the Théâtre Français with Maurice de Freudy in the rôle that Mr. Crane selected for his heroic experiment, and that the actor had never in his career as an established star played with such success. The public, which had grown accustomed to his peculiarities of acting in the banal dramas which for so many years supplied the main part of his repertoire, could not be suddenly brought to accept him in a thoughtful play that had some other purpose than to amuse his admirers. So it may be that "The Father" presented by such an actor as Henry Miller or Wilton Lackaye or Otis Skinner might not have appeared any more strongly to the taste of American playgoers.

It would at the same time be encouraging to the observers of the stage in this country to see some of the plays of the modern theatre abroad acted with all the care bestowed on the conventional importations which are rarely any more profitable. It would certainly have been just as much worth while for Wintthrop Ames to try "The Father," for instance, as the matinee bill which he has been performing at the Little Theatre. To persons interested in the exotic in the drama of the day it would have been more appealing than the play by Charles Rann Kennedy. It would certainly have been much more absorbing to any audience than the recondite curio described as "The Flower of the Palace of Han." The

presence in *Sunner's* home is not known to the visitors, runs into the room suddenly and stops short with a little exclamation of surprise. Instantly the visitor notices his hat—a mark of respect which she has just come into his life and she is *Cynthia's* father. It is a clever stage trick that conveys a psychological subtlety.

One of the realistic episodes in "The Rainbow" is the heroine's version of the song about the birds. Its naturalness is materially aided by the fact that in the translation which of the French song she hesitates whenever she reaches an idiom that does not lend itself to an English equivalent. Any one thoroughly versed in French understands the significance of the bird and the French words do not speak French unconsciously revealing an impression of realism that would result from a less intelligently directed reading.

One bit of symbolism that Mr. Miller introduced into "The Rainbow" goes unnoticed, although its effect is perceptibly felt by the audience. When the curtain falls at the climax of the first act *Sunner* is standing in the center of the stage with his profile to the audience, facing the door of his daughter's room. She has just come into his life and the happiness of the scene is suggested by the vivid sunshine that floods the stage. At the end of the second act, just before *Sunner* leaves the house to go to the office, *Sunner* turns from the mantelpiece against which he had been leaning and walks to the center of the stage with his profile to the audience and with his eyes fixed on the room from which the girl is about to come to tell him good-bye. It is the same posture the actor assumed in the first act scene. But now the atmosphere is entirely different. The room gradually grows darker as the scene advances and rumbling thunder suggests an approaching storm that has fixed the place of the sunshine that had filled the room when his little girl first visited his lonely bachelor home.

It is quite possible for an expert stage manager to apply symbolism even to a modern play, and part of the success of A. E. Thomas's drama of New York life, "The Rainbow," may be due to the skilful way in which Henry Miller has suggested and emphasized some of the young dramatist's scenes by his skilful stage management.

There is symbolism in the second act of "The Rainbow" that seems at first glance a piece of careless stage management. When *Cynthia* leaves her father's house at the climax of the play one of her hats is left on the piano. Her maid has packed her belongings, so anybody who notices the little summer hat lying on the pile of music might wonder why it had not been noticed and sent to the room where the little girl's maid was packing.

The neglect of the little hat is, however, a deliberate oversight. It is a symbolic suggestion that the influence flowing from the faintly little girl's personality remains in *Sunner's* home after his daughter has gone out of his life.

Another point in symbolic stage management that ultimately is grasped by most audiences passes every one at first. When *Sunner's* friends come up to his apartment in the first act one of them keeps his hat on his head while he and the other women in his private party expostulate with *Sunner*. It is not unusual to hear somebody in the audience whisper, "Why doesn't that cat take off his hat?" A moment later his daughter, whose

A SON OF HIS FATHER.

Frank Reicher Talks of His Famous Father.

Frank Reicher, who appears as Ferrand, the French vagabond in John Galsworthy's comedy "The Pigeon" at the Little Theatre, is a son of Emanuel Reicher, one of the foremost actors of the German stage. But Emanuel Reicher would never give his son lessons in acting or allow him to act in his companies. Frank Reicher made but four appearances on the stage with his father, though he had acted in Germany for seven years before coming to this country. He accompanied his father here on the German actor's tour of the middle West in 1889, when he was a boy.

"I think my father was wise," says Mr. Reicher, "in not giving me lessons in acting or allowing me to appear much in his own company. We were very much alike in physique, and when we spoke without being seen it was difficult to tell us apart. My father said often that if I gave my own lessons or if I acted with him that as an actor I would turn out to be merely a copy of him and would probably only copy his more salient peculiarities and never make a name for myself. He believed that I had a certain talent for acting, and encouraged me to adopt the stage as a profession and wanted me to go out on my own resources and thus to develop my own individuality and make my own name. It seemed a little hard at first, but I soon saw the justice of his point of view and ever since been very grateful to him for insisting that I follow his own lead."

That went into a stock company at Oberlin, and my first appearance with father was made there when he came to buy a second engagement as *Tréville* with the Oldenburg company. In honor of the fact that my father was playing the lead-

ing rôle I was cast that week, when still in my teens, for the part of *Tréville's* father. The manager asked him after the performance in my presence what he thought of my acting of the part.

"It was not all a great performance," he replied, laughing, "but I should like to see an actor of his years or experience who could do any better." That was great praise, coming from my father, for he was never eulogistic in his judgments of acting.

"In Hamburg I appeared in the same company with my father three times when he came to that city to play there. The first play was 'The Father,' by August Strindberg. Then he acted in 'Dumas's Kean' and in 'The Marquis' by Victorien Sardou."

"My acting has, however, been greatly influenced by my father, because I watched him act many times, and was always strongly impressed by the truth and naturalness of his method. I could not escape from his influence any more than the sons of other famous actors have when they have been in the same company with him. He was his insistence that I strike out for myself which saved me from becoming a mere copy of him and gave me the chance of making a career for myself. Often when I have been in doubt as to just how to gain the effect I wished for a part I have thought back and remembered how my father obtained an effect that was similar, and have found that I could gain it by the same means, though often I have had to adapt it to my own style."

"The greatest single thing which I have to thank him for as an actor is whatever faculty I have of looking at a part as a type, not as myself in that part; in other words, to act as the character I am portraying would act under the circumstances, not as I would were I in the same circumstances. My father was never satisfied merely to copy a type in his acting. He selected that peculiarities and personal ways of acting fitted the character he was to portray from many different individ-

uals, and then let his imagination work. I might say that he made an imaginative selection of details instead of modelling a character on any one type that he had seen. By observing him act and by heeding his advice I absorbed a knowledge of how to act which has stood me in good stead—perhaps, after all, that is the only way to learn how to act, to watch those who know how and unconsciously absorb a knowledge of how to conceive of a rôle and then how to express that conception."

THE MATTER WITH CHICAGO.
One View of the Theatrical Situation There.

Chicago has passed through the worst theatrical season known there in years. Eastern managers who might have come through very well with their interests in New York, Boston and Philadelphia have been almost bankrupt through their losses in Chicago. Plays that have succeeded in every other town draw poor audiences there. Drama leagues and other highbrow devices did nothing to swell the attendance of the playhouses. "What is the matter with Chicago?" has been the theatrical question of the day. When, in addition, local managers must put up with the trials reported in the following interview, it may be seen that their lot is not happy.

"Chicago managers of theatres are having a perfectly grand time with the labor unions," said the general press representative of William A. Brady's activities to a SEN reporter a day or two ago on returning from the West. "One of these managers is causing to be installed in his establishment a machine which plays on real musical instruments and is said to reproduce an orchestral inter-

Little Theatre would be an interesting systems of the theatre in this country that there is scarcely an actor who is the respect of the public to a degree which makes it possible for him to rely on theatergoers for any experiment he may want to make. Perhaps E. H. Sothern could count on the support of, say, such gentlemen as those who were generous enough to waste thousands in the effort to found a repertoire theatre on the west side of Central Park. But his experiments are not likely to be revolutionary. There are a few others in the theatrical profession who could get the confidence of any such amateurs in the drama, although many of them have so much to donate in matters they think will be appreciative and fruitful.

There is of course an important connection between the existence of such a state of affairs and the observations