# THE THEATRES in NOVEMBER

## Plays of this Week and the Last.

Mrs. Fiske in "The High Road"

Louise Huntly
Margaret Skirvin
Desmond Kelly
Roxanne Lansing
in
"What Ails You?"

Bessie Clayton With Weber and Fields

Joe Weber and Lew Fields

Gertrude Hoffman in "Broadway to Paris"

### THE PLAYS OF THE WEEK

**A Premise of a Novelty Every Night. Two Native Comedies and Two Extravaganzas.**

MONDAY:
Criterion Theatre. "What Ails You?" Farce by Rupert Hughes.
Garden Theatre. "Hamlet." with John E. Kellerd.

TUESDAY:
Hudson Theatre. Mrs. Fiske in "The High Road," by Edward Sheldon.
Harris Theatre. "Mrs. Christmas Angel." Matinee Performance.

WEDNESDAY:
Gertrude Hoffmann at the Winter Garden in "Broadway to Paris."

THURSDAY:
Opening of Weber & Fields's Music Hall with "Roly Poly" and "Without the Law."

FRIDAY:
"The Whip" at the Manhattan Opera House.

What the British drama would do without the doctor and his inevitable office, it is not easy to tell. Where could the hero or the heroine so comfortably tell the story which is indispensable to an understanding of the play? Where else could such sympathetic ears be found as those of that dear physician who is going to listen and sympathize and explain and incidentally put the audience into possession of all the facts it should know on the subject? It is certain that this beloved convention of the least enlightened stage in the world is not going to be withdrawn soon from the workshop of its playwrights.

Of course "Bella Donna" begins in the office of the famous London specialist, who was in London the hero of the play. This dramatization is just as ineffective in most of its scenes as might have been expected from a writer who put the doctor and his office in the first act merely because it happened to be the most obvious starting point. What is lacking in the second act is supplied by the demonstrations of Mme. Nazimova. Her reptilic eroticism furnishes for these episodes just the element of sensational interest that will make the drama popular. The Nethersole kiss of former years seems in comparison with the manœuvres of the Russian actress a cold salute.

When the languors and lillies of the lady have begun to pall on the audience—they would retain their effectiveness for a longer period were there a Baroudi who in the least way returned her expressions of emotion or revealed any of the masterful and virile qualities of this man in the book—the third act arrives with something like dramatic interest to form a foundation for Mme. Nazimova's acting. She is slowly poisoning the husband, who is lying ill on the dyahbeeah. His friend arrives, is repulsed before the action of this scene begins and again attempts to consult with the physician, who has been led by his affection for the heroine to be indifferent as to the exact malady of his patient. Here the struggle between the three is interesting. Victory seems at first to lie with the insolent heroine, who openly taunts the London doctor on his avariciousness and his desire to profit by the opportunity to be brought into the case. Then it is the same physician who finally triumphs because he has instilled into the mind of his colleague a suspicion that after all there may be something mysterious in the illness of this man who is dying from what he had been pleased to call an attack following sun stroke. It is finally the friend from London who completely triumphs, once he has seen the wretched sick man and heard his entreaties for a consultation. Adroitly cumulative, increasingly interesting is the progress of this act, which happens to be built on sound technical principles that impart its genuine dramatic quality.

It would be interesting to see Alla Nazimova act Cleopatra, not the Cleopatra of the Sardou version, but some cohesive arrangement of Shakespeare's play. She seemed to be thinking the other night of the serpent of old Nile and to find in this declassee London beauty the present incarnation of that earlier charmer. Her speech is vastly improved in clearness and almost without a trace of accent. It occasionally betrays a somewhat vulgar pronunciation, as if she were taking her ideals from persons without cultivation. The English language, spoken with education and correctness, is rare on the American stage to-day. It would be, therefore, little cause for gratification if Mme. Nazimova did learn to pronounce more correctly if she made this gain at the cost of a cultivated English speech. She speaks more distinctly to-day than Helene Modjeska ever learned to, and it would be quite possible for her to enact Shakespeare. To the last night she acted the role Fanny Janusheck never spoke the lines of Lady Macbeth with as little foreign accent as Mme. Nazimova possesses to-day. Then it would not be possible were she to play any of these heroines for the Russian actress to display so plainly her contempt for her roles as she has done for several years. It is not only that her scorn for them is evident in her manner. It is affecting her dramatic method to a degree which makes her, when she feels that the material is unworthy, altogether indifferent as to what extravagance she may commit for the sake of making what seem to her the only possible points.

Mme. Nazimova has never given indication of the least humor. She is always the inscrutable Mona Lisa. Her Cleopatra would not be the only role in the Shakespeare repertoire which would suit her strange genius. Perhaps she is reserving Lady Macbeth for later days, when there will be no further possibility for her to reveal the exotic Juliet, which would surely be her most original creation. The character of the young girl would be lit by the strange glare of that glowing, smoky passion which Mme. Nazimova more or less imparts to every character, and certainly the tragic note in this tragic life would be deeply sounded. Perhaps after a while the Russian actress will play some of these parts and then she will not at least presume to treat them with contempt, but color them in the sullen glare of her own genius.

Annie Russell's scheme of a theatre devoted to performances of old comedy seems most encouragingly started on its way. The Thirty-ninth Street Theatre serves as the appropriate home for such an undertaking, which is in all its branches an evidence of Miss Russell's wholly artistic manner of treating such an enterprise. There ought to be support for such a theatre in the catholic tastes of this public. Even those theatregoers who are supposed to exercise such an injurious effect on the theatrical taste of this city might be sufficiently curious to listen to one of the classic plays of the country which they have made their own.

It is not easy to see where Miss Russell will find the plays for any continued season of this character. It is easy to speak of the old English comedies, but there are not many of them. When one has acted "She Stoops to Conquer," "The School for Scandal," "The Rivals," "The Road to Ruin," "Speed the Plough," "The Country Wife," "The Recruiting Officer," possibly "The Critic" and "She Would and She Wouldn't," there is about an end to the list, unless one goes into the Shakespearian repertoire and will also regard "London Assurance" or "The Honeymoon" and possibly "Money," as old comedies. When is a comedy old enough to be really old is a question which such a season as Miss Russell's—if it lasts more than a certain length of time—will be compelled to answer. It will probably be found necessary in future years to take advantage of the leeway that Miss Russell allows herself and act modern dramas that fit into the general scheme of this enterprise, which deserves such loyal support from all lovers of the theatre.

Helen Lowell has probably been quite sufficiently praised for all that she accomplished in "The Red Petticoat." She is a comedienne so superior in most ways to the average funny woman of musical farce that it was quite excusable to acknowledge her abilities so generously. The unique quality of her fun seems to lie in her naturalness. It is quite conceivable that everything she does could have been done by a human being. Her extravagances never exceed the bonds of possibility. Of course so soon as she begins to sing and dance there is no longer any discussion of naturalness. But there is always about her humor the satisfactory feeling that she is not trying to be too amusing. It is just that quality which succeeds in making her about the most amusing of all the sisterhood.

### POINTS IN PLAYS.

**Elements in the Enduring Success of Certain Current Dramas.**

Few who saw the part as Agnes Booth used to play it will forget the delight with which *Belinda* in "Engaged" sighted the cream tarts in the midst of her distress, and walking over to the table said: "Thank Heaven, I can eat again." It is possible for half the characters in "Never Say Die" at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre to be thankful that they are able to eat, since there is a constant obbligato of food to accompany the farce throughout its progress. No less than three separate meals are served during the three acts. In the first there is a formal afternoon tea, with the viands rolled in on the baby carriage arrangement which has come to represent to the mind of the average American stage manager the last word in British aristocracy.

It is in the second act that there is still more of a meal. Nicholas Judels, as the French cook, is one of the most amusing figures in the play, and all through this act he is busy preparing the dinner which is ultimately served. The audience sees the elaborate electric stove, with the intricate supply of dishes, and whenever there is a lull in the dramatic action the white capped chef dashes over to the stove. Asparagus with sauce Hollandaise—Mr. Collier stickes one stalk in his eye—lobster à la Newburg, and soup are the features of this meal. In the last act Mr. Collier takes a hurried breakfast, but it is substantial—including tea, an egg and toast. Naturally Mr. Collier, being star and author of the new play, was able to insert as many meals as he wanted. And nobody realizes so well as the author what aid and comfort are to be derived from the movement, if not the action, that stage meals provide.

The revival of "Julius Cæsar" at the Lyric Theatre has met with great popular success, which may be the cause of William Faversham's optimism concerning the public taste in theatricals. At all events the actor met with his greatest success as *Marc Antony* and has just expressed in an interview this opinion concerning the taste of the public:

"Managers sometimes assert that they have to cavil to the loose instincts of the tired business man in order to keep heads above the financial waters, but that is all false. There is still a public for fine things, splendid performances, worthy plays. A laudable Shakespearian performance is almost insured against financial loss at the very outset, although the capital involved is many times that concerned in the ordinary modern play. Again and again we hear of the fondness of audiences a century or two ago for Shakespeare. The fact is true enough, but I don't think they were any fonder of him than we are."

Not a theatre manager in New York but agreed that the idea of "The Prisoner of Zenda" any longer possessed vitality. This scheme was very well exhausted by the playwrights who followed the example of Anthony Hope's dashing hero. But "Hawthorne of the U. S. A.," which is to be seen at the Astor Theatre, is built in just the same lines of the play which was at one time so successful. Douglas Fairbanks has an agreeable air of youth and enthusiasm. In a part that suits him he is always able to attract a large following. He is admirably suited as the young American officer in this fabulous land. James B. Fagan wrote the piece first as an adventurous melodrama and it was seen in London without attracting unusual attention. It took George M. Cohan to season the text strongly with his vigorous American vocabulary. Now the play in spite of its foreign locale really acquires a national flavor through Mr. Cohan's successful embellishment of the dialogue. One novel feature of the play is the marriage of the hero to the youthful princess on whose behalf he has undergone so many dangers. It has always been difficult to find some excuse for a matrimonial alliance between characters of such different social cast. Mr. Cohan and Mr. Fagan, however, have arranged the matter very easily. The old king quietly agrees that there has been enough monarchy already in his distant country and is proud to have his daughter become the wife of the citizen of a republic.

It looks now as if Gustav Luders would never again write music so melodious as that which made the fame of "The Prince of Pilsen." That operetta travelled around the world. In "The Gypsy" there is the same graceful form through all his music, but it lacks the vigor of the older score. Frank Pixley when he prepared the text of the new play at the Park Theatre frankly took refuge in conventionality of the most conventional type. But he does introduce enough characters to throw his gypsies into the background and impart the polite flavor of London musical farce to the second act of the play. So it seems certain to meet with success. It is unfortunate that for the enduring popularity of the play it lacks a comedian with a really rich vein of fun. Mr. Hazzard's method is neat—not wet, as the types said the other morning—and Mr. Lambert always plays well the silly ass Englishman. But a really funny man could do a great deal for the success of the performance.

### TO DELIGHT THE EYE.

**Pleasures for the Sense of Sight in Various Places.**

Dramatic education proceeds rapidly at the Hippodrome.

Twin deer were born in the menagerie of the building the other day and will soon be able to make their first appearance in "Under Many Flags." Their parents are the Scotch red deer used in the Scotch scene. They were imported last year from the highlands near Holyrood Palace. The herd numbers sixteen and skips across the Hippodrome stage just as the sun is rising. The new arrivals weighed over nine pounds each and are spotted white and red. After a while they are expected to assume the color of their parents in the Hippodrome company. In the meantime "Under Many Flags" continues to delight large audiences at the Hippodrome.

The first of a series of Newman Travel-talks to begin to-night at Carnegie Hall will deal with Holland. Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Delft, the islands of Zeeland and Maarken as well as less well known rural sections of the country will be described. Rural France, Switzerland, Munich to Berlin and the "Top of the World" are lectures that will follow.

The Paul J. Rainey African hunt pictures are still to be seen every afternoon and evening at the Bijou Theatre.

### TWO NEW PARIS PLAYS.

PARIS, Nov. 18.—Melodrama is supposed to be as dead in France as it is in most countries; yet the Ambiqu, the home of melodrama, is filled every night with audiences that cheer and hoot, jeer and weep at the right minute, and sit out five acts in rapt attention, and then go home thanking heaven they are true-born French men and women. "The Heart of a French Woman," the play that produces these results, is not only a well written melodrama, but it comes at the right minute.

Aubry, an engineer, has ruined himself in perfecting a war areoplane that will insure his country's success in the next war. A bureaucratic War Department will not listen to him, and his only comfort is his daughter Germaine, who refuses to marry her sweetheart, Capt. Evrard, an army aviator, in order that she may keep house for her ruined father. Thanks to the eloquence of the captain the War Minister promises to look a he inventor's plan, and everything seems bright. But need it be said that a serpent lurks in this Eden, a person calling himself Meyer and pretending to be an Alsacian, but really a German officer, Lieut. Anspach, acting as a spy. He has wormed his way into the household's confidence and purloins the plans the day before they are to be presented. Germain surprises him in the act, but he knocks her senseless and escapes.

Act II. takes places in Gen. von Thalberg's quarters in Berlin. The General is greatly troubled at the leakage of confidential papers and rebukes his staff for want of care. One of these officers points out that these leakages have all taken place since the General engaged his new governess, but the General is not impressed, because his governess came to him with excellent references, is a German and a charming girl. But when the governess appears we recognize Germaine and know that those references must have been forged.

Germaine is caught stealing documents and defends herself from the General's taunts on the ground that she did not begin the practice first. Then the pretended miller, Lieut. Anspach, arrives and throws the aeroplane plans down in triumph on the General's desk. But Germaine is still there, the other side of the desk, and as everybody rushes to hold up Anspach, still weak from an automobile accident, she picks up the plans and throws, or rather hurls (things are always hurled in melodramas) them into the fire, where it is presumed they are instantaneously annihilated. Last Saturday night, it is true, the fire failed to burst up into flames as it ought to have done, but none the less the skill with which the dramatist had led up to the point by making the General complain of the cold and have two logs placed on the fire at an earlier point in the scene, was much appreciated.

Germaine is tried by secret tribunal and condemned to twenty years solitary confinement. She boasts of her guilt but refuses to betray her accomplices.

The next scene is in a beer house, with students and some attempt to cheer up the audience after such strenuous doings. In it Germaine's father and lover arrive in search of news, and the ex-spy Anspach is there, so naturally there is a quarrel, and Anspach and Evrard arrange to meet in a duel on the frontier.

Germaine's escape from the citadel was easy work compared to Capt. Lux's from Glatz. Her lover replaced the pastor, who was allowed to visit her, and of course he left her a few files and a very long, stoutly made rope ladder by which, in the next tableau, Germaine lets herself down from the window. This scene outside the citadel is the poorest of the play. The citadel is a mediæval fort with a drawbridge. Germaine's father walks on—it is night—with a lit bomb, which he places under the drawbridge.

The sentry, apparently having seen him coming, withdraws long enough to allow him to place the bomb and Germaine to throw her ladder from the window. When Germaine is almost all the way down the sentinel takes a shot at her without result. The bomb explodes and the baffled guards inside the citadel are unable to pursue the escaping prisoner.

Final scene on the frontier, the duel, in which the French officer is successful, and the hated German spy is carried off among cries of "That's it!" "I am content" from the audience, and Evrard prepares to return to stand his trial, for it must be explained that the General, as governor of the citadel, had detected the imposture in the matter of the pastor and only let the French officer go long enough to meet his engagement on the frontier. However, the General, who is of course at the duel, decides he has already been somewhat culpable in not arresting Evrard before, and he determines to make a complete job of it, and frees Evrard from his oath and allows him to return across the border to join Germaine.

The other new piece of the week is "Frances's Idea," a charming four-act comedy by Paul Gavault. It was produced at the Renaissance and is surely fated to charm France, England and America. It will only need translating, and no scissors will be necessary to cut out a line as unsuitable to non-Latin ears.

Mr. and Mrs. Duvernet are a charming middle-aged couple, light hearted and gay, free from anxieties and perfectly ignorant of the value of money. They have been ruined more often than Mr. Duvernet can recall, but every time something has happened to save them. He still owns a wall paper factory which is not in a flourishing condition. He owes his neighbor, Count la Perliere, $8,000 and has not a cent, but he gaily promises his younger daughter, Lili, a dowry of $60,000 on her engagement to a worthy if somewhat ridiculous young man named Napoleon Couture.

He is about to order an electirc light installation in his seaside villa where the scene is laid, although the young engineer estimates the cost at $7,000. Another member of the family, a son, Henry is a worthy child of his parents. In fact, the only level-headed person is the elder daughter Frances, who looks upon father, mother, brother and younger sister as her four children, whom she tries to keep in some sort of order. Now 25, she has no idea of falling in love or making the best of herself by wearing pretty clothes; all her thoughts are occupied in running the house and trying to keep expenses within a reasonable limit.

Ruin this time seems inevitable, when la Perliere arrives with a proposition. He will wipe out his debt, advance $35,000 capital for the paper works, and marry the younger daughter; not that this must be looked upon as a condition, he explains, but merely as an accompanying factor, he having fallen in love with the young girl. The Count is, as he puts it, over 40, or, as his friends express it, nearly 50, and has been divorced recently.

Everybody is delighted with this solution of the difficulty. Frances, who does know what love is, can see no objection to her sister's abandoning Napoleon for the middle aged count. The light hearted parents put the case to their younger daughter. Of course they insist on their wish not to influence her decision in any way; still, she must remember that her acceptance means the family's rescue and her refusal means ruin.

Poor little Lili agrees to the marriage. But Gerard, the electric light engineer, surprises her in tears, and rebukes Frances for being willing to consent to her sister's sacrifice. Gerard and Frances have grown intimate by this time for they have been indulging in those disputes and arguments which, in M. Gavault's plays, are the forerunners of love between any two unlikely persons.

Frances, quite taken aback at an aspect of affairs she had quite failed to see, has an idea to set things right. The prospective bridegroom is in his villa when first of all his ex-wife calls on him, and his joy is so evident that she guesses he is about to remarry. She congratulates him, but when she hears it is a girl of 19, she shows a certain doubt and will only say, "I think you are a very brave man."

When she has departed the Count's aged butler gets in his congratulations, which are also of the bitter sweet order. The ancient family retainer is delighted with his future mistress, "so like the former madame," whose levity had caused the divorce.

These seeds of doubt had hardly taken root before Frances is announced, but not the Frances we have seen hitherto, who wore the cheap blouse and the working skirt which made the electric lighting engineer take her for a seamstress when first he saw her. No; she was wearing the latest fashion from Paris, and as if that was not enough to fascinate the Count, she forthwith set to work to put his house in order, went to the kitchen and explained why the stove always smoked, went to the poultry yard and showed why the hens would not lay. While she was so occupied poor Napoleon called, and the Count learned for the first time that he and Lili had just been engaged when the Count made his proposal. Thus enlightened, the Count determined to set free his fiancee and marry the elder sister. Frances accepts and joy reigns once more in the Duvernay household.

But the poor engineer, Gerard, is now disconsolate, as the news of the new engagement has shown him that he loves Frances. Frances, at his distress, finds she loves him, but is determined to carry out her idea to the bitter end. With her usual practical spirit she assures Gerard she will soon divorce the Count and marry him. The Count soon finds that his second engagement is not more certain than his first, and, having ventured to say that he does not intend to employ Gerard to do his electric lighting after he is married, in fact, that he does not intend to have Gerard around the house, Frances flames out in such a defence of Gerard that the Count recognizes that once more he is to be married from interest, not love, and being really a good sort, sets Frances free and turns his thoughts to remarrying his former wife, without withdrawing his promise of financial support to the wall paper factory.

### A SHY SOPRANO.

**Lee Kugel Knows One Who Just Won't Tell Her Name.**

Lee Kugel gives his word of honor that a distinguished American soprano who has sung with success in the foremost opera houses of Europe will make her début a week from Monday afternoon at Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre. This is her first appearance in vaudeville or anywhere else outside of a European opera house. At least Mr. Kugel says so, and he adds that neither he nor she has the slightest intention of revealing the identity of this mysterious artist.

There is a reason why the soprano selected the two a day in place of the Metropolitan Opera House or some of the other operatic theatres in this country allied with it. She says that being an American it was impossible for her to get a hearing at the Metropolitan Opera House. She found that foreign singers were preferred there and decided without revealing her identity to make her first appearance in vaudeville.

So anybody acquainted with a distinguished American soprano who slipped her moorings in the foreign opera house and whose whereabouts are at present unknown may find her next week at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. She will not wear a mask nor sing behind a net, but she just never, never will let anybody know who she is or was.