



THE DRAMA AT EASTER TIDE.

Plays and Their Actors



Nance O'Neil in 'Ann Boyd'



Napierkowska at the Palace Theatre.



The Castles in 'The Sunshine Girl'



Maurice and Florence Walton

THE THEATRES THIS WEEK.

Managers Are to Offer Some Springtime Novelties to the Public.

MONDAY—Wallack's Theatre, Nance O'Neil in a dramatic version of the novel "Ann Boyd," by Will Harben.

TUESDAY—Century Theatre, annual matinee for the Actors Fund, with all the leading players of the New York stage in the performance, under the direction of Daniel Frohman. The Playhouse, "Divorcé," to be revived by W. A. Brady, who will again present Grace George as *Cyprienne*.

WEDNESDAY—The Forty-eighth Street Theatre, "The Lady of Okla-homa," comedy of Washington life, by Elisabeth Jordan, with Jessie Bonstelle in the leading role.

It is not easy to discover what the public is expected to admire in "A Man's Friends," which George Tyler brought forward at the Astor Theatre last Monday night. It is not impossible for a dramatization of the building code to be interesting. There is no suggestion of poetry or imagination in such a theme, yet a playwright might find a path that led him to some more definite conclusion than the four acts of this new play of municipal life.

No impression one receives from all the play is so strong as the idea that it is too much belated. There must have been a greater interest in revelations of metropolitan graft than there is today. It was this supposed interest which could alone excuse the long life some of the dull dramas enjoyed at that time. Ernest Poole writes sharply and sometimes really witty repetitions of the usual language of these plays. The bosses have been talking on the stage for several seasons just as Mr. Poole's boss talked the other night. Then there has been somewhat of the same familiar strain in the recent convert of stage district attorneys.

Yet it is in its feeble sentimental interest that the appeal of "A Man's Friends" seems weakest. The audience is first invited to become interested in the fate of a dishonest Alderman, whom it has seen but for a minute or two. His wife's sufferings in his absence do not seem much more important to an audience that has seen little more of her than him. Then the decision of the District Attorney to abandon his candidacy for the office of Governor in order to act as the lawyer for his accused son-in-law might have seemed much more heroic and stirring and whatever else it ought to have been at the juncture of the play which brought it out had the audience seen more of this young man, had some chance to take an interest in him and sympathize with his sorrows.

It is not in the least sure that the failure of a man to do his duty through friendship rather than through the hope of financial gain, the theme of "A Man's Friends" if it has any at all, is sufficiently important for a play. It sounds very obvious to hear from Gustav Freytag that the motive of a play must be important. One is easily tempted to call such a statement of law a platitude which has resulted from the meticulous German habit of going into details. But the number of plays that fail because the motive is inadequate is large enough to convince anybody that Freytag has given no more important law to the stage. We might have had "Preserving Mr. Parson" with us much longer had its motive been adequate to a farcical comedy.

More than once has Arthur Wing Pinero presented and respectfully described as "M. Pinero's" by a foremost French critic failed to appreciate the importance of an adequate motive. In "Letty" it seemed to him that the sudden reformation of a boulevardier by the news that his own sister had eloped just as he was on the point of seducing a young girl of a lower social class would be a motive strong enough for a drama. It was not, however, so with all its truth and humor. "Letty" was lost to the stage long before

her time. Thus is there really vital importance in an adequate motive.

There are two characteristics of operetta twenty-seven years ago in the present performances of "The Beggar Student" at the Casino. One is the so-called "topical song" called "Sponge It Out," with which Ollendorfs of previous operetta dynasties made their greatest successes in the work. The other is the plump, sharply and fully revealed young woman in tights who acts as the general's aid. In the original production there were possibly half a hundred of these plump and pleasing persons, as Capt. Corcoran called them, and they were all arrayed in a way to reveal their curves with as much frankness as Viola Gillette does in the present performance. She is a comely reminder of an operetta style of an earlier period. That she acts with intelligence what lies within her brief opportunities is perhaps less true to the type. There were fair professors at the Casino to Miss Gillette in her well fitting fleshings. In that shapely group were Billee Barlow, Sylvia Gerlich, Alma d'Alma and other Victorian Frankie Baileys.

If the text of "The Beggar Student" seems old that quality is due rather to the form of the work than to the subject matter. The theme is one of the best known to the theatre. An impostor is put forward as a Prince. Then he is urged on to satisfy the wounded vanity of a crochety old officer. Finally the girl is tricked into marriage and the plot has succeeded. It was not alone in "The Lady of Lyons" that this scheme established its dramatic utility. It has served in other plays and always with effect when the material has been adequately presented. It seems astonishing to the mature judges of the drama to find a libretto in which a change of scene is required in both the first and second acts. That form is indeed unusual now and better librettos are made when such a device is avoided. But there are few stories better adapted to the use of comic opera than "The Beggar Student."

Of Milleoeker's score there can never be criticism. His form is somewhat different from that which his followers have accepted. Yet they change is by no means for the better. When Milleoeker composed his richly melodious scores the songs were still expected to tell some part of the story. They might be trios, duets or what not, but they were expected to carry on the dramatic progress of the piece. Nowadays nobody listens to the text of a duet or a trio and the composers know it. English composers of musical farce learned that their audiences could not be interested in any sentimental words that carried the story forward. All they cared to listen to was some fantastic rhymes about the amorous goldfish or the adventures dependent on a little bit of string. London taste in musical plays has affected both the composers and librettists in Vienna. So they have ceased to follow the models of Milleoeker's day and have come to write their numbers just as they care to, without thought of the dramatic side of the music. With all the impetus of their recent renaissance it is certain that not one has the melodic invention

or the skill in enriching his harmonies possessed by Milleoeker.

The revival at the Casino is really of a character to publish the best qualities of the operetta to a generation unused to them. The chorus is excellent, there are taste and liberality displayed in the mounting and the singers are capable. Blanche Dufiled still shows what a certain amount of cultivation may accomplish even in comic opera. It is unfortunate that the men in the company reveal no trace of the same cultivation. Arthur Aldridge's tenor is out of the ordinary. So far as singing goes George Macfarlane appears unable to do anything but sing at the top of his lungs. It happens that his inability to sing otherwise than fortissimo completely destroys the rhythm of "Setzen wir den Fall voraus," and until Miss Dufiled takes the theme the audience has no idea of its beauties. But he is an intelligent actor, although he seems to have taken more interest in other roles than he did in the hero of "The Beggar Student." The dancing of the ballet in this latest revival is distinctly inferior to what has been offered in previous productions of the same kind.

Probably "The Geisha" has never been so well sung as it was at the Weber and Fields Music Hall on Thursday. Alice Zepilli has a considerable charm of personality, and with greater facility in the use of the English language she would be a welcome recruit to the comic opera forces of this country. But she is not yet sufficiently familiar with our language to enunciate it distinctly on a first night when she is nervous. But she plainly won the sympathy of the audience. It was after the graceful song, "The Jewel of Asia" that the satisfaction with her performance was most enthusiastically expressed. Lina Abarbanell has probably played *Molly Scamone* many times in Germany. It is the lot of every soubrette in a Stadt theatre or even in the smaller opera houses to sing this part with some frequency. Fritz Schell used to appear as *Molly* in Nuremberg and Munich and even put "The Amorous Goldfish" on the Sunday night concert programme at the Metropolitan Opera House. Then she frequently sang it in musicals.

It was interesting to see Miss Abarbanell's efforts to appear really Japanese when she assumed the geisha's gray kimono. No American actress would take the trouble to do any more than put on that Oriental dress. It seems fairly certain that Letty Lind when she assumed the part first in London never worried herself about any attempt at characterization. She was doubtless content to be her familiar and charming self. These petted and adored personalities would not so soon pall on their admirers had they the wisdom to make an occasional effort to be a little bit different from their invariable incarnation. Miss Abarbanell is an artist in her little way, and she proved it on Thursday.

Lionel Monckton's name was omitted from the programme, although he was, with Sidney Jones, part composer of the score. None of Sidney Jones's subsequent works equalled "The Geisha," nor did they deserve to. With all its charm "San Toy" seemed more or less

of her company will act with her. A burlesque of "Hamlet" will be presented with Elsie Janis as *Ophelia*, Joseph Cawthorn as *Horatio*, Edward Mackaye as *Laertes*, Frank Westerton as the king, Tom Lewis as *Polonius*, Miss Minna Gale Haynes as the queen and Gertrude Dallas as the player queen. May Irwin and her company will present a comic temperance play entitled "Mrs. Pockham's Carouse," assisted by the members of her company. Henry B. Warner and members of his company will present the thrilling one-act sketch entitled "Detective Koen." From the opera "The Beggar Opera" there will be given three ballet numbers which include Miss Dolly and M. Agoust, principal dancers. Julia Sanderson and her "Sunshine" girls will also appear, as well as De Wolf Hopper, William Courtleigh and John Mason.

"The Lady from Okla-homa," a comedy of Washington life by Elisabeth Jordan, will be acted at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre on Wednesday night. Miss Jordan's comedy, which treats of the differences that may come between a man and his wife after he appears to have outgrown her, was acted with success in Chicago. Jessie Bonstelle will have the leading role.

THE WOMEN IN THE PLAYS.

Attractive Displays of Feminine Talents in the Theatre.

EFFIE SHANNON—Appearing first as the heroine of "Years of Discretion" at the Belasco in the old fashioned dress of a woman of 48; seen later in the most modish gowns worn in any play this winter, because they are not alone in accordance with the latest designs but are the gowns that might be worn by a lady and are not obviously intended for the theatre; later returns to her simpler style; in all appearances charming and a delightfully artistic representative of a novel role.

MARTHA HEDMAN—Blonde heroine of "Liberty Hall" at the Empire; posed as model of the Swedish type in J. D. Williams's standard volume, "Beauty in the Swedoborgian Countries, or Forging the Fjords with a Camera," distinguished and graceful in bearing and destined to find a wider circle of admirers in this country when she has greater opportunities than her parts in the plays of Bernstein and Carton afforded her.

JULIA SANDERSON—The brightest ray of "The Sunshine Girl" at the Knickerbocker Theatre; a figure of riant girlishness, slender, fresh faced and dewy eyed; looking on the world with the eager ingenuousness of the frightened bird; graceful in dancing and even adolescent in the matter of voice.

DORIS KEANE—Exotic, foreign and the essence of the artistic temperament as the heroine of "Romance," which is filling the Maxine Elliott Theatre; looking better in the frocks and coiffure of the '80s than in any other fashion of apparel in which she has ever seen here, since these unusual modes add the needed note of distinction to her ordinary beauty; an example of what a role different from any that she has ever played may do to inspire an actress to greater efforts and better results.

MAY IRWIN—Still the fun centre of "Widow by Proxy" at the Cohan Theatre; the soul of apparently spontaneous gaiety and ebullient good humor; disseminating a worldly but optimistic philosophy of life that cheers the Broadway spirit to a recognition of its own merit; as blond as a baby, with the consoling evidence that this golden aura will not fade so soon as baby's.

VIOLET DANA—One of the most

of current heroines, who is the character described by the title of "The Poor Little Rich Girl," who is at the Hudson Theatre until June; an appealing, natural girl, who is scarcely to be recognized as the same actress who appeared as the artificial, unpleasantly precocious heroine of a comedy seen earlier in the season.

MARY PICKFORD—Another youthful heroine in a play "The Good Little Devil," which is offered at the Belasco Theatre more especially to children; simple in her dramatic methods as the blind heroine, but direct and observant from her experiences in the moving pictures as to the value of distinctness; thus every gesture has its plain significance and every expression leaves its definite impression on the spectator.

JANE COWL—The youthful and slender heroine of "Within the Law" at the Eltinge Theatre; elegant and moving eyes, a delicately modelled profile and above all, a slim figure and the skill to wear her English gowns with grace; a certain control of pathos at times, a clear and expressive manner of speech; just now at the zenith of her career.

PAULINE FREDERICK—A sinuous and glowing figure of tropical allurements as the seductive wife of *Potiphar* in "Joseph and His Brethren" at the Century Theatre; moving with a serpentine deliberation of tread, wearing draperies artistically designed to display and not to conceal and making in all a picture of sultry, Oriental beauty which the pious *Joseph* with difficulty repels.

LAURETTE TAYLOR—Demonstrating in "Peg o' My Heart" at the Cort Theatre that charm may be as potent as the regular types of beauty; fascinating much more by the play of her nature on her face which expresses every change of mood; drawing and holding the sympathy and affection of those who see her by a stronger power than a straight nose and blue eyes; conquering by the force that in her case is really magnetism.

to start anything single handed with a New York cop, and don't you forget it. "I never looked at it like that," says Joe.

"No, and a lot of other people never looked at it like that, but it goes."

A hearty round of applause follows. When it stops to think the public has a keen sense of fair play. A kind word for a policeman is a distinct novelty in the theatre.

It was Robert Hilliard who interpolated these lines in the original text of "The Argyle Case." He has received many letters approving the sentiment. A judge of a criminal court has written to him. So has a retired ex-inspector of police whose name was famous as an enemy of ex-convicts. He writes: "I thank you as an old cop for who has the interest of the Police Department at heart."

NOTES OF THE STAGE.

Incidents and Suggestions in Recent Theatricals.

Grace Pitkins made another effort in the direction of theatrical prominence in Washington the other day when she acted the leading role in "The Love Leash," which was written by Anna Richardson for her. The play has a novelty in the suggestion of a "trial divorce" as a means of releasing themselves from the monotony of their married lives. The wife interests herself in a young musician and the husband devotes his spare time to developing the talents of a novelist whom he has met. But in the end they are both anxious to return to the former life and do not find it nearly so loathsome as the trial divorce which they had devised as a means out of their ennui.

A Gentleman of Leisure" has already had two opportunities without discouraging W. A. Brady, who owns the rights to the play in which Douglas Fairbanks and later Cyril Scott were seen. Now John Barrymore is to act the play under the title "A Thief in the Dark." It will soon be given in Chicago. Albee Brady will play the part first acted by Ruth Shepley.

Nobody believed that Victor Maurel would ever act *Napoleon* in "The Purple Road." He has long been retired from the operatic stage, where his greatest triumphs were won. As a singer of lieder he was not successful, and indeed needed all the devices of the theatre to make his impersonations effective. He was incomparably the best of all stage *Falstaffs*. Then his purely conventional and villainous *Otello* was a remarkably effective specimen of operatic acting. He was accustomed to all the luxurious eccentricities of the operatic darling of the '80s, and it was not to be expected that after a decade of retirement he could adapt himself to the methods of comic opera in this country. There have been successful transfers to the operetta stage from the Metropolitan Opera House stage, but they are in most cases young women who make the change. The only one who was not—Esterline Sembrano-Heink—soon returned to her earlier field, and it was a foregone conclusion that Victor Maurel would do the same.

Not all the dramatists earn the fortunes which "Paid in Full" is said to have brought to George Broadhurst. One of the most popular plays of the present year is said to bring to its putative father one-fifth of the amount paid to another playwright who does not figure in connection with the authorship of the work. Then Leo Dillitstein has been telling his woes as a dramatic author. He adapted "Vielka's Pappas" from the German and got only \$2,000 for it, although Blanche Ring is about to produce the play again as "What Happened to Claudia." Then for "Are You a Mason" Mr. Dietrichstein says he got only \$1,500, although it was supposed to be a source of much profit to his managers.

The author of "Believe Me, Xantippe" is a graduate of the Harvard school of playwrights. His farce has been successful for a long time in Boston, and he is the author of two other plays which have been accepted by New York managers. Then "Believe Me, Xantippe" will be produced by a metropolitan manager. David Belasco and W. A. Brady are the managers who have acquired the two other plays. The graduates of the Harvard school of dramaturgy always bloom in the words of the seedman's catalogue early and abundantly. But they are not always hardy.

It is said that the Shuberts and Arthur Hammerstein took measures to provide against loss through the interruption of the first performance of "The Geisha" by insuring the voices of some of the singers. The voices of Alice Zepilli, Frank Pollock, Lina Abarbanell and Carl Gantvoort, as well as "the general halcyon of James T. Powers," were insured for \$2,500. Prudent as this scheme was, it seems reckless not to have insured the voice of Mr. Powers. The last time he raised it in song within the hearing of New York audiences it seemed insured against insuring. Perhaps it was regarded as a desperate risk, or it may have been that it was difficult to estimate the premium on any interest so infinitesimal as Mr. Powers's singing voice; so there was sufficient insurance for his managers in letting it go at his general health.

"The Bridal Path," "The Brute," "The Spiritualist" and a few other masterpieces of native origin succeeded in reaching the stage during the present season in spite of the obstacles against which the American playwright must work. But it took the Stage Society to bring forward a play as bright as Arnold Bennett's, which really provided some entertainment for intelligent listeners. There was of course the usual explanation of managerial failure to recognize the charm of such a play, this time attributed to the weakness of the last act. It seems, however, that the plays of Arnold Bennett are destined to be seen here in the future.

Winthrop Ames, who has found it this year difficult to keep open a playhouse that seats only 300 persons, has announced the production of "The Great Adventure," which has just come successfully before the London public. It is a dramatic form of "Buried Alive," and was acted last year by the Glasgow Repertory Company. Now it is at the Little Kingsway in London. Miss Horniman's company has just acted in Chicago "What the Public Wants." Now that "Milestones" has been so successful that Klaw & Erlanger will probably clear up no less than \$100,000 on the American production of the play there may be a sufficient demand for the dramatist's witty dialogue to bring his plays to our stages.

Mr. Ames reports that there has been a

like a second brewing from the same tea.

It is difficult to see that the humor of the speeches in "The Geisha" has aged. It was always childish and British and obvious, and it was only tolerated on account of the melody and the dainty atmosphere. The humor of British musical farce was never its recommendation to American audiences. These pieces succeeded here not on account of their fun, but in spite of it.

EVENTS IN THE THEATRES.

Two New Plays of Native Origin, a Revival and a Benefit.

Wallack's Theatre will begin its career as a popular priced theatre to-morrow night with the production of "Ann Boyd," founded on the novel Will N. Harben, by Lucille La Verne. Nance O'Neil will play the leading role, and the actors associated with her will be the authoress, Wilson McFosse, Richard Gordon, Grayce Scott, the Witt Xoxing and many others. The four acts are laid in the home of the Boyds at the Crossroads, in the Chester house and in the new home of the heroine. The first act passes in 1860 and the rest of the play fifteen years later. All the scenes are laid in Georgia. Miss O'Neil has not been seen in this city since she created the leading role in "The Lily" at the Belasco Theatre.

William A. Brady will revive "Divorcé" at the Playhouse on Tuesday night. Grace George will of course appear as *Cyprienne*, a role in which she won her honors years ago. This version of Sardou's comedy to be used was made by Margaret Mayo, William Courtleigh, Howard Estabrook, Frank Reicher and other well known actors are in the excellent company engaged for this revival.

Daniel Frohman has turned dramatist for the sake of the Actors Fund Benefit, which will be given on Tuesday afternoon at the Century Theatre. Malvina Cavallazzi, head of the ballet school at the Metropolitan Opera House, is to exhibit her advanced pupils. In order that they may appear to the best advantage Daniel Frohman has arranged a sketch, which passes in the ballet school of a European opera house.

Laurette Taylor is to appear in the first act of her next year's new play, which is called "Barbarosa." This contains a complete dramatic episode and is by J. Hartley Manners. Orrin Johnson, Frank Campanou, John Westley and other members