

ON THE STAGE



of dramatic interest. He knew all the inner flippancy and sentiment of New York society which is so carefully excluded from the society columns of the newspapers. He saw its humor and its tragedies and dramatized them impartially.

The Princess Troubetzkoy, whose literary distinction as a poet and a novelist is established in her first play "The Fear Market," has restored society in its realism to the stage.

"If I were a dramatic critic and had been assigned to review a play called 'The Fear Market,' I should have been impressed by two things in the play," said the Princess, continuing.

"First, that its object was not to reform society, and second, that it was not complimentary to society. The construction, the acting, the scenery, the clothes, the rights and wrongs of the play making might not always please me, but I should recognize one thing, that the people in the play talked like the people one meets in modern society.

"If I happened to know any of them I might recognize in *Millie* a young society matron, who never failed to stand by her friends in a crisis, to say the right thing at the right time, to mother her slangy little husband in truly American fashion. There are women in society who are cats, and there are many more women in society who are stanch, sweet, executive, and above all loyal to certain standards that are universally understood by all women of character.

"As a critic, I should probably suspect that *Millie* was drawn from life, and I should wonder which of her society friends the author of the play had dramatized.

"I should probably think at once of these women in New York society

which I have tried to preserve, and that is the quality of the human beings who fill the society columns of the newspapers.

"We are used to seeing their pictures looking out upon us from the pages of the Sunday papers with the arrogance of the photographer's art. We are impressed with the sentiment or the self-importance, or the queenly expression of these women in society. They are much more human than they appear in the newspapers. It is no longer the fashion to impose one's intellectual inclination upon one's friends in society. The whole world of fashion talks slang. Not the slang of the shops, but a slang of their own, with a queer mental twist, a point of view that is to be found only in the highest society.

"For instance, in my play I have tried to explain this:

"*Millie*—*Bertie* thinks my slang unrefined. So I substitute 'chamois' for 'scent'.

"*Sylvia*—You're too ridiculous!

"*Millie*—Well, anyway—what gets my quadruped is this—how you can see him in the depths and not dive in yourself!

"*Sylvia*—*Millie*!

"*Millie*—Let me tell you something, *Bunny Big Eyes*—when the Lord made *Oliver* *Ellis* he pinned a blue ribbon on his nose. This, said he, 'is a man! Adam was just a fluke!'

"*Sylvia*—What about your *Bertie*?

"*Millie*—I finished him. The Lord only began *Bertie*, but *Oliver* was hand made in heaven from start to finish!

"*Sylvia*—I hope *Bertie* approves of your sentiments.

"*Millie*—He does. There's too much bow down and respect in my feeling for *Oliver* to make him jealous. *Husbands* don't want respect, they want comfort. If I thought you were going to turn *Oliver* down I'd hustle you right back to the Plaza and your dragon aunt!

"*Sylvia*—*Millie*! Really!

"*Bertie*—That confounded slang again! 'Throw a weep.' I ask you, *Oliver*, is that fit language for a lady?

"*Ellis*—In my opinion everything becomes our *Millie*—even slang!

"*Millie*—What a husband you would make!

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

HE unfortunate dramatic critics condemned to spend so much time in the contemplation of plays to which wild horses could not take them were not their duty to be there still capable of the emotion of surprise, although it is by no means that most of them are not immune to pity and terror. There was some occasion for their indulgence in the emotion of wonder at the Cort Theatre on Monday night. Owen Davis had to be a more or less irregular contributor to the literature of the theatre. It is not easy under these circumstances to see how they came to believe that the public could possibly be interested in "Any House."

This modern morality is altogether scorned with an old man's step from the path of the highest rectitude. He's a world old man at that, querulous, grumbling, and it is a question whether he could be any more obnoxious if he had than he is when fairly good. Why an audience should be expected to interest itself in his moral struggles or the attempts of his family to keep him straight, it is not easy to understand. Of drama, there is scarcely a suggestion in the piece. The corporation lawyer sits at his desk throughout three acts. At one point he advances as far as a table in one corner of the stage. At another he walks from one room to another. During the rest of the time he rivals St. Simon Stylites in the persistence with which he clings to his desk chair.

Edwin Arden is too accomplished an actor not to give to the role of the ancient crone all the values it possesses, but it is never within the power of an actor to impart variety and color to a role when the material for it does not exist. There is little or nothing here to endear it to anybody. Mr. Sills was so hard as the unyielding young secretary that the husband of the daughter, disinherited because she had married the man of her choice, was the only spot on which the sympathy of the audience, ever on wing in the air waiting to land somewhere, could possibly settle. Mr. Sills's utterance has unfortunately grown so nasal that it is no longer possible to listen to him with any satisfaction. Then because he happens to play usually the role of a good young man it is not in the least necessary that he should always look as if he had slept in his clothes.

Does it ever occur to the playwright to question himself as to the claims of what he is to put before the public? Does he ever ask himself whether or not there is in the contents of his three or four acts sufficient inducement to lead into the playhouse at the customary box office price the man in the street who is seeking to be amused, entertained or thrilled? Probably managers are more likely to measure the contents of a play in their relations to the public than the author who is delighted with the force of his own ideas that he is likely to find in it alone a certain source of satisfaction for any audience.

It must be true, however, that any careful contemplation on the part of author and manager as to the exact amount of pleasure which a play is going to give would result in the withdrawal of many enterprises which are now before the public and allowed to strut their brief hour. It may be true, as managers say, that there is no human means by which

the fate of a play may be ascertained in advance. There have been a dozen plays put before the New York public this winter which from their manuscripts must have proclaimed how little they had to offer. It ought not to take a clairvoyant, for instance, to suspect that the old man in "Any House" was not going to gather the public to see him bully his family, treat with the powers of evil and generally display in its most violent form the effects of senile selfishness. Even with the pill more or less gilded by the suggestion of an old morality play there seems here a failure of correspondence between what the public has a right to expect in the theatre and what it will get when it goes to "Any House."

"The Earth" is a newspaper play, to be sure, but it is a newspaper play with a difference. There is none of the detail of newspaper routine such as one had in "The Fourth Estate," "The Truth Wagon" and similar recent attempts to deal with the same milieu. The possessor of eighty publications and three newspapers of irresistible influence is a fantastic figure, with none of the attributes and limitations of the usual hero about him.

There is something Jovian in this figure of a man who talks in millions and is himself greater than any trust which, for purely business reasons, he is attempting to overcome. Then the locality of the play is England, and that removes from its scene some of the literariness and lack of imagination which is inevitable in the case of so many plays. The attempt to find in the atmosphere of newspaper offices something suited to the purposes of the playwright to-day has not hitherto dealt with the subject in a larger way. But the hero of "The Earth" may be said to direct his affairs with a Napoleonic liberality. That puts him outside the list of mere newspaper heroes of the kind usually seen in these plays. He is as fantastic as the conditions in which he finds himself.

"The Earth" in contradistinction to the majority of the plays that have recently come here from England, is logically built—it contains a beginning, middle and end. As the German expression so aptly puts it, the play at least has hands and feet. That is more than one can truthfully say of much of the Maugham, Sutro and Vachel drama which is coming to this country now in such quantity.

The fact that the play ends on an unresolved chord with the Cabinet Minister and his Irish sweetheart still in love and certainly in danger of exposure sooner or later, does not impair the value of the story. It is no more than an episode in the lives of three persons—the newspaper owner and the two lovers. But the episode is shown in all its phases. It may be that the threat of the woman to expose the owner of the newspapers as well as

herself in order that the political ideals of her lover may not be sacrificed is not an altogether novel device. But it is perfectly suited to solving the difficulty in the present situation. "The Earth" is the best specimen of dramaturgy that has come out of London in years.

The search for the sweet little play is unceasing. "Peg o' My Heart" was a sweet little play. It is said that "The Cinderella Man" is saccharine. "The Melody of Youth" is a sweet little play if ever there was one. Perhaps it is the sweetest little play that has been seen here for some time. It is too sweet for proper judgment by anybody over the ripe age of 18. Middle aged critics should not be allowed to give utterance to their unsympathetic ideas on the subject. What do they know about apple blossoms, mauve satin breeches, blind beggars and lovely young girls playing the harp to admirers that lie on the sword at their side? Yet they have been the creators of some of the loveliest stories of youth that the stage has ever seen. In all probability both M. Melhac and M. Halevy when they collaborated in such a masterpiece of sentimentality as "Frou Frou" were the same young matrons whose social status and dignity of character can go no higher in the society scale. At some time or other most of them have encountered the blackmailer and sweet him aside!

"Well, as a critic, I shouldn't be far wrong in my estimate of *Millie*, though as the author of 'The Fear Market' I must admit that no single character in my play is an exact prototype. I can say, however, without being challenged for my indiscretion, that the characters of 'The Fear Market' talk and behave like the people one meets in society in London or any other cosmopolitan society.

"I sometimes think the title of the play may be misleading, although it expresses the theme of the play, which shows how society people are victimized by unscrupulous journalism. It was intimated when the play was produced that it was a dangerous theme. If there is one place in the world where the truth is useful it is in the theatre. Personally, my profession is writing. I have many friends among writers, who, like myself, regard their profession with the same ethical regard for its dignity. The theme of the play deals with facts as I know them, as the whole world knows them!

"There is, however, a more significant quality in 'The Fear Market'



Julia Sanderson in "SYBIL"



Lucille Watson in "THE FEAR MARKET"

"Bertie—That he wouldn't! He's too absorbed in getting fair play for the man in the street to worry about a little side issue like a wife.

"Ellis—If I had a wife I flatter myself she'd contradict you with some warmth.

"Millie—There, little boob!

"Bertie—What's the use of bluffing? You know you're a hopeless idealist. Why, if you got your way you'd have a Virgin President and a grape juice Senate! You're all theory. And a wife's not a theory—she's a fact.

"Ellis—Don't you wish I was a theory!

"Bertie—No. I'm a practical man—facts suit me down to the ground. *Oliver's* wife would have to suit him up to the sky.

"Ellis—A bit of earth—a bit of sky—mix well with as much love as will be absorbed—that's my recipe for an ideal wife.

"Millie—You see? He has thought of it! We'll marry him!

"Bertie—A nice husband he'll make—always tilting at windmills!

"Ellis—Excuse me. . . . I tilt at buzz-saws.

"Bertie—What difference—to your wife? I suppose you think she'd find her happiness darning your socks while you were off tilting?

"Ellis—Perhaps she'll go a-tilting with me! Which would you do?

"Sylvia—17

"Ellis—Yes—you. Would you prefer the socks or the buzz-saws?

"I refer to these lines in my play because to my mind they interpret the most interesting phase of the society idea, which is after all the reason that the play was ever written. I wanted to put on the stage a reflection of a picture of New York's society as it is. It might just as well be London society, however, but it could not be Richmond society or the society of Cleveland, Ohio. In Richmond all the young matrons know that their husbands carry revolvers, which I understand is not the case in New York.



Marguerite Namara in "ALONE AT LAST"

HACKETT'S "MACBETH."

The Actor Tells "The Sun" of Its Characteristics.

James K. Hackett has succeeded in interesting New York in his beautiful revival of "Macbeth" to a degree which has made it the most popular of all recent productions of that play. The Criterion Theatre has been filled ever since the first performance. The tragedy will probably be acted for a long time to come.

Mr. Hackett told a SUN reporter the other day his impressions of the char-

acter to which he has devoted so much study. He said:

"A conception of *Macbeth* cannot be expressed in a few words or even in a few pages, except in a most general manner. I consider it a great honor that the public should consider my opinion of this greatest of all Shakespeare's tragedies to be worth while quoting.

"When I refer to *Macbeth* as the most difficult of all Shakespeare's tragedies I merely voice the opinion of the majority, not only of our English Shakespearean commentators but foreign commentators, notably the German. I may also add that Abraham Lincoln in a letter to my father concurred in this opinion, and within the last few days I have received a letter from the Hon. Theodore Roosevelt in his characteristic style, from which I take the liberty of quoting the following sentence:

"I have more than once said however different I may be from Lincoln in other respects I resemble him in the fact that *Macbeth* is my favorite play." Thus with the majority of the older commentators and reinforced by two such brilliant minds as Lincoln and Roosevelt, I feel that my premises in stating that *Macbeth* is the greatest (and most difficult) of all Shakespeare's tragedies are sound.

"Now we naturally come to the most doubtful point, and that is whether my conception of the character of *Macbeth* is at all worth while. Let us start upon this hypothesis. Shakespeare wrote, for the sake of argument, forty plays. So-called students of Shakespeare therefore must have started their analysis at least at the age of mental puberty, which, let us assume, would be approximately 21. Therefore to familiarize one's self with these many and varied works it would require, purely from a critical and literary analysis, at least two years for each play before one could speak with any authority worth while regarding each or any individual play, and this analysis would be solely not a creative analysis in the sense of the projection of the part by the players, but solely a theoretic analysis, without the additional study which is necessary to project the part before the mind of the auditor or auditors (the plural is used, unfortunately with a meaning). If the fact that I was fed upon *Macbeth* from the time I was 7 through my hereditary association with the stage (and I might add occasionally to the point of mental and physical indigestion), and if the fact that I have averaged at least four hours a day for nearly two years on the character and the play of *Macbeth* alone be of any value, then the public is right in asking for my humble views, and I herewith gladly give them.

"I realize thoroughly that 'conception' does not mean successful execution of the thought or thought conceived, so let us remember that I am speaking purely regarding my conception and not in any sense regarding my execution.

"*Macbeth* seems to me very clearly to appear first in the play as a whole soldier and warrior. He has rescued his country from great physical risk by winning bloody victories over two armies and has saved Scotland from the invading hosts. He is acclaimed by his King and fellow soldiers exactly as any triumphant, warlike soldier today would be acclaimed upon his return from any successful military expedition in which he may have been engaged.

"He is a man sensitive to the surroundings of his time, both mentally and physically. That he is a much beloved man is shown conclusively by the King's reference to him; that he is tender hearted and noble is shown by the lament of the milkmaid, 'Thou art too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way.' To my mind this admits of no argument. When he meets the witches for the first time he is not awed by them; he is in the seventh heaven of delight, buoyed up by victory, returning after his triumphant campaign not only to honor but to his home and his wife's love. The spirit of evil, to my mind, is symbolized by the witches. They were used by Shakespeare to give a note of reality to the audience of his day—the medium of witchcraft, which probably was more compelling in that time than in the present era, and from the money evil influences which unprofessionally had been planted by the secret, black and midnight hags' start the thought which makes for his temptation, and ultimately his undoing.

"To hold that *Macbeth* has no heart or no remorse is, in my opinion, untenable. He weighs carefully whether the one hour will be the life and all that shall not commit the murder; but the many a strong man, physically and mentally pliable, he is gradually persuaded, not so much because the wish is not father to the thought but because of her influence in urging him in the other moments between himself and his wife.

"And I might say here that I can recall at the present hurried dictation no case of important historical significance, where a man was harnessed, especially a great physical being like *Macbeth*, by a virago of a woman, as portrayed by so many according to the commentators. *Lady Macbeth* of the present time, however, is an immediate instance in which, by the subtlety of their appearance, the seductive femininity of women have twisted the big, best and strongest of men of all time to their desired ends. This I conceive briefly to be the impetus which persuaded *Macbeth* to proceed on opportunity so unexpectedly at hand, reinforcing the predictions of the witches, which have partially been realized by the ascendancy to the Throne of *Edward* and bitterly wounded by the injustice of the King, whose crown and kingdom he has just saved by placing his son over *Macbeth* by naming him Prince of Cumberland, then by superseding *Macbeth* in succession, the crown. There is nothing in military strategy which gives so harshly upon the sensibilities of a soldier as undeserved preferment over deserved position, either by politics of today or by court intrigue of yesterday.

"Immediately the murder is done *Macbeth* is torn by remorse, which is shown line after line. *Lady Macbeth* is also a torn by remorse, and while she in every way tries to support him and encourage him, yet in her moments when alone, as shown in the scene when she asks him to come with her, she is a weak and clinging feminine creature; this culminates in her complete breakdown, as shown conclusively in the scene walking barefoot on the sleepers of a soldier as undeserved preferment over deserved position, either by politics of today or by court intrigue of yesterday.

"*Macbeth* plunges from one crime to another in an endeavor to extricate himself. *Lady Macbeth* shrinks from the additional horrors, and *Macbeth*,

THE PLAYS THAT LAST.

The plays that continue in New York are "Our Mrs. McChesney" at the Lyceum Theatre, "Cock of the Walk" at the Coban Theatre, "Hobson's Choice" at the Comedy Theatre, "The Little Minister" at the Empire Theatre, "The Boomerang" at the Belasco Theatre, "Common Clay" at the Republic Theatre, "The Pride of Race" at the Maxine Elliott Theatre, "Hit the Trail Holiday" at the Harris Theatre, "Just a Woman" at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre, "The Cinderella Man" at the Hudson Theatre, "Major Barbara" and "The Earth" at the Playhouse, "Treasure Island" at the PUNCH and JUDY Theatre, "Macbeth" at the Criterion Theatre, "The Weavers" at the Garden Theatre, "The Melody of Youth" at the Fulton Theatre, "The Great Lover" at the Longacre Theatre, "Any House" at the Cort Theatre, "Erstwhile Susan" at the Gaiety Theatre, "Fair and Warmer" at the Eltinge Theatre, "Abe and Margret" at the Lyric Theatre, "Margaret Schiller" at the New Amsterdam Theatre, "The Unchastened Woman" at the Thirty-ninth Street Theatre, and the Washington Square Players at the Broadway Theatre.

The musical plays are "Very Good Eddie" at the Princess Theatre, "Alone at Last" at the Shubert Theatre, "The Blue Paradise" at the Casino Theatre, "Sybil" at the Liberty Theatre, "The Coban Revue 1916," at the Astor Theatre, "Robinson Crusoe, Jr.," at the Winter Garden, "Stop! Look! Listen!" at the Globe Theatre, and "Katinka" at the Forty-fourth Street Theatre.

The Hippodrome is open with Sousa's Band, "Hip Hip Hooryay" and "Flirting at St. Moritz," a big spectacular offering.

perceiving this, tries to keep from her his various plots—notably that of *Banquo*.

"I could continue if I thought it would be of interest, but I think I have said enough on this score. Some critics have called my interpretation of *Macbeth* the new *Macbeth*, and I believe in many respects it is as far as I can glean from the many analyses which are to be obtained. Perhaps my conception may be nearest that of the greatest German Shakespearean critic, Schlegel, than any other with whom I am familiar. I think it was Aristotle who said that a tragedy requires two things: horror and sympathy, and a writer, commenting upon *Macbeth*, said that it was therefore easy to know why *Macbeth* was the least appreciated of all Shakespeare's plays by an audience, that is, because it possessed the one thing without the other, it had horror but no sympathy. This in my opinion is not true and it is my impression that I have succeeded in a large degree—as much as is compatible with the play in gaining what sympathy is justifiable, and I have striven from start to finish to accentuate the congenial intimacy between *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*.

"There is one line that seems to me to have put my own commentator on *Macbeth* that I have ever read on the wrong track regarding *Macbeth's* conception of the murder of *Duncan*. In the third scene of the first act *Macbeth* says: 'My thought, whose murderer is not *Duncan*, shakes as my state of mind, that function is smothered in surmise, and nothing is, but what is not.' The word murderer here (or in the old texts) murderer has seemed to have made an undue and wrong impression upon the minds of readers. *Macbeth* has no idea of murdering *Duncan* at this point in the play, 'thought' whose extermination is yet but fantastical, that shakes so his single state of mind.' In other words, he is completely confused. The word 'murder' here does not apply to *Duncan*. It signifies the 'murder' or his thought. His brain is in a whirl and he tries to give his thoughts a form, turns to *Banquo* and says, 'My dull brain was wrought with things forgot! He has put any such diabolical phantasies aside at that moment for good and all. The thought, however, is restored with interest when *Duncan* makes his appearance in the presence of *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*. My humble opinion is that the first moment he seriously considers the possibility of having *Duncan's* kingship is where he says, 'State like you'll bleed.' Even when *Lady Macbeth* urges him in various and feeble ways after their first meeting, 'We'll talk further' in other words, his wife's arms at that moment are more attractive to him than plotting against the king.

"In our interpretations (even if it be Shakespeare's) let us be human if possible, and let us be as good as our own thought; where the more explicit was foisted through the lens of so many eminent writers of the past, have clouded the strange actor, who has been so busy in the obvious work of his profession that he has not been able to strike out for himself, and accepted what has been seen in print ever a name that has become venerable by the coat of dust which has accumulated upon his back.

NEW YORK SOCIETY PUT INTO A PLAY

"New York society," said the Princess Pierre Troubetzkoy, nee Amelie Rives, "is a hard working, virile, active community governed by the same rules of human interest as the rest of the world. They are in society because they belong there. How they get in, why they stay there and how they get out of society constitutes excellent material for the theatre."

The subject was delicate, because the Princess Troubetzkoy is of New York society herself, not by reason of her family alone, but of her intelligence, her own American aristocracy and the innate graces of manner and feeling. These, she explained, were a subtle element in social success.

"Myself, I have friends in all places," she said. "I took as much trouble and pleasure in curing a poor man of the grip as I would in attending the most exclusive entertainment in New York society. Human beings in their elemental qualities are alike. We love, we hate, we envy, we are truthful or we lie, according

to our individuality. A diamond tiara does not ornament the soul, it is the soul that makes the diamond tiara becoming.

"Society life as an occupation used to be stimulating, to-day it can be amusing. There are always dull people, people who have a lot of money and who give society a reputation for stupid hypocrisies and extravagances."

Since those society plays of brilliant dialogue which the late Clyde Fitch knew how to write no modern playwright has taken his exclusive field

A Play a Week Here.

There will be an opportunity to see Eva Tanguay in musical comedy at the Standard Theatre this week. She plays the cook—think of the dainty Eva as a corded blue—in "The Girl Who Smiles," which was last fall at the Lyric and other theatres. Miss Tanguay, who played "The Box" last week in this play, and there is no reason to doubt that her delicate humor will prove equally irresistible further down town. She will be supported by some of the members of the original cast.

The Theatre Francaise is to close its season after a week devoted to "Le Cœur" by Francis de Croisset, the brightly comely acted several years ago at the Lyceum Theatre as "The New Secretary." Edgar Reeman and Lillian Ginzey are to have the leading roles.

The Irving Place Theatre will on Wednesday present "Das Wirthshaus in Sibirien; Petrograd," by Max Simon. This is a play of the eastern frontier and the campaign of Von Hindenburg. Singularly enough, the treatment of this theme is said to be comic.

"In Old Kentucky" has proved such a magnet at the Manhattan Opera House that it will be continued there during the week.