

# The Theatres at the Year's End



ERNEST GLENDINNING and PHOEBE FOSTER in "THE GIPSY TRAIL"

By LAURENCE REAMER.

NOW Jacques Copeau is going to carry the war into Africa by performing "Twelfth Night" at the Theatre du Vieux Colombier. It is no new task for the actor. He won praise for the effort in London, which had for years past been compelled to take its Shakespeare from the austere Mr. Benson or the opulent Sir Herbert Tree; so any change was possibly a relief. Of the fashion of acting the plays at the theatre in Thirty-fifth street there have already been suggestions in previous representations here of the poet's dreams.

It is not at all certain in the mind of the writer that the extreme simplicity of the manner at the Theatre du Vieux Colombier is not more destructive of illusion than the most overdressed play that was ever witnessed. So wide a departure from the accepted traditions of the theatre



GRACE CARLYLE and LOU TELLEGEN in "BLIND YOUTH"



JOSE RUBEN and MRS. FISKE in "MADAME SAND"



JUSTINE JOHNSTONE and CRAIG CAMPBELL in "OVER THE TOP"



GRACE VALENTINE and LEO CARRILLO in "LOMBARDI LTD"



MAXINE ELLIOTT in "LORD and LADY ALGY"



CHARLES CHERRY and VIOLET HEMING in "THE NAUGHTY WIFE"

sprinter of the Rangers Cricket Club of Calcutta and in 1909 was sent to England to represent India in competition for the London Athletic Club championships. There he won the 100 yard dash in 16 seconds flat, the quarter mile low hurdles and the 129 yard hurdles in the remarkable time of 15.4-5 seconds, which time hasn't been bettered in England to this day.

The following week he went to Paris to represent India in the Olympic games, and there met his Waterloo in the person of Arthur Duffey, the famous Georgetown University record breaker, then in his prime. He was also beaten in the hurdles by Kraenzlein, who in winning the race created a new world's record.

The following year in a football scrimmage he emerged from under the pile with a smashed foot. A damaged tendon resulted in his permanent retirement from the strenuous in athletics, and he has since been reduced to golf.

In 1907 he went on the stage in London to commence what the London dailies described as a "military career." In six months from the date he made his first entrance as the but-



ROMA JUNE in "FLO FLO"

may be more disturbing than the most pedic adherence to conventions. It used to be a criterion of such success in such ways whether or not the spectator's enjoyment of the play was or was not destroyed by the manner of its presentation. Inadequate investment was certain to provoke ridicule or annoyance, while excess in garishness irritated by the suggestion that merely to please the eye or the ear the appeal to the mind and the heart had been sacrificed. So resentment followed in the trail of this feeling. Perhaps it was after all less inimical to

pleasure than the poverty of decoration that might result in absurdity.

Here arises the question as to the intensely Jeffersonian simplicity of M. Copeau's manner. The Queen stands on the terrace which stretches across the stage and surrounded by her courtiers and her maid of honor communicates to the spectators some illusion of the grandeur of her position. But how much greater would be this illusion if the monarch did not stand before a staircase that was obviously made of three painted boards which had been shoved together in order that the steps might be broader. The ears of the audience soon convinced them that those steps were of wood. With the same conviction it was plain that the platform on which nobility perched was of the same resonant material.

Of course it need not be too material for any genius to think of the possibility of so deadening these wooden boards that their reverberations may not disturb the enjoyment of the feet of the actors on the planks. There are various ways in which even the tyros of the theatre's mechanics know how to deaden sound under such conditions. During the scenes of "Les Fous de Scapin," acted on the platform, the din was ceaseless.

Such details may be trivial. But illusion is the soul of the theatre. Why should the uncommon skill, the almost unprofessional freshness and lack of perfunctory attention to their tasks which distinguishes all these French players in almost equal degree be counteracted by such an obvious physical cause of distraction? The cost of moral qualities is sound in the art of the theatre. But M. Copeau with his rattling planks doth protest too much.

So far as M. Copeau's theories have been observable in the plays given at the transformed Garrick they would make of the theatre a museum which is to maintain in uncommon freshness and vividness the beauties of former generations. The general formula of the institution, if its principles have all been published in the plays so far seen, cannot closely be related to life. They must inevitably rest on the foundation of an ancient art since it is from the past that M. Copeau derives his inspiration. Yet there may be in the representations the charm of a primitive or the rococo bloom of a seventeenth century study of life or the fading fragrance of a derelict page from the age of the Romantics—and these are enough in the very immediate tendency of the contemporary stage to be thankful for. So M. Copeau's repertoire is gratefully accepted.

The scenic authority is often a problem in other ways. His latest tendency is to follow the mode of the interior decorator in its most recent manifestations. It is needless to say that the use of these inspirations are carried on the stage to a point never contemplated in their use by persons of taste. The modes of decoration are like the modes of the actress's frocks—exaggerated beyond value for any but theatrical figures. The latest example of how the theatre may travel ahead of actuality is to be seen in the second act of "The Gypsy Trail."

Exaggerating the fashion for empty rooms the designer has equipped the interior of this country house so

meagly that the effect is altogether cold and chilling. It may be that the intention is to suggest an apartment in a temporarily unoccupied home. Certainly that impression is produced. The whole tendency is a curious contrast to the former effort of the stage decorators. It used to be their object to make rooms look as if they were lived in.

### BEFORE XMAS PLAYS.

Managers to Offer New Pieces in Advance.

There are to be a few novelties before the holiday week which brings some new plays, musical and otherwise, before the public.

On Thursday John Cort will present at the Cort Theatre a new musical entertainment called "Flo-Flo," book and lyrics by Fred de Gresac and music by Silvio Hein. "Flo-Flo" is a magnified version of Fred de Gresac's "The Bride Shop," which for some time has been a headline act in vaudeville. The story has to do with a young girl who, having broken off her engagement to a youth in her home town, visits the city. There she becomes the bride-to-be of a youth among the idle rich, who at once proceeds to shower this world's bounties upon her. She is escorted to the various shops, where, under the supervision of the most exclusive modistes, she is equipped with a trousseau of exquisite design and manufacture. Manikins are paraded before her wondering eyes. In one of the shops she again meets her former lover and romance once more takes possession of her. The cast will include James B. Carson, Oscar Figman, Roma June, Fenita de Soris, Dolly Castles, Arthur Mills, Thomas Handers, Leon Leonard, George Rendall, W. H. Mack, Louise Beaudet, Katherine Stout, Anna Sands and Blanche Bellaire.

"Yes or No," a new drama by Arthur

### The Week Before Xmas.

MONDAY—The Palace. Sarah Bernhardt finishes her annual series of farewell appearances for 1917.

THURSDAY—Cort Theatre. "Flo-Flo," by Fred de Gresac and Silvio Hein, will be presented by John Cort.

FRIDAY—The Forty-eighth Street Theatre. "Yes or No," a comedy by Arthur Goodrich, will be offered by Weber & Anderson as a successor to "The Very Idea."

SATURDAY—The Broadhurst Theatre. William Faversham will revive with Maxine Elliott and other noted actors R. C. Carton's "Lord and Lady Algy." The Fulton Theatre. Hitchcock and Getz will put before the public a new review called "Words and Music."

Goodrich, will be presented at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre on Friday. G. M. Anderson and L. Lawrence Weber make the production. The leading roles are played by Willette Kershaw, Emilie Polini and Marjorie Wood.

"Yes or No" is described as a comedy drama of women and their homes. The title comes from the fact that most of the big crises in life are settled by one of these two little words. Two women face such crises in this play, and their answers change and mould their after lives. One of these women is rich; the other is poor. In the presentation of the double plot a method of ancient drama is used, which with the aid of modern devices in the theatre becomes distinctly novel. While the stories of rich and poor are parallel they are not balanced. The structure of the play demands that one story is that of a woman's development while the other is that of an entire family.

Players in a large and capable cast are Eva Francis, Byron Beasley, Malcolm Duncan, Robert Kelly, Frank

has undeservedly won a reputation for easy living and is one of favor with his father, the Duke of Devonshire. Algy's elder brother Quarmby, supposedly a model of rectitude, is infatuated with Mrs. Tudeley and takes advantage of his brother's position to meet Mrs. Tudeley at his rooms. Mrs. Tudeley is a harmless, innocent young woman, romantic and flighty, and she imagines she does not love her husband. Through a misunderstanding Algy is accused of the flirtation with Mrs. Tudeley and he is drawn into the complications which almost wreck the possible reconciliation with his wife. The first and third acts take place in Algy's rooms and the second act at a fancy dress ball scene at Mrs. Tudeley's house, where Algy appears in a more or less irresponsible condition, brought on by his losses at the racetrack and his dependency over her marital affairs. This scene gives Mr. Faversham rare opportunities for light comic acting.

Hitchcock & Getz will present their review "Words and Music" at the Fulton Theatre on Saturday. Richard Carl, Elizabeth Bruce, Wellington Cross, the Three Dorleys, Edna Aug, Marion Davies, Anna Seymour, Frank Mayne and others are in the cast.

### HOWELLS LIKES WILLIAMS.

That is to say the Literary Style and Matter of Jesse Lynch.

Few American writers of modern times have had their work submitted to closer analysis than Jesse Lynch Williams, novelist and playwright. His latest story, which comes to the Astor Theatre on Christmas night under the title "Why Merry?" assuredly has been submitted to the acid test. That it has thus far stood that test assuredly may be reckoned by Mr. Williams as one of his triumphs in the world of the theatre and letters.

In all that has been said of Mr. Williams's writing he prizes the most

highly, and rightfully so, that which William Dean Howells chose to say of him and his work. Looking at Mr. Williams as a typical American humorist and comparing his work with that of the humorists of the generation before him, Mr. Howells wrote:

"Yet there is a difference between the finer humor of that time and the time humor of this, as we think the reader will feel in tasting the delicious irony of Mr. Jesse Lynch Williams's little fable.

"Divorce was common enough among us two generations ago, but not so common among people one knew as now. No such husbands and wives as those his satire portrays in their separation and then their reunion in a mutual exchange of husbands and wives were known to the finer humor of former times. Divorce was then chiefly the sport of the romping drollery which played with the resort of the parties to the Western and Farther Western shirines of divorce and did not divine the sources of the poet's pleasure. Mr. Williams has found in dealing with the potential eventualities of the release from one another."

After analyzing in detail the processes by which Mr. Williams arrives at his results, Mr. Howells sums up his estimate of the work of Mr. Williams in this fashion:

"This is in the Greek spirit of 'nothing in excess,' and in the perpetual paradox of the charming tale there is the pleasure of Gilbert's finest moments. Neither Bernard Shaw nor Sir James Barrie surpasses the paradox, and we may flyly rejoice in it as a native effect from a native cause like that which the observer of fifty years ago traced in our burly humor to our burly conditions.

"We have come a long way in our civic and aesthetic evolutions which has apparently been more conscious than the reaction which science is now confidently assuming as the agency of all development. What we may fearlessly say is that the humorists who have been forgotten and who have perished in giving expression each to a moment of our moral and social life have not perished in vain if this has been a condition of our more delicate pleasure in the exquisite irony of a story such as Mr. Williams's."



ELEANA SINCLAIR in "WORDS AND MUSIC"

let, a small part, in "The Budget of Hercules" at the Royalty Theatre. He later he was starring under his own management at the Savoy. It was while he was playing "The Barn" with Marie Tempest in London that an attractive contract was offered him to come to America. He arrived in 1914.

### AN ACTOR FROM INDIA.

But He Never Shot a Tiger There or Anywhere.

Whoever heard of a man born and educated in India who has not shot at least ten tigers? Whoever heard of a man winning international recognition as an athlete and later developing into an excellent actor, say, as Norman Trevor? Very few. Yet there is such a man and he happens to be Mr. Trevor, whose performance lends so much of charm to "The Pipes of Pan" at the Hudson Theatre.

Mr. Trevor was born in India and as a youngster went to school in Darjeeling, a famous hill resort in the shadows of the Himalayas. And he has never shot a tiger. He saw one once for a moment and his tiger record commenced and finished in that space of time.

While Mr. Trevor's fleeting acquaintance with the man-eater about which many of those who have lived in India are accustomed to speak freely furnished little material for after dinner anecdotes, his record in athletics was and is something about which to write home.

As a youngster he started running and soon achieved considerable local fame. Later he became the star

### The French Theatre.

There will be no new bill at the Theatre du Vieux Colombier this week, but De Maset's comedy act comedy, "Barberine" and "Le Pain de Menage" of Jules Renard will be given on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings, while the three one-act plays, "La Navette," by Henri Becque, "Le Carosse du St. Remond," by Prosper Mérimé and "La Jalouise du Barbouillé," by Moliere, will be repeated on Wednesday and Friday evenings and at both the Thursday and Saturday matinees.

For Christmas week the novelty to be presented by the French players will be "Twelfth Night" in French. This was one of the most successful of Copeau's productions at the original Vieux Colombier in Paris, where it created an artistic sensation and was pronounced by eminent critics of both nations to be superior to any production of Shakespeare's comedy acted in English in modern times. Its success was afterward repeated in England.



VIRGINIA HAMMOND, HALE HAMILTON, CHARLOTTE IVES and JED PROUTY WHO APPEAR IN A BENEFIT, FOR THE SUN TO-BEACOND IN "WHAT'S YOUR HUSBAND DOING?" at the 39'S STREET THEATRE TO-MORROW NIGHT.

### PLAYS THAT LAST.

Belasco, "Polly With a Past"; Bijou, "Odds and Ends"; Booth, "The Masquerader"; Bramhall, "The Silent Assertion"; Casino, "Oh, Boy!"; Century, "Miss 1917"; Comedy, Washington Square Players; Cohan & Harris, "A Tailor-Made Man"; Cort, "Flo-Flo"; Criterion, "Madame Sand"; Eltinge, "Business Before Pleasure"; Gaiety, "The Country Cousin"; Globe, "Jack o' Lantern"; Hippodrome, "Cheer Up"; Hudson, "The Pipes of Pan"; Knickerbocker, "Her Regiment"; Longacre, "Leave It to Jane"; Liberty, "The Green Widow"; Lyceum, "Tiger Rose"; Manhattan Opera House, "Chu Chin Chow"; Maxine Elliott's, "Eyes of Youth"; Morosco, "Lombardi, Ltd."; New Amsterdam, "The Riviera Girl"; Park, "The Land of Joy"; Playhouse, "Elevation"; Republic, "Blind Youth"; Plymouth, "The Gypsy Trail"; Shubert, "Maytime"; Thirty-ninth Street, "What's Your Husband Doing?"; Winter Garden, "Doing Our Bit," and Cohan, "The King."