

Maytime Plays at the Theatres



Alla Nazimova in 'A Doll's House'

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

ASTUTE specialists in giving the public what it wants report unprecedented wariness in regard to the war play. No trout ever needed more adroit angling to make a land. Public taste for the drama of the war is as elusive as the thimble-rigger's walnut. Now you see it and now, by gosh, you don't. Sometimes thoughtful observers of the theatre—this is no charge against the impresarios—have been led to wonder whether or not the conclusions of Jacques Copeau are correct. He thinks the overwhelming tragedy of the thing too great to be used as a theme for amusement. But in such a work as "Seven Days Leave" there is undeniable public interest and the managers try again.

There has been a curious alternation of entire indifference and mild interest in these pieces from "Under Fire," which opened the list and did not arouse enthusiasm, although "Within the Lines" seems to have found in England the success denied it here. In such a case lack of popularity is easy enough to explain. The mere timeliness of these which the war complex provided is not going to compensate for such lack of skill as the composition of this play revealed. Greater appreciation has come to the drama first known as "The White Feather" since as "The Man Who Stayed at Home" it has been put before the public of a country which is at war with the same foe. But it is well made melodrama whatever its theme might be. William A. Brady's effort to interest the New York playgoer in Bernstein's "Elevation" met with no response. Yet it was regarded as the finest contribution of the French authors to the theatre since the war began. Almost a war play was "The Hyphen," by far the truest and freshest transfer from life of all the series. But alas! Justus Miles Forman did not distinguish in his writing between idiom of the novel and the play; so inevitably all that was so good and true in his work was lost irretrievably. This is the worst penalty that the author has to pay when he neglects the rules.

But faith in the war play continued and managers sought the lucky solution for which they felt sure the public was eagerly waiting. Audiences at the Casino, however, refused to put themselves in the same place as audiences at the Fourteenth Street Theatre in 1911 and "An American Ace" left the public cold. Tried in Boston as "Our American Boys in France," or some such title, the east wind was not tempered to the play and it disappeared more rapidly from view than it did from the New York stage.

PLAYS THAT LAST.

Astor, "Fancy Free"; Belasco, "Polly With a Past"; Bijou, "A Pair of Petticoats"; Broadhurst, "Maytime"; Booth, "Seventeen"; Comedy, "Washington Square"; Playwrights, "The Kiss"; Cohan, "The Kiss"; Cohan & Harris, "A Tailor Made Man"; Cort, "Flo-Flo"; Eltinge, "Business Before Pleasure"; Empire, "Ethel Barrymore"; Forty-eighth Street, "The Man Who Stayed at Home"; Forty-fourth Street, "Hearts of the World"; Globe, "Fred Stone in 'Jack-o-Lantern'"; Gaiety, "Sick-a-Bed"; Hudson, "Nancy Lee"; Knickerbocker, "Gerard's Four Years in Germany"; Liberty, "Going Up"; Lyric, "The Callaux Case"; Lyceum, "Tiger Rose"; Morosco, "Lombardi, Ltd."; Maxine Elliott's, "Eyes of Youth"; The Park, "Seven Days Leave"; Playhouse, "The Little Teacher"; Plymouth, "Alla Nazimova"; Princess, "Oh, Lady! Lady!" Thirty-ninth Street, "William-Hodge, and Winter Garden, "Sisbad" with Al Jolson.



The all star cast which will play 'Out There' for the benefit of the Red Cross at the Century Theatre on Friday and Saturday.

Standing—left to right—George MacFarlane, Burr McIntosh, Laurette Taylor, H.B. Warner, George M. Cohan, Chauncey Olcott, Helen Ware and O.P. Heggie. Seated—left to right—Mrs. Fiske, George Arliss, Julia Arthur, James T. Powers, Rose Stah (for whom Beryl Mercer has been substituted) and James K. Hackett.

last century in the playhouses of the Bowery. Thus by a curious accident of taste the aging muse finds a warmer reception probably in the same quarter that cherished her first.

The spring for some reason expels the cinema from its predominant place in the humblest theatre of all the expatriated. During the winter the same gods that prevail elsewhere in the moving picture theatres take possession of the playhouses abandoned now by all who rely on the vernacular. The second class favorites of the uptown picture palaces, alternating with a few singers of couplets in Italian, make up the sum of what the Italian theatre in New York may offer. But with the spring along with the beloved salad of dandelions, which flourishes on the stalls of Mulberry street as it does nowhere else in the city, the spoken drama returns to its place. Spettacolo e varietà may still be its description, for there are popular pantomimists or couplet singers between the acts of "La Morte Civile" or "Le Due Ortelens" to impart variety to the spectacle. But it is the drama which is predominant during the spring nights and indeed late into the summer. Afterward the cinema once more comes into its own. It may be that there are no "feature" films or any of the other specialties which aim to mask the deadly idiosyncrasy and the pretentious shoddy which is the characteristic of the picture play at all times and under all names. But the favorites of the camera theatre smirk from the hoardings.

Departing from D'Ennery and the rest of the Gallic gods of his day there are strongly national products which must be impatient of any kind of variety introduced into the spectacle. "The Hymn of the Cemetery," for instance; "The Year of the Plague in Naples"; or "The Revolution of 1799 in Naples," not to mention "The Five Sons of Nessuno"—these must be as little adapted to the pantomimists and the chanters of the canzonets as D'Annunzio's "The Daughter of Jorio," which occasionally brings the paroxysmal Aguglia out of her domestic retirement. Sem Benelli's famous "Cena di Beffa" is another modern play which she has brought to the humble abode of her country's muse. There have been no other performances of this famous play in New York. Sarah Bernhardt announced the drama during her long engagement at the Globe Theatre before she departed for the less exacting atmosphere of the 'alls, but it was withdrawn at the last minute.

And the swarming Yiddish theatre, with its importance in the lives of the people and its plays which are such a brief and clear abstract of the times, does also return to the classics of the French emotional stage when there is an actress who seeks for this method of revealing her talents as a tear producer. Bertha Kalich won her first fame in the plays of Sardou. One of them is not afraid to appear in "Zaza," although it is certain that she can create nothing like the epileptic thrills of Mimi Aguglia, who is likely to emerge in the same part at any minute and give such delicate nuances in interpretation as that famous scene of the first act in which she showed the actress supplying the neglect of nature by means of newspapers. To see Aguglia in that first act is to realize anew the pathos of Mathilde Serao's "La Ballerina," with all its sordid pitifulness. But the Yiddish theatre, an institution of great artistic precocity and no traditions, likes to keep close to the lives of its loyal subjects.

So the prevailing springtime success is "The Price for a Girl's Good Time." The title sounds as if it had been written by a cultivated theatre manager, in spite of disappointments, hope to make the source of a profitable advantage. It might not be without its advantages to the playwrights to bear in mind that there is so far but one discernible element in all the plays that have failed and those that have succeeded. The prosperous authors have at least done all in their power to follow the rules of the game, with the inevitable improvement in results. And the extent to which the war enters the story is probably to a considerable degree negligible. It is always the good play that will gain the public suffrages, however timely the theme may be.

ably that he was making it difficult for the commentators to catalogue "Belinda," in which Ethel Barrymore is playing at the Empire Theatre. The mood of the first act is frankly Gilbertian burlesque in the manner of "Engaged," which also has its *Belinda*. There are also evidences that the playwright intended to draw a marked character in the heroine. It looked as if she were to be the forgetful, feather-brained heroine who in her absent-mindedness did all sorts of things in just the wrong way, doing them all very charmingly of course, and having none of them turn out badly as they might have and in all probability would have done in the case of a less charming person.

We know this lady well, and she has been as beloved of the public as of the writer since she was *Mrs. Gilflory* in the days of the *Floresces*, *Feather-brain* when Marie Janes embodied her alluringly or the flighty woman of society that Hartley Manners drew so amusingly in "Happiness" and Lynn Fontanne acted so admirably. This is a stage type which has always been popular. Mr. Milne apparently wearied of the effort to develop it, however, and his heroine was no more than a charming woman by the time the first act was at an end. But she was very charming and so irresistibly incarnated and acted by Miss Barrymore that one could but wonder why no American dramatist felt inspired to write a play for her. Certainly there ought to be sufficient talent here to do something better than "Belinda." But this is, alas! the land of the cub dramatist!

But Mr. Milne continued to write in the spirit of burlesque. A husband missing for eighteen years and unrecognizable because he had shaved off his beard supplanted two widely conducted lovers and *Belinda* went back to him because there had to be some sort of an end to the play. The author would never agree in all probability with the audience that after the abatement of the witty lines in the first act the play had for all practical purposes come to a short stop. It was certainly with the deliberate intention to write in the spirit of burlesque that the playwright gave the hero a mole on his arm by which his wife recognized him. Mr. *Keightley's* mole, moreover, which looked from now on as big as a thrift stamp, was designed as pure burlesque. We refused to be otherwise persuaded.

Of course the playwright who relies on his wit must expect, even if he be uncommonly gifted, to struggle from his second act against the law of diminishing returns. It grows harder and harder to make the public smile at verbal wit. Its quality must ever improve. As a rule it is the earlier speeches which are best; and the diminution in the response of the public continues to grow less and less. If there is a story and it is well enough told the author can dispense with his quips. Even character amusingly drawn may be an aid. But the going is hard for the playwright who after the first act seeks to live on the merry gibe and the elusive joke.

PLAYS OF THE WEEK.

A MOST remarkable cast is to present J. Hartley Manners' "Out There" at the Century Theatre on Friday and Saturday next for the benefit of the American Red Cross. Three performances will be given, a Saturday matinee having been arranged for. New York is one of seventeen cities to be visited by this all star organization during the next three weeks. St. Louis will be the furthest point west reached.

hospital scene; Chauncey Olcott will be the grouchy Irish soldier; James K. Hackett will be the deep voiced Canadian; O. P. Heggie will be the Cockney; Julia Arthur will play the nurse and George MacFarlane will be the Scotchman.

In the last scene Mrs. Fiske, for whom there was no role in the play, will deliver a stirring Red Cross appeal, and Mme. Eleonora de Cleneros, mezzo soprano from the Chicago Opera Company, will sing the national anthems of the allied nations. During the intermission between the second and third acts Burr McIntosh will auction off a souvenir program.

The enterprise is perhaps the most important contribution ever made by the theatrical profession of America to a charitable cause. All of the artists are not only contributing their time and where the boxes and first choice seats were auctioned off, indicate that the receipts for a single performance in each city will average about \$30,000, thus establishing entirely new high records.

Susan Glaspell and Eugene O'Neill will have work on the new bill of "The Washington Square Players" which will open Monday night at the Comedy Theatre. Miss Glaspell, whose plays, "Trifles" and "Suppressed Desires," have proved among the most popular in the repertory of the players, has written in "Close the Book," a keen satire which is said to be double edged in that it satirizes conventional people as well as those who pride themselves on being unconventional. The O'Neill play is a drama called "The Rope" and like his great success "In the Zone" deals with simple, passionate folk who live by the sea. In addition to these new plays the comedy hits "Lonesome Like," by Harold Brighouse, and "The Home of the Free," by Elmer Reizenstein, will be continued.

An interesting feature of the new bill will be the return to the Players of Josephine A. Meyer, who will play in "The Rope." Miss Meyer was one of the founders of the Washington Square Players and has been from the beginning their first play reader. Before her retirement on account of illness she played many leading roles for them and achieved a personal triumph as the farm drudge in "The Cloud." Whitford Kane and Ethingham Pinto, as guest players, will also be seen in "The Rope." Among The Players who will appear on the new bill are Helen Westley, Elizabeth Patterson, Kate Morgan, Florence Enright, Marjorie Vonnegut, Robert Strange and Saxon Kling.

BILLIE BURKE ON THE STAGE AGAIN.

And she Loves to Do Real, Not Screen Acting.

So far as Billie Burke is concerned, she is deeply pleased in returning once more to the legitimate stage. And so far as her admirers are concerned, their pleasure is as genuine as is hers. Which latter may be the reason, as it should be, why Miss Burke is so naively delighted with the role of the

A PLAY A WEEK.

Henry Miller presents Ruth Chatterton in "Come Out of the Kitchen" at the Bronx Opera House this week. Miss Chatterton will be supported by the original company.

The Standard will have "Oh Look!" with Harry Fox, Henry Kelly, Betty Hope Hale and Genevieve Tobin are among those supporting the comedian.

"The Boomerang" will be the attraction at Loew's Seventh Avenue, with a cast that includes Wallace Eddinger, Arthur Byron and Helen Slosson. These will be the final performances of the play in New York.

Comtesse de Candole in "A Marriage of Convenience."

The feeling that the audience is there, to respond immediately to whatever happens on the stage—that is a virtue the movies lack, as Miss Burke has found them. From the stage the silence that accompanies an emotional scene can be felt, the quick, deep breaths that follow; in a word, the reactions of some 900 people as they laugh and cry. That is the tonic of the stage and it is not the tonic of the movies.

At least that is just how Miss Burke differentiates between the two. In the filming of screen stories there is naught but the black aperture of the camera. That offers no inspiration. The logical question is as to whether Miss Burke finds response in watching herself on the screen. The answer is "No." She doesn't like to see herself in pictures. Which of course has nothing to do with the fact that thousands of folk do.

"Emotions on the stage are fleeting," said Miss Burke, "but in the pictures they are caught and held. If one is not careful they appear ridiculous. A grimace on the stage is just a grimace, but it is something to be avoided in the pictures—it is there forever."

It is difficult to register emotions on the screen, and for that reason Miss Burke said she admired those screen actresses who had been able to do this. "Sorrow or joy is expressed in such a way—a certain expression and drooping of the lips in one case. Emotions are expressed in certain prescribed fashions which are not as easy to master as might be thought."

Now this thing of the camera catching and holding an expression—and it can't be changed at a later time—is another thing to be marked against the movies. "In the movies what you've done is done," said Miss Burke, "but when you have the feeling after a performance that you haven't done as well as you might have you can make up your mind to do better tomorrow."

Don't get the impression, however, that Miss Burke doesn't like the movies. It's not that she loves the movies less but that she loves the stage more. And in addition she has two more pictures to be filmed before she starts in her winter season next fall. It might be added also that, although Miss Burke said that there was a certain enjoyment in the movies, she was kind enough not to mention the old and (for the present) dormant question, "Are Movies Art?"

After all, it is simply that Miss Burke is pleased to be back of the footlights again "feeling" the audience. It is quite obvious that there must be a sincere thrill when the audience sighs (some of them gulp and sob), as Miss Burke says "tears, yes, tears of—of joy" as a fine climax to the third act of the piece. It is apparent that she must get more satisfaction from such an excellent bit than she does from knowing there's nothing but the black slit of the grinding camera.

It is deeply satisfying, every bit of it, but not nearly as much so, it may be hoped, as that time when Miss Burke's dreams come true and she plays (it's no secret) Sheridan and then Shakespeare.

ELSE JENIS ABROAD.

She is Working Hard in the Army Camps.

How Elsie Jenis is proving her title, "The Playgirl of the Western Front" is shown in a recent letter from Paris to the entertainment section of the National War Work Council of the Y. M. C. A., under whose direction the popular player is appearing on the trench and camp circuit overseas. Her latest exploit was to make her appearance before an audience of 3,500 soldiers on the cowcatcher of a French locomotive. Needless to say, that locomotive needed no headlight, thereby aiding in the conservation of candle power for war purposes.

"Miss Elsie Jenis," the letter began, "is now on her second trip for the Y. M. C. A., covering areas in the central part of France and one of the port cities. The most interesting feature of



BILLIE BURKE IN A MARRIAGE OF CONVIENCE.

her tour was on the opening night in one of the central camps, which is an important railroad center. Here there is a very large railroad shop with a track running down the center of the building for its entire length.

"On the evening of the entertainment Miss Jenis was brought into the hut, filled with 3,500 men, riding on the cowcatcher of a locomotive, which was driven along the track the entire length of the building through the cheering multitude. As the locomotive approached the stage Miss Jenis jumped off, ran up on the platform and put on her usual very popular show, consisting of songs, dances, stories and her well known imitations of folk do."

Incidentally it appears that Miss Elsie is doing things in France that she would never dream of doing on Broadway. For instance, she makes no protest at all overseas when the stage manager requests her to "go on" twice in the same evening. In fact when she sees the hut filled and as many more outside hoping to squeeze in she invariably offers to repeat her entertainment at a "second show."

Current engagements for her in France include her appearance as the star feature, headliner, added attraction, &c., at a Franco-American fete in an important city where there are many American officers and soldiers and numerous French officers. According to the plans announced the entertainment is to consist of forty minutes by American entertainers, then the French will hold the stage, and after that the Americans will appear in rebuttal, as it were, for another forty minutes.

Miss Jenis apparently feels that she is doing the most worth while work of her career, for she has called to her brothers and sisters of the American stage to "come over." Her message was given to the players of America by the Over There Theatre League, which is recruiting plays and players for service overseas under the direction of Winthrop Ames at the Little Theatre.

LOUISE BEAUDET HAS PLAYED EVERY ROLE.

Louise Beaudet, who plays Mrs. Stokes, the match making mother in "Flo-Jo" at the Cort Theatre, has had a most interesting career. Born in Tours, France, she was taken by her mother to Paris to live about the time when she had learned to talk. Here she was introduced to the mysteries of the theatre and began the cultivation of her voice. Victor Hugo, who was a friend of her mother's, was instrumental in instilling in the young mind the desire to become famous, but about this time troubles came and Louise and her mother moved to New York. Here she learned English with a volume of Shakespeare as her text book.

When she was about 12 years old Miss Beaudet accompanied Aimee, the French actress, who was then in this country, in "The Little Duke." She stayed with Aimee for about two years after which her voice began to fail her from overwork. But giving no heed to her physician's advice to leave the stage, she became the ingenue of the

Baldwin Theatre Stock Company in San Francisco. During her engagement there she was cast for such characters as *Pauline* in "The Lady of Lyons," *Ophelia* in "Hamlet," *Desdemona* in "Othello," *Doris* in "Narcissa" and *Lady Macbeth*.

She then went on a four years' tour with the tragedian, Daniel E. Harman, and upon her return to America became a member of Rudolph Aronson's Opera Company. After leaving this organization she joined Pauline Hall, with whom she played in "Pauline." Now followed engagements with Abbey and Grant at the Auditorium in Chicago as *Progress* in "America," which ran for eight months at the World's Fair, and a starring engagement at the head of her own company, the Louise Beaudet Opera Bouffe Company, in a repertoire of French operas.

In May, 1905, while visiting Emma she was induced by George Edwards to play Marie Tempest's part of *Madame* in "An Artist's Model," after which she was engaged to sing at the Palace Theatre, and in 1907 appeared at the big command performance at Buckingham Palace before all the crowned heads of Europe. This was only one of a number of command performances that followed.

In December, 1907, Miss Beaudet made her debut in vaudeville on a bill at Hammerstein's Music Hall, and for several years she divided her time between Europe and America, appearing in drama and operatic roles and engagements in vaudeville.

During the summer of 1912 she featured the legitimate stage for motion pictures, where her best part was that of the mother in "The Battle Cry of Peace."

When Mr. Cort offered her the role of Mrs. Stokes in "Flo-Jo" Miss Beaudet embraced the opportunity to return to musical comedy. What she will try her talents at next she cannot say, but out of the wealth of her experience Miss Beaudet declares:

"Give me a good grateful actor part every time."

Vaudeville and Burlesque.

So far as vaudeville patrons are concerned, the most important thing this week will be the benefit at the Hippodrome tonight in aid of the National Vaudeville Artists. Seventy-five artists, the majority of them headliners, will take part.

The Palace bill this week is headed by Josephine Victor in "The Maid of France," and the Spanish dancers once of "The Land of Joy." Elizabeth Brice is also on the bill, which contains in addition half a dozen other good acts.

Trixie Fragonza heads the Riverside bill, in which Gus Edwards' Revue has a place. Nan Halperin is the attraction at the Colonial.

The summer run starts at the Columbia to-morrow afternoon with "Hello America," a burlesque that is strongly tinged with patriotism. Sam Lewis and Sam Dody head the cast.