Last Week of Local Theatrical Year Is Unusually Interesting

BELASCO MAKES NEW PRODUCTION

New National Theater Selected by "Wizard of Stagecraft" for Premiere of "What's Wrong," a New Comedy by Frederick Ballard.

By JULIA CHANDLER MANZ.

The closing week of the local theatrical season of 1913-14 is one of remarkable interest, in that it brings us an opportunity to see a new play by a comparatively new playwright as well as the production with which David Belasco anticipates opening his New York season of 1914-15.

Mr. Belasco has chosen the New National Theater as the scene for the premiere of "What's Wrong," a comedy from the pen of Frederick Ballard, and will remain in Washington throughout the week in order to personally supervise the production.

That the "Wizard of Stagecraft" has faith in the judgment of Capital playgoers has been many times demonstrated, for it was in this city that his most notable successes were given their initial performances, including "Du Barry," "Zaza," "The Darling of the Gods," "Sweet Kitty Bellairs," "The Woman," "The Case of Becky," and many other Belasco successes.

And now we are to see his first presentation of a comedy from the pen of a new author, who is a native of Lincoln, Nebr., and a graduate of a Western college.

Frederick Ballard says he cannot remember the time when he did not intend to write drama, nor when he did not take his preparation for this work into serious consideration. Being of a practical turn of mind, he went to Chicago after he had finished his literary preparation for the career which he had picked out for himself, and there, very sensibly, went to work as a stage hand in order to familiarize himself with the technical end of play producing. At the end of a year in this occupation Mr. Ballard went to Harvard for the purpose of dramatic instruction under Prof. George F. Baker, during which course John Craig, of the Castle Square Stock Company, of Boston, offered a prize of $500 for the best play written on an American subject, only the students of Harvard and Radcliff being allowed to enter the contest.

Mr. Ballard took advantage of the contest, and his comedy, "Believe Me, Xantippe," won the prize, and was given a production for six weeks by Mr. Craig. The comedy presented many crudities, but it gave ample evidence of the genuine ability of its author to the astute Belasco—the always-ready producer to give youth a chance—and he contracted with Mr. Ballard for his next effort, with the result that, after two years' constant work under Mr. Belasco's direction, we are now to see his comedy based on the foolhardiness and futility of our national curse of overcrowding our lives with work and worry.

Mr. Belasco's productions need no comment. They have won him the title of "Wizard of Stagecraft," which is known internationally, so that, whatever may, or may not, be the merits of Mr. Ballard's new play, we are at least sure of a supremely artistic production.

The Belasco Theater also closes its season Saturday evening, the final week being devoted to a return engagement of "Within the Law," which will open on Tuesday evening, as the Mask and Wiggers have the theater tomorrow evening for their annual jubilee.

The same company which was seen here earlier in the year, headed by Miss Helen Ware, will again present the most tense and thrilling melodrama which has been seen in Washington this season, closing the season for theater and company alike until another dramatic year, after which Miss Ware, who has a great passion for the great out-of-doors, will go to her ranch in the West, where she will spend the summer in riding, shooting, and throwing the lariat.

No one acquainted with Miss Ware's finely intelligent and highly emotional work in "Within the Law" would ever imagine that a gift so pronounced as hers could ever have found difficulty in gaining recognition, but it is a fact nevertheless.

Talking of the matter during her former visit to Washington this season, Miss Ware said:

"It was not until I resolved to go on the stage that I appreciated what real work meant. Nor was it until after I had become acquainted with every flagstone on Broadway in the vicinity of the producing managers' offices that I fully appreciated the truth of these lines:

The heights, by great men, reached and kept,
Were not attained by sudden flight;
But they, while their companions slept,
Were toiling upward in the night.

"For four years I struggled for recognition, and during those four years I went through enough painful experiences to fill a good-sized shelf full of books. Going the lines above 'one better,' to use the vernacular, I toiled not only through the nights, but through the long days as well. Only an unknown Thespian, striving without experience and without influence to make the managers give him a chance, can understand the heartaches and the footaches of those four years.

"I shall never forget my first engagement. It was played at the 'Op'ry House" in a small Western town whose name has slipped my memory. Everyone in the company was hard pressed for money, and the news that there was an American plan hotel in the village where we could live for 80 cents a day was greeted with cheers. This 80 cents included a room and three meals, so you can imagine the proportion of luxury. But fortune was against me, for upon reaching the hotel, after plodding up a long hill with two heavy grips in my hands, I was chagrined and dismayed to find that every room was occupied. My plight touched the heart of the landlady, however, and she informed me, with a benign smile, that she could accommodate me with a room in the wood shed! I was so tired that I jumped at her generous offer. After retiring, I began to regret accepting such hospitality. I might as well have tried to find comfort on the coal pile. It was so cold I nearly froze to death and, sacrificing comfort for self-preservation, I put the matress over instead of under me. The irony of the whola circumstance lay in the fact that we were doing 'The American Gentleman,' the story of which concerned the great wealth of the character portrayed by me!

"The following season things took a turn for the better. I was cast for a part in 'Under Two Flags,' in which Blanche Bates was starring. It was in Detroit that Miss Bates fell ill and there was no understudy. But I was so ambitious that I had learned the play, word for word, and I was perhaps as startled as the manager when I announced that I would go on and play 'Cigarette' without a rehearsal. How I went through with it I can't imagine. But I did, and my reward was permission to remain in the star's role the entire week.

"It is a well-known fact that the younger an actor is the more nerve he possesses, and that an 'old timer' would hesitate before rushing in where the tyro has no fear to tread. The answer is that the experienced actor has a reputation to lose if he fails to make good.

"If ever I sit down to write the story of my professional career I shall devote two-thirds of the book to detailing my struggle for recognition. After success arrives, a player's life becomes more or less a repetition of incidents which are much alike in character. It is before the 'heights are reached and kept' that the real drama, comedy, and tragedy of an actor's existence occurs. A failure now and then is the best thing that could happen to the successful artist because it acts as an impetus to urge him to renewed effort. In the theatrical profession, particularly, one is too apt to rest on the laurels known as 'hits.'"

Even were it not for the splendid productions which our two stock companies—the Columbia Players and the Poli organization—are weekly offering us, we would still be assured that the sizzling days of summer are not far distant by the information which floats our way concerning the many improvements now in progress at Glen Echo Park, and the announcement that the popular amusement park will be opened to the public May 23.

DR. MONROE HOPKINS, BELASCO TONIGHT.

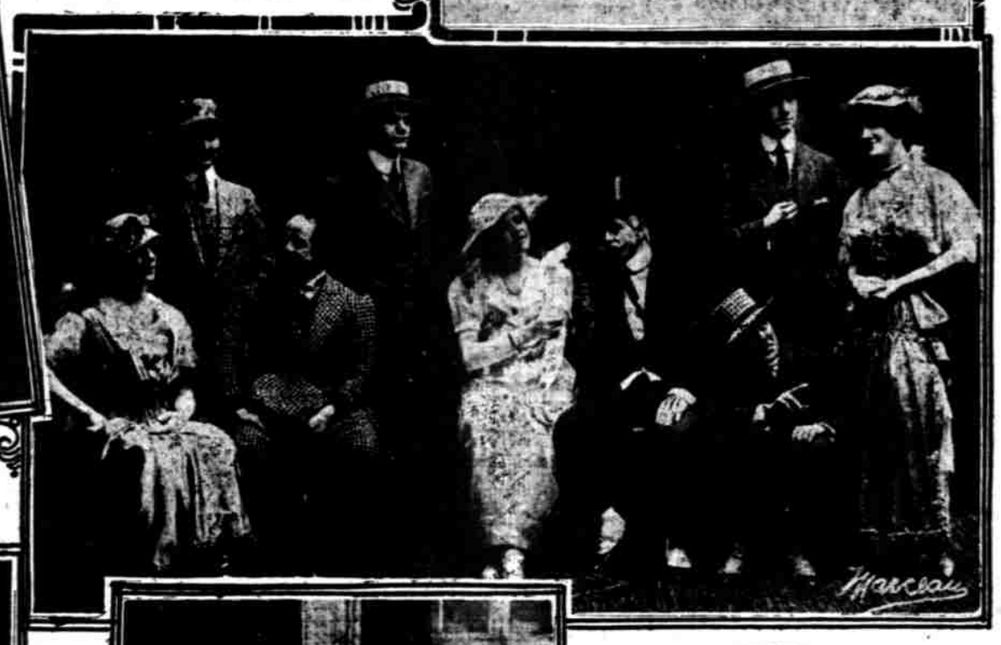
NELLIE DUNNE, GAYETY

SCENE FROM "WITHIN THE LAW", BELASCO.

JANET BEECHER, NATIONAL.

ADRIENNE SHREVE, NATIONAL MAY 11TH AND 12TH.

"BUNTY PULLS THE STRINGS," COLUMBIA PLAYERS.



PRINCIPAL MASK AND WIGGERS BELASCO, MAY 4TH.

SCENE FROM "BOUGHT AND PAID FOR" POLI'S

MLLE DAZIE & CO. B. F. KEITH'S.

CALENDAR OF THE WEEK.

National—"What's Wrong."

Belasco — Tomorrow night—Mask and Wig Club. Balance of the week—"Within the Law."

Columbia — "Bunty Pulls the Strings."

Poli's—"Bought and Paid For."

B. F. Keith's — High - class vaudeville.

Gayety—Bon-Ton Girls.

Cosmos—Vaudeville.

Casino—Vaudeville.

The Week's Amusements.

National—"What's Wrong."

The story of "What's Wrong," the new comedy by Frederick Ballard, which will be produced tomorrow night by David Belasco at the New National Theater, since it is said to be pure comedy, will not be repeated here in detail, for the essence of comedy effect is in its surprise. But it may be stated that the play concerns the universal American mania for overworking, the average business man's mad rush through life sacrificing everything to success and always measuring success, not by friends and happiness, but by the dollar.

The head of the George H. Smith Land Company in New York is this type of American business man. He goes at such a break-neck pace that he comes to a nervous collapse. Through the influence of a bright, alert, understanding young woman, who temporarily takes over his wide land interests, he quits the turmoil of the big city and goes to a New Jersey farm, where he takes up chicken raising with the same intensive methods as when he was selling oil lands in Mexico or wheat lands in Argentine. But there came a time when he had to stop, and fortunately there was this clever and beautiful and sensible young woman at hand to take up the reins and drive him straight. She teaches him moderation, self-control, poise and all the rest of the important lesson that made him realize that "making good" can be accomplished without a man's being eternally hurried and worried. Of course there is a romance, and a very pretty one, and final happiness is the reward of the clever girl's interference. Although the story of the play has its serious point, it is told with all the embellishment of high comedy and quaint characterization. The coming week's offering at the National is of special interest because "What's Wrong" is expected to be Mr. Belasco's initial production of the coming New York season.

A company of exceptional excellence will appear, headed by Janet Beecher and including Frederick Burton, Richie Ling, William Dixon, Percy Helton, Henry Weaver, J. W. Kennedy, Russell Simpson, Maidel Turner, Louise Sylvester, Dorothy Walters, Susanne Willa, Grace Vernon, Jane Shore, and others.

Belasco, Tomorrow—Mask and Wig Club.

Demure "maidens" clad in silks and crinoline and wearing brilliant wigs will pirouette on the stage of the Belasco Theater tomorrow night in "The Royal Arms," this year's production of the Mask and Wig Club, of the University of Pennsylvania.

The chorus of "The Royal Arms" is the big feature of the play. There never were such "girls," and it is no disparagement of a Broadway show to say that the college lads have few superiors at the terpsichorean art. The faultless manner in which the chorus men and "girls" kick up their heels and perform gyrations is evidence of their ability. And they can sing just as well, too. They are the pick of the best songsters at the University and most of them are members of the Glee Clubs.

R. G. Morris, is the leading "lady" as "Olive Burton," an orphan heiress adopted by a rich Chicago merchant. P. M. Hesser has the part of "Henry," Grand Duke of Himmelsbergen. T. R. Merrill is the comedian. "Otto B. Ausgeschnitten" and his blunders are the source of the play's humor. D. A. Hogan, as "George Washington Keene, a detective, runs down the false clew that comes near upsetting the match between the duke and the leading lady. J. B. French is "Robert La Salle," the Chicago merchant, and W. M. Wright is "Mlle. Eugenie De La Fontaine," a Russian adventuress.

Colored wigs will be introduced in the "spectrum dance," one of the features of the play. The lyrics written by Charles Gilpin are catchy. "Oh, But I'm a Devil With the Wemens," "That is the Place for Me," "I'm glad to meet you Boys," "The Ladies," and "When You Have a Winning Way About You," are said to go with a lilt seldom excelled by the popular songs of the day.

Belasco—"Within the Law."

Tuesday evening will mark the beginning of a return engagement at the Belasco Theater of "Within the Law," with Helen Ware, Monday evening having been given over to the Mask and Wig entertainment.

As we all known, "Within the Law" is interesting drama keyed to a high tension. That it is an implied charge of brutality and inhumanity against all employers of labor; that it holds lawfully constituted authority up to derision; that its obvious purpose is to create sympathy for Mary Turner, leader of a shady band; that we are asked to admire and applaud the principal masculine member of the same gang—all these ordinary "bars to fortune" do not seem to operate against the general acceptance of the play. This is because it is a well-told story, one essential phase of the which telling is sound dramatic construction.

The story of Mary Turner, the shopgirl, is so well known that it is almost a household tale. She is convicted of shoplifting in the store where she is a clerk and is "sent up" for three years. The fact that she is innocent does not become known until after her time has been served and she has entered into an elaborate system of blackmail, which is to culminate, and does, in marriage to the son of the employer who insisted on making an example of her.

Helen Ware will again be seen as Mary Turner, and she will be supported by those excellent players, Frank Campeau, Eugene O'Rourke, Charles White, Emmett King, Edward Donnelly, Echlin Gayer, Beatrice Noyes, Catherine Daly, Minnie Gale, and others.

Columbia—"Bunty Pulls the Strings."

"Bunty Pulls the Strings" will receive its first production at the hands of a stock company in Washington tomorrow evening at the Columbia Theater. It is a quaint comedy, refreshing in the humanity it pictures, taking the audience back to the crinoline days and the prim formalities of the middle nineteenth century. Behind this is the rich human nature of a Scotch country folk that breaks through like sunshine illuminating the dreary and "dour" monotony of every day life. It is the story of a very plain people, very human in its appeal. The problems it puts forth are everyday ones and familiar to the home circle, the solutions of which are always happy. Graham Moffat has a simple story to tell and tells it directly and plainly. "Bunty Pulls the Strings" is one of the most artistic and successful entertainments before the public. The first production occurred in London in the summer of 1911, after which it made its New York debut at the Comedy Theater, October 9, of the same year. Graham Moffat delights, too, the militant woman, for he makes the loutish lover, when asked by his "managing" sweetheart if he minds his aunt's prophecy that he will be henpecked answer, "I don't care if I am the most henpecked man in Scotland. I will glory in my shame." The Columbia Players have been cast for the play as follows: Violet Heming, as Bunty Biggar; Everett Butterfield, as Rab Biggar; Julia Blanc, as Susie Simpson; John M. Kleine, as Tammas Biggar; Earl Brown, as Weelum Sprunt; Carrie Thatcher, as Eeleen Dunlop; Jessie Glendinning, as Teenie Dunlop; George W. Barbier, as Jeems Gibbs, and Marie Drofnah, as Maggie Mercer.

Poli's—"Bought and Paid For."

"Bought and Paid For," the play that stands as the finest achievement to the credit of George Broadhurst, author of "The Man of the Hour," and half a dozen other successful dramas, will be presented for the first time at popular prices tomorrow afternoon by the Poli Players. The play tells the story of a telephone girl who marries a millionaire whom she does not really love. She respects him, and, incidentally, she marries him to make existence easier for her sister and brother-in-law and their baby. When under the influence of intoxicants, he is an unspeakable brute, and the extent of his brutality is very clearly shown in the second act when he returns home in a maudlin condition, and, resenting his wife's repugnance for him, boasts that she is his property, "bought and paid for." At the climax of the scene he breaks down the door of the room in which she has locked herself. In a succeeding scene the girl tells him

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SIDNEY M. HIRSCH LITERARY GENIUS

His Greek Pageant Described by Noted Educator as Having the "Lyrical Ecstacy of Shelley."

By JULIA CHANDLER MANZ.

Should you go over to the Builders' Exchange, on New York avenue, where daily rehearsals are in progress for "The Fire Regained," the Greek pageant-drama which will be presented in this city by some 1,500 local people this month, you will find a very reserved young chap either directing the grouping or else sitting in some remote corner, his dark, serious eyes fixed upon the distant horizon with an expression that tells you that he is not aware of his surroundings at all. And even when you have attracted his attention to the fact that you are there to talk to him you will not have chased the dreams from his eyes—not even then, nor yet any other time, because the dreams are woven into the fiber of the very being of Mr. Sidney M. Hirsch, and you cannot but glimpse them through his great dark eyes.

Then you mention the approaching pageant, and at once you know that you have touched the well-spring of Mr. Hirsch's heart. Into the dream-haunted eyes a smile creeps slowly—the sort of smile which lights the face of a woman when one praises her best-loved child—and in just another little moment he has forgotten everything else and is ready to tell you how precious is this offspring of his brain to him.

"It is not widely known and understood that Greek drama was primarily and essentially religious in character, and in direction differs more than any other from modern drama," he told me.

"The plays in Greece were produced under sacredotal authority. In fact, all who were connected with the production were of a religious persuasion. The Greek word for actor, interpreted, is moral teacher. Dramas themselves were sacred allegories, and had their source in religious myths.

"Our nearest modern approach to Grecian drama is that of the Passion Play at Oberammergau. But to the Greek the play meant far more than to a modern audience, for, firstly, if he was one of the multitude, mythological illusions and names of the gods were very familiar to him, and caused a ready association in his mind, for there were given, during the year, and from his childhood he was present at, many religious festivals in honor of these deities.

"Again in the production of the drama the poet aimed at an artistry, technique, and beauty of conception to appeal to the connoisseur and the artist, and lastly there was the allegory, the recondite, inner truth for the philosopher and scholar," he ended.

In writing "The Fire Regained" Mr. Hirsch says that he did not attempt to follow all the recognized canons of Grecian art, but kept three or four fundamental phases in mind.

The theme of his classic drama is suggested by its title, "The Fire Regained," which alludes to the fire kept continually burning in the temple of Hestia by thirty virgins. It was believed that if at any time this fire ceased to burn it was an expression of the wrath of Olympus because one of its maidenly tenders had been false to her vows. The pageant has to do with the supposed falsity of one of the fire-attending virgins, the tests to which she is subjected to prove her guilt, and the final establishment of her innocence.

There is no doubt that Tennessee has given to the world a literary genius who will take his place beside the most distinguished men of literary history and fame, for Mr. Hirsch's "The Fire Regained" is a poetic masterpiece.

In a letter written by Dr. Little, dean of Peabody College, the noted educator says of Mr. Hirsch and his Greek pageant:

"In the spectacle-drama, 'The Fire Regained,' written by Mr. Sidney Hirsch, the author has meant to produce a play in the spirit of the Greeks. He explicitly denies the limitations of the ancient Greek drama and has allowed himself a wide choice of elements both ancient and medieval, such as Bayard Taylor has used in his 'Prince Deukalion' and Shelley in his 'Prometheus Unbound.'

"As a drama 'The Fire Regained' seems to me to have some of the real breadth and solidity of world literature. There breathes through it the spirit of the Greeks, of the Renaissance, of the great creative ages. In its beauty, profundity, and spiritual suggestiveness it reminds me strongly of Maeterlinck's 'Blue Bird.' In its lyrical ecstacy it even reaches the perfection of Shelley."

And while Mr. Hirsch's round, resonant voice lingered tenderly over some of the lines from the little volume which he read aloud to me, I was tempted to add to Dr. Little's eulogy still further tribute, if indeed more can be said than the dean has said already.

Mr. Hirsch is at present preparing a play for the Liebler company to serve Duse as a vehicle in this country next year, the theme and scene being Italian, and is also under contract to the same producers to remake an Egyptian drama, which he has written, into a Chinese play to fit the stupendous production of "The Daughter of Heaven," the beautiful spectacle which cost a fortune and brought such small financial returns.

DAVID BELASCO JOINS ALL-STAR GAMBOL

David Belasco, who will be in Washington this week producing the new comedy, "What's Wrong?" at the National Theater, will be one of the loyal Lambs who start on Friday, May 22, on a series of All-Star Gambol performances, beginning at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York and playing in rapid succession Philadelphia, Wheeling, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Chicago, Buffalo, Rochester, and Boston. Mr. Belasco has handed in his signed "contract" to the Shepherd, William Courtleigh, and is enthusiastically engaged in rehearsing several of the most important numbers for the big show, appearing in one of them himself. When the Lambs went to gamboling over the land in 1909 Mr. Belasco was one of the most enthusiastic members of the party.

ARTHUR SMITH TO HAVE NEW HEADQUARTERS

T. Arthur Smith has completed arrangements for a lease of the building, 1306 G street, as a headquarters for things theatrical—musical bureau and amusement ticket office.

The upper floors will be converted into studios or teachers of dancing; vocal, and instrumental music. The lower floor will be the amusement ticket office and sheet department, conducted by J. Edgar Robinson, formerly with Sanders & Stayman.

Mrs. May Ramsdell will, as heretofore, be in charge of the musical bureau.