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Curios in the Window of the Show-Shop

The Reviewing Stand

By ALEXANDER WOOLLCOTT

IN the midst of our enjoyment of the antics indulged in by the marionettes of Tony Sarg, who has set up his puppet show at the Punch and Judy Theater for the Christmas season, we could not help reflecting that theirs must be a delightful game to play. It must be fun to be a puppeteer brooding over a human comedy and, in Olympian fashion, pulling the strings and playing Fate behind the scenes. Doubtless it provides all the year round the same sort of sanctioned satisfaction, which, according to all the Christmas magazines, is permitted once a year to those diffident grownups who on Christmas Eve can be discovered clandestinely and jocosely playing with the children's toys.

It must be fun to achieve a gradual mastery of the marionette's difficult technique, to grow so deft that the little puppets can be made to perform the most intricate feats. And we have no doubt that as this mastery develops the puppeteers lose interest in the tale they have to tell, lose interest even in the faith and laughter they are supposed to inspire among the children out front. They care more about an episode that is intricate than about one that is merely happy or charming or true. Probably they become interested chiefly in those scenes which are most difficult to manage, and in Mr. Sarg's "Don Quixote" are proudest of certain complicated episodes which we have already forgotten, the while they scarcely give a thought to that easy but incomparably delightful moment when the marionette lambs frisk and gambol to the piping of a marionette shepherd.

If so, they are yielding to a weakness which besets all workers in the arts. They are giving way to a perversion which leads to sterility. We all know the artist who succumbs to a sort of golf player's passion for seeing in how few strokes he can draw a likeness. We all know the novelist who so fondles and caresses every word before she lets go of it that, when the mosaic of her work is done, it lies before her beautiful but lifeless. We all know the playwright who becomes so engrossed in ingenious ways of getting his characters on and off stage that he quite forgets to have them say anything while they are there. And we can all guess that among the heads now bent over one or the other of the forthcoming productions of "Romeo and Juliet" there are some so abuzz with niceties of speech or inventions of setting and costume that they forget that once again a tragic tale of young, young love must stir an ancient pity or it is not worth the telling.

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It is, of course, a weakness to which critics are especially addicted. We know one who, being somewhat excessively interested in the mechanics of stagecraft, can attend a loathsome performance of a witless play and yet come away in a rosy rapture because a new kind of lamp from Copenhagen threw its light on to the third act. We know another who can sit sulky and impervious through a fine "Hamlet" because the cuttings made in the interminable and uneven text are not the cuttings which his scholarship approves.

The actor who is giving a lustrous and whole hearted performance before such grim precisionists must feel as dampened as did the adhesive lady who bored the forester with her embraces. "Dearest," she cooed, "the only witness to our love is this great oak above us. What do you think it would say if it could speak?" "If it could speak," replied the forester, yawning, "it would probably say: 'Pardon me, madame, but I'm an elm.'"

"The Texas Nightingale"

THERE faded last night from the Empire Theater a piece called "The Texas Nightingale," a brilliant and authentic comedy which had been mauled and dogseared by a ruinously inferior performance—not quite sufficient in the central rôle and downright distressing in some of the others. In reporting on this mishap we have been diagnosed as suffering from "a creeping silence." It was the silence of one groping for words that would tell how all like-minded playgoers must expect to be both delighted and tormented by the goings-on at the Empire. It is on such cross-roads occasions that the critics divide into two groups, never to meet again. The division is fundamental and is as undebatable as the famous dispute over precedence between the chicken and the egg. For our own part we are among those who tend to think of a play less as something written and final than as a living, growing thing that is the joint work of author, actor and audience. We cannot understand those who come beaming from a theater saying: "It was delightful. Of course the cast was appalling, but we enjoyed it immensely." Such a division occurred last season when Arnold Daly produced here a beautiful play from the German called "The Children's Tragedy," which, after going through the rough laundry of translation, emerged in Greenwich Village discolored and distorted by a performance that was not short of monstrous. It was murder. Yet, because the origin of this thing was, in its native tongue, a fine and important play, George Jean Nathan and one or two others wrote as if all the reviewers should have gone cheering from its hideous counterfeit here in New York. If he had succeeded in publishing his recommendations before the play closed and if, as a playgoer, we had carried our foolish reliance on him to the point of buying a seat to "The Children's Tragedy," we should have felt impelled to choke Mr. Nathan to death at the first opportunity. Which rude reprisal, while doubtless a popular proceeding, would have made the judicious grieve, for while it might have put an end to a good deal of muddle-headed writing about the theater, it would have cut short, too, an annual output of uncommonly comical remarks.

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As to the sudden demise of Miss Akins's play, Gilbert Miller, its nominal producer, sends this obituary:

I am fully in accord with the statement regarding "The Texas Nightingale" which appeared in your column last week, that in this piece Miss Akins has achieved "her best play and "one of the three or four most artful and most civilized comedies which the American stage has yet produced." I am further in accord with your reasoning that because the play possessed such distinctive beauty, such delicacy, if fragility of quality, "it is the more easily bruised on that account, is more easily thwarted and damaged by a haphazard collection of every day actors than would be a sturdier play." I will go further, and agree with you that "The Texas Nightingale" was blunted in its performance at the Empire Theater.

But when you state that "Fate and the House of Frohman have roughhoused a brilliant comedy" I must take issue with you. "Fate," perhaps—but not "the House of Frohman." Your "Becky Sharp" analogy is a good one and leads me to infer that in reviewing "The Texas Nightingale" you considered that the whole weight of that play, its life or death, also rested, on the shoulders of the principal actress. I note that Miss Akins's correspondent, whom you quoted, is of the same mind.

Now "the House of Frohman" had no more to do with the selection of the protagonist of "The Texas Nightingale" than did the writer of "The Reviewing Stand." As steward of the Charles Frohman Company I accepted "The Texas Nightingale" as one of the finest modern comedies I have ever known—even though in negotiating for the play I had to accept as a codicil to the contract the author's very natural but inflexible determination to cast the play according to her own lights. It was for me a unique predicament: on the one hand was, and still is, my enthusiasm for a manuscript of great comic, philosophic and artistic beauty; on the other hand was the imposition of the author's will as to the casting of the play. I can think of no greater tribute to a play than that a manager should accept full financial responsibility for its career, with nothing to say as to its interpretation.

Fashions For Men.

"I AM a superstitious man," writes Benjamin Glazer, the demon translator. "Doubtless back stage associations have made me so. Wherefore I ask you to take off the curse you put on 'Fashions for Men.' With certain reservations, you seem to have liked the play very much. 'Adroitly written' you said of it, 'beautifully produced,' 'shrewdly cast,' 'skillfully acted.' Which is, for you, lavish praise indeed. But our hero's mildness irked you. You went so far as to express the wish that he would fall down and break his neck. Here, I submit, you overstepped the bounds of critical decorum. Should any ill befall the play, I solemnly avow that you will be to blame. Let me hasten to add that I have no quarrel with your taste in heroes. You don't happen to like your heroes mild. Fair enough. For my part, I happen to despise the 'virile he-man' type of hero. Nothing in the theater bores me quite as much as the gent who woos his woman by offering to punch her in the eye. But, if I had written your notice of 'Fashions for Men,' I would certainly not have let any such bias color the whole of it.

"And that is precisely what you did do. Here is a play written by one of the master craftsmen of the theater. You dismiss it with the comment that the same author has written plays that pleased you more. . . . Here is a play in which every character is drawn and shaded with lifelike fidelity. You proceed to forget that nine out of ten plays you are called upon to review are mere familiar posturings of shopworn puppets. You say nothing to indicate that here is a play high above the average of merit. You content yourself with pronouncing a curse on the head of the hero. . . . Do you imagine, for instance, that it was inexperience which led Mr. Molnar *not* to have his worm turn for the big scene of the second act? Almost any other dramatist would have done it. The turning worm is one of the most familiar and, alas, effective devices in the theater. Molnar avoided it because he is Molnar. . . . Here is a play the ends of which are so swiftly and deftly bound up that (a thing unique in my experience) a hard boiled first night audience remained in its seats for a full five minutes after the hero and heroine were reunited in the 'ultimate embrace'; and subsequent audiences have invariably done likewise. Yet no critic seemed to have been aware of it. What I am trying to say is that from your own printed opinion of the play you have failed to do it justice."

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All of which severity was brought upon us because we tried to explain why we were only mildly interested in "Fashions for Men" by voicing a suspicion, which we still harbor, that a limp and inert protagonist is likely to make a spiritless play. It did in "Ambush." Turning the other cheek may be good ethics, but it seems to make dull drama. And we should like to assure Mr. Glazer that between the gent who woos a woman by offering to punch her in the eye and the gent who casts upon her the reproachful eyes of an old horse she wouldn't have the heart to shoot, there are certain intermediate types. As for the hard-boiled, first-night audience—but, really, that's too old a delusion. A first-night audience is soft, scrambled, full of mushrooms and given to dripping on the bib.

Billie Burke, who will return to the Empire Christmas night in "Rose Briar," a comedy written for her by Booth Tarkington.

The elder Schildkraut, father of the impending *Peer Gynt*, who will himself make his first appearance in English when "The God of Vengeance" is presented Thursday night at the Provincetown Theater.

The Talk of Broadway

By FRANK VREELAND

PEGGY HOPKINS JOYCE is going to return to the stage again, all true students of the drama will be glad to learn. It will not be in a straight comedy or farce, like "A Sleepless Night," in which she last appeared here, supported by a bed. No, it will be a play with music, as the fascinating young woman appeared abroad in "The Riviera Girl," and seems to have grown accustomed to her own voice and others raised in song.

She will be starred in nothing less than the next Winter Garden show, which accounts for the fact that the Garden has been so extensively remodeled. Doubtless it is to provide extra space for the jewels and wraps which the star will nonchalantly toss about her dressing room. Likewise this would seem to give a reason for the extensive repairs to the book—probably to allow room for the introduction of various sly allusions to some of Peggy's conquests. When the production opens, which is expected to be sometime next month, Peggy's Rolls-Royce will be seen flashing up and down Broadway more vivaciously than ever, with the electric blue lights drawing attention away from the chewing gum signs.

Benny Leonard, it has also been definitely settled by the Shuberts, will likewise have a hand—two of them, in fact—in the show. He started out with it when it was recognizable under the title of "Hitchy-Koo of 1922," but is the only one of the cast to reach the ultimate destination, the rest of the show having dropped off piecemeal en route.

"Fashions of 1923" will be the name of the new Winter Garden production, but so far they haven't tacked any real dress goods on to the name. The Winter Garden is still undergoing extensive alterations. The most important change, probably, is the plugging up of the peep-holes in the curtain through which the chorus girls used to spot their gentlemen friends in the audience—if that means anything in your life.

A double set of coincidences has cropped up in connection with the presentation by the Equity Players at the Forty-eighth Street Theater on Christmas night of "Why Not?" This comedy is by Jesse Lynch Williams, as every one ought to know by now, and is ostensibly his own answer to his own previous play, "Why Marry?" It so happens that a play of the same title, "Why Not?" though of different import, is to be presented at about the same time by the dramatic club of Williams College, so you can see how fearfully complicated life will be in the theatrical district. No steps have been taken yet to instruct the traffic cops on Broadway, when the undergraduates present their one act farce at the Waldorf on December 29, how to show bewildered theatergoers which is Equity and which is college, but it may become necessary to make the bluecoats guides to the drama.

The author of the sketch is Van H Cartmell, Jr., son of the late Van H Cartmell, president of the Kelly Springfield Tire Company, who is in the banking business with Bonbright & Co., and therefore naturally turned his attention to the stage. He and Mr. Williams have put their heads together over the matter already, but so far nothing has been done about it for the good of the drama. The Cartmell playlet was played in vaudeville about four years ago under the title "A Wife Wanted," besides being presented by various amateur societies, and when an amateur club in Philadelphia put on a piece with a similar title two years ago young Mr. Cartmell had a good time spoofing them about it.

The indications are that Jane Cowl's version of "Romeo and Juliet" won't be in New York till after the Arthur Hopkins production, so that Ethel Barrymore will have the balcony rights for the metropolis awhile. Miss Cowl, incidentally, has been rehearsing her Shakespeare with the stage virtually set, which is a novelty for rehearsals as well as Shakespeare. As the scenery consists mostly of draperies this has been fairly easy to do, and gives the actors not only a greater stimulus for their work in the actual surroundings, but also more time in which to learn to avoid getting tangled up in the hangings. Instead of jumping right into Broadway, Miss Cowl will warm up out of town, where her calling list will be as follows:

Toledo, December 21-23, inclusive; Cincinnati, the following week, and then New York at the Selwyn, opening about January 15.

John Halliday, one of the charmed "Circle" company, instead of appearing with Miss Cowl as *Mercutio*, was last observed accepting an engagement to appear with Helen MacKellar in "The Masked Woman" at the Eltinge the coming week, and seemingly quite reconciled.

Florence Reed, who left this house last week in "East of Suez," will be returned as a Christmas present by A. H. Woods to Charles Dillingham. She was under contract to Dillingham earlier in the season, but he permitted Woods to induct her into office in the Maugham melodrama. It is reported that Miss Reed will engage dauntlessly in a series of Pinero revivals. Apparently she has forsaken her urge toward Shakespeare for a playwright a bit more up to date.

The "East of Suez" company is expected to be recast somewhat and then sent out on the road and told to do its darnedest by Martin Herrman.

Genevieve Tobin is to be escorted into the Little Theater early next month with Winchell Smith and E. Ray Goetz as the guard of honor. This is a new producing combination, but evidently Smith has found it an easy step from Golden to Goetz. Miss Tobin will appear in "Polly Preferred," by Guy Bolton, in which Patricia Collinge turned from sweet *Pollyanna* into satirical *Polly* when the play recently burgeoned at Cleveland.

Another Sam H. Harris star, Francine Larrimore, has stopped exposing the young girls of to-day on tour in "Nice People," now that the flapper subject has been pretty well exhausted. She is back in town, but as Harris just now has no play ripe for her, he is thinking of letting her keep in training in some other manager's production until some glad new work bursts over his horizon.

Edith Day, in "The Wildflower," opens late in January at Baltimore for a week, and then Arthur Hammerstein will let fate decide about New York. Hammerstein has another musical show ready to his hand, which he has not yet fitted to the measure of any star. It was written by the same lads, Otto Harbach and Oscar Hammerstein 2d, but so far it has escaped a name.

Georgia O'Ramey has dropped out of the tour of Frank Tinney's show, possibly through being unable to muster the breath for the fast pace which the show is expected to hit in Boston next week.

Willard Holcomb, manager, hopes the Ku Klux Klan won't think poorly of him when he presents a new play soon in Richmond, Va., since he originally presented "St. Elmo" with a stock company there and played the role of *Uncle Shad*, the negro butler, with his own voice. The play which he will set in motion there will be "Alias, Mrs. Pepp," with none other than Marie Cahill putting ginger into the title role. The comedy is by Edward A. Paulton, who did the penmanship for "Her Temporary Husband," and it will be lowered into position on Christmas.

Christine Norman, who appeared in "The Love Child" out of town, has written a play for which she will choose her own star, consisting of herself. It is understood that her husband will present her to the world in it.

It's not often that an understudy succeeds a star when the creator of a role steps out, for usually somebody is imported by the manager into the role who hardly heard of it. But sometimes it happens in the best regulated managements. When Joseph Schildkraut steps out of "Liliom" on tour in about two weeks in order to get in tune with "Peer Gynt" and the infinite, Sam H. Harris will let his understudy, Charles Ellis, follow the natural course of events and roll right into the part. Ellis played the role only once before, during an afternoon at the Garrick Theater when Schildkraut was in abeyance.

Oliver Morosco's comedy for Led Carrillo, "Mike Angelo," which is expected finally to open its eyes here shortly after New Year's, has been entirely rewritten by Morosco himself, who has got up as early as the aforesaid chorus girls to do it.

Max Marcin is willing to bring in Aaron Hoffmann's comedy, "Give and Take" if some philanthropist will give him a theater. He aims to re-cast it, as Augustin Duncan, who followed Sam Sidman in one of the leading roles—either *Give* or *Take*—couldn't depress his intellectual methods to the point of low comedy, doubtless being still under the spell of "Malvaloca." Marcin has been making efforts to get Sam Bernard and Louis Mann boiling over at each other in the principal parts. Both Bernard and Mann want to be under the personal direction of the A. H. Woods office, but so far Martin Herrmann hasn't offered to seal the arrangement by dipping into

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The Passing Shows

Play.	Presented.
Kiki	Nov. 29 '21
Chauve-Souris	Feb. 4 '22
Able's Irish Rose	May 23
Ziegfeld's Follies of 1922	June 5
Whispering Wires	Aug. 7
Blossom Time (2d eng.)	Aug. 7
The Old Soak	Aug. 22
The Gingham Girl	Aug. 28
So This Is London!	Aug. 30
Better Times	Sept. 2
Sally, Irene and Mary	Sept. 4
Why Men Leave Home	Sept. 12
Greenwich Village Follies	Sept. 12
The Awful Truth	Sept. 18
Spite Corner	Sept. 25
Loyalties	Sept. 27
Thin Ice	Sept. 30
The Lady in Ermine	Oct. 2
R. U. R.	Oct. 9
Music Box Revue	Oct. 23
The Fool	Oct. 23
The Last Warning	Oct. 24
Springtime of Youth	Oct. 26
Seventh Heaven	Oct. 30
Six Characters in Search of an Author	Oct. 30
The World We Live In	Oct. 31
Up She Goes	Nov. 6
Rain	Nov. 7
Hospitality	Nov. 13
Merton of the Movies	Nov. 13
Little Nellie Kelly	Nov. 13
The Love Child	Nov. 14
Hamlet	Nov. 16
The Bootleggers	Nov. 27
Liza	Nov. 27
The Bunch and Judy	Nov. 28
It Is the Law	Nov. 29
Listening In	Dec. 4
Our Nell	Dec. 4
Fashions for Men	Dec. 5
The Doormat	Dec. 7
Gringo	Dec. 14

Addenda

FROM Elsinore, Tyrone Power writes to assure us that his offense was not so rank as his erstwhile *Antony* had suggested. Says the present *Claudius:*

I have read with interest Mr. William Faversham's statement in the dramatic column Sunday, in which he contends that I robbed him of the glory of first presenting to an American audience a ghost represented by eerie lights because of my inability to work up my imagination so that he had to let Mr. Fuller Mellish go on as the ghost of Cæsar.

I have no recollection of such an unfortunate state of affairs while I was in Mr. Faversham's production of "Julius Cæsar." At the back of the tent scene there was an opening prepared, covered with gauze, behind which the ghost appeared, and certainly I had nothing to do with the designing of the scenery. As a matter of fact, after I retired from the role of *Brutus* in Mr. Faversham's production I produced "Julius Cæsar" myself, and in that production, unaware of the prior claims of Germany and Austria, I employed nothing but "an eerie light," which proved overpoweringly effective.

In all justification I may claim the first distinction of an actor presenting the "ghostless ghost."

It is fortunate that the managers have not seized this idea to represent the weekly welcomed "ghost" by "an eerie light," which, I am told, is pitifully true in Germany and Austria to-day.

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While from Peggy Wood, who would have been the *Ophelia* of this production had she not been held close to the Savage breast, comes this semi-lyric appreciation:

'Twas not alone the trooping crowd, good critic,
That drowned Polonius's admonitions wise,
Nor yet the comic beard and wig he owned
That stopped his voice from being heard by one—
'Twas his deliv'ry; loud and then again
Too soft, too mushy and too loosely bound
For this poor groundling in the tenth row back
To hear a single word. Can ought be done?
Can he be led beside a roaring El
And learn to RAISE HIS VOICE BY THAT?

Or what? I know the audience I sat with was the latest and the noisiest ever, but at that I got a few unimportant words back in the tenth row. Always the important one, the rub of the sentence, was swallowed.

If Mr. Hopkins can cure a few hard cases of theater-bronchitis, make people come on time and jack up Polonius, nothing else could be asked by friend or caviller.

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And, breaking our long silence on the subject of "Hamlet," we should like to air a plausible rumor to the effect that among the critics of the massive steps and pillars of Mr. Jones's *Elsinore* is the present *Hamlet* himself, who, they do say, invariably refers to it as the Pennsylvania Station.

STILL ANOTHER SHAW PREFACE

By G. BERNARD SHAW.

The following "translator's note" was written by Shaw to precede the only translation he ever made, that of "Gitta's Atonement" (Frau Gitta's Sühne), which is to serve as a vehicle here for Bertha Kalich, under the direction of the Shuberts. Shaw made the translation in return for the translation of his works made by the author, Trebitsch.

SIEGFRIED TREBITSCH, a well known Austrian novelist and playwright, was born in Vienna on December 21, 1869. The list of his original works includes eight novels and volumes of stories, and three or four plays, including "Frau Gitta's Sühne," of which the present work is a translation. I have to stress the word original, because, with a devotion extraordinary in the case of a writer with a successful career open to him as an original writer, he has undertaken and carried out the heavy additional task of translating and introducing to the German speaking public and to the German theater the entire body of my own works, both literary and theatrical.

This enterprise is the more remarkable because it was begun at a time when my position in the English theater was one, not of good repute, but of infamy. I was rated in the theatrical world of London as an absurd pamphleteer, who had been allowed to display my ignorance of the rudiments of stage technic, and my hopeless incapacity for representing human nature dramatically or otherwise, in a few performances at coterie theaters quite outside recognized theatrical commerce. Thebitsch knew better. He also knew English. He was quite unknown to me when he appeared one day at my house and asked to see me with a view to his becoming my interpreter and apostle in Central Europe. I attempted to dodge his visit by asking my wife to see him and to explain politely that a proposal to translate could be entertained only when made by the responsible manager of a theater with a view to immediate production. The evasion failed ignominously. My wife came to me and said that the young gentleman, though he seemed a very nice young gentleman, had swept aside her excuse with explosive contempt and would take no denial. If I was to get rid of him (which she already regarded as doubtful policy) I must go down and do it myself. I came down, and the result was that the young gentleman carried the citadel by storm as successfully as he had carried the outworks.

I did what I could to dissuade him from what seemed a desperate undertaking; but my faith in my destiny was invincible. I surrendered at discretion; and the result was that I presently found myself a successful and respected playwright in the German language, while the English critics were still explaining laboriously that my plays were not plays, and urging me, in the kindest spirit, to cease my vain efforts to enter a profession for which nature had utterly unfitted me. In the last decade of the nineteenth century I was deriving a substantial income as a playwright from America and Central Europe. Not until the middle of the first decade of the twentieth could I have lived by my theatrical earnings in London. To-day I have only to lift up my finger to attract a hundred translators. When Trebitsch volunteered for the job the hundred would have fled from my invitation as one man.

It is not for me to say how far English drama is indebted to Herr Trebitsch for its present prestige abroad. It is for me to say that my personal debt to him is incalculable. Now that the horrible catastrophe of the war has torn Anglo-German relations to fragments and that only the fools who will not heed Mr. Lloyd George's warning to "stop snarling" can doubt the vital European necessity of mending them, I can do no less than take advantage of the fact that Trebitsch has written plays of his own to translate one of them from German to English for the man who has translated so many plays from English to German.

There were technical difficulties—how great I never realized until I took the job in hand. At first I was preoccupied with a quite minor matter. I can neither claim knowledge of the German language nor plead ignorance of it. I am like most literary persons: I have spent several holidays in Germany (mostly in Bayreuth), and have just managed to ask my way and get what I wanted in the shops and railway stations without the aid of an interpreter. The proverbial bits of Goethe and Wagner and Nietzsche are familiar to me, and when a German writes to me I can generally make out what he wants, provided he uses the Latin and not the Gothic script. And that is all. When I opened the pages of "Frau Gitta's Sühne" I was driven to the dictionary, only to discover that Trebitsch apparently does not use words

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