

MUSICAL COMEDY ALMOST MONOPOLIZES THE STAGE

The Field of Art.

A Province Now Apparently Given Over to Musical Comedy—How Such an Art Product Is Made.

AFTER the first production of the Paderewski opera, "Manru," the critics and the composer were quick to explain that the work partook of both artificial and dramatic character. The great pianist thought the truth of opera would be found midway between Donizetti and Wagner. The much heralded opera of the future would be, in his mind, a combination of dramatic and thematic composition, much along the lines of "Siegfried" and "Die Walkure," and purely artificial lyrics, duets and trios such as characterized the works of Donizetti and Gounod.

It has seemed possible the promoters of the modern musical comedy set too long at the feet of the great Polish virtuoso. It might well be that Messrs. Sam S. Shubert, Nixon and Zimmerman, and Klaw & Erlanger feared to stray after strange gods. Perhaps, like the great body of French sculptors, they had found academic art good enough. It might even have been that, with Matthew Arnold, they found the kernel of all inspiration in things Greek. If this were true, it would not be wise in the Times to treat such academic—although eclectic—products as "The Runaways" and "Winsome Winnie" with disrespect.

For fear of making so unhappy a mistake, therefore, The Times has been at some pains to discover the secret hidden in the making of musical comedy. A hundred dramatic chemists have contributed to the end. And now the mystery is clear to all.

Inspiration Put to Work.
When a young man from Chicago or Junction City or Ocean walks nervously along Broadway, fired with the spirit of Palestrina, Dufay, Mozart, and Liszt, and seeks to find a market for the musical inspiration with which genius stamped him for her own he finds himself eventually in the august presence of the trust. There he learns that busy men have too little time either to hear music or read plots. Finally, if his spirit is not too proud and his necessity be great, he consents to present in lieu of his completed work what the trust terms a "scenario."

A "scenario" is the briefest possible outline of a plot. A glance at it serves the trust manager admirably. If it pleases him, and it may please him in a hundred different ways, he informs the young man that some part of his work may be accepted.

This usually ends the interview. The manager has the idea, the outline and a refusal on as much of the book and music as he may choose to accept. The young man has nothing. In the course of a year or two, if the work succeeds, he may get 2 per cent of some share of the proceeds. If it fails he gets nothing, and is forever barred from giving his serious work a serious presentation.

No Scorn for Old Friends.
Meanwhile, the manager is busy. With the "scenario" in his hands and one of his assistants at his side he is hard at work.

The trust managers vie with each other in attempts to make their musical comedies splendid. One of them recently contracted for so many costumes that twenty trunks full remained unused, another pocketed a loss of his entire investment after a generous trial without a murmur. Ten years ago a sufficient mounting could be obtained for \$10,000. Today a similar enterprise would cost from \$25,000 to \$40,000. Whatever can be said of the musical comedy as an art product, its promoters of the trust provide it with an equipment generous from every point of view.

But the "shoe string" manager reasons differently.
"We can use a couple of old scenes out of 'Girle Girle' for the first act," he says to his aide. "I guess we had better get a set made cheap for the second act, and we can worry along with some old thing for the last act."
"Get the property man to hunt out those old costumes we stored away in 1888. They ought to be pretty nigh forgotten by this time. See what you can do with—about a new set for the first act, and the right to use his name."
"As for the company—it's a cinch. You know that little fellow that came from Australia? Well, he's mighty handsome. We can get him on our own terms. We'll put him in the chief part, take him from a soldier in the Turkish way to a reformed race-track tout, cut. We ought to do his part pretty well. We'll help me find two or three people who can sing and are out of work, and get that fat-faced fellow to do the love making. If you can get a lot of students to do the other roles and some good lookers for the chorus, we'll have a hot company."

Made in a Night.
In less time than readers of this column would believe all this is done. The new scenery and new costumes take the most time. The little fellow from Australia, the two or three people who can sing, the fat-faced fellow to do the love-making, and the "lookers" for the chorus are brought together about two weeks before the opening night. Then follows a jumble of rehearsals, bookings, instructions to advance agents, shipments of lithographs, newspaper advertising and communications to dramatic critics enough to drive the ordinary commercial manager to the insane asylum.

The opening is usually in some city not too far away from New York. Philadelphia was used for a time. Then came Baltimore, Boston and Washington may come next. For about a month the company is kept in the "provinces" being whipped into shape. More and more of the composer's inspiration is introduced. The comedians get into form and



BERTHA GALLAND, as Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall.

interpolate a hundred jokes with mighty slight relation to plot or character. Finally, and of equal importance to the investors in the production, the timorous and fearful critics of these provincial towns contribute most desirable advertising by praising this production to the skies.

Where the Shoe Pinches.
This is no flight of fancy. It has happened more than once this year. It is in epitome the story of the Shubert Brothers, Nixon & Zimmerman, Klaw & Erlanger rule in the American theater. But the worst is yet to be told.

These musical comedies are the money-makers. The profit of one member of one of these firms last year was over \$300,000. His associate is said to have cleared from the same musical comedies over \$200,000. Yet last year was the season which barely paid expenses for Henry Irving.

With so much money in sight the several managers named are naturally solicitous for the welfare of the young man's operatic inspiration. They plan their season's bookings—they control 90 per cent of the desirable theaters in the whole country—for one attraction at a time and their musical comedy money-makers are mapped over the country first. When engagements have been provided for "The Wild Rose," "The Show Girl," and "The Runaways," the next most desirable dates are allotted to No. 2 companies in such classics as "A Chinese Honeymoon."

Such dates as remain go to Ada Rehan and Otis Skinner, Viola Allen, Mrs. Campbell, Henry Irving, Maude Adams, Richard Mansfield, E. H. Sothern, and their conferees. There is no room for Charles B. Hanford and Ward and James, and it is worth serious financial loss to keep Henrietta Crossman, Mrs. Fiske, and James K. Hackett altogether out of the theater if possible.

A Light! A Light!
With this inside view it seems safe to assume that the promoters of musical comedies are neither devoted exponents of academic art nor in business for their health. At present their power is apparently unlimited. But in the words of a familiar classic, "There's a good time coming by and by." The storm is centering on Washington. When the clouds break perhaps the sunlight will center here, too. Meanwhile, The Times rejoices that the enterprising gentlemen who manage the local theaters have been able to obtain for their patrons a



E. M. HOLLAND, of the "Raffles" Company.

series of bookings in which musical comedy occupies little more than the position it deserves. A. D. A.

At the Theaters.

Columbia—Bertha Galland.
No contemporary novelist has a happier knack than Charles Major of humanizing historic personages, who have dwelt so long upon the pinnacles of fame as to have become almost myths to the modern mind; and in reviving the real-life romance of "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall," he brings back the brilliant Elizabethan era—the most picturesque and dramatic of English history.

For Dorothy Vernon was a vividly real English girl of the days when Elizabeth of England and Mary Queen of Scots waged their feminine, but none the less fatal, warfare. In the midst of conspiracies and counterplots, family feuds and royal rivalries, this fascinating and self-willed heiress of Haddon Hall managed to outwit them all and win the heart and hand of the man she loved.

To this day, old Haddon Hall—one of the best preserved and most picturesque of Elizabethan manors—exhibits "Dorothy's door," the portal whence she eloped with Sir John Manners, son of her father's ancient enemy, the Duke of Rutland, four centuries ago. It is strange that Shakespeare, who must have been familiar with this story, passed over the happy romance of this English "Romeo and Juliet" for the tragic Italian tale. But politics as well as the theatrical tastes of the period probably dictated this ignoring of Dorothy Vernon.

However, "everything comes to the heroine who waits," and under the expert stagecraft of Paul Kester, who so successfully dramatized Mr. Major's first English historical novel, "When Knight-

Lafayette—Al H. Wilson.

Al H. Wilson, in the romantic play "A Prince of Tatters," will come to the Lafayette this week.

Mr. Wilson is known to be an actor of refined comedy, with a magnetic stage presence, and much delighted humor. His reputation as "golden voiced singer" is well deserved as his voice has a mellow richness and sweetness that charms the listener. His repertoire of songs includes "The Jolly Rover," "Schmittelbank," "Memory," "My Old Pipe," "Winding of the Yarn," and others.

The period of 1770 offers a good field for picturesque setting, and the opportunity has been made the most of in the present piece. The costumes are of the period of the Georges, and is brightened by touches of Dutch burgher life.

"The Prince of Tatters" is an Austrian prince, whose wife has been taken away from England by her guardian, who hopes, by obtaining her legal freedom and marrying her to the son of the Eng-



KYRLE BELLEW, as a Gentleman Cracksman.

land was in flower," for Julia Mariow, "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall" will live before the footlights in the pleasing personality of Bertha Galland.

The production, which marks the first managerial venture of J. Fred Zimmerman, Jr., will be on an elaborate and realistic scale, the scenes being painted from photographs of old Haddon Hall, and the costumes carefully reproduced from Elizabethan models in the British Museum. Miss Galland and her company, including May Robson, Kate Denin-Wilson, Mary Bacon, Isabel Richards, William Lewers, Frank Losee, Sheridan Block, A. Law Gislis and George Le Soir will be seen at the Columbia Theater this week, coming direct from a successful run at the Chestnut Street Opera House, Philadelphia.

National—"Raffles."

The theory that crime is a disease is body advanced in the new play which Kyrle Bellew will present for the first time in this city tomorrow night at the National Theater.
The play, which has just enjoyed an

uncommonly successful premiere at the Carick Theater in Philadelphia, is from the pens of E. W. Hornung and Eugene Presbrey, and is based, as almost every one knows, upon the fascinating sketches of the first named dramatist, which were booked under the titles—"The Amateur Cracksman" and "Raffles."
The dramatists have joined the book titles and call their play "Raffles—The Amateur Cracksman."

Mr. Bellew will be surrounded by a particularly interesting company, headed by the admirable character comedian, E. M. Holland, while other members of especial prominence will be Clara Blandick, whose Glory Quayle, in Liebler's revival of "The Christian," recently won unstinted praise from all the New York critics; Ethel Matthews, a noted London beauty, now making her first appearances in America; Hattie Russell, the beautiful sister of Ada Rehan; Lucy Milner, who appeared here prominently with Mrs. Patrick Campbell, last season; Mignon Beranger, a young French actress from the Theatre Sara Bernhardt; Frank Roberts, Stanton Elliot, Frank Connor, Frank McCormack (a Washingtonian), Alfred James, and others.

The production is said to be, in its discriminative beauty, one of the most notable Liebler & Co. have ever sent out of New York. The costuming of the ladies is said to be especially rich and beautiful.

For the benefit of those who have not read Hornung's exciting short stories, it may be told that A. J. Raffles ("The Amateur Cracksman"), is the character antithesis of Sherlock Holmes, the equally famous character creation of Sir Conan Doyle, who first suggested to Mr. Hornung—his cousin—the idea of dramatizing Raffles and pitting against him a contending genius of crime in the person of a great detective.

Raffles is no vulgar scamp. He is a brilliant, lovable, intellectual criminal, whose propensities for crime are caused by inherited taint or disease. He is a gentleman received in the highest social circles of London—a noted athlete, and the adored of all the ladies.

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lish governor of the colony, to gain immunity from ruin and disgrace. The prince goes to Fort George, not knowing of the presence of his wife, and is indirectly implicated in a conspiracy against the life of Governor Belmont. Unrecognized by his wife, he pleads with her for her husband, whom he calls his friend, and whom she has been led to believe a freebooter and unworthy of her love. They become reconciled, the prince is arrested for complicity in the plot, is sentenced to death, but is finally pardoned by the governor, and the play ends happily.

Al H. Wilson plays the role of the prince with ease and dignity, and wins the hearts of his audience with his clever singing.

Chase—Vaudeville.
Hyde's Comedians' annual appearance in this city will be made at Chase's Theater next week. The four Mortons, Sam, Clara, Kitty, and Paul, head the bill. The marvels of another sphere of vaudeville will be revealed by the four Holo-

ways in their suspended wire act. Piccolo's Midgets are an important feature of the bill, and their new diversion draws from almost every line of amusement, as they are acrobats, wrestlers, comedians, and singers. Another pleasing attraction is Paul Kleist, "King of Black Art," and master of musical instruments. Admirers of the tinkling banjo will derive enjoyment from the act of Hill and Whitaker, noted as banjoists. The Yankee Comedy Four will supply an eccentric commingling of vocalism and ludicrous antics. Carr and Burns will offer a travesty. Bennett and Young, with life-like pictorial ballads, and Cole and Warren, the brewers of German comedy, round off the bill.

Academy—"Shadows of a Great City."
"Shadows of a Great City," with Annie Ward Tiffany in her famous creation of Biddy Ronan, the rollicking Irish lass, will come to the Academy this week. The production this season is said to be the most elaborate ever offered of the play. The scene showing East River at Hell Gate has always been given with painted waters. This season, it is said, a tank containing 40,000 gallons will be used on the stage showing the river with boats of various descriptions plying to and fro making, what is said to be, one of the most beautiful, yet natural pictures ever known to modern melodrama. The production is under the management of C. B. Jefferson, a son of Joseph Jefferson, and patrons of the Academy may look forward to one of the rare treats of the season in "Shadows of a Great City."

The action is brisk, and the situations give scope for elaborate scenic and mechanical effects. The combat between the true and the false begins at the rise of the curtain. The plot, which involves the recovery of the stolen child from a watery grave after the death of her mother, and in after years the return of her heritage; the release from prison of her falsely accused lover, and the bringing to justice of the real villain forms an absorbing story. In addition to

include the submarine boat, wireless telephone, etc., features new to the stage, and are introduced in a dramatic story that holds the attention of the audience from beginning to end. The company includes Eugene Perkins, Nicholas S. Conway, John J. Dempsey, the famous "Dancing Tramp"; Zonzetta McGraw, Lyda Powell, Edith A. Pond, Frank Asburne, little Martha McGraw, and others whose names are familiar to theatergoers.

Lyceum—Reilly and Woods Company.
For the week of October 12 Manager Kernan, of the Lyceum Theater, has engaged the Reilly and Woods company, headed by Pat Reilly. This organization has been noted for the excellence of its burlesque performance. This season it is stronger than ever before, and nothing has been spared to maintain its former reputation.

Personality and Art.
Dramatic Success Depends on Concentration of Self in Role.

By BERTHA GALLAND.

While I feel it rather presumptuous on the part of a woman of my years and comparatively brief experience to indulge in an extended dissertation upon dramatic art, I may plead my great love for it as an excuse. The opportunity of speaking a few words, even in cold type, to the theater-goers who, by their attendance and applause of my humble but well-meant efforts, have encouraged me more than I can tell, is too strong to resist.

Especially to the playgoers of Washington, who have viewed and apparently approved my most ambitious ventures into the realm of the classic English drama, do I feel like writing those words of heartfelt thanks, which I have never been able to voice before the curtain.

Several times, especially since the production of my latest play, "Dorothy Vernon of Haddon Hall," I have been called before the curtain repeatedly, and I confess was always glad to respond until some one called "Speech." At that word all power of speech leaves me, and however I may wish for the gift of tongue to express my gratitude, it must all be made manifest in pantomime, and I fear that my actions on such occasions suggest panic rather than pleasure.

Concentration Defies Speechmaking.
My training has, perhaps, been too strictly dramatic to enable me to doff and don a character as quickly as its costume. For my earliest instructor, Mr. Edgar, always insisted upon what might be termed mental immersion in the part assumed, and with that admirable actor of the modernized "old school," the late Joseph Haworth, I learned the value of almost hypnotic self-concentration in the character assumed from the time one enters the theater and commences to make up for the part until the final curtain falls.

This must be my excuse for appearing so tongue-tied before the curtain; for, unless Mr. Kester writes me an epilogue for "Dorothy Vernon" after the fashion of dramatists of her day, I fear I shall never be able to make a curtain speech. However, Mr. Kester himself, master of language though he be, is none too fluent before the curtain, so the duty of responding to the audience's demands for "speech" on first nights has fallen to our manager, Mr. Zimmerman, who does ample credit to all concerned.

"Art Is Where the Heart Is."
After this long prologue I have almost forgotten what I wanted to say. But if the exordium is extended, the peroration must be correspondingly brief. Some one has said that "Art is where



ETHEL MATHEWS, a Noted English Beauty, in "Raffles."

the heart is"—which is a terse expression of the great truth that one achieves his best work only when following the bent of his strongest natural inclination. I believe that in everyone is born more or less of the dramatic instinct.

Nearly all children, in their little impromptu plays, assume different characters, and some very cleverly imitate the voices and manners of persons they have observed. They do so successfully because they are able in their innocence to divorce themselves from self-consciousness. Later, as the Ego becomes exaggerated in their minds, they become artificial and self-conscious—especially when they observe some one watching them; and then all the native talents, all the spontaneity of their impersonations disappears.

Experience and the Fitness of Things.
With very few does this capacity for dissociation from self and complete mental identification with the character assumed remain after they are grown to maturity, and these few are those usually referred to as "born actors." As a matter of fact, they simply follow the bent of their strongest inclination, or by training or association are taught to subordinate their native talents to the established technique of the stage. This power of concentrating the imagination upon the character assumed so as, for the time being, practically to live the part, seems to me to be the essential qualification of an actor. To use a mechanical, but modern metaphor—this is the "motive power" of dramatic art. Its management, so as to control and direct this energy and make it most effective, in the "technique" that makes the artist—and is usually a combination of experience, and a natural sense of "the fitness of things."

The first and most essential thing in acting, to my mind, is to get into the part, and remain in it. Then it follows that the actor cannot do anything unnatural to the character or its environment. This may be the converse of the proposition, but it is the method of achieving such results as I have obtained, and much greater that I hope to achieve.

Miss Blandick's Success.
Gradual Rise of a Talented Young Player.

Clara Blandick, leading woman for Kyrle Bellew, recently won prominence in New York by reason of a fine portrayal of the role of Glory Quayle in the Academy of Music revival of "The Christian," which, in addition to Edgward Morgan as John Storm, gathered together most of the original Knickerbocker Theater cast that had surrounded Viola Allen.

Miss Blandick has proved that real merit and honest work are certain means for success on the stage as in other lines of professional effort.

Three years ago Clara Blandick was unknown beyond her social circles in her home city—Boston.

Today, by virtue of her position with Mr. Bellew, she takes her place in the front rank of American leading women.

When asked how she made such progress and in such incredibly short time, Miss Blandick is said to have replied: "I was determined, and I took the first chance that offered itself, unpleasant as it was. Then I pleaded, beseeched, and demanded more work. I insisted on understudying every woman in the cast. This was my real method, and by it I won what little I have thus far achieved. By understudying everybody I increased my chances for a hearing. Edith Hardy, the principal boy in 'The Walking Delegate,' my first engagement, was taken suddenly ill, and I went on at three hours' notice and scored a success in my home city."

"Next, while playing in 'The Tarrytown Widow,' Carrie De Mar, the leading 'soubrette,' whom I had been careful to understudy, fell ill, and I went on for the widow at about two hours' notice."

"I understudied Ida Conquest in 'Because She Loved Him So,' and when she was taken away by Mr. Frohman to appear in another play, I was the only one prepared to take the leading part. I was successful again, and was retained in the role for two seasons."

"The following year, Daniel Frohman engaged me to understudy Cecelia Loftus in 'Richard Lovelace,' with E. H. Sothern. On Monday night of the final week at the Garden Theater, New York, Miss Loftus was suddenly stricken with fever. I was prepared, and went on for the leading role of Lucy Sachervell, with no more preparation than could be given me after I entered the stage door on the evening of the performance."

"Next I had an opportunity to play the leading role in 'If I Were King,' when Miss Loftus was again taken ill, and then Liebler & Co., engaged me for Glory Quayle in 'The Christian.' This engagement was my 'making.'"

Miss Blandick had her choice this season of following Miss Allen in the role of Donna Rosa in "The Eternal City" to the Ross of Edward J. Morgan, or of becoming Mr. Bellew's leading woman in "Raffles."

Costly True Love.
And It Seldom Runs Smooth in the Show Business.

Pretty little Clara Morton, of the Four Mortons, at Chase's this week, is engaged. This will be sad news for the "chappies" who frequent the front rows at the theaters and fondly imagine that their glances awake responsive chords in the bosoms of the fair ones back of the footlights. Fred Stone, of Montgomery and Stone, now with "The Wizard of Oz," is the happy possessor of Miss Morton's affections. That the course of true love, however, does not run smooth, draws its best illustrations from theatrical engagements and marriages, and Mr. Stone is even now drinking his cup of difficulties. The every-

body advanced in the new play which Kyrle Bellew will present for the first time in this city tomorrow night at the National Theater.
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