

A MUSICAL COMEDY, A PLAY OR TWO, SOME VAUDEVILLE AND A FEW REMARKS.

BY ASHTON STEVENS.

A new romantic drama, a new musical comedy, a big composer who played the piano, a symphony concert, a production of a celebrated Gillette farce, a quartet of variety novelties—it has been a live week for anybody whose business it is to see and hear all such things. I appreciate the prodigality of the gods, but I would be content with a lesser variety and more "Geisha."

I approached "The Geisha" gingerly last Sunday night. And there never was a happier man than I when it turned out to be nothing more formidable than English musical comedy as it is in a Japanese locale. When Donald Graham, who knows his Japan like an Arnold, told me that the kimono costumes were distinctly non-Japanese, and that the girls did not even know how to tie their obis, my telerity rose higher still.

A goldfish swam in a big glass bowl. As near little goldfish do. And he looked with the whole of her heart and soul. An officer brave from the ocean wave. And she thought that he loved her, too.

I know that some perch is not the rule in comic opera; it seemed never to have been the general order at the Tivoli until Ed Stevens came back. Sunday night I actually discovered the chorus in the act of articulation. Heretofore the Tivoli chorus, like other comic choruses, has voiced a vocabulary bounded by idiom.

But one never knows nowadays whether these things are opera comique, opera bouffe, operetta, operatic farce, comic oratorio or musical comedy until one reads the programme. The disinctions are too fine for the normally equipped intelligence—it is safer to leave the classification to the librettist.

One of the large beauties of "The Geisha" is that it needs no classification. It is not like ordinary melodramatic frivolity—it frivolous. You are swept into an amiable vortex of sparkling nothing. Beyond the times—which cling like a birthmark—there is nothing to think about. The whole scheme is the very sensuousness of forgetfulness.

Stevens' work in the part of the Marquis is of the most generous sort. Aside from looking after his own fun he must be ever assistful to the efforts of the others. Often the scene hangs on his appreciation, as it were—by some tacitly m m tic trick or timely comment he calls attention to the humor of a song, a dance, a word, and thus we get the full significance by the reflection in him.

It used to be said that Paris could endure only one poet at a time. I hope San Francisco is not going to be equally exclusive in the matter of theatrical entertainments. Down in my heart I know that the hardest blow at the bigger theaters here is struck by the smaller ones.

principally the Tivoli and the Orpheum. The prices at these houses practically exclude any pecuniary speculation. The patron's only gamble is, Am I going to spend the evening profitably? And in more times than not he is. Thus, Tivoli-going and Orpheum-going have become habitual with thousands. And say what you like, but a variety show or a comic musical show that is clever in its kind will eventually dull the appetite for the higher—or, at least, the mediocre higher—achievements in the drama.

At the Tivoli the seasons change from heavy opera to lightest musical farce. There is no limit to the amount of genre art that may be lavished upon a Tivoli audience. During the reign of Hartman there was a silly superstition among Tivoli folk that the fun had to be magnified to ten times mortal size to be discernible by the audience, but since Stevens has been doing the fun-making it has been toned down to human proportions with anything but disastrous effect on the box office. At the Orpheum it is somewhat different. The gallery makes or breaks an act there, and the gallery does not care for high art, except in such rare instances as the good opera singers who sang there last year, and the little red band of Buda-Pesth, which, by blending a beautiful picture with precocious brass-blowing, has maintained popularity for months.

of variety people who would have been massacred at the Orpheum, and Walter's option lay on the whole outfit, so he refused with thanks. The Orpheum audiences will not take "stuffers" under any circumstances, nor do they crave the scandalized ladies of quality and suicide-inspirers who are sent from Europe to New York every year. Put a Duchess in red and green fleshings and try her on at the Orpheum and if she cannot do a turn that is clever in itself the boys upstairs will be insulted by the association.

The Chinatown play drew everybody there, and out of that crowd a safe clientele has sprung in support of the theater. The present company is not so well appointed as the one that has gone missionarying with "The First Born" to New York, but it numbers several clever people, and the introduction of new blood nearly every week points to a steady effort at improvement. The performances of "Too Much Johnson" this week show that the Alezar can play farce without offending the fastidious. Wright Huntington has the pose of naturalness, the affability of Peter F. Daley, without much of its brass, and many excellent points of the farcical actor. He plays Billings with

Aurevoir" with her masculinized speller voice. It is hard work to fairly criticize the people's vaudeville, and it is the one department of the "parish" where one must consider the people's opinion.

No one can question the expenseiveness of the show Manager Walter offers week after week the year round. You may compare his programmes with those of Keith's or Koster & Bial's or any of the big New York houses, and while the Orpheum may be surpassed in one or two big cards the bill as a whole will average the best in the country. It is impossible to pad the Orpheum programme with bad acts. The audience will not have them; and the gallery has a not too gentle method of showing its displeasure. A few weeks ago a young woman who had sung at the Tivoli without meaning absolute disaster was billed at the Orpheum and "tried out" before a Sunday night audience. Her act proved to be unintentionally ludicrous, and the gallery gaped it. Next day most of the newspapers published notices that she was too ill to fulfill her contract. Chevalier was offered to Gustave Walter by the Frohmans, but Chevalier carried a supporting company



Charles Bryant, Alcazar.

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William Morris, Baldwin.

a compromise that pleases both the upper and lower portions of the audience; and, of course, a clean, lithe acrobatic turn is everybody's enjoyment. But the spoken line—and there we approach the institution of drama—must in its allusion and form of humor comply with the gallery idea of how this sort of thing should be done. Edridge's jokes are a fair example, or take the Duns, the feature of this week's bill. Brother Dunn you will remember for his clever service under Henderson in the days of big spectacular pieces. He is an expert along the lines of extravagance and burlesque; his legs fairly twinkle in the dance; he smiles a smile that, aside from its superlunary appointments, is irresistibly magnetic; he is a competent craftsman. But observe his lines; they are often funny, but the fun, to express it in vaudeville, is dead common. The funniest thing he said the other night when I was there was in a direct statement to the audience concerning Sister Dunn. "To look at her," he said, "you wouldn't believe she was the mother of five children." The fun lay in its truth. The now "Miss Dunn" was once the wife of Ezra Kendall, and five little Kendalls did she give him in tribute to the variance. And this is what brings the variety actor close to his audience. He concedes the audience equality with himself from the start; he is intimate, confidential. The audience derives its pleasure from participation rather than the old scheme of illusion. And this is one of the things that work against the modern stage. Take Miss Collins, the young woman who waltzes, and who whistles well and in perfect time—which will never be said of her predecessor, Frank Lawton. Her little feat, which is essentially artistic, although in a popular vein, is received with no liking like the reptile that attends upon the young woman who makes curdling melodrama of the "Misereur" and "Say



Mr. and Mrs. Henschel, California Theater.

good simulation of the implacable William Gillet, whose art of acting, you will remember, consists in not acting; also, he smokes the "Too Much Johnson" cigars with pleasing conviction. It is strange, but true, that most actors make a frightful function of smoking on the stage. Nat Goodwin once told me that what he believed to be a fair test of "naturalness" in modern comedy was for an actor to come upon an empty stage, remove his tie and topcoat, ring for a servant, order a drink, swallow it, cut off the end of a cigar, accept a light from the servant, be helped into his coat and make his exit—all the time maintaining the demeanor of a human being. Huntington's style is normal and he does the trifles easily and, as Sir Henry says, while trifles make perfection, perfection is no trifle. It was my fortune to strike "Too Much Johnson" on a night when the advertised portrayer of Johnson was on the shelf. The understudy had his grand opportunity, and he used it to the limit. I have never seen fiercer facialisms nor heard more cavernous pectoriloquial effects than those which this young man lavished on the character. Mrs. Bates finds a happy outlet for that comically emotional voice of hers in the mother-in-law; she is really splendid; and Miss Kinsley, I think, would do well with the soubrette part if she could reduce her power by about two-thirds. Her present single-juggle is too vast for the little Alcazar.

I have not been to see Mr. Rose's stirring adaptation of "Under the Red Robe" since the opening, but I can readily believe the press agent, who says the acting has improved since that awful night when it was supposed to adorn the Baldwin stage to point a Frohman moral. It couldn't be much worse. With the exception of Miss Hampton and Mr. McGynn the company is a weak one, and the real spell of the play is denied. But if Mr. Morris will find some means of spurring his parlor emotions to a pitch that will account for the splendid devotion of Miss Hampton's Renee de Cocheuret, at least the prime motive of the play would not be lost.

ASHTON STEVENS.

"An American Beauty" is the descriptive title of a light operatic concert in which Lillian Russell was the central figure at the Casino last season. It comes to the Columbia Monday in the hands of Corinne and a company of fifty. It is said that the scenery and effects and personal vestments of the company require nearly an entire train of cars for their transportation. As it is promised that the chorus and most of the feminine principals are of most entrancing physical charm, and as the eloquent press agent himself asks: "What is more delightful than a graceful form showing its dainty curves and exquisite developments?" and as it is also especially stipulated that the music and jokes are light unto evanescence, it is only more deplorable that the principal items on the large freight bill are scenery and masculine wearing apparel. Judging by Corinne's former appearances in San Francisco she carries a very small and modest trunk, a somewhat mammoth diamond casket.

Everything that is gorgeous and glistening is said to find a place in "An American Beauty"—handsome stage pictures, spiced marches, florid ballets, fresh young faces and fresh young voices, and a company of good comic opera entertainers. Frank David is the principal comedian, Charles Fostelle is his chief aid. Owen Fitzgerald is the lyric tenor, Miss Octavia Barbe is the young woman whose acting is underscored and Miss Bertie Crawford is the soubrette. Gracie and Reynolds are the grotesque, Miss Lillian Stewart and Miss Fannie Ferris are the "Casino Girls" and J. K. Adams, a townman of ours, is one of the comedians and the stage manager of the organization. The times are ripe for just such gaudy spectacles as "An American Beauty" is pledged to be by its promoters.

"The Ensign" is announced for next week at Morosco's. This is a play which has always been well received in San Francisco. It was one of the successes of the first Frawley season, and was played to enthusiastic audiences by Mr. Brophy during his last engagement at the Grand. Next week Mr. Pascoe will figure in the title role, and it is said that his conception of the part is interestingly different from Mr. Brophy's. The Ensign, as portrayed by Mr. Brophy, was a reckless dare-devil, who

met misfortune with a laugh and faced death with a sneer. Mr. Pascoe conceives him to be quiet, calmly, self-contained and courageous, and plays him with no more melodrama than the story demands, and depends on well-managed climaxes for the effects. The cast includes several new parts, and more new features. Baby Ruth has gone over from the Alcazar, where her cunning specialties made a telling hit, and will play the touching part of the little child who took her doll to call on the President. The production will be under the superintendence of W. L. Geason, and special attention has been given to scenic effects.

"Under the Red Robe" is still holding forth at the Baldwin, where to-morrow night it commences the second and last week of its engagement. "The actors have evinced a disposition toward improvement in their work, and at any rate the audience seem to be exceedingly well impressed with Mr. Rose's dramatization," says the press agent. The play is really excellent, one of the best romantic pieces we have had recently, and in the part of Renee de Cocheuret Miss Mary Hampton does considerable good acting, strong in conception and feeling. Mr. McGynn is very much to the good, too, in the pantomimic role of Clon.

The next attraction at the Baldwin will be "Lost, Strayed or Stolen," a musical comedy affair that made a reputation in New York last year. We are promised Fred C. Whitney's original company. The pieces have been likened by traveled writers to a two or three hours visit to Paris, so truthful is the phrase of Parisian life. The company includes: Charles Dickson, Harry Clay Blaney, Harry Allen, C. J. Alden, Charles E. Burke, Bert Thayer, Lucien Henderson, A. Holbrook, Harry Ricketts, Anna O'Keefe, Mabel Bouton, Oriska Wodan, Marie Mather and Adelaide Nye.

The tribulations of Faddish and the wiles of the imperturbable Billings will be aired for another week at the Alcazar, that is to say, "Too Much Johnson" will have a two weeks' run. The theater has been crowded nightly since the opening and gives promise of another equally profitable week. This is merited recognition of a good farce, well acted, handsomely and appropriately staged. Wright Huntington as Billings has done his best work at this

ASHTON STEVENS.

dedered Pietro Vallini for his musically direction. Nini Mezzi, who sang the name part in "Gloconda," is spoken of as a very dramatic soprano with a big voice under easy exclamation, and Adeline Fantoni, a repetition of a good impression in the part of the blind mother. Agostini, the tenor, and Clon, the barytone, are enthusiastically complimented in both the Herald and Times notices—only the Times critic evidently forgot to finish his story last night that the house rose at him again and again.

The opera for the opening night at the California is "Gloconda"; the next night (Wednesday), "Othello"; Friday night, "L'Anciano"; Saturday matinee, a repetition of "Gloconda"; and Saturday night, "Cavalleria" and "Pagliacci." Among the artists are Linda Montanari, Nina Mazzi, Adeline Fantoni, a young woman of the illustrious name of Benvenuto Bolso, Prop. Francisco, Colleen, Giuseppe Agostini, Cesare Clon, Luigi Francesconi and Beatrice Franco, the latter a late addition to the company, who is said to do remarkable work in the contralto role in "The Masked Ball."

Hugo Mansfeldt announces a recital to be given at Sherman, Clay & Co.'s Hall Monday evening, November 1, under the management of William L. Geason. Mr. Mansfeldt has a large repertoire and shines particularly in his performances of the great concertos. He has had notable success during the symphony concert in the rendition of the difficult and concertos by the orchestra. At this recital he will play two entire concertos, besides some schumann numbers, that are new to San Francisco.

theater so far, and Mrs. Bates is capital as the aristocratic Mrs. Batterson. Fred Strong has the voice and person with which to depict the lascivious Johnson, and the part is well cared for. Charles Bates has modified the Frenchman and now finds favor with the audiences. Then there is Wallace Shaw, who, through strange circumstances, is reduced to being Collier and Frank Thompson, who plays the servant of Johnson, and several others, all of whom have pooled together for a special effort in "Too Much Johnson."

The next piece to be staged at the Alcazar is "The Highest Bidder," played for several seasons by E. H. Sothern and last season with marked success by Frank Wortling and the Frawley Company. The "American Biograph," which is evidently some new improvement of the vitascope, is one of the new attractions for the Orpheum. It will display "Mrs. Kinley at Home," "How a Young Man Makes Love," "In a Bowery Cafe," and a dozen and more other scenes. Mile. Ortasang and her troupe of trained cockatoos will execute novel tricks, and Miss Edna Collins will whistle new selections. Miss Collier is decidedly an artist. Ota Hayden will continue to sing "A Hot Time," assisted by the cake-walk chorus, but her other numbers will be new. Press Edridge promises to unload another cargo of well-served jokes, and sing a new song that has been written for him by a local composer, and the Dunas have a new sketch. The Hungarian Boys' band starts on a concert tour next week.

"The Geisha" has made such a hit at the Tivoli that it is hard to tell when a new piece will be presented. The Tivoli enterprise in securing the pieces from Augustin Daly has only been outside of the brilliancy of the Tivoli production. Throughout the long cast flaws are not easily found, the singing is good, the costumes fresh and bright and the scenery would be a credit to any theater. The music has become public property; the shops report a big demand for "Geisha" scores.

Beginning to-day, Adgie, the daring dancing girl, will begin her tenth and last week at the Chutes. The lions will be fed every evening during the performance on the stage in view of the audience, and the rest of the programme will be contributed to by the Girards, whose pantomime and gymnastic work has seldom been equaled here; the Zoyarrows, aerial performers; W. H. Sothern, lyric tenor, who will sing for the first time in this city, and the Williams Bros., acrobatic comedians. Nearly a dozen views for the chutescope have just been received from Paris, and they will be shown during the ensuing week.

The management of Satro baths announces a lively bill for this afternoon. The Martelles (Agnes and Harry), fancy, trick and acrobatic bicyclists, make their first appearance. Oro and Bell present a new knockabout act, Trixida dances her contortion dance and Charnum makes her farewell appearance. Three teams of five men each will contest for a \$10 purse in a 500-yard relay race.

The standard of the musical programmes presented at this favorite resort continues to win the approval of large audiences. Stark's magnetism as a leader and his skill as a violin soloist, combined with the talents of the ensemble work of the Vienna Orchestra, are decidedly a big attraction.

ASHTON STEVENS.



Scene from "An American Beauty," Columbia.

ALCAZAR. FRED BELASCO, Manager. This Sunday Night, BEGINNING TO-MORROW (MONDAY), SECOND AND LAST WEEK. ADVANCE SALE JUSTIFIES IT. PLAY AND PLAYER APPRECIATED. Will the Comedy has been the amusement most of thousands during the past week, and will therefore be continued for another week. "TOO MUCH JOHNSON." AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS. Scenery and Properties especially painted and constructed. NEVER BEFORE AT THESE PRICES. —50c, 35c, 25c or 15c.— INCLUDING A RESERVED SEAT. Week of Nov. 1—"THE HIGHEST BIDDER."

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BEG. TUES., NOV. 2. ITALIAN GRAND OPERA CO. SUTRO BATHS. THIS AFTERNOON (Sunday), Oct. 24. GREAT SPECIALTY AND AQUATIC BILL! THE MARTELLS. TRICKS AND STUNTS. ORO & BELL. CHARMION. 50-YARD RELAY RACE. 100-YARD RACE. 150-YARD RACE. 200-YARD RACE. 250-YARD RACE. 300-YARD RACE. 350-YARD RACE. 400-YARD RACE. 450-YARD RACE. 500-YARD RACE. GEORG HENSCHEL. Will give a few vocal lessons during his stay in San Francisco from Oct. 25 until November 14. Address: HENRY WOLFSOHN, Manager, Palace Hotel, San Francisco.

Columbia Theatre. LAST PERFORMANCE TO-NIGHT: MR. DIGBY BELL. THE HOOSIER DOCTOR. TO-MORROW (Monday) EVENING. The New, Beautiful Comic Opera. AN AMERICAN BEAUTY. Peerless CORINNE. A MAGNIFICENT PRODUCTION FROM EVERY STANDPOINT. TIVOLI OPERA-HOUSE. THIS EVENING AT 8 O'CLOCK. THE COMIC OPERA SEASON! GORGEOUS PRODUCTION OF "THE GEISHA." SUPERB CAST. Splendid Chorus, Excellent Orchestra. A SAN FRANCISCO TRIUMPH! POPULAR PRICES. 25c and 50c. Seats on Sale One Week in Advance.

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BASEBALL TO-DAY (SUNDAY) AT CALIFORNIA LEAGUE GROUNDS. Cor. Sixteenth and Folsom Sts. The Boston Bloomer Girls vs. S. F. Athletic Baseball Club. GAME CALLED AT 2 O'CLOCK. Don't fail to see the Lady Champion Baseball Club of Boston, Mass. This will be the star game of the season.

BALDWIN THEATRE. AL HAYMAN & Co. (Incorporated). TO-MORROW MONDAY BEGINS THE LAST WEEK. CHARLES FROHMAN PRESENTS UNDER THE RED ROBE. Adapted by Edward Ross From the novel by Stanley Weyman. 300 NIGHTS AT THE EMPIRE THEATRE, NEW YORK. EXTRA—MONDAY, NOVEMBER 1. "LOST, STRAYED OR STOLEN." SEATS ON SALE THURSDAY, OCT. 28. THE CHUTES AND FREE THEATER. Every Afternoon and Evening. Positively Last Week of ADGIE AND HER LIONS! THE ORIGINAL G. GIRARDS! The WILLIAMS BROTHERS, acrobatic comedians, and the ZOYARROWS, Aerial Artists. New Views will be shown by the CHUTES. Lions will be fed on the stage every evening. Admission to all 10c. Children 5c. OBERON. GRAND CONCERT EVERY EVENING BY STARK'S VIENNA ORCHESTRA!