

THE WEEK AT THE THEATRES

NEWS OF PLAYS AND PLAYERS

Results of modern meretricious performances may be conspicuous by their absence, while the giddy fairy may not dominate the chorus, and while the stage manager may not have received his education at the London Lyceum, his bone and sinew of an operatic company is all there. Bone and sinew sound well and are good things to have; and Mr. Wyatt, the manager, promises me that the homeliness of the chorus will be diluted by a handsome bunch of damsels from the local Italian colony; and as there are several shops in town that make a business of renting decent opera costumes, it is possible to triumph over some of these material difficulties. And the orchestra, which heretofore numbered a beggarly dozen instruments, will for us be swelled to thirty. However, to-morrow night will tell the tale. I am not much given to booming the unknown and unheard, but from all signs it seems to me that the town ought to turn out to-morrow night and find out for itself of what stuff these modest Lambardis are made.

Still speaking of opera—only of another kind, I have never heard anything quite so banal musically as "The Princess Nicotine," which the Southwell company has struggled with during the past week. The composer is William Furst, known and loved here for a long spell of bright, original work. Furst is the cleverest light opera leader the Tivoli ever had, and he showed musicianliness and vigorous invention in his grand opera, "Theodora," which was produced in the little opera house around the corner some ten years ago (and subsequently worked over by the Bohemian composer in the form of incidental music for Frohman and Hayman plays). But Furst left for the wider metropolis, where he took to leading theater orchestras and writing comic operas at so much per yard, or mile. And his finish found him. It takes a particularly sensitive ear to find how much worse is one recent Furst opera than another, but I will swear that "The Princess Nicotine" has less tune to the acre than anything else in Mr. Furst's collected properties. It isn't even decently stolen. Occasionally you catch a snatch of somebody's good music, but in the next bar it is submerged in the hopeless commonplace of the composer's own. It is music without color, without tune, without motion. The orchestra and company go through all the sound and gesture of a real comic opera. There is a character song for the comedian, a warble song for the soprano, and trios, quartets and finales in which the brass blows and the drums thump and the hardware rattles—but no music comes out of it. You have listened to the street preacher whose motions and pulpit-business might be Henry Ward Beecher's, but whose words are a tireless stream of nothing? "The Princess Nicotine" affected me in the same way. I admire the Southwell company for the most complete comic opera organization that ever occupied a permanent place in our amusements, and would encourage rather than chill its enterprise in producing pieces that are new to us, but as I live I would rather sit to a revival of even "The Bohemian Girl" than to such stuff as "Nicotine."

Besides singers yet unheard we are promised on Monday night in the Columbia a play as yet unacted and untitled, from the pen of Mrs. E. F. Riggs, a Southern woman, Herbert Keley and Edie Shannon will produce it and a prize of \$100 will be given to the lucky suggestor of the most suitable title. In the theatrical business the name of a play is a very important detail, and a good one is easily worth the price offered. I hope that the play may be of equal value. That, too, is a matter to be settled later. After several readings



BLANCA BARDUCCI, LEADING SOPRANO, AT THE CALIFORNIA THEATRE

of the printed plot that is furnished to the contestants for the title prize I am come to the conclusion that either I am a very bad reader or the man who got it out a very bad writer; and with all modesty I am inclined to give myself the benefit of the doubt. The most of this printed story deals in events that took place twenty years before the curtain rises on the first act. A simple intelligence like my own finds much difficulty in mastering the complications that follow this "period of time elapsed," as they are set forth in the documents, but I dare say that Mr. Keley, Miss Shannon and their associate players will puncture these mysteries very nicely in the performance. As I try to make it out, one of the big situations in this new comedy is where the young woman mistakes the man who subsequently marries her to be her long-lost father. I may be wrong, but I think that is what is intended by the scenario. Certainly it is a novel complication. It does not pay to trust too much to the public, and I imagine that the author, actors and managers have in readiness a little title of their own in case a better one should not drop in from the outside.

This is the Lambardi company's repertory for the week of grand opera: Monday, "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "I Pagliacci"; Tuesday, "Faust"; Wednesday, "Lucia"; Thursday, "Norma"; Friday, "Cavalleria Rusticana" and "I Pagliacci"; Saturday matinee, "Lucia di Lammermoor"; Saturday, "Rigoletto." The notorious French farce, "The Turtle," opens in the California a week from to-night. The name of the winner of the \$100 prize offered for the best title to Mrs. Riggs' new play will be announced from the Columbia stage to-morrow night. The play is said to be one of atmosphere, after the mode of "Alabama," and its scenes and characters are Southern. The abandoning of a child by the father, who is deceived into so doing by the machinations of a jealous woman and the mistaking by the child, after growing into womanhood, of another man for her father; the falling in love of the mistaken father with the girl who thinks he is her father owing to the fact that he bears her real parent's name by virtue of an order of court; the delicate mission of bringing together the real father and daughter by the lover—these, says a late press notice, "furnish the main theme of the comedy." A great deal of interest is being taken in the coming engagement of Henry Miller at the Columbia. He will be supported by a host of good people, including Edward J. Morgan, an actor of extreme power and distinction, and Margaret Anglin, who re-

ENTER LAMBARDI AND HIS THIRTY-FIVE STARS

A PROMISING EXPERIMENT IN ITALIAN GRAND OPERA

By Ashton Stevens

Recently played Roxane to Richard Mansfield's Cyrano. Charles Walcott, Guy Standing and Blanche Burton are also of the company. The opening piece will be Henry Arthur Jones' comedy of manners, "The Liars," in which John Drew has made a success.

Alcazar.

Lewis Morrison, Miss Roberts and the regular Alcazar stock company will present "Hamlet" all of this week at the little playhouse on O'Farrell street. Next week "The Master of Ceremonies" will be the attraction. "Romeo and Juliet" is in prospect, but the announcement is not yet made whether Mr. Morrison will be the Romeo. Mark Thall leaves for New York shortly, with an eye to new plays and players.

Grand Opera-House.

Both kinds of opera again by the Southwells. Next week they will appear at the Grand Opera-house in a double bill of "I Pagliacci" and "The Pirates of Penzance." In the former Miss Mason will appear as Neida, her impersonation of which the Eastern press declares to be

delightful style of the waltz king. Gracie Plaisted will reappear after an absence of nearly three years. Frank Coffin will make his reappearance, too, in the role of Ricardo, and Edwin Stevens will be happily cast as Balthazar Groot, a tulip grower from Holland. Charlotte Beckwith, who is becoming a valuable number in the favorites of the company, will appear as Theresa, and Annie Meyers will sing Violetta.

Orpheum.

The Orpheum's new bill includes Johnstone Bennett's vaudeville celebrities in conjunction with the Orpheum's regular list of stars. At the head of the bill is Johnstone Bennett herself, she who attained fame as the mannish woman in "Jane," and later as the star of the "Female Drummer." She appears at the Orpheum in a sketch written for her by Lon Rosen of London, and said to be very funny. During the run of the playlet Miss Bennett introduces no less than five different characters. She is assisted by Antonio Williams, himself a clever comedian. A feature is expected in Houdini, the "King of the Handcuffs." He is credited with giving one of the most interesting and mystifying exhibitions of tricks with cards, illusions and cabinets ever witnessed on a vaudeville stage. McAvoy and May, the cyclonic comedians, are regarded as the big comedy cards, and Caswell and Arnold, pantomimic acrobats, are said to be very clever. The holdovers include Clifford and Huth, Henri French, Mung Toon, and Montgomery and Stone.

Olympia.

The Olympia's new people include



HENRY FRENCH AT THE ORPHEUM



GRACIE PLAISTED IN 'MERRY WAR' AT THE TIVOLI.

excellent. Mr. Persse will sing Canio and Mr. Goff Tonio. In "The Pirates of Penzance" Miss Julie Cotte, a new California prima donna, who has lately returned from New York, will appear as Mabel. Her last appearance here was as the principal support of Gullie, the tenor, in scenes from grand opera. Mr. Wolf, as the Major General, will present a likeness of the commander-in-chief of the British army, whom Gilbert satirized in this role.

Tivoli.

"The Merry War," Johann Strauss' comic opera, will be revived at the Tivoli this week. The opera has not been sung here for two years, and a careful and well conceived production is promised by the capable members of the Tivoli company. To all lovers of light opera "The Merry War" is known. It is full of waltzes from beginning to end and written in the most

Waldo and Elliott, who are said to be very clever as acrobats and trapeze performers, and George Wilson, who is claimed to be one of the best dancers.

The Chutes.

At the Chutes next week Mr. and Mrs. Keesing will make their vocal debut in this city. Earl Way and Madge Maitland

will present a new "coon" specialty. Gene Hughes and Lena Crews Hughes, direct from the Keith theaters, will appear in "A Matrimonial Substitute." This afternoon Du Bell, a rival of the late Blondin, will walk across a wire stretched from the end of the Chutes Theater to Clayton street, a distance of nearly 300 feet.

Debut of Miss Nellie Bowlin.

Miss Nellie Bowlin, a young San Francisco girl, will make her professional debut as a dramatic reader at Sherman and Clay Hall next Thursday evening. She will be assisted by well-known local talent and several special features will be introduced to make the programme unusually attractive. Miss Bowlin will give several poems that have brought her considerable reputation in private circles. Among them will be "The Man With the Hoe," Kipling's "Recessional" and "The Vampire."

Another California Girl Success.

Hardly a week passes without bringing us news of the success of some California girl on the stage. Pretty soon we will be reckoning actresses among the chief products of this resourceful State. Following Blanche Bates' triumphs in New York and Washington, comes news of the triumph of this city and an actress of versatile resources we are acquainted with only one phase of her work. We saw her, as "The Girl in the Hat," in Fadden. During the stock season in Baltimore she has played all sorts of parts, from the flip to the emotional, and the Baltimore critics give her as much praise in serious as in comedy work. One prominent writer says that her Louise in "The Two Orphans" is better than Kate Claxton's at its best.

Musical Mention.

After three years' study with Clodio in New York, Miss (Daisy) Mae Crescy will return to San Francisco and give a song recital in the Sherman and Clay Hall on the evening of June 15.

Outer World.

The Washington papers are thick with compliments to Frank Mathieu, who is playing with the Frawleys in the capital city. In a recent production of "The Wife" Myron Calice was taken ill and Mr. Mathieu had to take his part, that of Matthew Culver, the villain, at short notice. He was nervous at first, but before the night was over achieved a distinct success.

Charles Frohman is reported to have said after the curtain fell on the first performance of "The Pirates of Penzance" and "The Merry War" on Monday evening of last week: "I am going to make a bid for the Western rights to that play. I think it would be a hit in that section of the country." Maude Adams is to appear in New York in a new play, a new Barrie play. Mr. Frohman thinks of letting her try "As You Like It" or "Twelfth Night" next season.

Sarcey came out on top in his exchange of wit with Coquelin. His first article said: "Coquelin finds that I am growing old. Alas, we all grow old, my poor friend. You have discovered that for yourself in playing Bonaparte. You divide my life into two parts: up to 1880 I was the national critic; after that I became foolish, I think you are mistaken. The lines of division are not so simply drawn. I have my days, like everybody, and which is extraordinary, my days correspond with yours. When you played Petruccio in Megera apprise me I was the next day full of talent and intelligence. You no sooner played Fanfan de Tulipe than I became an idiot. You played Labriestere in 'The Hermit' and I again became the national critic. You played Ohnet's Colonel Roquebrune and again I fell. You played Cyrano de Bergerac and I reached the clouds. You play Bonaparte and I become an old fool. Oh, my dear Coquelin, I pray you, play only good roles, and play them always perfectly. If you will not do this for your sake, do it for mine."

Mrs. Craigie's three-act blank verse tragedy, "Osborn and Ureyn," which has been bought by George Alexander, is published in the June number of Lady Randolph Churchill's new quarterly.

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AMUSEMENTS.

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Wednesday....."RIGOLETTO"
Thursday....."MANON LESCAUT"
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