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# SIX SAN FRANCISCO WOMEN LAND THEIR PLAYS in BROADWAY

By Vivian Pierce

CALIFORNIANS were interested a few months ago by some of the statistics compiled by a long suffering playwright reader, who made the statement that more plays were submitted to eastern managers, actors and agencies by Californians than by the near playwrights of any other state in the union. Now San Francisco steps forward with another remarkable record. Six San Francisco women have put on, or are about to put on, plays this season in New York. The six San Franciscans—though many of them have of necessity become temporary New Yorkers, but still claim the city by the gate for home—are Gertrude Atherton, Miriam Michelson, Geraldine Bonner, Mrs. Fremont Older, Charlotte Thompson and Gladys Unger. Their remarkable output rings every change of the dramatic gamut, from the costumed, semihistorical romance dear to the heart of the matinee girl to the ultramodern problem play discussed by the women's clubs—from comedy drama to farce and back again. Can any other state beat this record of San Francisco virtuosity?

Gertrude Atherton's play, "Julie France," is a modern problem play built especially for Mrs. Fiske. Mrs. Atherton objects to that hackneyed phrase, "problem play." She prefers to call it "a transcript from modern life." It is a play with large and real interests, introducing the now much discussed question of the readjustment of the English divorce law.

The scene of the play is the island of Bevis in the British West Indies, which readers of Mrs. Atherton's "Gorgeous Isle" are already familiar with. In this out of the world spot much of the colonial atmosphere and spirit survive, and it is in this backwater of life that Mrs. Atherton sets her young heroine, London educated, modern to the finger tips, to fight her battle with established convention. The play shows the combat between the old and the new spirit of the age in regard to women.

It is interesting to know that the play was written especially to exploit the personality of Mrs. Fiske. Mrs. Atherton, who is an intimate friend of Mrs. Fiske, said that Mrs. Fiske had never been able to play herself, never been allowed to show the force and fire of her own untrammeled spirit. She believes that in "Julia France" Mrs. Fiske will have such an opportunity. The odd fact, often commented on, that the two women, both the playwright and the actress, are strangely alike, not only temperamentally but physically, lends still another interest to the play.

Mrs. Atherton feels a very whimsical humility in regard to her new craft, and it is amusing to hear her talk of the way in which she came to write the play and how she served the first weeks of her unaccustomed apprenticeship. Yes, weeks' apprenticeship. According to her, play writing is, finally, a mere matter of weeks. Mrs. Atherton had been asked by Mrs. Fiske to dramatize one of her novels for the stage, realizing, as do so many, that there is splendid dramatic material in many of the Atherton stories; but Mrs. Atherton refused pointblank. "A novel is a novel to the person who wrote it, at least," she said whimsically, "and makes poor work for a play." But when Mrs. Fiske insisted, she compromised by saying she had an idea for a new play that she would rather write.

"After making the fatal admission," Mrs. Atherton said, "for

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