



How "THE DARLING OF THE GODS" GREW

Nothing less than a dramatic miracle, the critics write, is the Japanese play, "The Darling of the Gods," which its authors, David Belasco and Luther Long, have endowed with charms so subtle as to almost defy analysis. As a result of its success, the book reviewers have been overwhelmed with avowals of Japanese literature; the stores stocked with Oriental wares and tea tables have become eloquent with discussions concerning cherry blossoms and Sake bowls. All this is only scratching the surface, for the causes which excited "The Darling of the Gods" to the twenty-seventh Japanese heaven of popular favor must be found in the association of the collaborators, in their methods of work and in the history of the building of the play, which is now told for the first time.

With the individuals of the dramatic partnership the public is familiar. David Belasco, dramatic thaumaturgist, had worked many wonders before this last triumph. None knows better than he how to translate the printed page into action, and his name is a synonym for a master of expression, of light and shadow, of the witcheries of calcium and scenery and stage mechanics.

Mr. Long Feared Not. John Luther Long, a Philadelphia lawyer, first attracted attention in 1895 by writing a novelle of Japanese life. An actress who had read it suggested that it would make a good play. "So it will," said Mr. Long, and with a knowledge of the dramatic art which a literary man may gain from sitting in an orchestra chair he wrote the play. He read it to a circle of friends, and, observing an untranslatable expression on their faces out of the corner of his eye, he tore up the manuscript. Mr. Long tried again, and the result was so much better that he had the courage to take it to a New York manager, who shall be nameless. The director of theatrical destiny told him that it would not do.

"The Japanese environment," said he, "is suited only to light opera and musical comedy. A serious Japanese play is bound to be a failure." "What would you say to a play," asked Mr. Long, "in which all the characters are Japanese?" "Impossible," was the reply.

The answer to this was "Madame Butterfly" at the Herald Square a few months later. When the story of "Madame Butterfly" appeared, David Belasco, playwright and manager, saw in its possibilities and obtained the dramatic rights. During the course of the dramatization, Mr. Long was occasionally consulted. The two men found that they were enough alike in their ideas, to work together in harmony, and an agreement was made that they should collaborate in the writing of a play. "Madame Butterfly" the play, was a great success at the book. It has been performed thousands of times, and the book, which has had a large sale, is soon to be printed by the Century company in an edition de luxe.

The inception of "The Darling of the Gods" dates from the second night of "Madame Butterfly," when Mr. Belasco said to Mr. Long:

"Brother Jonathan, we must follow this up with a long play of Japan." "How about having every character Japanese—a tragedy?" asked Mr. Long. "Good," said Belasco.

Beginning of the Idea. Nothing more was said on the subject for several months, when, in the course of a conversation, Mr. Belasco exclaimed: "Now then, let's get down to work on that Japanese play. We must have something mystical, tragic, a story of feeling, you understand; passing away of old Japan, may be. Something like that."

"How about the Samurai?" "Good; the two-sword men; extinction of the chivalry of old Japan. We have it."

That was the beginning of "The Darling of the Gods." The idea was abstract, almost chaotic, when the authors began their labors. Mr. Long had by hard experience acquired some knowledge of the technique of the drama. He learned more as he labored with David Belasco. The building of the play was carried on in New York, and the hours of toil would have been a shock to the walking delegate of a Playwrights' union, for when the fever of composition possessed the authors they worked twenty hours at a time. Their meals were sent in to them, and they separated only to snatch a little sleep. There is not a passage

in the play which was written less than ten times by these modern exemplars of David and Jonathan. When a drama is prepared in collaboration no man may say who is the property of A and which of B. One might as well try to show to the naked eye the atoms of a chemical salt and point out which belong to the acid and which to the base. He who beholds this remarkable play may say that he thinks he recognizes the hand of Belasco in some startling bit of stage magic or that a sonorous line is the work of Long. "The Darling of the Gods" will bear no such dissection. It is impossible now to say which is Long and which is Belasco, and how much each contributed, for the authors themselves do not know.

What is Atmosphere? The great success of "The Darlings of the Gods" rests on something ill-understood and difficult to define. It is due to that quality which for lack of a better name, playwrights call atmosphere.

"And you ask me," said David Belasco, "what it is?" "I don't know," he picked up a file letter case and threw it over on a desk. "Suppose," he continued, "that in that box is all that is known about Japan. Cas atmosphere be taken from a pastboard box or from a pile of books? Why, then, cannot thousands of successful Japanese plays be turned out in the course of a year? Here I take a war god, a lacquered floor, a man, a false mustache, a light here and a light there, I arrange them and rearrange them. Do I get atmosphere? Atmosphere is largely a matter of feeling and of temperament. It is the appreciation which the playwright has of his theme."

The sense of atmosphere, John Luther Long shares the idea of an associate. The writing of a book and the building of a play are dissimilar occupations, yet on the printed page, Mr. Long shows that appreciation of atmosphere and detail which goes to create atmosphere.

In that remarkable book, "The Prince of Illusion," the persons of the story are a blind child and his mother; the properties, a bed, and a ray of sunshine. Yet details are so used that the story is as picturesque as a novel. In "Naughty Nan," Mr. Long depicted a young woman who had many admirers. Her flirtations were a subject of grave concern to a young man who felt called upon to extricate her from situations in which frivolity involved her. The charm of "Naughty Nan" seems to be in its delicacy of sentiment, and in the cleverness of expression. Yet it is really due to the atmosphere of modern life which it breathes in every line.

"A story," said Mr. Long, "appeals to the mind. The printed page is read carefully and with critical eye open for flaws of diction, crudeness of workmanship, looseness of style. What happens very well for purposes on the stage would often be reduced to pathos in a book. The spoken words do not appeal to the senses as do the printed words, which you can turn back to and read again. In a play, the idea is to arouse emotions in an audience not so much by the motive that prompts the words. The mere words themselves are of secondary importance."

The Theme Develops. "The Darling of the Gods" was slow in growing. A year and a half passed before the play was finally completed, and in every minute of that it seemed as though it was on the minds of its authors. The dominant note was that tragedy which is compressed in the fate of the Samurai, deprived by law of the two swords which were the outward signs of their old-time chivalry—their souls!

Then came the variations, the growth of the story of the love of the Princess Yo-San for Kara, leader of the Samurai; how she betrayed his men to save him from the glowing fires of the torture chamber of the minister of state, the slaying of the last ten, the suicides of Kara and Yo-San. A dark and gloomy tragedy it may seem, yet so well the material employed, so subtle, and so well done is the striking of the chords of emotion, that the play absolutely enthralled the auditor. Then the last effect built upon this wonderful witchery, the translation of the lovers to the great white heaven, after Yo-San has passed through the River of Souls. Everywhere in the construction of the play, the collaborators were best by pitfalls, yet they achieved a triumph of art, notable in the history of the American stage. Every energy was bent to the attaining of atmosphere. A situation here, a word there, bits of stage magic, pantomime—all were employed with a delicacy and skill. "The Darling of the Gods" is the soul, the essence of a play which men call atmosphere. After all the work was done, after the play had been rehearsed, changed shifted and tested from all points of view, Messrs. Belasco and Long realized that they had reached the goal toward which they had so long striven. "I am sure that even in Japan such a well-devised play as yours will scarcely be found. I simply wonder how you were able to imagine so well the real scenes of the Japanese

olden-time and costume," is the testimony of one of the more intelligent Japanese in America as to the atmosphere of the play.

Hunting for a Name. One of the most difficult details in connection with the writing of a play is the choice of a title, for the name must be fitting and suggestive, and must also stimulate curiosity. Among the candidates were: "The Red Poppy," "The White Poppy," "The Princess Yo-San," "Heart of Yo-San," "Behind the Shoji," "The Moon Flower," "Lily of Yedo," "The Face in 'The Lantern's Light'" and "Daughter of Japan."

None of these answered the requirements, and last of all it was suggested that "The Darling of the Gods" might do, as there were many divinities mentioned, and "Shaka," the Japanese Pagan, the great god, was often apostrophized. Besides, Yo-San had danced to the gods in the Temple of War, hence a milkmaid, a "darling of the gods" indeed. The line which Kara speaks to Yo-San, "You are my darling of the gods," was inserted after the play was named.

Comment on Late Books

A book of interesting reminiscences will be published by Doubleday, Page & Co. by Audrey Boucicault, his son, a well-known actor of New York. Some of the first chapters of it have been printed in one of the metropolitan magazines, and give one a good idea of its style and contents. The older Boucicault was a man of rare ability, of great versatility. He acted in more than over four hundred plays and in the midst of his work as writer and actor, he found time to engage with Beaumont Newhall in the "Lionel Lincoln" controversy over the wrongs of Ireland. He was born with great genius, a sort of sixth sense which told him what was permissible on the stage and what was not. When he was only nineteen years old his first, and by many considered his best, "London Assurance" was produced by Charles Matthews at the Covent Garden theater in London. He was not only wonderfully witty himself, but he adapted to the stage many of the cleverest speech pieces which he served in his mind like a photograph. He was like many other geniuses—rich in ideas and poor in money—had no ability to save money; so that in his long life he made and spent many fortunes. But he lived to some purpose which is more than can be said for some mere money getters; lived to amuse many and was the center of many entertainments. His ships which are recorded in his son's book. In his opening chapter he says: "I cannot conceive of anything more brilliant in the history of the theater. I have seen gathered together on a Sunday evening in the house in London where I was born, with a little sharp-eyed Irishman presiding at the feast, I have seen at various times Patti, Sir Jules Benedict, Baile, Planche, H. J. Pyling, Terry, Jeffrey, Jefferson, Booth, Florence McCullough, Sarah Bernhardt, De Najac, Paul du Chailu, Sir Henry Ponsonby, chamberlain to the Prince of Wales, Pigeon, the censor of plays; Charles Lamb, Kenny, Sothorn, Adelaide Neilson, Langtry, Dickens, Charles Reade, Sir Frederick Leighland, in a word, a pot-pourri of intellect was there. My father was nothing if not original. He was the first man to put a carpet down on the stage, and he was the first to 'London Assurance' they played on bare boards. He was the first, as is known in stage parlance, to box a scene. No such things as doors were known on the stage before he introduced the box scene. Moving scenery he first introduced to the Prince of Wales, and he was the first to use the 'Colleen Bawn' thing until 'The Colleen Bawn' was a thing of the past. He was the first to write a play: 'First take your story and cut it into climaxes of your acts. Cut your acts into situations. Cut your situations into scenes. Say who the scenes are by, what transpires between your characters, and serve hot, or to be well shaken before eaten.'

Brief Mention. Gossip about authors tells us that G. Morris, who wrote "Aladdin O'Brien" is a great grandson of the statesman of the same name. The young Morris is a Yale man of '98. His ancestor, of whom he is naturally proud, is always to figure as the hero in a book by Carter Goodloe, which is to be brought out by the Scribners. Like his descendant, the other Morris

An Aching Void. Between those who are talking about the decline in quality of the novel and the overabundance of that form of literature, and others who prophesy a time when it will not be so much a difficult to find a point of vantage from which to consider it reasonably. Now comes a prominent review and says that there has been a dearth of novels for a time this season which has been much felt and publishers are looking toward the well known novelists of the past. He says they will do something to fill the void. At the same time promise of the spring season is not great; there is, however, prospect of Winston Churchill, Howard Pyle, James Lane Allen, Israel Zangwill and the writer of "The Garden of a Commuter's Wife" all being ready to produce something to fill the void. It is hard to see how any person who has read both books could attribute "The Garden of a Commuter's Wife" to Eleanor Glyn, who was guilty of "The Reflections of Ambrosine." The former is a breath of pure country air, a prose

poem, a gem of its kind, while the latter, in comparison, is a forced hot-house plant, a book without which we would be infinitely better off. Any fear that the novelists dying out or losing in popularity is not well grounded. It is in fact a matter of expansion of human thought in the world today, taking the place of the drama in another age. In spite of the fact that a novel should be a means of expression, often the means that persons take to exploit their ideas of ethics, religion, science and philosophy. Until some better way of reaching the greater number of people can be devised, the novel is not likely to decline.

Too Much Relics. There is such a thing as carrying the relic business too far. A case of this was recently noticed in London, where some sentimental person in print desired to preserve the bricks of a portion of the walls of the old Gaiety theater, because these were part of the building from which "Household Words" was published. Nothing could be more absurd than this, and relic hunters because these are so much of the time when they make such a proposition. Another not unlike it is to save and rebuild the old house in London from which "The Republic" was published. With the above absurdities it is gravely stated that the very great and good thing in front of which poor old standing buildings are being pulled down, are still preserved in a vault somewhere, in case some American millionaire desires to purchase them. The reputation which the latter gentlemen have gained in London as possible purchasers of everything not fitting and his country so much of a matter. Hence another change for the Minneapolis King of Books to obtain something of value for his home town.

Another View of Japan. Japan being much in the public eye at present, any new books on the subject are of interest. One of the best is "Around the World Through Japan," which is a book of travel, written by a man who has spent nearly all his life in Japan, and who has seen the country from the inside. He tries to give a fair and dispassionate account of the cause of the failure of Western civilization in China and Japan, and blames some of the missionaries for it. He says that the main cause of the failure was the contempt which he admits China has for the virtues most prized in Europe. He says that the main cause of the failure of Western civilization in China and Japan, and blames some of the missionaries for it. He says that the main cause of the failure was the contempt which he admits China has for the virtues most prized in Europe.

Maxwell Gray, who is a woman and the author of "The Silence of Dead Maitland," one of the most powerful stories ever written, will soon publish another novel to be called "Richard Rosney." It is said to be 10,000 words in length, with the scene laid in the south of England, and includes the murder of a stepfather, a good beginning, surely, and one that promises well for the interest of the book. It is a problem story and a character study as well serially. As a rule Mr. Pemberton writes two stories of about 80,000 words each every year.

An interesting work for scientists will shortly be published by Doubleday, Page & Co., called "Atlas of the Moon," written by Prof. William H. Pickering. He claims to have discovered that the measurements at present used by astronomers in the study of the moon are all wrong, and that a new set of measurements is calculated by Prof. Pickering. The book will be of the greatest interest to astronomers, particularly if the writer can carry his point. Cyrus Townsend Brady, who is one of the most prolific of modern writers, has a new book in press called "The Southerners; a Story of the Civil War." The scene is laid in Mobile during the war, and the hero and heroine are natives of Mobile. The hero, having been educated at the United States naval academy, feels in honor bound to fight for the Union. As the heroine is extremely loyal to the Confederacy, the dramatic possibilities of the situation are numerous and will doubtless prove interesting. One wonders whether a Northern-bred writer can do justice to the feminine patriot of those days.

HUNTING BIG SEA GAME. A Whalesman's Wife—By Frank J. Bullock and J. H. Appleton & Co., New York. Adventures on the mighty deep have a permanent fascination for a large proportion of readers who never saw the briny deep—as much fascination perhaps as that felt by those who never saw the deeps of men who go to the sea in ships. The volume in hand is the last of a series of popular sea stories by J. Bullock and will prove as great a favorite with the general reader as it is with the hunting of the whale is at all times when the leviathan is in sight at least an exciting business. The author is a man engaged in the chase, when vividly told the story of a man who takes place, the story of a man who takes place, the story of a man who takes place.

BOOKS REVIEWED. Educational in Character. Pitman's Stories of Old France—By Leila Brewster Pitman, American Book Company, New York. A work well suited to serve as an introduction to French history. It presents charming stories of the most salient characters and events of Old France, written with fidelity to truth and at the same time clothed with romantic life in its every form. This is the latest addition to the well known series of Eclectic school readings. Mine's Advanced Algebra—By William J. Milne. Ph. D., LL. D. American

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Another Bismarck Boom. Personal Reminiscences of Prince Bismarck—By Sidney Wiltman, Published by D. Appleton & Co., New York. Accepting the declaration of a distinguished German parliamentarian that "nothing concerning Prince Bismarck is so interesting as his private life," the author proceeds to give in the detail the result of his observation during his long acquaintance with the man of "blood and iron" during a period of years.

TURK HEARS DEMANDS FOR REFORMS IN MACEDONIA. Austria and Russia Present Identical Memorials. CONSTANTINOPLE, Feb. 22.—The Austrian and Russian ambassadors presented Saturday to the grand vizier identical memoranda embodying the demands for reforms in Macedonia. They afterward quickly made the foreign minister of the step taken. This course was adopted to give the proceedings a semi-official character.

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