

# With the First Nighters

"PAID IN FULL."

By Tod Goodwin.

Possibly nothing could better exemplify the reason for the popularity of Eugene Walter's great play, "Paid in Full," and its hold on the American public, than a little story of the audiences



Albert Brown—"Jimmy" in "Paid in Full."

which greeted the splendid company that presented the play here.

On the first night the audience was small and for the greater part indolent of mind. The faces on both sides of the foots were strange to the average run of theater goers, and while those who realized the force of the play were intent upon the human interest that held one every moment, they were in such a hopeless minority that the tumultuary and unappreciative low brows spoiled almost every situation with ceaseless prattle and unpardonable inanity.

The next audience was larger, the play wasn't over their heads, and that night every seat was taken, for people had awakened to the fact that there was a real play in town at last, and some were seeing it a second time. And so it went, until at the final performance, there wasn't standing room, and there weren't ten people in the house, including that ruminant, well meaning, but misguided young critic, who were not held by the virility of this play, in which there was less that was theatric and more that was real than in anything seen here in years.

Mr. Walter has demonstrated that he is in the forefront of the propaganda that has resulted in the sensible modern view that a life is not to be ruined because there has been a mistake in its mating, and so well does he know human nature and so perfectly has he constructed his play that while it is irresistibly forceful, it is sweet and clean and far away from that thing often erroneously designated as "audacity."

There are always people who make a mad dash for the box office if they get an idea that a play should be suppressed or that some lady in it who is commonly lawless is about to be married under the common law or in spite of it, but those people do not make the success of a play—nor, by the same token, can such a play equal the success of "Paid in Full."

With some interest, I read the grave statement that Emma should have stayed by Brooks, even after she had discovered how detestable he was. That is the rot that has been written and rewritten for years and years, and is hardly in accord with the absolute fact that it would have been far worse for her to go on living with a man she did not love. Thanks to the thinkers, as well as Herrick, Le Gallienne, and Chambers, much is being done to enlighten the poor fools who think that a soul once caught must bear the burden to the end. Most women are martyrs, for no man is honorable, but Lord, give her a chance when he is unbearable.

It would be difficult to imagine how a company with more histrionic ability—that is, well averaged—could be found to play "Paid in Full."

It is a case of only three men and a woman, with a few accessories.

The woman, Emma Brooks, as played by Sara Perry, is most artistic. The part calls for almost too much restraint, and in many hands the scene in the Captain's apartment would really be a

"scene" and get away from an actress having less control than this accomplished woman.

William L. Gibson, as Joe Brooks, acts better than he reads, though it should be easy for him to improve in the speaking of his lines. His task is not an easy one, and if any serious criticism is to be made of the play, it is in the part of the cad husband, for his persistent and violent grievance against the world in general never lets up a minute. The character is overdrawn, not by Mr. Gibson, but by the author, who has created a character, who, if he died, as one author said of another, "wouldn't like God."

The trecent Captain Williams was a natural and wonderful portrayal, given by Scott Siggins. The part is a difficult one, and he seemed like the composite prototype of all the seafarers of his kind. From the first glimpse of his exhibition of apparent brutality to the time he showed what kind of a premium he could pay for decency, his progress was a histrionic triumph.

Rose Snyder, as Mrs. Harris, and Pauline Darling, as her daughter, were admirable in the scenes they lightened, and Allen Atwell, as Sato, is the best Caucasian Jap ever seen on this stage.

There is another man in the play. His name is Jimsy, and he is all man. Most of us have had in mind a man like him—gentle, courageous, proud, with a humor that is all American and a breadth that comes of the knowledge of men and things. But in this splendid picture from red blooded life, it is in the delicate touches with which the part



Pearl Zinn, one of the show girls with "The Flower of the Ranch."