

NEXT WEEK'S BILLS: NEW "POTASH" AND "PASSING SHOW;" WASHINGTON SQUARE PLAYERS

Honest Injun, Pickford Parts Are Variegated

Something About "Little Mary's" Versatility as a Screen Actress, and "Less Than the Dust," Her New Vehicle

WHEN it was announced that Mary Pickford would head her own company—the Artcraft—which will release her first vehicle under its banner, "Less Than the Dust," at the Stanley Theater next Monday, there were many gasps of interest. But hardly seemed in importance to the little star's change of studio base is the fact that in this new picture she will give a demonstration of her versatility too often wanting in her films of the last few years.

Miss Pickford did much amiable and clever work with the Famous Players, but she did not vary her characters a great deal, confining herself for the most part to two types—the "sweet, young thing," as in "A Girl of Yesterday," and the hoyden of the submerged tenth, as in "Flags" and "The Dawn of a Tomorrow."

Now, according to the "stills" of "Less Than the Dust," she will play an Indian maiden, or, perhaps, a white girl masquerading as an Indian. Since the locale of the feature is that India, the experience ought to be a new one for her.

This writer has seen Miss Pickford in virtually every movie she ever did, even back to the neolithic days of the Biograph, and can bear witness to her remarkable variety of characterization when she so wills. She has, indeed, enacted nearly every sort of role. Some of her portraits of (American) Indians were in "Gola's Promise," in which she played opposite Alfred Page, the Belashazzar of Griffith's "Intolerance," in "A Romance of the Western Hills," with the late Arthur Johnson and others in the same romantic type, remembered by photoplay-going veterans.

Perhaps the two severest tests of "Little Mary's" ability were put on her by Mr. Griffith in "The Female of the Species," where she portrayed a murderous girl of the desert, and in "The Call to Arms," in which she essayed the part of a messenger boy of the middle ages. It was one of the best native costume pieces ever done by an American company.

A bill of Miss Pickford's history may not be out of place at this juncture. She was on the legitimate stage as a child, as most every one knows, and when scarcely more than a child went to the old Biograph building at 11 East Fourteenth street, New York city, in that weather-worn house—once a fashionable dwelling—she made her debut before the all-wise lens, under the tutelage of Mr. Griffith, in a one-reel piece called "The Violin Maker of Cremona."

Her fame being noised about "Flicker Alley," Carl Laemmle, of the Imp concern, lured her away from her anonymous affiliation, and she was featured with Owen Moore, her husband, in a number of pictures, some of them made in Cuba. She left Imp to head her own company, Maelic, but soon quit it. By that time everyone knew "Little Mary," and when she went back to the Biograph there were silent cheers from all over the land. Her best work to date was done during the ensuing months. Then David Belasco offered her the role of the blind girl in the Rostand fairy tale, "A Good Little Devil."

The direction of "Less Than the Dust" was done by John Emerson, a producer of marked talent, who has to his credit such films as "His Picture in the Papers," "Old Heidelberg" and "The Flying Torpedo" for Fine Arts-Triangle, and who was last seen on the speaking stage in this city with John Mason in Owen Davis's "Drugged."

The supporting company promises well.

B. D.

BOOTH TARKINGTON WRITES A LETTER ABOUT PISTOLS

To the Dramatic Editor Evening Ledger: Sir—I am encouraged by the amiable tone of your criticism of my play, "Mr. Antonio," and for some information, and I trust that you will not think that I am objecting to your criticism or challenging it. I simply and truly and quite naively "want to know," and I shall be very grateful if you will tell me.

Why do you call me a delineator of small-town characters? I am mystified because, since the writing of a novel in 1897, I have not dealt in "small town characters" until this present volume. I have written a line or two of three "small town stories" for Everybody's. There are some stories in this volume, but these occur in purely political stories (1903) and in a novel (1904). The latter, I take it, you would exclude, obviously.

What is the objection to the introduction of a weapon into a play? I think, besides objection to the continuous presentation of "cock stuff" and "musket" in a play, that this is a moral objection, and yours seems to be made on dramatic and theatrical grounds, and not on objection to the introduction of a weapon. I have had two plays produced, and six were successful. In three of these weapons were used and no objection was recorded. In "Hercules," for instance, there was an extraordinary amount of shooting. In "The Sign of the Cross," by Sheridan and Shakespeare, to mention no more than two previous colleagues. Of course, the fact that a weapon is a revolver and not a sword has no bearing on the case. Dramatically, a weapon is an instrument of death; it may be a bomb or a rapier or a broken washbowl.

I know that you must have a reason for saying that I do not respect the theater when I introduce a weapon into a play, but I can't, for the life of me, tell you what it is. In the obvious bit of symbolism I wished to hint that the finest sort of person doesn't care what you do to him; even though you try to kill him or "steal the honor of his body," you cannot make him your enemy. (The play will shortly be published in Harper's Monthly, where it is simple measures will probably appear to a laudatory reading.) I cannot see how it could have presented this meaning more simply and directly than by the use of a weapon. The space of a play does not afford opportunity for me to talk another way to you, and, of course, naturally, soberly and seriously, one does not take into account the ephemeral sophistications of the stage, such as definitions of "melodrama," "farce," etc. It is the tone of a thing, and not the event, that counts in a play. I am sure that you will find "Hamlet" a melodrama because there is a pistol used in it.

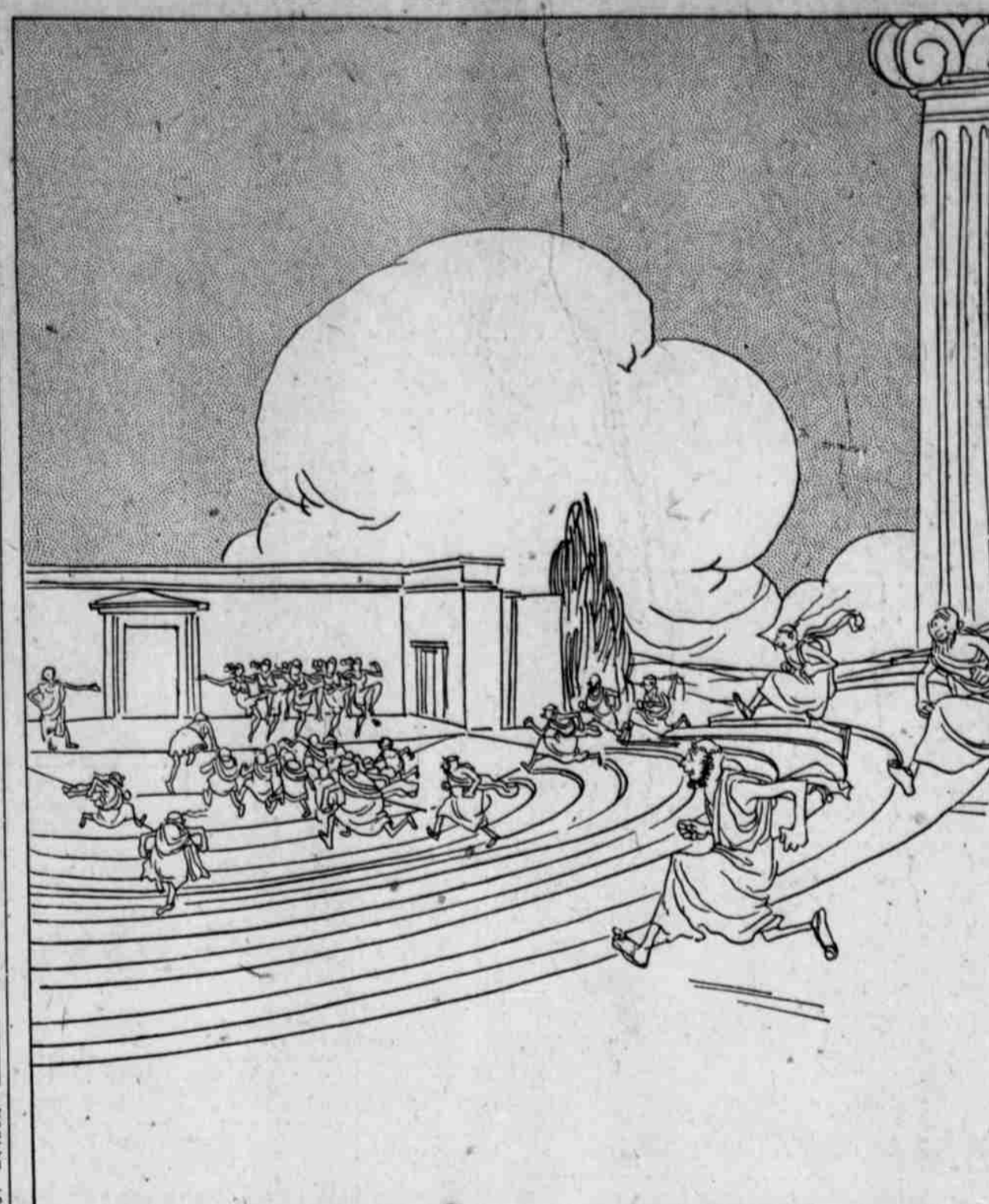
But, as I read your criticism, it is the very introduction of the real weapon in my play which you find objectionable, and I shall be honestly grateful if you will spare the time to tell me why. Several critics in New York made the same objection without stating their reasons. You are like them in this latter detail, but vastly unlike them in phrase and in the tolerant attitude of your criticism. I should never have written a word of criticism upon any hope of a coherent reply, but in this present misadventure I do this, and I do so, finally, I wish again to emphasize my prefatory statement that I am in no way challenging your criticism. I am sure that you will find a little more ample for my benefit. Yours truly,

BOOTH TARKINGTON.

Princeton, N. J., November 4.

(Mr. Tarkington's question concerning the revolver is answered in the editorial on this page. As for the other matter, Mr. Tarkington remains "America's most skillful delineator of small-town characters," even though he is also our most skillful delineator of many other things.—K. M.)

THIS DAY IN DRAMATIC HISTORY



Aeschylus invents the chorus, November 4, 490 B. C.

THE GENESIS OF ABE AND HIS PARTNER

Here is Montague Glass coming along with still another play, and the assumption is that presently no season will be complete without one or more plays by Mr. Glass, who wrote "Potash and Perlmutter in Society," which comes to the Garrick next week.

The story of Mr. Glass's early struggles with the partners is cheering, considering the heights to which he has since ascended. The first P. and P. yarn was written eight years ago, and was titled simply "Potash and Perlmutter." The story concerned Mawruss's marriage and Abe's grief thereover, and with the change that overcame the senior partner when large orders began to roll in from the cities that Mawruss was visiting on his honeymoon.

One publication after another turned the story down—most of them because they feared that Hebrews would be offended by it. Then an obscure publication in the Middle West accepted it, and printed it in May, 1908. Thus it accepted another and printed it—and then went out of business. The next one went to George Horace Lorimer, who bought it. It was "Taking It Easy."

JOSEF HOFMANN WILL BE HEARD IN RECITAL

Josef Hofmann's recital at the Academy of Music on next Thursday afternoon promises to be as successful in point of attendance as the one which he gave here last season, when the audience numbered more people than at any other piano recital given in this city, with the possible exception of one.

Hofmann is such a superb artist and stands so high in his profession that he is always assured of a sympathetically appreciative and cultured audience, and the program which he has arranged for his recital on November 9 makes a special appeal to music lovers of all classes.

The series of five recitals for the benefit of the endowment fund of the Philadelphia Orchestra, under the management of Arthur Judson, of which Hofmann's recital is the first, is perhaps the most brilliant group of recital attractions ever booked in this city. The artists who will be presented have reached the pinnacle of fame and represent the highest development of their art. The second recital in the series will be given by Mme. Olga Samaroff on Thursday afternoon, November 16. Madame Gluck will appear on Friday afternoon, December 1; Zimbalist on Wednesday afternoon, January 10, and Elman on Thursday afternoon, February 15.

Mr. Tarkington Wants to Know

Simple sincerity, not to mention good-tempered graciousness, is too seldom the virtue of a playwright when criticizing a critic—or of a critic when criticizing a playwright. But here is a notable example in the letter from Booth Tarkington about "Mr. Antonio," printed in another column, and here, I hope, is a reasonably gentlemanly answer from the critic.

Mr. Tarkington asks for information bearing on the following sentences from my review: Of course, he could be as simple on the stage as he is in "Perrod." But that isn't the way of the novelist. Instead he qualms before the awesome figure of Thespis and hauls out—a revolver. . . . When the Mayor casts a loaded revolver in the way of the lunatic in order that he may kill Antonio in the course of his cap-pistol campaign—well, it is just one sign that a novelist ought to keep to his own business or else have more respect for either his own trade or the theater. With humble simplicity, Mr. Tarkington could make Mr. Antonio a triumph. When he brings in the revolver of melodrama he merely arms his audience and puts it on the defensive.

From this Mr. Tarkington believes that the Evening Ledger's critic objects unqualifiedly to the revolver on the stage. Mr. Tarkington knows that he successfully filled "Beaucaire" with swords, and that Sheridan and Shakespeare were not above cold steel. Mr. Tarkington concludes that "the fact that a weapon is a revolver and not a sword has no bearing on the case. Dramatically a weapon is an instrument of death—it may be a bomb or a rapier or a broken washbowl." And, naturally, he "wants to know."

There are just two things to be said: First. A revolver is different from a rapier or a washbowl. It is capable of a nerve-shattering racket, which makes its introduction upon the stage the signal for an extreme and violent state of nervous suspense in ninety-nine hundredths of the audience.

Second. A revolver exploded in a vast emptiness—physical or dramatic—is several times as nerve-shattering. Obviously such a weapon does not produce the state of mind for genuine character study or for such symbolism as Mr. Tarkington has attempted. Mr. Tarkington complains that the brief space of a play doesn't afford opportunity for one character to talk another to death. But there is such a thing as killing symbolism by not talking about it at all. Thus, when Mr. Tarkington puts an all-important idea into a single sentence located between a revolver shot and a third-act curtain, it becomes, not merely cryptic, but adamant.

There is, of course, no earthly objection to introducing a revolver into a play. But there is a decided objection to introducing nothing else but a revolver. A man may safely wear a loaded gun in Rittenhouse Square—if he also wears a policeman's uniform. Otherwise he may be mistaken for a prospective burglar. Mr. Tarkington's revolver is almost the only dramatic action in "Mr. Antonio." At least, its violence is able to dwarf everything else, including much good character study. A mere trick, whether designed to spread symbolism or make a climax, betrays the dramatic weakness of the play. In that sense it arms the audience.

Of course, the difficulty at bottom is that this bit of violence is not in character, either with the play, which is genre study, or the Mayor of Avalonia, who causes it. Waving instruments of death was a common and commendable habit in Beaucaire's day. It isn't precisely the custom in Avalonia, Pa. Or, at any rate, Mr. Tarkington hasn't built his play to make it seem so.

Frankly the revolver wielded by the extraneous idiot in "Mr. Antonio" seems to me a very marked sign of disrespect for the high estate of the drama. It is not such things as plays are made of. And it is not from such things that Mr. Tarkington makes his novels. The novelist too often feels at sea when his feet tread the stage, and flies to cheap and obvious expedients, among them instruments of death. The creator of the Gentleman From Indiana and of Perrod, and of all the men and women who lie between, has no business with tawdry and unskillful melodrama. He doesn't write novels that way. Why should he write plays? K. M.

Skinner on Collaboration of Actor and Audience

The Distinguished Player of "Mr. Antonio" Talks of His Art to Members of the Drama League and Arts Association

By OTIS SKINNER

A VERY keen student of the theater, Dr. Brander Matthews, has said that to no artist does popular demonstration and approval come so readily and in such abundance as it does to the actor. There is a sound reason for this. The actor's art plays upon the more or less unrestrained emotions of his audience, to a degree not to be compared with that of the appeal of the sculptor, the painter, the poet, the novelist, the architect, or even the sensuous art of the dancer or the more emotional one of the musician. To be sure, there is a close kinship in the enthusiasm evoked by a gifted orator or celebrated soloist, but even in these instances there is not that complete amalgamation of the artist and his product that we find in the case of the actor. Canvases may be hidden in rubbish heaps, sculptural masterpieces buried in the dirt of ages, music scores looked in forgotten trunks and still be perfect works of art, but the work of the actor is never accomplished without his actual presence at the end of their plotting. Colonel Philip Bridan appears upon the scene. He is there to put these plotters to flight. At the entrance of the Colonel the doors fly open, and slamming his cane upon the table, in a loud voice he demands to see his uncle. They are amazed at his appearance. He tells them he is going out to smoke a cigar, that he is coming back in five minutes, and that if at the end of that time he cannot see his uncle, every one connected with this operation can clear out. This struck me as being a very spirited, very forceful, very interesting end of an act, but I was not prepared for the reception that that bit of acting received. The howls of laughter that came up on my appearance was something that nearly disconcerted me, and immediately on the drop of the curtain a continuation of their laughter was something that I had not considered possible. I knew that Colonel Philip Bridan was humorous, but not intensely funny. The audience then told me that there was in accord with the character of the play, and I saw that it was a character whose comic possibilities outweighed his serious ones. So the audience gave me my first lesson as to how to treat Colonel Philip.

presenting the same thing. But if he indulges himself in the pleasure of grief when he represents grief, his grief becomes ineffective to the audience. If he cries real tears he is apt to choke his own utterance, and yet I can recall so many applicants for theatrical honors who said, "I know I can act because whenever I read these scenes I cry real tears." I always feel like saying, "Well, go home and cry them, but not in public." There was but one person whom I recall who had the capacity to cry real tears, and that was Clara Morris. It would be a very little matter whether or not she shed those real tears, but it did amount to a great deal whether she could cause her audience to shed real tears.

While art for art's sake is never absent from the player's purpose, his thoughts, or even his prayers (if he says them), it is art for audiences' sake that becomes his achievement of supreme endeavor. I have referred to audiences as the actor's collaborators; perhaps I should have said, instructors. . . . We so often miscalculate our effects in study and rehearsal. I recall my experience in "The Honor of the Family," a play which up to the first entrance of Colonel Bridan was one that rather got on the nerves and bored the audience. It was a long series of demonstrations and preparation. Two persons were plotting and conspiring to get away with an old man's money, when at the end of their plotting Colonel Philip Bridan appears upon the scene. He is there to put these plotters to flight. At the entrance of the Colonel the doors fly open, and slamming his cane upon the table, in a loud voice he demands to see his uncle. They are amazed at his appearance. He tells them he is going out to smoke a cigar, that he is coming back in five minutes, and that if at the end of that time he cannot see his uncle, every one connected with this operation can clear out. This struck me as being a very spirited, very forceful, very interesting end of an act, but I was not prepared for the reception that that bit of acting received. The howls of laughter that came up on my appearance was something that nearly disconcerted me, and immediately on the drop of the curtain a continuation of their laughter was something that I had not considered possible. I knew that Colonel Philip Bridan was humorous, but not intensely funny. The audience then told me that there was in accord with the character of the play, and I saw that it was a character whose comic possibilities outweighed his serious ones. So the audience gave me my first lesson as to how to treat Colonel Philip.

I think we can find authority for the elimination of the actual presence of emotion of the actor in the words of the celebrated French actor, Mole, who once noted in his diary his disgust with his work the night before when he let himself go too fully into the emotions of his character. "It was real, as I would have been at home," he said. "I ought to have been real in another way in accord with the perspective of the theater." But when mechanics become too pronounced the effect on the audience is gone. We must be filled with spiritual exaltation; pulse quick, body and mind alert to meet any contingency. The only way that we can figure out this paradox of acting and emotion is to say that more or less of it, but it must always be under control. It must be method plus the spirit of the occasion, and not emotion

I had the same experience in the character of Hadji in "Kismet." The character of Hadji is that of a witty oriental doting upon his daughter and seeking revenge for the wrong done him by his ancient enemy, Javan. I saw a very excellent melodrama in this play, but I failed to see the comic characteristics that actually worked out for the audience. I did not know that my bloodthirsty threats were going to provoke laughter, or that I could commit murder, but I did. Before opening the play a New York theater manager said, "I understand that there are a few murders in this play, but I think Broadway is going to stand that." I told him I thought Broadway would at least accept it, possibly enjoy it, but I was not prepared when I found my fingers on the throat of my deadly enemy to hear bursts of uncontrolled mirth; and later, when my other enemy was flung into the pool and my hand was on his head, thrung him down into the water, while I counted the bubbles that came up, one, two, three, from the expiring man's lips—I was not prepared for a greeting as if it were a Greek chorus. I had not prepared myself for the bloodthirsty, horrid aspect of these two occasions. They had entered into the spirit of this performance of a dry tale of one thousand years ago, were enjoying my joy, and their heels were clicking together with delight as my heels did.

Then there is the controversy between Irving and Coussin as to how much the actor should put of himself and his own emotions into the character. It is an old, old dispute, and possibly there may be right on both sides; but it seems to me that the theory and contention of the French actor was the only one solved with effective result, that the feeling should be left entirely outside in the performance. The actor must be capable of presenting rage, hope, despair and all as if he was

YOURS FOR VOTES AND LAUGHS

At an opportune moment, here come Fred and Will H. Phillips, in "The Passing Show," and Lyle in the proper mood.

"Y'UNDERSTAND?" The only original Potash, Barney Bernard, in a new variety, "Potash and Perlmutter in Society," which comes to the Garrick Monday.



THE LASSO LAD Will Rogers, rope tasser and premier monologist, who is responsible for a large proportion of the laughs in the new "Follies" at the Forrest.

Mary's ability were put on her by Mr. Griffith in "The Female of the Species," where she portrayed a murderous girl of the desert, and in "The Call to Arms," in which she essayed the part of a messenger boy of the middle ages. It was one of the best native costume pieces ever done by an American company.

"LOOK PLEASANT, PLEASE"



Something in the world when Mary Pickford is at the camera crank and she is seen, the director of her new Stanley feature, "Less Than the Dust," back of it.



At an opportune moment, here come Fred and Will H. Phillips, in "The Passing Show," and Lyle in the proper mood.