

Both Sides of the Curtain

WHERE William Collier not so expert a comedian, his art might have illumined a really worthy vehicle in the course of two decades. The handicap of his own talents has been extremely formidable. "Collier could get away with that play; nobody else could," has become an all-too-prevalent formula. The skilled funmaker would then substantiate the familiar forecast by triumphing season after season with indifferent material.

On the other hand, less deserving actors have repeatedly enjoyed the protection of strong dramatic bulwarks. A striking instance of this injustice is manifest in the case of Francis Wilson, now happily retired. Mr. Wilson is a scholar and a gentleman. He has supported many beneficial movements in staged form. He has literary tastes and a facile pen, as witness his diverting reminiscences of Joseph Jefferson. But he is no actor. "Erminio" two decades ago revealed the full measure of his meager histrionic equipment. His rough clowning in that operetta won thoughtless laughter. Wearisomely he repeated that method in subsequent stellar tours.

Several of them brought forward farces that would have been ideal media for Mr. Collier. Particularly memorable are "The Mountain Climber," Clyde Fitch's adaptation of Labiche and Martin's "Le Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon," and the delicious fantasy, "When Knights Were Bold." Mr. Collier's handling of such pieces would have been adroitly keyed to their merits. In Mr. Wilson's performance the playwrights won all the honors.

IN THE end, of course, personal ability to some extent asserts itself. Mr. Wilson's abandonment of the footlights is apparently permanent. How entertaining he can be when histrionic presumptions are forsworn will probably be realized when the quondam star appears in Philadelphia this month as a University Extension feature. He will then discuss "The Humorous Side of an Actor's Life," and his literary perceptions will have an opportunity for assertion. The prospect of a public performance at such the right niche naturally inspires the hope that Mr. Collier may some time occupy his place in stardom. Very virtuous have nurtured much modesty that one almost wishes that this droll farceur were a shade less clever than he is.

Occasionally his humorous inspiration has led him to dispense altogether with the lucubrations of feeble dramatists. Certain of his own devices. These were obviously "actors' plays," rich in opportunities for his distinctive histrionic facility in construction, void of sound technical motivation. At least one of them however, was fully as meritorious intrinsically as the present farce on view at the Adelphi Theatre. "Nothing But the Truth," despite James Montgomery's authorship claims on the playbill, is similarly redolent of the star's comic predilections. By far the funniest moments of the piece, are those which Mr. Collier adorns with his inimitable byplay. His gift for simulating comic embarrassment and his delectable bits of "business." The conjectures that Mr. Montgomery's dramatic instructions were not so detailed, however, suit him out for special commendation. He writes as all the rest of his kind, with a certain fluency, with evident respect for melodic themes built up by such methods. What Mr. Montgomery did was to "modernize" a well-tried farcical theme, long since exploited to the maximum of humor and satire by W. S. Gilbert in "The Palace of Truth." The Gilbertian fantasy exerted an additional and compelling appeal from the fact that his leading characters, made veracious through enchantment, were unaware of their amusing, shameless and convulsively amusing frankness. "Execrable!" exclaims the applauding auditor of a wretchedly sung ditty. The impression that a conventional social compliment is being enthusiastically voiced constitutes stimulating "kick" to the scene. The episode is echoed in Mr. Collier's outspoken denunciation of a debutante's caterwauling at the opening of act 2 in "Nothing But the Truth." There was whimsy in the Gilbert passage. The new version is sheer farce.

MEASURE of Mr. Montgomery for employing a stock theme is, however, hardly justifiable. M. P. Foll, a French critic, has reduced all possible dramatic situations to what counts in playwriting. The basic idea may be as familiar as the Jinxes of "Mother Goose," and no complaint is warranted if the technical execution is tasty. Theatre-goers must have realized that Eugene Walter's "The East West" was based on such the same premises as Pinner's "Iris." But that fact was never invidiously emphasized. Mr. Walter's craftsmanship and skill in characterization had fully justified his performance. It matters not, therefore, whether Mr. Montgomery's Gilbertian or Mr. Isham's as disclosed in the novel from which the play is derived, was deliberate or unconscious. Neither of the writers is too prone to have seen "The Palace of Truth" as a revival of the piece formed a picture of Ben Greer's repertory in

country within the last ten years. Even if they missed it and are further more unfamiliar with the bound volumes of the Gilbertian theatre, the American dramatist is still blameworthy for reliance on Mr. Collier's individuality to bolster up a padded, shambling, incoherent play that, judged by the very lenient standard of farce, is still a mediocre product. It may be presumed that few visitors to the Adelphi Theatre this month will leave that playhouse under the impression that an evening has been ill spent. Mr. Collier's drooleries victoriously dispel the mere shadow of such a reflection, though the query "Will the most painstaking and polished funmaker in America ever have a good play?" remains unanswered.

RETROSPECT of the general histrionic quality of the performance suggests a postscript with reference to one of the star's supporting players. Arnold Lucy, as the sacerdotal mere babe in business, submits a portrait of a clergyman that refreshingly runs counter to the overdone conventional type of stage minister. Even as caricaturing his mirthful work imparts a flavor of individualism and sincerity. Joggling the public's memory ought to make this manifestation of good art all the more comprehensible. Mr. Lucy is one of the most accomplished character actors extant. Bernard Shaw, whose "Iris" punned in selecting cast for his comedies is the name of London's impresarios, picked Mr. Lucy to portray the effective role of Mr. Knox in "Fanny's First Play." With delightful Kate Carlyon, the comedian composed the residue of the original company in that piece during its American tour. In this same Adelphi Theatre Mr. Lucy presented a conception of a middle-class Britisher uncannily akin to our own notions of "Mr. Common People." It was so fine that audiences naturally remembered the conception, but not the identity of the interpreter. Such is the really proficient character actor's usual unhappy fate. Handsome leading men whose versatility is minus quality are easily recalled. Players with a genuine gift of portraiture pay the penalty of their experience. Arnold Lucy, Fuller Mellich, Albert Brumby, and three of the best genre artists on the stage. But their names are never posted in flaming advertising type. They get "under the skin" of a character, and that's fatal to general recognition.

THE Spanish "zarzuela"—musical comedy in the Iberian vernacular—is reported to have stirred up a deal of interest lately in New York. Quinito Valverde's "The Land of Joy" (La Tierra de Alegria) yeams to Gotham and tired business men, enervated critics, casual playgoers, chronic theatre "fans," matinee girls and all the component cohorts of the general public have suddenly become aware that American musical farce is in a quagmire and that "they order things better" in a land of whose theatrical art we have long been so densely ignorant. The modern Spanish excels in light music. His zarzuelas, as the writer can testify from personal observation, sparkle with life, pulsating rhythm, intriguing melody. "The Land of Joy" is but one gem in a dazzling galaxy. "La Gran Via," "Las Brilonas," "A las de Dios" are sung, whistled, danced, strutted and strutted on castanets from one end of the peninsula to the other. Composers like Chapl, Valverde, Serrano, the late Enrique Granados and Don Tomas Breton have delighted their compatriots for a generation. At least two of these have tilted pretentious fields, but the others have mainly sought a musical distinction without stultifying the musical intelligence. In conceivably they could exist in this country they would be furnishing musical comedies. What a relief that would be! It would be a relief to the witless rehashing of antecedent tunes served with monotonous regularity to our audiences! It is here made for "high-brow" offerings. Valverde vigor would suit the "Follies." "The Holy Roman Empire," said Napoleon on terminating its existence, "is neither holy nor Roman." "The Land of Joy" is neither musical comedy nor musical comedy. The chemical reaction of our alleged "froth" would be lead.

THESE painful thoughts have been partly inspired by the addition of another dull, flat, stale and unprofitable score in a new musical play. "The Rainbow Girl," current at the Forrest Theatre, is void of true melodic inspiration. Its saccharine measures drool along, sometimes tricked out with conventional syncopation, while at others the poverty of ideas is masked by transitions of key and very obvious ruses. It is unfair to composer Louis Hirsch, to single him out for special condemnation. He writes as all the rest of his kind, with a certain fluency, with evident respect for melodic themes built up by such methods. What Mr. Montgomery did was to "modernize" a well-tried farcical theme, long since exploited to the maximum of humor and satire by W. S. Gilbert in "The Palace of Truth." The Gilbertian fantasy exerted an additional and compelling appeal from the fact that his leading characters, made veracious through enchantment, were unaware of their amusing, shameless and convulsively amusing frankness. "Execrable!" exclaims the applauding auditor of a wretchedly sung ditty. The impression that a conventional social compliment is being enthusiastically voiced constitutes stimulating "kick" to the scene. The episode is echoed in Mr. Collier's outspoken denunciation of a debutante's caterwauling at the opening of act 2 in "Nothing But the Truth." There was whimsy in the Gilbert passage. The new version is sheer farce.

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ARTISTIC FACTORS IN THE NEW ROSTER OF PHOTOPLAYS



Jack Pickford as Tom Sawyer in the adaptation of Mark Twain's classic to be shown at the Arcadia Theatre next week. Mrs. Vernon Castle (top) will be revealed at the Regent Theatre in "Stranded in Arcady." Lois Wilson and Ida Lewis (bottom) will be featured in "Alimony," at the Victoria.

HEMPEL TO RETURN IN OPERA COMIQUE

Metropolitan Diva Will Sing in "The Daughter of the Regiment" Tuesday. Opera comique will hold sway at the Metropolitan on next Tuesday night. Donizetti's "The Daughter of the Regiment" will be the bill, bringing forward here for the first time this season Frieda Hempel, Francesco Carpi and Antonio Scotti. The work has not been heard in this city since the Hammerstein regime, when Tetrazini sang Marie and the irrepressible Charles Gilbert was the Sergeant Sulpice. In earlier operatic eras it was a favorite offering. Jenny Lind, Patti, Albani, Kelllogg and, more recently, Marcella Sembrich won approbation for sprightly performances of the title role. Donizetti's melodious trifle was first presented at the Paris Opera Comique under the title "La Fille du Regiment." Properly speaking it is not "grand opera" at all but operetta, no weightier in musical substance than "Robin Hood," "The Serenade," "The Chocolate Soldier," "Véronique," or "The Children of Normandy." The full measure of its appeal cannot be exerted on a vast stage, and in Continental Europe "The Daughter" is seldom listed in a repertory of pretentious lyric drama. It could be heard to best advantage in an auditorium about the size, say, of that of the Forrest Theatre or the Chestnut Street Opera House. "The Barber of Seville" has usually been similarly handicapped in America. Because grand opera artists sang its roles, the work would be submitted in the same musical cycle that also included "Aida," "The

A MUSICAL FAMILY AND OTHER STARS OF CONCERT AND OPERA



Mme. Louise Homer, the contralto, who has lately rejoined the Metropolitan Company, and her four daughters, one of whom, Louise (right), is already a singer and scheduled for a recital appearance here at the Academy of Music on Wednesday night. Chauncey Olcott is coming. Chauncey Olcott in "Once Upon a Time," by Rachel Crothers, will be the attraction at the Walnut Street Theatre for two weeks commencing Tuesday night, December 25. Francesco Carpi (left) will be heard in the role of Tonio in "The Daughter of the Regiment" at the Metropolitan on Tuesday evening. Ronald Warren, the baritone (right), will take part with Miss Homer in the concert that is to be given this week for the benefit of the Hahnemann Hospital.

THEATRICAL INDICATOR FOR THE COMING WEEK

New Play by Hulbert Footner, Fourth Production Margaret Anglin's Season, Will Have Premiere Tuesday Night—Many Attractions Hold Over

LITTLE THEATRE—"The Open Fire," a modern drama by Hulbert Footner with Margaret Anglin in the leading role of Laura Kevery, an interior orator, whose artistic tendencies and warm-heartedness are developed further than her business acumen. First production on any stage Tuesday night. New members of the star's company are George Howell and Trenton. Edward Emery and Langdon Bruce will, of course, have important roles. George Foster Platt will be the director.

CONTINUING ATTRACTIONS FORREST—"The Rainbow Girl," musical comedy, suggesting a novel angle of the servant problem. Amusing book, derived from a Jerome K. Jerome tale, is by Renold Wolf. Louis A. Hirsch wrote the score. Among the leading players are Billy Van, Sydney Street, Dorothy Follis, Harry Delf. ADELPHI—"Nothing But the Truth," farce, depicting the terrors of veracity and made into an offering of potent mirthfulness chiefly through the skilful comic technique of William Collier. Arnold Lucy, Rapley Holmes, Betty Wales and Ned A. Sparks are assisting players.

BROAD—"Pollyanna," the "glad" play. Catherine Chisholm Cushing did the dramatization. Eleanor H. Porter's popular tale. Patricia Collings portrays the persistently optimistic title character about whom action revolves. Oswald Yorke and Maude Cranger are in the supporting cast.

GARRICK—"The Boomerang," delicately adjusted farce, raised often to the point of comedy by the most carefully selected company seen here this season. The principal parts are Arthur Byron, Martha Hedman, Ruth Shepley, Wallace Eddinger and Margaret Keyes. CHESTNUT STREET OPERA HOUSE—"You're in Love," musical comedy, with book by Louis Hirsch and music by George Fennel. Arthur Hamnerstein makes the production, whose chief spectacular feature is a realistic ship deck scene. Heading the cast are May Thompson, Marie Flynn, Clarence Nordstrom and Mrs. Gardner Crane.

AT POPULAR PRICES ORPHEUM—"Come Back to Erin," a romantic comedy, with scenes laid in New York and Ballymore, Ireland. Walter Lawrence heads the company. Helen Courtney portrays Kathleen, the Irishman's colleen, who is the sentimental mainstay of the plot. WALNUT—"The Newlyweds," a cartoon musical play.

VAUDEVILLE KEITHS—"The Naughty Princess," an elaborate musical comedy with Esther Jarrett and Sammy Wesson leading a large company; Adele Rowland, in a repertory of new song features; the Six American Dancers, Burns and Prabito, in a comedy sketch; Maleta Bonconi, in a "Courtney Leonard" sketch; Harry Lester Mason, character comedian; Seabury and Shaw, dancers.

GLOBE—"Follies Bergere," a musical comedy feature; "Goldstein's Wedding," a farce; "The Beauty of Experience," formerly addressed to Howard Fenton and Green, Hall, Ellsworth and Merrick, Kate and Wilder; latter half of week.

BROADWAY—"The Star Bout," the Hal-lange; Barry and Mildred, Fenton and Green, and "A Daughter of the Gods," photoplay; first half of week. Bruce, Duffett and company, in "Viva Wireless," the Mazetti couple, Murry Livingston, May Curtis, Melody Trio, and "The Wild Girl," photoplay; latter half of week.

WILLIAM PENN—"The Suffragette Revue," a musical comedy act, with Moby Dick, the Mazyck couple, and "One Hour," photoplay; first half of week. Weber, Wilson, Revere, Kennedy, Day and Sheridan, and "The Thrill of Life," photoplay; latter half of week.

NIXON—"A Regular Business Man," one-act comedy, formerly acted by Douglas Fairbanks and now involving a selected cast of players; Götter and Cox, youthful song writers; Worme and Phillips, the Duffin-Reeday troupe of gymnasts; and "The Rise of Jennie Cushing," with Elsie Ferguson, photoplay.

COLONIAL—Dong Fong Gue, the Chinese actress and Harry Haw in a specialty entitled "The Children of Confucius"; the Four Swans, in "A Darktown Revue"; the Durkin Sisters, Martini and Maximilian, in an act of our league magic; the Flying Sunners, the Three Emmett, in "Going to the Races," and "The Little Princess," with Mary Pickford, photoplay.

GRAND—"The Man and Her Dad," Gaiety's Monkeys, "His Quaker Girl," introducing George S. Brown and Gertrude Taylor; "The Street Urchin," Hopkins, Axtell and company, in a Pullman car skit, and the Tenent Sisters in song and dance specialties.

FEATURE FILMS STANLEY—"The Devil Stone," by Leighton Oumum, with Geraldine Farrar in the leading role. Arctart production. All week. PALACE—"The Curse of Iku," a Japanese photoplay, featuring Teuru Aoki; first half of week. "The Judgment House," with Violet Heming; latter half of week.

ARCADIA—"Tom Sawyer," a film adaptation of Mark Twain's famous story. Jack Pickford portrays the title part. Paramount production. All week. VICTORIA—"Alimony," by Hayden Talbot, featuring Lois Wilson and George Fisher, and "The Man From Painted Post," with Fairbanks, double bill; first half of week. "Alias Mrs. Jessop," with Emily Stevens; latter half of week.

REGENT—"Stranded in Arcady," with Mrs. Vernon Castle, Monday and Tuesday; "The Square Deceiver," with Harold Lockwood, Wednesday and Thursday; "The Small Town Girl," with Harry Holmes, Friday and Saturday.

LAST BONNET RECITAL NEXT WEEK Interest in the series of organ recitals which M. Bonnet is giving at St. James's Church will culminate in the fourth and last on Wednesday evening next, when modern composers will figure on the program. Music by a number of modern Frenchmen, including Saint-Saens, Widor and Bonnet himself, will be played. There will be a hiatus in the enjoyable series of free Sunday concerts at the Academy of Fine Arts next week. The cycle will be resumed on the afternoon of December 23, when the soloists will be Cecile Ayre, pianist, and Jere Shaw, tenor.

BEAUTY SHADOWED BY TEUTONIC NAME So Jean Moyer, of "Experience," Now Calls Herself Miss Downs. War's effect on nomenclature has hit the actress Jean Moyer, who has changed her name because, although she herself is intensely American, her ancestors happened to have been German. Jean Moyer, formerly addressed to "Experience," George V. Hobart's modern morality play, which returns to this city for a limited engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House beginning Monday, December 24. She is also a Philadelphia girl and glad of it. For the last two years of her stage life she was known as Jean Moyer. She played several parts in the Olan and Harry productions and last season was engaged for "Experience." At the beginning of this season the former Miss Moyer notified the office of E. L. Cohan, who had been her producers, that henceforth she proposed to be known as Jean Downs, having adopted her mother's name so that no one would suspect her of pro-German sympathies. The postal authorities in Washington have been duly notified that all mail notes intended for the Beauty of "Experience," formerly addressed to Jean Moyer, shall henceforth be delivered to Jean Downs.

THE MATCH JINX INVADERS THE FILMS It is a well-known fact that members of the theatrical profession are probably the most superstitious class of people in the world. Some actors will not permit a hat to be placed on a bed, and will allow any of their best friends to whistle in their dressing room or knock over their heads into the mirror while they are making up. An instance of this falling was disclosed recently in the production of "The Devil Stone," the Geraldine Farrar starring production which will be shown at the Stanley Theatre on Monday. The film itself is concerned with superstition. While a number of the actors were standing on the lobby stage with Cecil B. De Mille, producer of the picture, cigarettes were offered to the group by one of the players. Two of the men lit their cigarettes from a single match and a third was on the point of using the same match when he was stopped by a rude hand which dashed the burning lucifer to the floor. "Don't do that!" exclaimed the actor. "Don't you know that is the worst omen in the world?" "What's the matter?" asked Mr. De Mille. "Has all this superstition in the picture gotten under your skin?" "Well, maybe it has and maybe it hasn't," replied the actor smiling. "but nevertheless I noticed that when we were scheduled to begin this picture on Friday, the thirteenth, the show wasn't ready or something happened so conveniently, perhaps—so that we didn't begin work until Saturday."

Circling the Pacific With Helen Among the unusual motion pictures to be shown by Burton Holmes this week is "Circling the Pacific," which will be a most interesting revelation of the various outposts of civilization on the one-time German port of call and the lighting front in Flanders. Helen took Tain-tau from the German now the Chinese, with their country being taken in momentous consequence the work of road and railway construction for the British in Flanders. Mr. Holmes will give "Circling the Pacific" at the Academy of Music on Monday evening only. He will also give this extra feature on Thursday and Friday as he has the travelogue on a melange of musical farce and vaudeville.