

BEFORE THE CURTAIN GOES UP

"Main Street," the Only Novelty in the Theatres Next Week, Will Interest Both Theatregoers and Lovers of the Novel—Other Stage Gossip

By HENRY M. NEELY

THEATRICALLY speaking, we stay pretty much "as is" for next week, with the exception of the Walnut. There the plays change. "The Skin Game" going out and the dramatization of the popular novel, "Main Street," coming in and bringing with it Alma Tell, the beautiful sister of the other beauty, Olive, who was at the same theatre earlier in the season in "The Night Watch."

OTHERWISE things remain—the Greenwich Village Follies at the Shubert, "The White-Headed Boy" at the Broad, "Orphans of the Storm" at the Forrest, "Ladies' Night" at the Casino, "Dog Love" at the Adelphi.

Of course, we all hate to admit it, but haven't our British cousins shown us a little something new in acting this year? Fine Character Somewhat, when they work in some plays, they seem to approach it from a different angle than we do. They look at it from the inside; we look at it from the outside. They seem to say to themselves, "Now, if I were that fellow, really? What would he do in such and such a circumstance? How would he act? What would his mental processes and reactions be?"

They do seem to do quite that. We see similar characters that we have known or read about and I'm rather afraid that we have a tendency to say, "Now, with this extra bit of business, I can get a little bit more out of the character, but it isn't really in character, but it will get across better."

I am led to these reflections by "The White-Headed Boy" at the Broad. Every time that it is a vitally distinct "character." There are wonderful contrasts and conflicts brought out and, in the main, the thing is amazingly well done.

Arthur Sinclair, in his early scenes, makes the part of John Duffy about as clear-cut and decisive and convincing as anything I've seen in a long time, when he introduces the comely element after his lovingly making with Aunt Ellen, it seemed to me that he got out of his character and consciously "put something across." At first, he was John Duffy, living, actual John Duffy. Then he was a wayward boy, but when he kept acting John Duffy, he kept acting John Duffy. It just spoils what would have been a triumph, it seemed to me, but I hasten to add that I can't say anybody who agrees with me. Or does that more properly mean that I'm right?

Sydney Morgan, as George, impressed me as giving a good performance. He did not relapse into himself a moment, even when others had the center of the stage. But I confess I didn't care for Morgan O'Neill's "funny, perhaps, but with too much of the atmosphere of slapstick about it."

But it's all a mighty neat little show and one of the most interesting things we have had in Philadelphia this season. It is full of genuine merit that no one but an old crook like me would be mean enough to find and point out the little faults—which may exist only in his own mind.

Funny thing happened Tuesday night. I've often read, in plays, the stage direction, "The curtain falls." Tuesday night it really did it when a chain to a counterpane broke and down she came with a bang. It was 9:30 and they were about to raise it, and then they saw the audience and at that time, the play was in the scene throughout, they simply cut the intermission and we were out by 10:30.

THERE'S one thing you can thank I am full at the present time, and that is that you haven't Avery Hopwood's job in filling out an income tax form. Nobody knows how much money they are getting. If it were my income tax form, I would be sure to get a nice little profit. But there probably isn't another playwright in captivity who has so many sources of income and all of it working actively.

"The Night Watch" now enjoying a run at the Lyric, is only one item. Hopwood's record for this year shows big companies playing to big returns in "The Hat," "Ladies' Night," "The Girl," "The Gold Diggers," and "Spanish Love."

His past successes are still profitable to him, for they are all favorites with road or stock companies. "The Girl," "Spanish Love," and "The Hat" are being played by "The Fat" lines and situations. That is natural, because he has a big hand in writing the story. But there is one other character—the quaint and pathetic town failure, the old man who has spent his life inventing and dreaming great dreams only to be laughed at by the narrow-minded townspeople—who remains in the memory as a delightful old man who quite properly wins success and happiness in the end.

We have had so many great men's parts taken by young actors this season that it is almost unique to have this old man played by a genuine old actor. And David Higgins, the Clean Beams of "Welcome Stranger," and "The Hat," and "The Girl," and "The Gold Diggers," and "Spanish Love," in that same year, Higgins was written the story. But there is one other character—the quaint and pathetic town failure, the old man who has spent his life inventing and dreaming great dreams only to be laughed at by the narrow-minded townspeople—who remains in the memory as a delightful old man who quite properly wins success and happiness in the end.

George Sidney, of course, is the outstanding figure in "Welcome Stranger," at the Garrick. The play is all about a doctor who has a big hand in writing the story. But there is one other character—the quaint and pathetic town failure, the old man who has spent his life inventing and dreaming great dreams only to be laughed at by the narrow-minded townspeople—who remains in the memory as a delightful old man who quite properly wins success and happiness in the end.

Everybody who was a theatregoer a decade ago will remember such plays as "At Piney Ridge," "His Last Dollar," "Kidnaped," and "Up York State," which were big money makers over the "popular price" circuits. David Higgins wrote them, produced them and starred in them.

His Philadelphia connections go back as far as 1883, when he came East from a long career in stock companies in California and played at the Chestnut Street Opera House with Sadie Hagan and Joseph Dowling, the latter to be come famous in film as the Miracle Man in the photoplay of that name. The plays in 1883 were "The School of Clime." Four years later, Higgins was in the old Arch Street Theatre with Oliver Doud Byron in a play he wrote for Byron. It was called "The Phlegm." In that same year, Higgins produced "Burr Oaks" at the Chestnut Street Opera House and scored with it one of his biggest successes. It was one of the hits of those days.

STARS OF THE STAGE COMING HERE NEXT WEEK

ALMA TELL
and
MARY MORRIS
"MAIN STREET"
Walnut

FLORENCE REILLY
"LADIES' NIGHT"
Lyric

POLLY BLATT
"GREENWICH VILLAGE"
Shubert

ANN DAVIS
"DOG LOVE"
Adelphi

ROSE BERNARD
Casino

MABEL WHITEE
"STREAGER"
Garrick

ARTHUR SHIELDS
"THE WHITE-HEADED BOY"
Broad

GERTRUDE RITCHEY
"ORPHANS OF THE STORM"
Forrest

JOSEPH SCHILDKRAUT
"ORPHANS OF THE STORM"
Forrest

AL HERMAN
"KENTUCKY"
Garrick

Shows That Are Coming to Philadelphia Soon

February 26—"The O'Brien Girl," dramatic musical comedy Garrick, by the Gold Diggers, Belmont comedy Broad.

March 30—"The Grand Duke," with No Date Set—"The Swan Man," with William Faversham, Lyric.

Greenwich Village Follies at the Shubert, "The White-Headed Boy" at the Broad, "Orphans of the Storm" at the Forrest, "Ladies' Night" at the Casino, "Dog Love" at the Adelphi.

It is a pleasure to meet a "different" actor now and then. Most of 'em, minutes after you've met, take you aside and tell of how good they were in this part or that.

Met Robert Pitkin, of the Greenwich Village Follies at the Shubert, the other night and he gleefully showed me a rewritten criticism from a newspaper out in little Rock, Ark. He has carried for some years. It said:

"I wrote a review of 'The Telephone Girl' when it was presented here at a repertoire company. At that time, I said the comedy was a masterpiece. I had seen or could imagine. Since I wrote this criticism, that actor has passed away, I have had to retract that statement in his art to retract that statement in its entirety because I saw Robert Pitkin in the same role last night at the Opera House."

"Main Street," which had the most of the population of the country lined up as "pus novel," is likely to be just as provocative of argument in its stage form, which is coming to the city for an indefinite run.

Stuart Walker, in that most valuable stock company of his in Indianapolis, gave the first performance of "Main Street" here at the Walnut next week.

Morris will have the part of Carol the producer's chum Alma Tell. Indeed, the Tell family seems to have pronounced lending for this part at the Walnut next week, as Alma Tell's equally attractive sister, Olive, was Robert Warwick's leading lady in "The Night Watch," which was here early in the fall.

He is a Busy Author
Lennox Robinson, author of "The White-Headed Boy," which the Irish Players from the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, are presenting at the Broad, began his management of the Abbey three years before the war. Last year, this theatre presented forty-five plays, seventeen of which were entirely new. He is now under his supervision. He has written a volume of short stories, besides carrying on his duties as librarian of the Carnegie Trust in Dublin. He was born in Cork, the son of a clergyman.

Dave Marlon Show Here
Dave Marlon's own company, in a show called "The Land of Impossible," will be the attraction next week at the Walnut Theatre. The production, which is in two acts and fourteen scenes, has a company headed by Emil (Jazz) Casper and Will H. Ward, favorite fund-raisers. Also in the cast are Inez De Jordan, George E. Rock, Ross Bonerud, Myrtle Franks, Albert Dwinell, Spellman and Hazzard, Jack Honeywell and the Golden Trio. There are twenty-four girls in the chorus.

THE CRITIC TALKS TO MUSIC LOVERS

THAT Philharmonic Society last Sunday performed one of its most important functions in the musical life of Philadelphia, when it introduced to the public the two young soloists who won the piano and violin medals of the organization at its contest last year.

Now, if these young men simply represented the standard of performance which might fairly be termed even first class amateur playing, the Philharmonic would not be justified in presenting them to the public in the person of the members of the organization. But both, like all the other local soloists which the Philharmonic has presented, showed a high standard of professional performance and fully justified in placing them as soloists upon an important concert program.

It is true that neither of the youths is yet a finished artist. This is only natural and it would be impossible to expect anything else. Their youth and their lack of experience militate against original or striking interpretation, but it is doubtful if even the greatest interpretative geniuses at the age of seventeen or so were able to show much more than a clear technique and a facility and adaptability of tone.

AS HAS been explained before, it is impossible for Mr. Stokowski to give young artists the soloists' position at the concerts of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The extremely critical nature of the soloists' position at the orchestra among the great musical organizations of the world demand that the most finished artists on the concert stage be given the soloists' position.

THE greatest difficulty that a young artist, like a young composer, has to overcome is obtaining a hearing as a soloist with a competent orchestra. If he makes good after a few performances his reputation is virtually guaranteed.

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One of the most ambitious programs ever undertaken by a Philadelphia church body will be given Wednesday evening at Walnut Street Hall, when St. Peter's choir will appear in a program of unaccompanied church music.