

THE PASSING SHOW

Angels and Ministers of Grace! No wonder Mme. Melba avoids London. Because of her last visit there the Duke of Orleans was confined to his room for eight days in hunting season, and during her stay carefully avoided all public resorts. If this thing keeps up Melba will be forbidden to enter English ports and exiled like poor Modjeska. I am sorry for the Duke. He must be a gentleman of a susceptible and romantic temperament to die so hard, and the susceptibles are always to be pitied. But there are a few things in this world which to have had and lost are quite enough to keep the Duke of Orleans indoors a week, even in hunting season.

So Julia Arthur will be with us this winter and will probably receive the recognition which was denied her before she went to London. Miss Arthur is one of those talented women of whom there have been several in America, who seem to have every desirable thing but success. She has a voice, such a voice; the face of the tragic muse, and eyes that might have been Niobe's, so full of anguish are they. But for some reason, probably the same old everlasting reason, on this side of the Atlantic she had never brilliant or pronounced success. In America we do not seem to have the faculty of developing great actors. We have no great national schools of acting like those abroad, where the severe training mercilessly divides talent from vain assumption, giving to the great man all the secrets of art and putting the little men where they belong. We have no managers who have elegance of taste or fine discrimination; who are actors, playwrights, critics, artists all in one; who can select the gold from all that glitters and purify and chasten it. It is an art to manage an artist, and our managers are for the most part guiltless of all art, heaven knows. Then we have no precedent. In this country whosoever wills and can find a backer may star, may even rent a big theatre and play to the metropolis, yes and receive respectful attention and consideration as if they had a right to be there. With us training is not requisite to a "star," to say nothing of talent; only "nerve" and money. Of course in spite of all this we have had some great actors, men in whom the God sent madness of genius raged so riotously that they developed without our help, in spite of us, in defiance of us, were their own school, their own managers and their own traditions. But we have had many more like Miss Arthur who go very well until they reach the point where they need the guiding discipline of the strong arm and do not find it. But Miss Arthur, wiser than her kind, went to London and put herself under Sir Henry Irving. There she found what she wanted, positivism and severe training. Since then she has made sure and rapid progress and has taken all Ellen Terry's parts when that great actress was ill. She has not been seen in America for several years and perhaps when she comes back this winter, if she has profited by Irving's masterly management and has not been spoiled

by Terry's nervousness, we may still be proud of her.

A French newspaper that is not on to the highly proper modes of doing things across the channel, innocently asks "If it is to be Sir Henry Irving why is it not Lady Ellen?" Why not, O great and righteous court of England?

Elwyn A. Barron, formerly critic on the *Inter Ocean*, is now dramatizing George Eliot's "Romola" for Julia Marlowe. Mr. Barron is not a particularly successful playwright. He is a reflective man who writes very decidedly in the essay style and is sometimes a little given to fine writing and sophomoric figures. His paragraphs are graceful and poetic, but he seems to lack the power to work up definite and strong action. His only former attempt at a drama, "When Bess Was Queen," was rather a story in dialogue than a play and did not outlive a dozen performances. It is pretty safe to say that in "Romola" he will not do much better. Romola is the most tedious and impossible as it is the most studied of all George Eliot's novels. It is great in its way, but not as a novel. Then what will it be as a play? There are playwrights who could divest the plot of the awful results of Mrs. Cross' devoted study of Florentine history, oil it up a little and make it alive. *Tito Milema* could be made quite a fellow if he were not so learned and even *Romola* herself might be persuaded to care more for her husband than for Theocritus, but Mr. Barron is scarcely the man to persuade her. He will devote himself to the cameos and old parchments and Savonarola, all of which the theatre going public cares very little about. When the gentle and reflective Mr. Barron gets through with "Romola" it will be a choice addition to Miss Marlowe's collection of unplayable plays. "Chatterton," "Peg Woffington," "Colombe's Birthday," "Blot on the Scutcheon" and "Romola." Great arms of Juno, what a repertoire! If Miss Marlowe would only revive "The Jew of Malta" and Wycherly's "Love in a Wood" and a few of the miracle plays she would be perfectly consistent.

Richard Mansfield will not touch one of his old successes this season. His repertoire will be entirely new including, "A Son of Don Juan," "The House of the Wolf" and "A Society Highwayman." It takes a daring artist to burn his ships behind him.

Fannie Edgar Thomas, the Paris Correspondent of the *Musical Courier*, a young lady supposed to be endowed with good sense and even with good taste writes a touching lament that the "truthful lines of Ella Wheeler Wilcox are so seldom set in music." She says they are "so tuneful and lyrical that they almost sing themselves." Almost perhaps, but not quite, thank heaven. Shut up in their red cover one can escape them, but give them vocal power like Memnon's smitten of the rising sun and there is no escape, none. Mrs. Wilcox, it will be remembered is the person who wrote those scarlet sins called "Poems of Passion" and "Poems of Pleasure" in which she sings of "dear, dead love" and makes "pray" rhyme with "America." She lives in a New York flat and wears gowns that are the

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terror of the town. Her husband travels for a jewelry house and Ella writes little poems on various precious stones and has them printed on the back of his business cards. She always orders her meals in French and the *Garcon* thinks she is talking Scandinavian dialect of some sort, and judiciously bring her what he thinks best. Wisconsin French is apt to be a little confusing to anyone who has only heard it in Paris.

Accidents still happen. Last week Minnie Hawk, the great soprano was kissing her pet parrot and the loquacious beast caught her viciously by the lip and it required the most frantic efforts of Count Von Hesse-Wartegg to remove it. The wound became inflamed and the Countess was compelled to cancel her London engagement. Minnie should devote herself to kisses more

worthily bestowed. If it were almost any other opera singer I should have my doubts about that parrot story. Anyway, its rather transparent.

Calve is down at her new place in the Department of Aveyron in France feeding chickens. Really, that is what she does, day in and day out and she is said to experience the most exquisite satisfaction when her dear chicks and turkeys flutter toward her every morning. Well, what if they do? If they did not know enough to "flutter" toward the person who feeds them they ought to be sent to a feeble minded institute for chickens. "Ah!" cries the radiant cantatrice, "Ah, my chickens, how different you are from the fickle world yonder, you would love me if I lost my beauty and could not sing a note." True, but let Calve's granery give out and see how long her chickens would love her. Ah

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