THEATRICAL TOPICS.

SOME SAYINGS AND DOINGS IN STAGELAND.

The Babyhood of Viola Fortescue—May Robson and How She Holds the Mirror Up to Nature in the Conquerors—Stage Whispers.

AMY LESLIE tells us about Viola Fortescue, who used to be the most wonderful child of the stage atmosphere. She was always with her father and mother, who belonged to "Rice's Surprise Party," and the baby lived at the theater a great deal. The baby has since grown to be a beautiful girl who plays ingenue roles most charmingly. She is pretty as a peach, but in the early days she was cast for everything from "Blossom Canary Bird" to "Angel," and was a bundle of the most incalculable mischief. Rice put on "Pinafore" with Lizzie Webster as Ralph Rackstraw, Venie Clancy as Josephine, Harry Hunter as Dick Deadeye, George Fortescue as Little Buttercup and Dick Golden as the boatswain. It was a rollicking venture, followed by tremendous success. Little baby Fortescue come to all the rehearsals and knew every note of the music and would sing it with the most frantic gestures and her own picturesque libretto. Particularly did she like the delicious aria in which Josephine invokes alternate advice in "Oh, god of love and god of reason, say!" to decide upon her two chances to wed in a hurry. The baby used to perch up on a table and clasp her little flower hands over her belt and sing: "Oh, got a love, got a freezin', say!"

Sardou has been complaining to friends that in late years his proverbial luck in producing new plays when the attention of the public was not engrossed in other more vital and important questions had deserted him. The production of "Sans Gene" had to be postponed on account of the Russian officers' visit to Paris, during which the Parisians absolutely refused to go to places of amusement, the streets affording all the diversion they needed. "Pamela" was given while the Zola trial was in progress, and, of course, the newspapers did not devote to this important dramatic event the space they would have devoted to it had not the French novelist claimed all the attention of the Parisian press.

"I object," says May Robson, "to being criticised because when I appear as La Poulette, the antiquated dancing girl in 'The Conquerors,' I make up my face perfectly white. The writers that have attacked me on this score have never visited, as I have, the Latin quarter of Paris, where women similar to La Poulette frequent the cafes. I was in Europe last summer, and visited out-of-the-way places with the avowed purpose of studying character. In the Latin quarter it was no strange sight to see the Bohemian girls crunch a rag into a box of white chalk and then rub the rag all over their faces. That may not strike you or me as producing a beautiful effect, but it is the fad in that eccentric neighborhood, and when I appear as La Poulette looking like a sheet fresh from the laundry I am merely holding the mirror up to nature."

Mr. Alan Dale, says the Criterion, has discovered that Fifth avenue is preferable to Broadway as a promenade for actors of distinction; and also that Mr. John Drew affects the first-named thoroughfare. There is nothing new in the announcement that Broadway is passe as a promenade; for nearly three years only soubrettes and hair-cutters have paraded regularly thereon. But it has never been supposed by those who knew him best that Mr. Drew ever walked in Fifth avenue or anywhere else. Heretofore, when his system has craved the boon

VIOLA FORTESCUE.

of physical exertion he has walked down the steps of the Players' club and back again or taken a ride around Gramercy park in one of the electric carriages.

"I believe that the stage," said Mme. Modjeska, recently, in discussing the treatment of morals on the stage, "in order to be a factor in civilization and in modern life cannot be treated on the plane of a kindergarten, but must touch all the vital interests of life. It cannot keep even entirely aloof from the delicate subjects, which, though not pleasant to talk over in polite society, have a great social bearing. But there is a measure for everything. All depends on the treatment, and there is a higher instinct of good taste and a nobler ideal that ought to be decisive in this regard."

Of Edward S. Willard, who is ill in Chicago, the Inter Ocean speaks as follows: "Mr. Willard has been sick for some time, the cumulative effect of a hard season on the road and a touch of malaria that he had in the south. A man of iron will and tremendous nervous energy, he has bravely persisted in carrying out his engagements as originally arranged. He has always been a particularly active man, and looks after a great amount of detail outside of stage work, as he personally directs his business affairs, and the effect of overwork has told upon his naturally rugged constitution."

John Doel, England's oldest living actor, has just celebrated another birthday, his 94th. He played Launcelot Gobbo to the Shylock of Edmund Kean, and saw the first Napoleon when he was prisoner on board the British man-of-war Bellerophon. For many years he managed a theater, which perished long ago, at Devonport, and he had some famous names on his pay-roll, among them those of the Kembles, Liston, G. V. Brooks and the elder and younger Mathews.

A retort courteous with a pretty piece of wit is said to have passed during a recent call of Richard Mansfield upon the wife of a cabinet officer in Washington. He seated himself in a great leather easy chair. As he sank into it, he remarked: "Inflated, isn't it? Puffed up. It is quite naturally flattered to have a place in your home." "On the contrary, my dear Mr. Mansfield," replied the complimented hostess, "any chair is puffed up with the honor of having you sit in it."

Kate Terry has returned to the stage in London, in "The Master." When

KATE TERRY.

she was first seen as Arthur in Kean's performance of King John, Macaulay, who saw the representation of the play before the queen at Windsor, wrote to her: "The little girl who acted Arthur did wonders. It is almost worth while to be past middle life to see Miss Kate Terry play this."

Annie Irish will not be the leading woman of William H. Crane's company next season. Miss Irish has made an extremely strong impression in the role of the French widow in Mr. Crane's production of "A Virginia Courtship," and Joseph Brooks, his manager, has made enticing offers for her to continue with them next year. She intends taking engagements that will not compel her to leave New York.

The reputation of M. Rostand has lately suffered in Paris from the changes that his successful "Cyrano de Bergerac" is a bold plagiarism from an old French play written many years ago. This discovery is said to have been made by the purchasers of the English rights, who found that a version of the old play has recently been prepared for use in London. M. Rostand has not yet answered the charge.

Franklin Moore has finished a play based on the life of Nell Gwynne, taken from a novel called "The Impudent Comedian," which he wrote some time ago. The actress is shown first as an orange seller in the pits of theaters and her career is traced to the time in which she became a court favorite. The character is said to be highly sympathetic.

Adelina Patti, Clara Butt, Edward Lloyd and Charles Santley will sing with a festival chorus of some 3,000 and an orchestra of 500, led by August Manns, at a concert in the Crystal palace, June 25. Patti has not sung in the Crystal palace since the Handel festival of 1880.

I. Zangwell may write a play for Richard Mansfield. "He has been at me for years," says Zangwell. "He wants to play 'The King of the Schnorrers,' and once offered me a carte blanche commission to write no less than four plays for him."

Eleanora Duse has achieved a great success in Florence in an Italian version of "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray." Critics who have seen both say that she did not look the part of Paula so well as Mrs. Patrick Campbell, but surpassed her in force of acting.

J. H. Stoddart expects to retire from the stage after he has played in "Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush" for a season or two. He says: "A son and a daughter are ready to make my life's evening easy, and I shall enjoy a rest."

John R. Rogers has a new star and seems to be doing well with her in the British provinces. Her name is Julie Ring and she is playing the part formerly portrayed by Minnie Palmer in "My Brother's Sister."

NOTES OF THE WHEEL.

MATTERS OF INTEREST TO DEVOTEES OF THE BICYCLE.

Cycling Styles for the Present Season—A General Improvement Is Noticeable—Two Boys on One Wheel—A Roadside Joy.

Cycling Styles.

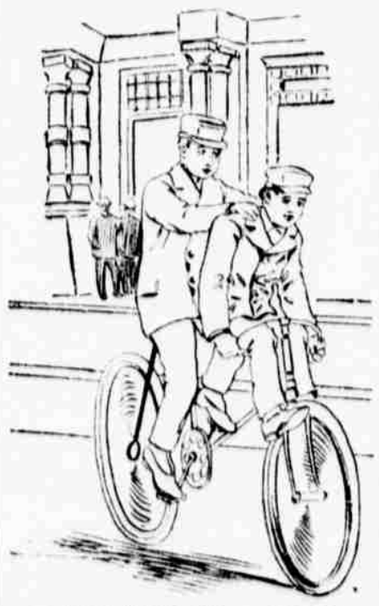
INDICATIONS of what the coming cycling styles will be are beginning to appear. Knickers will not be worn full with overhanging bagginess at the knees, but they will fit fairly snug and have cuffs of the same material. Double-breasted coats are gaining greater popularity. Dark blue or black golf hose are selling well, say the outfitters, and the prospect is that stockings of solid colors, with fancy colored tops, will largely replace the loud plaids. Sweaters are losing ground rapidly. Many of those who ride all winter have come to repudiate the sweater, and its use is now relegated almost entirely to the racing men and scorchers. It will be considered the correct thing to wear knickers of a decided pattern, with a coat of different material, darker and of solid color. Bicycle shoes are being made heavier, and with slight extension soles. The footless stocking, to be worn with half-hose, seems to be pretty much the only thing at present. In headgear there is little that is new, but the custom of wearing a fedora or some other style of felt hat in preference to the little cloth cap seems to be growing. Fancy neglige shirts, with white collars and cuffs, and gay-colored neckties will be worn, but the blazing Scotch plaids of last year are to be put away. Something new and sensible that has just appeared are cycling drawers that reach only to the knee and have elastic seams in the sides, so as to permit of freedom of action. With the women bright colors will be in vogue, even the reds and scarlets. Lavish decorations of black braid are gaining favor, and the cycling costume of one hue will make way for skirts and coats and vests of contrasting colors. While bloomers are pretty much out of it, leggins and the high-topped shoes are both losing ground. In hats the boat and sailor shapes will have the preference over turbans and Tam O'Shanters, and for hot weather chip hats and wide panamas will be used, say the clothing prophets.

Michael to Ride.

Jimmy Michael, the middle-distance professional rider, has contracted to compete in six bicycle match races during the months of July and August this season. He will ride under the control of the American Cycle Racing association, and will receive a guaranteed compensation of $15,000. Michael's determination to engage in bicycle races again this year settles effectually the talk of his riding race horses. In consenting to ride in six races the Welsh rider places himself entirely in the hands of the American Cycle Racing association. The latter is at liberty to arrange matches for Michael with any riders they may select, the only stipulation being that the distance shall not be less than fifteen nor more than thirty-three miles. Until the termination of his contract Michael is debarred from entering any match or competition races, but will be allowed to ride exhibitions at race meets. The six match races will be run alternately in this city, Philadelphia and Boston.

Two Boys on One Wheel.

The average messenger boy has a knack of getting his full money's worth out of his bicycle. One of these shrewd youngsters recently hit upon a scheme whereby an ordinary wheel was made to do duty as a tandem. One boy sits on the upper bar, brace his



SAVING TIME AND CAREFARE.

feet on the coasters and grasps the handlebars. He, of course, attends to the steering department. The other urchin occupies the saddle and works the pedals, supporting himself with his hands upon the steersman's shoulders. Thus two boys who have messages in the same locality may save time and carefare by doubling up on one wheel.

Work Cut Out.

In engaging the leading distance men for match races the promoters have stipulated that the riders under contract must not engage in any open or special races other than the match contests contracted for. The large number of riders who will take part in middle-distance contests will enable the big tracks to arrange races of special interest each week. The tracks at Manhattan Beach, Ambrose Park and Berkeley Oval propose to schedule big racing features at frequent intervals during the summer months, so that some events of an international character will likely be run off every Saturday during June, July and August. The arrangements under way for racing attractions involve the expenditure of considerable money for purses and the maintenance of racing teams, so that unless the public shows a disposition to give strong support to bicycle racing this year considerable money will be lost. Well-known managers admit that the season will be largely an experimental one in regard to racing. Experts view the extensive plans in a sort of dubious fashion. They profess to know that the season will either see racing made one of the premier sports or else witness its death.

Road Records.

Official road records in England will be made under strict rules this year. A new regulation is as follows: "A rider attempting an unpaced record must be entirely alone throughout. He may be followed by a witness, who must not, while the competitor is mounted, either approach him within 100 yards or coach him by audible signals." All records must be timed by an official timekeeper, using a special watch, but in cases of the records between London and York, Liverpool and Edinburgh, London and Liverpool, it will suffice if times are taken from the general postoffice clocks at each end, provided those times are vouched for by at least two creditable witnesses; in each case, any fraction of a minute being reckoned as a whole minute."

A Roadside Joy.

The idea of a roadside air pump that the disabled traveler could avail himself of through the penny-in-the-slot device was suggested in the early fall. The time is now approaching when deflated tires and thorns and tacks will

THE PENNY-IN-THE-SLOT PUMP.

be met with at every turn of the road and when some such contrivance as the above would be a boon to many

Quad Racing Team.

One of the strongest racing combinations ever gotten together in this country has been formed in making up the quad team comprising Charley Church, Clem Turville, Charley Turville and Bob McCurdy. These men are the best that this city ever turned out. Church and McCurdy have splendid records as sprinters and short distance riders, Church being the fastest man in the state up to five miles, and Bob, the old war horse, was always a dangerous man to have at your rear wheel coming down the home-stretch. The Turville brothers were out for the stuff all the time and they made a lot of the leaders sick in the finishes of the handicap events. Church and McCurdy are the fastest team in the state and one of the fastest in the country. The Turvilles are also fast as a tandem team. It would indeed be hard to get a better matched four up for a racing quad team. A machine is being built for the team and in a short time they will have one of the lightest and best wheels in the country. As a quad team they are open to race any team in the world or race against running or trotting horses in relays. As a tandem team Church and McCurdy are open to meet any American or foreign tandem racing team in the business.

Foreign Winnings.

The earnings of the professional racing men in Europe during the season of '97 have been estimated at various figures. A member of the N. C. U., in order to ascertain the actual winnings of the noted riders during last year, communicated personally with the men, with the result that the following statistics have been completed: Bourillon and Morin, $12,000 each; Constant Huret, $9,600; Champion, $3,600, Nieuport, $2,200; Jacquelin, Ruinart, Taylore and Romain, about $2,000 each; Stein, $1,800; Felix-Henry, Solbud, Guignard, $1,600 each; Bourotte, $1,200; Gras and Le Veller, $1,000 each; Gaston, Prevot and Germain, $800 each.

Why the Fire Sputters.

From the St. Louis Republic: Everyone who enjoys sitting by a wood fire must have observed how the wood sputters and hisses and frequently gives off little jets of flames and again the pieces crackle and fly off at a considerable distance. This is caused by the water in the wood, which, confined in the cells, becomes heated and generates steam. It is a curious fact that intense heat and intense cold produce fractures in various substances. In the most extreme cold weather it is not uncommon, especially if the cold has come on suddenly, to find trees that are split from the ground to the top by the action of the frost. Freezing expands the water in the cells of the wood, and so suddenly is this done that the trees burst as would a pitcher or mug in which water was confined.

IN THE ODD CORNER.

QUEER AND CURIOUS THINGS AND EVENTS.

Miss Fuhrman's Brave Battle Fought in Vain—Clouds of Sea Dust—The Smallest Watch—The Flying Dragon—An Umbrella Bird.

The Lonely Hunters.

Green branches, green branches, I see
you beckon, I follow!
Sweet is the place you guard, there in
the rowan-tree hollow.
There he lies in the darkness under the
frail white flowers,
Heedless at last, in the silence of these
sweet midsummer hours.

But sweeter, it may be, the moss whereon he is sleeping now,
And sweeter the fragrant flowers that
may crown his moon-white brow,
And sweeter the shady place deep in
Eden hollow
Wherein he dreams I am with him and,
dreaming, whispers: "Follow!"

Green wind from the green-gold branches,
what is the song you bring?
What are all songs for me, now, who no
more care to sing?
Deep in the heart of Summer, sweet is
life to me still.
But my heart is a lonely hunter that
hunts on a lonely hill.

Green is that hill and lonely, set far in a
shadowy place;
White is the hunter's quarry, a beloved
human face;
O hunting heart, shall you find it, with
arrow of failing breath,
Led over a green hill lonely by the
shadowy hound of Death?

Green branches, green branches, you sing
of a sorrow olden,
But now it is midsummer weather, earth
young, sun ripe, golden,
Here I stand and I wait, here in the
rowan-tree hollow,
But never a green leaf whispers: "Follow, oh, follow, follow!"

O never a green leaf whispers, where the
green-gold branches swing,
O never a song I hear now, where one
was wont to sing
Here in the heart of Summer, sweet is
life to me still,
But my heart is a lonely hunter that
hunts on a lonely hill.

—Fiona Macleod in "The Hills of Dream."

Clouds of Sea Dust.

We have heard of waterspouts, of showers of fish, of salt rain and many other curiosities which present themselves in the atmosphere, but to assert that there is such a thing as sea dust is to transcend all reasonable bounds. The evidence, however, in favor of its existence is exceedingly great—indisputable, in fact—and this is the story told by eye witnesses. They say that in certain parts of the world, notably about the Cape de Verde islands, there are constantly met at sea, several hundreds of miles away from land, thick, yellowish red fogs, not unlike London fogs in November. These fogs obscure the atmosphere and are very injurious to navigation, but they have not the baleful odor of their London prototypes, nor do they effect the breathing in the same way. While standing through them it is found that the ship, sails and rigging are covered with a fine, impalpable powder, which falls as dry rain and covers the surface on which it falls, sometimes to the depth of fully two inches. In color it is of a bright, brick dust hue, sometimes of a light yellow, and it feels between the teeth like fine grit, such as might be blown into the mouth on a windy day in March. No place is free from its presence, its fineness giving it power to penetrate everywhere. The sea, while the dust is falling, looks as though it had been peppered, and is discolored for some distance down. Sometimes the dust comes in a shower and passes off again. The fogs are nothing but vast quantities of the dust suspended in the air.

It is not only in the vicinity of Cape de Verde that this wonderful dust is seen. In the Mediterranean, on the northern parts of Africa, and in the middle of the Atlantic it has been reported. It is invariably the same in kind and appearance, and examination under microscopes has proved the identity of, say Cape de Verde sea dust with Mediterranean sea dust. All this is very remarkable—dust falling in clouds, no land within some hundreds of miles, nothing visible which could possibly account for the curious phenomenon.

Sand spouts there are in sandy deserts, and showers of sand taken originally from spots whereon the carrier wind has left its mark; here there is no desert from which the sand can be drawn, and the wind, so far from being boisterous or disposed to play whirlwind pranks, is light and steady, blowing ships along at a calm five knots an hour.

It is believed by scientific men that the dust clouds of Central America are in all probability, closely connected with the phenomenon of sea dust.

The Flying Dragon.

No living reptile possesses true powers of flight, and only one, the "flying dragon," has any power of sustaining itself in the air. This reptile, which is of small size, is found in the Indian Archipelago and East Indies, and lives in trees, feeding on small insects. The upper ribs are straightened out and support a wing-like fold of skin on each side of the body, which, when the animal is running about, is folded down to the side, but is expanded when it wishes to jump from tree to tree. These so-called wings can not lift the dragon from the ground, nor have they any propelling power, they simply sustain it in the air and enable it to make leaps of comparatively enormous length. Though no reptiles of today possess the power of flight, geology teaches us that an extinct species called Pterodactyles could fly. They had a leathery expanded membrane attached to hind limbs, body and fore limbs, its chief support being the outermost finger of the forelimb, which was enormously elongated. That they passed their time in the air and did not, like the "flying dragon," simply jump from tree to tree, is proved by their bones being filled with air like those of birds and by their having a prominent ridge to support the general muscles that worked their limbs. Many of them were small, but some must have been gigantic; the extent of wing of one species was probably 27 feet from tip to tip.

The Smallest Watch.

The smallest watch in the world is at present on exhibition in a show window in Berlin. It is the latest triumph in the art of watchmaking—the art that has made such wonderful progress within the last decade. The Lilliputian timepiece was made in Geneva. Following are given some of the tiny dimensions of its works: The diameter of the little watch is less than half an inch. The exact measurement is 10½ millimeters, or .4137 inch. Its thickness is .1182 inch. The length of the minute hand is 2 4-10 millimeters or .09456 inch. That of the hour hand is 1 3-10 millimeters, or .05122 inch. The entire works comprise 95 individual pieces, and its exact weight is 14.3499 grains. After having been wound up with its diminutive key the watch will run for twenty-eight hours. The weight of the four main wheels, with their springs, is .6468 grains. There are thirteen cogs on the little cylinder wheel, which has a circumference of two millimeters, or .0788 inch, and weighs .75 milligramme, or .01155 grain. The most delicate tools and measuring instruments were made specially for the construction of this lilliputian watch. The preliminary work in the making of the timepiece was very expensive, and the selling price of the watch is comparatively low being $1,250.

The Umbrella Bird.

The Umbrella bird, which has some resemblance to a crow both in size and plumage, is so called from a wide crest which spreads out above its head like a parasol. This crest is composed of long slender feathers, rising from a contractile skin on the top of the head. The shafts are white, and the plume glossy blue, hair like, and curved outward at the tip. When the crest is laid back the shafts form a compact white mass sloping up from the top of the head, and surmounted by the dense hairy plumes, but when fully spread the top forms a perfect, slightly elongated dome, of a beautiful shining blue color. The length of this dome from front to back is about five inches, the breadth, four to four and a half inches. This bird is a native of the islands of the South American rivers, being seldom if ever seen on the mainland.

Tailless Dogs.

The "schipperke," a small dog which comes from the Low Countries, is tailless. He is in his native country the favorite companion of the Flemish bargee, and hence his name, which, in English, means "little skipper." At the Fakenham dog show of 1876 the Prince of Wales exhibited a pair of Indian tailless dogs. Then there is the bob-tail sheep dog. Until within the last half century sheep dogs without tails were exempt from taxation, it being supposed that no one would keep a tailless dog who could afford to pay the tax. As a consequence almost every sheep dog had his tail cut off, and owing to this cause the tailless sheep dog, still met with in some localities, has arisen. Darwin tells us that a mutilation of this kind will often become hereditary.

Miss Fuhrman's Brave Fight.

The Bucyrus (Ohio) correspondent of the Daily News says that Miss Emma Fuhrman of that city fought a local telephone company to a standstill Wednesday night, but was finally worsted. Miss Fuhrman was starting to make some calls, being stylishly gown-

ed for the street. When she stepped from her door she found a telephone company about to erect a seventy-foot pole in front of her property. She remonstrated without avail, and starting a member of her family to secure an injunction, she remained to stand guard. The hole was completed and the pole ready to lower when Miss Fuhrman got into the hole and effectually stopped work. After unsuccessful efforts to coax her to come out the men started a new hole a few inches away, and rushed it to completion. The pole was put up while the lady held the fort and watched proceedings from beneath the ground. As the affair became noised about people swarmed about to see the sight, not less than 5,000 people witnessing the peculiar affair. After being underground five hours the lady left her post, the tardy injunction having been served after it was too late.