

Gossip About Plays, Players and Playhouses

PASSING OF THE FIRST NIGHTER

Managers Are Themselves to Blame for the Type.

NEW YORK, Nov. 14.—Bitter recriminations have been heard from only one of them. He hated to have his name disappear along with the list kept in the manager's office. That was always a species of patent of nobility that stamped him officially as a first nighter. Enrolled there, he was recognized as a real member of that famous but now discredited body that witnesses the first performance of plays.

"That manager took my name off the list and abolished the old crowd," said the rebel, "because he watched me at the first night of 'Diana of Dobson's' when I had paid \$12 for two tickets. How in the world did he expect any man to look cheerful under such circumstances?"

For whatever reason, the managers have discovered that they prefer to submit their plays to the judgment of the general public and they have ceased to give the preference to the persons entered on the so-called "first night list." The theater that first put this rule into effect has decided to test it at the first appearance of a very popular actress who has a large public different from that which usually gets into the theater on the first night she acts. Her friends, being neither some publishers, bookmakers, stage dressmakers, wholesale ticket speculators or unemployed actors, have usually had to wait for the second or third night to see her. Now they will have an opportunity to stand in line and get seats in the order they reach the box office. Whether this rule will enable the theater to rid itself of the old first night gang remains to be seen.

"The managers are of course to blame for the character of the first night audience," one of them confessed the other day, "because they got first into the theater the men from whom they were certain to get favorable expressions of opinion. These were largely men who were connected with them in business. That was of course enough in itself to rob these gatherings of any social character. Then their friends of the manager wanted their friends to come along too, and gradually they also were added. The result was a strange mixture, but it could be relied upon to receive whatever the manager offered with unbounded enthusiasm. So long as the audience was docile and generous the managers made no protest against its social character, which had come to be such that the newspapers ceased to give the names of the persons who attended. The managers even let that pass because the first night audience of its friends behaved as it was expected to."

Whatever the performance might be during the last ten years—the period in which the new and despised kind of first night came to its present estate—the character of the audience was the same. The majority of these first nighters began to look upon themselves seriously and tried to live up to their reputations as judges of the drama. It takes only one or two visits to the theater to turn every New Yorker into a dramatic critic. So what could be expected of these regulars with the duty of their positions as first nighters to uphold? They began to grow critical and then supercilious, and after awhile it was all but impossible to make them take the least pleasure in any but a positively sensational show. Their demeanor under average circumstances was not only enough to chill the actors, but it even had its influence on the dramatic critics. They were able to say truthfully that the audience received the play coldly. In the managerial mind the least it could do was to laugh or cry or applaud with equal cordiality whether the play deserved it or not. These first nighters created by the managers, however, had become too critical and too important for any such mood and had outgrown their usefulness. So the managers had no more use for them. They have now been cast into outer darkness by the managers because they became too sophisticated to applaud the bad shows."

Such is the conclusion of other managers than the one quoted here. They are perfectly willing to acknowledge that the joke is on them. They created this audience out of very obsequious elements. The general public had practically no opportunity to get into any first night performance at one of the principal theaters. All the tickets went to the regulars whose names were on the box office list. In some cases, as in the case of the Melville & Stetson, they would insist upon having ten or twenty seats for friends. But that allotment was never sufficient to leaven the whole lump. The first night crowd remained practically the same.

There used always in the past to be certain well-known figures at first night performances. General Slicks was one of them, for instance, and in his period were John Bird, John Heckscher and later General Horace Porter. The most conspicuous men to go to the first nights of a later generation were the late Stanford White and his little circle of associates. The irrepressible little lawyer who is now living in Europe. Now there are positively so few persons who would be noticed among first nighters that the rich woman from the west and her young Anglo-American husband are practically the most characteristic attendants at first performances. Of course, there is the regular first night gang, but their names would be just nothing, as they are distinguished for no other peculiarity.

THIRD AMERICAN DANCER WINS

Ruth St. Denis' Hindu Dances Promise Success in London.

LONDON, Nov. 14.—(Special Correspondence.)—Although London doesn't always appreciate American plays, its interest in American dancers seems to be inexhaustible. Its welcome to Ruth St. Denis on Thursday night was just as hearty as the welcome given to Maud Allan and to Isadora Duncan. The third to arrive in London of this American trio, who have made such a commotion abroad before be-

ing well known at home except by hearsay, has made a brave venture in taking at her own expense for several weeks one of the most spacious and beautiful—least successful—theaters in London. It is too early yet to say whether she will manage to carry so heavy a load on her slender young shoulders, but if the enthusiasm of the first night audience at the Scala on Thursday, and the discriminating praise of the critics in any criterion, she is going to win out, in spite of the fact that her dances are rather more serious-minded than any we have seen before.

Ruth St. Denis' story has been much like that of Isadora Duncan. She gave a few performances in America two years ago and won more critical attention than she could have dreamed of. Then she went to Paris and suddenly found herself famous. Berlin, Vienna and the other continental capitals took her up, and made a tremendous do over her, and now after winding up her continental season in Wiesbaden last June, she is getting her belated reward in England, and next spring she will probably try her luck in her native land.

Miss St. Denis is a slim, lithe, thoughtful girl who takes her art seriously, and has original ideas. No prouetting and conventional flourishes for her. "I want," said she to the writer, "to express in terms of rhythm and gesture the real spirit of the Orient, and especially Oriental religion. The Hindu dances I give now are only the beginning of what I want to do in the future in representing eastern religious ideas, for it is in the Orient that the dance is recognized as one of the highest expressions of religious feeling. It is necessary for me to be, for the time, a devout Brahmin or I cannot do justice to such of my dances as are of a religious nature."

"Although I have never been in India, I have studied everything, and everywhere I could reach that would help me to get into touch with the Hindu spirit and I am told that I have succeeded. My friends have told me I had gone mad to take a big London theater when I could have made twenty times as much money as part of a vaudeville entertainment, but I can't express the sentiments I want to express except in the right surroundings, and if I go to New York I want to appear there in the same way, even if it is not so profitable."

"Miss Allan and Miss Duncan chiefly convey musical ideas in motion, and I try to convey another kind of idea, but it is significant that in every case to reach what seems to be the highest expression of the art of dancing, one must always represent an abstract idea, rather than represent some particular person."

Maud Allan has been writing a book about her life and her dancing, and I am told that she has the literary knack. Her 150th performance is to be given at the Palace next Wednesday, and if the book comes from the printers in time, the occasion is to be celebrated by distribution of a copy to everyone in the audience. This fair American has been getting all sorts of big offers from home for a season of dancing there, but London seems to show no disposition to let her go. She had been planning to make a tour of the provinces after her Palace season is over, but it can be announced here that she is now definitely considering a particularly attractive offer she has received from America, and may go to New York sooner than she had expected.

England heralds the advent of a new girl playwright, Miss Gertrude Robins. She has written a successful one-act comedy, "Makelshits." She conceived the plot of this play when acting in "When Knights Were Bold" at Wyndham's theater. Miss Robins has had a career sufficiently varied to satisfy even people in stardom. She began life as a poultry farmer in the Midlands, from which she "incubated" herself—using poultry farm terms—into an artist's model. This latter career did not suit her and she went to Oxford, where she secured a triumph and took honors in modern languages. All this, mind you, while in her teens. The process of incubation continuing, she achieved her first stage success with Wilson Barrett and won her way up to leading lady in what is considered his finest drama, "Lucky Durheim." On coming to London she appeared in legitimate drama and was considered a distinction at His Majesty's theater in "A Winter's Tale." Miss Robins has now developed into a full-fledged playwright. She has retired into the country temporarily and is hard at work on a farm incubating—not poultry—but more plays.

JOHN AVA CARPENTER.

Coming Events.

Since the genius of Hugo wrought out the figure of Jean Valjean in the warp and woof of human misery, there have been few great male characters in fiction. Rostand's Cyrano is one. Charley Steele of Sir Gilbert Parker's great story, "The Right of Way," is another dramatic version of this fine book by Eugene W. Presbury, which will be presented at the Boyd by Klaw & Erlanger Friday and Saturday with a matinee Saturday.

"The Patriot" is the name of the new three act farce in which Charles Frohman will present William Collier at the Boyd theater tonight, Monday and Tuesday with a matinee Tuesday afternoon. The appreciation of the title will be readily appreciated when one sees the play comedy. As a title "The Patriot" is not unusual. As a matter of fact it has been used on more than one occasion in this country and abroad. It was used for the first time in this country on June 11, 1794, when "The Patriot or Love in Camp" being the second part of "The Poor Soldier," a musical play was produced at the John Street theater in New York, when that famous play house, the second built as a home for the drama in this country, was under

the management of Messrs. Holman and Henry. In the company were Messrs. King, Ashton, Woolf, Richards, Frimore, Berriman, Hammond, Martin and Mesdames Wilson and Pownall. The scenes of this opera, which was repeated at intervals for many years after, were laid in Ireland. The new comedy by Messrs. Collier and Man- ners resembles the earlier one only in the title.

"The Man of the Hour," George Broadhurst's new play, will be seen here at the Boyd Wednesday and Thursday with Thursday matinee. "The Man of the Hour" is a timely play, full of dramatic incidents, with plenty of comedy and telling a story of human interest. It deals with one of the most burning topics of the day. The "grafting" of the political "machine" in many of the great cities of this country is the central theme of the story, the particular delineation being the passage through the city council of the town where the action of the play takes place of a bill giving a perpetual franchise to a street railway.

"McFadden's Row of Flats" will be the offering at the Krug theater today and tomorrow with the usual matinee today. It deals with an exposition of life on the east side district of New York. It is a farce comedy that has weathered many successful seasons, yet seems to be as potent an attraction as when it was originally produced fourteen years ago.

The new program to be offered by Lyman H. Howe at the Krug Tuesday and Wednesday is composed of a series of the most vivid travel sketches. It is all the more fascinating because it is unnumbered by mere description. In Naples you see the Neapolitan at home; on the streets, at the market, and at church. There are scenes of beauty shown on an automobile tour through Savoy, and Niagara in winter seems so real that one feels like reaching out and touching the monster icicles under the falls. There are very few scenes in India and Sicily, and a most startling series of a ten mile steepclimb in England.

A story of the seamy side of New York City life is what is claimed for the latest melodrama from the pen of S. A. Judson, "Sold Into Slavery." The story centers around two young people, a bank clerk and a beautiful but poor girl, who are devotedly attached to one another, but who are separated by scheming villains for most sordid of reasons. As most of the various incidents are taken from life, the story of the play is full of human interest and there is little in the action of the four acts that is not plausible. The eight scenes are all laid in New York City and each shows well known localities. A. J. Spencer has made the production and it is in keeping with the previous ones with which his name has been associated—elaborate and massive. With a strong company, Mr. Spencer will present "Sold Into Slavery" at the Krug theater for three nights starting next Thursday night. There will be the usual matinee Saturday.

"The Professor's Love Story," which will be the offering at the Burwood for the week starting this afternoon, is a comedy by J. M. Barrie, one of the cleverest of the present day dramatists, whose "Peter Pan" and "The Little Minister" won for him fame and fortune in both America and England. The play is just what the title implies, the love story of an old professor, but it is a story as unusual, and it is told in such a delightful way, that it appeals to one in a far different way than does the average stage romance. The famous actor, E. S. Willard, always considered the play one of the strongest in his repertoire; in fact, he played it more times than any other comedy. The plot has to do with Prof. Goodwill, who is an enthusiastic electrician, whose work has hitherto so engrossed him that it has become his world; and as a result, though a middle-aged man, he looks and has the habits of a man of 20 or 30, and lives alone with his maiden sister, Agnes, who is his housekeeper and only companion. In the first act we learn that the professor has almost completed his greatest work, but that for some unaccountable reason, he is unable to give his mind to the work. The professor, during the absence of his sister, had engaged a young woman, secretary, and unconsciously he has fallen deeply in love with her, thus accounting for his inability to finish his book. Never having been through the experience before, he summons his old schoolmate, Dr. Cosens, to diagnose his case. The doctor is baffled at first, but finally scents the truth. The rich fun which has thus far developed is continued, with the assistance of two or three subplots during the three acts of this delightful comedy, which will be found to be one of the most charming bills yet presented by the Burwood company. The week will be distinctly Frank Bacon's, as the character of the quaint and lovable professor is one most admirably suited to Mr. Bacon's qualifications. Mr. Bacon appeared in this role several times in San Francisco, and considers it exceptionally becoming to him. There will be matinee today, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

Gus Pixley will be over at the Orpheum for a week beginning matinee today, in Jesse L. Lasky's latest presentation, "The Seven Hoboes." This piece is a satire on American tramp life. Paul West wrote the book, while Charles Berton composed the original musical numbers. The act is one which causes general merriment in the audience and is designed principally for laughing purposes. Some catchy songs and clever character acting, however, are given by the seven comedians.

Seven types of tramps are represented in the piece. Mr. Pixley, well known as a tramp comedian, assumes the role of Weary Walker; Sam Dody as Dago Dan, sings the song hit, "My Brother Sylvester"; William C. Gordon, a splendid baritone singer, has the musical set-piece, "I Sing in My Glorious Ho. Ho." Other roles are played by Brooke Van Valer, Charles N. Nelson, M. Rose and Tommy Van.

Amelia Summerville returns to the west as a vaudeville star. She will be remembered as "The Merry Mountain Maid," in Henry E. Dixey's "Adonis." Miss Summerville has an act she titles "Mrs. Get-Rich-Quick's Supper Party," in which she gives clever impersonations of theatrical celebrities.

Melville and Stetson have been names to conjure with for a decade. They know just what people want in the way of entertainment and have their own inimitable method of dispensing joy in large quantities. They have a string of distinct impersonations and breezy chatter. They make people laugh and forget about "the cares that infest the day."

Tom Barry was an office boy in the office of the Kansas City Star a year ago. He wrote a sketch of Bowery life, secured a professional companion in the person of Madge Hughes, went to New York City, secured a hearing and made an instantaneous hit. Their sketches are written in a natural way and are presented in a human interest manner. It appeals to young and old because it is taken from real life. Orchestral accompaniment of the real life of the four Baltus, who made hits in all the

management of Messrs. Holman and Henry. In the company were Messrs. King, Ashton, Woolf, Richards, Frimore, Berriman, Hammond, Martin and Mesdames Wilson and Pownall. The scenes of this opera, which was repeated at intervals for many years after, were laid in Ireland. The new comedy by Messrs. Collier and Man- ners resembles the earlier one only in the title.

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"The Aeroplane June Bug," "A Basket Party" and "Motor Boat Races," are the subjects of three interesting kindred views just received for the new bill. Daily matinees are growing in popularity. Seats for the entire week are on sale.

The cameraphone promises an interesting vaudeville bill in the talking pictures. Beginning today Sadie Hurly & Co. will be shown in one of Vesta Victoria's latest successes. Jewett and Wilson in singing and dancing acts, the Novelty quartet, and Idaho, by Thayer & Co. The Cameraphone theater is now heated with steam throughout and is the coziest little theater in the city.

Miss Frances Gordon is doing some of the best work of her career in the enjoyable role of "Plain Mary," and nothing better or more effective has been seen in years than the "Kid Burns" character of Scott Welch, whose interpretation is receiving the commendation of all who have seen this clever play, together with the original cast and production. "Forty-five Minutes from Broadway," Monday, Tuesday, November 22 and 23.

A new series of travelogues illustrated with colored views and moving pictures will be given at the First Methodist Episcopal church on four consecutive Thursday nights, commencing November 26, by Frank Robertson, who gave a series there last winter that were greatly enjoyed.

A new feature of the lectures this season is the liberal use of moving pictures in conjunction with the colored views. The slides show the beauty of the old world scenes and the motion picture camera in the life, pursuits and pleasures of our neighbors across the seas which it is impossible to describe without the cinematograph. Street scenes in Sweden, life along the canals and through the locks of Holland, mendicants and religious enthusiasts in Palestine are all depicted with the exact attention to detail and vividness of action that only the moving picture camera in the skilled hands of Robertson's photographer can show.

The first subject, on November 26, will be Palestine; December 3, Sweden; December 10, North Holland; and December 17, South Holland.

The BEE BILL of the PLAYS

THIS WEEK'S ATTRACTIONS

Boyd's Theater. "The Man of the Hour" "The Right of Way" "McFadden's Flats" "The Professor's Love Story" "The Man of the Hour" "The Right of Way" "McFadden's Flats" "The Professor's Love Story" "The Man of the Hour" "The Right of Way" "McFadden's Flats" "The Professor's Love Story"

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Burwood Theater. "The Man of the Hour" "The Right of Way" "McFadden's Flats" "The Professor's Love Story" "The Man of the Hour" "The Right of Way" "McFadden's Flats" "The Professor's Love Story"

Orpheum Theater. "The Man of the Hour" "The Right of Way" "McFadden's Flats" "The Professor's Love Story" "The Man of the Hour" "The Right of Way" "McFadden's Flats" "The Professor's Love Story"

Falm Theater. "The Man of the Hour" "The Right of Way" "McFadden's Flats" "The Professor's Love Story" "The Man of the Hour" "The Right of Way" "McFadden's Flats" "The Professor's Love Story"

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