

Milne's Latest Comedy Shows Life's Tragedy

By JAMES WHITTAKER.

NEW YORK—A bit underwritten is the new play by A. A. Milne "The Truth About Blayds," in the Booth theatre. The actors, among some such fault of too much perfection in the original of the work they are doing, overact it in one or two places. Mr. Milne takes the tragedy of Blayds too lightly. Miss Alexandra Carlisle takes it too heavily. Between these two interpretations lies a clever little trick of a tale, shorter, I suspect, than the time Mr. Milne takes to tell it, but just the sort of outline for him to fill in with his talent for pretty and diverting detail. Miss Carlisle's persistence in taking all of "The Truth About Blayds," as a very serious matter, fit for meaningful elocution, conveniently illustrates the points in his story which Mr. Milne, always the comedian, has seen fit to pass by; points where Mr. Samuel Shipman, for instance, always the tragedian, would press his greatest weight.

Mr. Milne is not seriously concerned with the tragedy in the predicament of Blayds' spinster daughter, Isobel, (which Miss Carlisle finds so sad), when the famous old poet, survivor into the present of the greatness of the Victorian era, confesses to her on his death bed that his verses have all been stolen from a man long dead. He has but half an eye for the sadness of her sacrificed state, a wasted human offering to a god of belles letters who has been proved false. But he has a whole eye and winking one for the comic things around her.

The pumped-up importance of Blayds' son-in-law has had all the air grotesquely let out of it and here is pompous William Blayds-Conway Esq., delivered to the pen that turned to lampoon in the pages of "Punch." And the female Blayds whom William married, moistening many handkerchiefs with the tears of a pure type Oedipus complex, is she not good stuff for Milne's gently ruinous ridicule? His pleasure is to give the unlicked self-revelations of a household which has had all the inheritance of the glory and fortune of a famous name rudely swept from them and his main business is doing that brown.

The centers of gravity of the play will thus be found in the pungently ironic scene of the second act, when these various selfish folk are confronted with the proof that they and the nation have just conducted a very fine funeral for a venerable fraud and, again, in the family council of the third act wherein they cautiously and with many droll sophisms start out to make a second secret funeral for the truth. In the Booth, the center of gravity has been put, wrongly, I think, in the undoubted powers for moving sentiment of Miss Carlisle's acting. It makes too much gravity in the booth.

The horrible thing about these strange O'Neill dramatic proceedings in the Provincetown Players' little theater in MacDougal street is not the hair on Actor Louis Wolheim's bare and sweating chest, nor the fervid vocabulary which O'Neill has put in his large trombone mouth—including the singular epithet, "lousy tart," and the plural one, "spit in her white face"—nor yet the ghastly termination of "The Hairy Ape" career in the scrunching arms of a terribly realistic gorilla, plus the subsequent hysterics of the women in the audience.

These are tricks of the strenuous little theater stage for which reports and import from the Parisian Grand Guignol stage have prepared the venturesome play-goer. My sweat in the overpacked MacDougal street house was not chilled by these point-terrors. But it ran cold during the intermissions, when there was time to ruminate on the brain of the man who had contrived the entertainment.

Eugene O'Neill has allowed that brain to take on a fine cruel edge and has fallen into a way of using it surgically, as one uses only scalpels. "The Hairy Ape" resembles the same author's "Emperor Jones" only in the formal aspects of its curious construction in the right stage pictures which O'Neill prefers to the traditional three acts. Between the earlier and the present work he has made an enormous mental ascent and an equal temperamental descent. "The Emperor" was a type of the reverting civilized nigger. "The Ape" is no type, but a very human suffering man. In "The Emperor" O'Neill dissected. In "The Ape" he vivisected.

"The Ape" he calmly hog-ties and skins. From the moment the first curtain goes up on "The Ape" and his fellows lolling half dead in the hell-hole of the stokers' quarters of a modern ocean liner until it goes down on "The Ape" writhing with a broken back in the gorilla cage in the Central park zoo he is continuously at the harsh mercies of his tormenting biographer.

Of course, in no play do the characters have much privacy from the author. He can strip and libel at will. The author has all the privileges of a ferret, the characters some of the hunted rabbit. No play character is permitted to run. A decent author will not take the ultimate privilege of the ferret and gnaw his prey after it is caught. But O'Neill has no gentler scruples. He writes the history of a man who never had a chance, following him from indignity to indignity, from stakehold to park bench, to jail, to death, and heaping on him the final indignity of this photographic record of his many shames. He has not written or given "The Hairy Ape" a fair play.

The production of the piece is enthusiastically good, particularly in the acting. "The Third Avenue Stage" in which it is written presents no difficulties which Mr. Wolheim has not mastered. To use some of that vernacular here, Mr. Wolheim as the ape is a ham what am. And Mr. Henry O'Neill (no relationship mentioned in the program) is, as his pal Paddy, the next best thing.

One of the attractive things about "The First Fifty Years," in the Princess theater is that the reviewer does not have to work in a long string of names of people concerned in its production together with, if possible, fitting and variegated adjectives. Henry Myers, a Columbia graduate, wrote it. Charles F. Jones and Tom Powers act it. That is all.



Cameron Sisters ORPHEUM



Genevieve Butler ORPHEUM

Helen Spencer GAYETY



Helene Lynn EMPRESS

When one has termed the first novel, the second impressive and the third sane, the personalities are done with, the compliments over, and we can get on to the thing, the play. If Author Meyers novel, his play is much noveller. Indeed, it is a novel and its presence as a play on the Princess stage is the merest accident of the writers imagination. It would not surprise me to learn that Myers had originally produced this record of fifty years of the married life of his two protagonists with a book press in mind and had changed the opus for the stage simply by handing all the dialogue to two actors and all the descriptive stuff to some scene painter.

Myers speaks for the failure of marriage. His pair start blithely, like the end of a fiction, on a simple honeymoon in a Harlem flat. Thence their course and that of the play is ever downward toward the dumps, until, in an ultimate scene scene, Mr. Myers sits them in two chairs to glance backward over the anniversaries of their mating and discover that everything was all wrong, always all wrong. It was. They suffered in Harlem. Things got worse when they moved to the suburbs. They got still worse when the old man began to develop indigestion and the old lady the

mood which made Lydia Pinkham famous. And they were wretched beyond repair on the golden anniversary, which the aging couple spent in vindictive silence, having vowed never to speak to each other again. All this is done very deftly by Mr. Myers and redone veraciously by the two actors. But, I claim discovery, the truth is lately getting very easy to tell. The trick of exposing it has become so general among the writing people that it has become just habit. Nothing, nowadays, is simpler than to tell the truth about almost anything, treaties, tariffs, taxes and tumblers. The exhibitions are all down in the mud, the victory over the Victorian complete. In fact the truth is told so often it makes me tired. It is time again for a quaint and fascinating lie. I want a new Robert Louis Stevenson to write me 300 pages of circumstantial account of things that could not happen or another Barrie with three acts of undiluted make-believe. The short and ugly truths that Messrs. Eugene O'Neill, George Bernard Shaw, and Henry Myers lately have been telling me have made me very weary and I want to be refreshed with tall and pretty tales.

Following a brief illness, Theodore Roberts is now hard at work in his role in "Our Leading Citizen," starring Thomas Meighan. It is a picture by George Ade.

Advertisement for Orpheum Theatre featuring William Gaxton, Emerson & Baldwin, Ed Allen, and Harry Delf.

Advertisement for Margaret Romaine at the Metropolitan Opera Co. on Thursday, March 30.

Shoe Soles Cause Cameron Sisters to Work Overtime

In these days of high shoes, not high in point of concealment but in dollars and cents, the dancer must necessarily be an economist as boots and shoes are an important part of her attire, and undoubtedly the part that receives the roughest usage. The Cameron Sisters, two attractive girls, who are running the Dollys a close second, as dancers, are nothing short of cranks on the matter of their foot dress. Being well shod to them is the most important part in ladies' attire. Not alone must the boot or shoe be as distinctive as the gown or hat, and as well made, but it also must appear brand new from collar to sole, and it is the sole that causes Dorothy and Madeline their trouble. A piece of leather that comes violently in contact with the stage many hundreds of times in the course of the performance, is bound to show some effect. The leather becomes so hot that it scorches mildly and causes the sole of the shoe to become dark, or if they are colored to fade. Of course, it would be perfectly difficult to discard shoes that are good in every other respect except that their soles are slightly discolored, and it would also have the way to bankruptcy for anyone who might attempt such an extravagance.

The Cameron Sisters, however, have solved the problem. When you see them, note carefully that the soles of their shoes always appear brand new, and then remember this secret. After every performance, their maid assembles all of the shoes they have used on that occasion and very carefully applies a bit of emery cloth to them, thereby removing the tiniest fractional thickness of leather, and in reality bringing to the surface an unused part of the material. This goes on after each performance, until so much of the sole has been filed away that the shoes are no longer safe to dance in, and then, of course, the cobbler is consulted.

Broadway Star on Screen. Nita Naldi, an exotic Broadway beauty, who played the part of "Temptation" in "Experience" has been chosen to play the part of Dona Sol, the Spanish vamp, in "Honey" which will be pictured with Rodolph Valentino in the star role. Several seasons ago Miss Naldi won fame as a vampire with her work in "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," a picture with John Barrymore in the dual role.

What the Theaters Offer

FOR one of the two stellar attractions this week at the Orpheum, William Gaxton is to present the little play, "Kisses." In this offering he is supported by five players, carefully chosen. When Douglas Fairbanks left vaudeville for the motion picture field, it was Mr. Gaxton who took his place in the little role of the oldest play, "A Study in Rhythm," as presented by the two dancers, Hilda and Dorothy. Madeline and Dorothy Cameron is to be the other leading attraction, as the two sisters, assisted by Grant McKay, Long the Cameron Sisters have been favorites in vaudeville. The bill is to have five other excellent Orpheum acts, two of them being featured. One of these is to be contributed by Harry Duff, who is to present songs of his own composition. Taste, a new actor, is to appear in a playlet called "True Fals." With Ed Allen as his partner, the educated canine has the role of valet. Emerson and Baldwin are expected to appear in a playlet called "The Day and the Night." Acrobats are trapezole stage is offered by Flo Flinders and Genevieve Butler. Acrobats are trapezole stage is offered by Flo Flinders and Genevieve Butler. Acrobats are trapezole stage is offered by Flo Flinders and Genevieve Butler.

Reid Battles With Fists for the Love of Spanish Dancer

A scene with the much-sought punch was the fray between Wallace Reid and Montagu Love in the picture "Forever," starring Elsie Ferguson and Wallace Reid, when the two meet in the stage, dressing room of Dolores, the Spanish dancer, played by Dolores Cassinelli. "Forever" will be shown at the Brandeis theater this week.

In the screen version of the Du Maurier classic, the fatal argument between Peter and his Uncle Ibbetson begins back stage in the dancer's dressing room. Both Mr. Reid, who plays the Peter Ibbetson role, and Love, who is cast as Colonel Ibbetson, are about six feet tall. Reid weighs two hundred and two pounds and Love nearly as much. Swanson's New Lead. David Powell, who will play the male lead in Gloria Swanson's next picture, "The Gilded Cage," is a Scotchman and has appeared on the speaking stage with Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Beerholm Tree, Ellen Terry and others. He has appeared in numerous pictures. He is five feet ten, weighs 160 pounds and has dark hair and eyes.

Theater Owners Against Play of Obenchain Murder

Thoroughly against capitalization of film plays based on actual murder scandal, the Motion Picture Theater Owners of America have issued the following statement, setting forth reasons why such photoplays should not be shown: "Our attention has been brought to the fact that an attempt is being made to exhibit the Ralph Obenchain picture in certain sections of the country. As this picture has been developed largely through the murder notoriety which attaches to Mrs. Obenchain, our national officers feel it is against good public policy to have it exhibited on the screens of the theaters of the United States. We strenuously object to its presentation on that account, as we do not believe such a picture has an edifying or elevating influence. "It should be accorded precisely the same adverse treatment as was given the Clara Hanson Smith picture which had a similar origin. Theater owners are respectfully requested to refrain from exhibiting this picture for the reasons mentioned. This line of action is in exact conformity with the attitude of the Motion Picture Theater Owners of America on all such pictures and is in line with the resolutions of protest adopted at various state conventions. "Let us keep our screens clean and use pictures of a wholesome character."

Doug Ready for Action.

Douglas Fairbanks has engaged Paul Dickey to play the chief heavy role in the super-feature which he is making to succeed his "The Three Musketeers." Dickey was signed up during "Doug's" stay in New York. He will have the role of a "bad man" of the Crusader period.

Advertisement for David Warfield at Brandeis Theatre, featuring "The Return of Peter Grimm" on Tuesday and Wednesday, April 11-12.

Large advertisement for Elsie Ferguson and Wallace Reid in "Forever" at Brandeis Theatre, including a large photograph of the couple and promotional text.