

## A WICKED PLAY.

"Rebellious Susan," Now Being Played in New York Has to be Defended.

It was Heine who observed "that a blaspheming Frenchman is a more pleasing sight for the Divinity than a praying Englishman." To the Lyceum theatre divinities there is no sight so pleasing, however, as a praying Englishman. Even when he is inclined to make merry after the fashion of his Gallic neighbors, they will tell you the man is praying, not esting.

"We make Susan innocent of absolute guilt." This was the burden of an official communication issued by the Lyceum theatre divinities in the course of the week, according to the *New York Herald*.

As if the question had not been settled long ago, and by no less a person than the author himself!

In a delightfully written preface to his comedy of "Rebellious Susan"—why does not the Lyceum theatre management insert it in the programme?—Henry Arthur Jones says:

"I am aware that I have no warrant in the actual facts of the world around me for placing on the English stage an instance of English conjugal infidelity. There is, I believe, madam, a great deal of this kind of immorality in France, but I am quite sure you will rejoice to hear that a very careful and searching inquiry has not resulted in establishing any well authenticated case in English life. And, even had the inquiry revealed a quite opposite state of things, I am sure you will agree with me that it would be much better to make up our minds once for all that the facts are wrong, and stick to that, rather than allow the possibility of anything hurtful to our continued self esteem and self righteousness. I am too sensible, madam, of the honor of belonging to the same nation as your own revered self to do anything to impair its holy self respect and worship of its own conviction that it is the most moral, most religious, most heaven-favored nation under the sun."

The preface is addressed to Mrs. Grundy of England. Unfortunately, that lady is not unknown in our country. And it is particularly at the Lyceum theatre that this "august and austere effigy of the national taste and respectability" loves to assert herself.

One need not read between the lines of this preface to see

that Henry Arthur Jones meant to convey that in Cairo Lady Susan had carried out her threats, and that she had not frittered away her time discussing Plato with young Edensor. For later on in this prefatory letter he says to Mrs. Grundy: "If you must have a moral in my comedy suppose it to be this—that if women cannot retaliate openly they will retaliate secretly—and lie." Which is precisely what Lady Susan did when she found that Sir Harabin deceived her. But Mrs. Grundy of the Lyceum will not have it so. "We"—how delicious that "we" is—"we" make Susan innocent of absolute guilt—only a flirtation. She came very close to actual guilt."

Really, somebody ought to look up Lucien Edensor in New Zealand and find out just how close. It would settle a most vexatious question, for Henry Arthur Jones' testimony is not at all to be relied on.

But let all that be as it may. Let the British matron and the Lyceum theatre matron blush and boil with indignation at "The Case of Rebellious Susan" as much as they like; it is a most delightful play for all that. It is not only the best thing that has ever come from the pen of Henry Arthur Jones, but one of the best satirical comedies that has been written in years. And whether the heroine sinned or merely flirted is, after all, a question which does not add to the interest of the play the least bit.

In no other work is the author so sincere as in "The Case of Rebellious Susan." He seems to have written the play to please himself, not the public, whereas in the case of "The Masqueraders" he seems to have made the play only to please the public. Besides which the craftsmanship is superlatively fine. The author plunges into medias res the moment the curtain rises; no "preparations," no exposition of characters, no telling of old tales. And only those who constantly attend the theatre can appreciate the feeling of ease and relief which the absence of all these conventional features affords.

Lady Sue, having discovered that her husband has been unfaithful to her, declares that she will be avenged. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

"Read those letters," she says to her friend, Mrs. Quesnel. "I found them in his secretaire. They explain it all. And then tell me if you wouldn't do as I am going to do. I'm going to follow Jim's example. I'm going to pay him back in his own coin."



Miss Black—Lod! Misto Slasha, what yo' cuttin ebybody fow! What is de mattar wif yo'?

Mr. Slasher—Din'a yo' tell us to cut fow de game?



Dr. William (of Harlem)—What have you been feeding that kid on madame?

Mrs. Rockedweller—Nothing but tin cans.

Dr. W.—I thought so. He has cancer of the stomach