

THE MATINEE GIRL

By MARGARET BELL

PLAYS WE HAVE SEEN.

The Piper.

TORONTO has been particularly fortunate this season in her theatrical bowls of bouillon. There have been fewer of those concoctions of horse play, suggestiveness and tinny music, called out of courtesy musical comedies. There have been a few strong plays, a few good

gradually changed to the hoyden, the swearing, infuriated Becky, was really wonderful. Her acting of the part was never overdone, as it might easily have been with any less capable artist. And to help her along, she was assisted by the best balanced company we have seen for many a day.

A Witness for the Defence.

ETHEL BARRYMORE came back to us once more, this time in a gruesome play, dealing with murder, narrow-minded society, and the application of theory to real life.

Somehow or other we went away from the theatre unsatisfied. The action dragged; sometimes Miss Barrymore posed in her same old way, and did not rise to her great climax in the third act. She has grown much stouter, and really looks regal. There is one thing about her, she always knows just what jewels to wear to display her own good points to the best possible advantage. She wore some very handsome ear-rings, whole pearls, suspended by diamond-studded chains. A single sapphire and diamond cluster ring was the only ornament on her hands. And it also seemed to me that she was not as gracious as she might have been in acknowledging her applause. She has become blasé with her audiences, and allows this to evince itself before the curtain. I should think Miss Barrymore would be more tactful.

Now, perhaps the matinee girls will not agree with me one bit. And I forgot, for the instant, that I am supposed to be addressing them. Ethel Barrymore will always be an afternoon favorite, and I should not forget this when I write of her posiness and Barrymore mannerisms.

However, here is an item that may interest the girls. She had her baby with her, a dear, chubby little fellow of two summers. He travels wherever his Thespian mamma travels now, and is quite a petted offspring.

The Gamblers.

It is something to be called the handsomest woman on the American stage, yet that is the well deserved title by which Jane Cowl is known. She appeared recently in Toronto in "The Gamblers," and convinced the most critical that she is not on the



MISS FRANCES STARR
Appearing in "The Case of Becky."

farces, and one delightful poetic drama. To judge from the items the press agents have on their books-to-be, Toronto is to enjoy a good season's run, for which the Thespian gods be praised. For the stage seems to be leaning—rather it has had a tendency toward froth and piffle such as should grace the inside of a side show tent at some country fair.

To begin with, the best of all the season's offerings, so far. Edith Wynne Matthison was responsible for most of the success of "The Piper," which appeared in the New Theatre last spring. Seldom has it been my good fortune to see such a play. The daintiness of it, the beauty, the poetry throughout, combined with a stage setting seldom equalled outside of the Lyceum in London, all combined to make the most delightful offering of Toronto's theatrical season so far. Miss Matthison's knowledge of Shakespeare undoubtedly aided her in reading the blank verse, and her beautiful speaking voice made them still more poetical. I cannot think of anyone else who would have made the play such a success.

The Case of Becky.

NEXT in importance, perhaps, is "The Case of Becky," Frances Starr's starring vehicle for this season. Toronto was the third city to see this play, but Toronto did not seem to appreciate it as much as she might have done. But that is a habit of Toronto, not to appreciate the plays that are really worth while. You see, we are developing such a spirit of commercialism here in the second city of the Dominion, that thought at any time other than is absolutely necessary, seems absurd. The musical comedy will always mean packed houses in Toronto, I fear.

The play dealt with the subject of heredity, dual personality, and prenatal influence, all three of which are of great interest to the leading physicians and thinkers of the day. Frances Starr seems to have improved wonderfully since she appeared in "The Easiest Way." One could scarcely imagine two such different characters as those she had in the play. The first, that of a sweet, trusting young girl, almost of the bromide type, made us long to see some hoydenish escapades. Which we surely did. Miss Starr's facial expression, as she



MISS ETHEL BARRYMORE
Touring this season in "A Witness for the Defence."

stage on account of her beauty alone. She has a beautiful voice, and the most wondrous eyes you ever saw. Every little gesture in her acting is so studied that it is a bit of art, and becomes so natural that one forgets

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