

Harry James Smith is said to be a new author in the field of playwriting, and "Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh" furnishes internal evidence of the fact. He has, however, created a thoroughly humorous situation, and Mrs. Fiske as thoroughly realises the comic possibilities of the central character on whom the chief burden of the comedy rests. The comedy is based on the efforts of a *bourgeois* family to forget its humble origin and more especially its association with the profitable, but not highly, reputable sale of proprietary medicines. As a preliminary step toward social emancipation, the home town of Missionary Loop, Indiana, is forsaken in favour of Washington and the family name changed from *Sale*, of Soothing Elixir fame, to the more socially soothing *de Salle*. A prolonged stay in England on the deceased *Sale's* money, during which the family acquire an English accent and the elder daughter an English husband, bearing the hyphenated name that gives the play its title, brings on the scene of action, the Long Island home of a proud American family, between whom the elder daughter is trying to form a matrimonial alliance on behalf of her younger sister. The unexpected and unwelcome arrival on the scene of a former friend of the presumably English family—*Peter Swallow* by name and tombstone maker by occupation—creates very natural consternation, and the efforts of the resourceful *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh* to keep the family skeleton safely locked in the closet during the encounter provide the larger externals of the comedy. The intruder is finally brazened out, but just at the moment of victory the younger sister, conscience stirred and refusing to be an accomplice to these deceptive enterprises any longer blurts out the truth and the "jig" is up. Resourceful to the last, how-

ever, *Mrs. Bumpstead-Leigh* succeeds in bringing about an adjustment whereby the insurgent sister shall marry another *Rawson*, less splendid, but more to her liking, and with a family alliance once made silence is naturally imposed upon all.

The part is broader than we have hitherto associated with Mrs. Fiske, but never has she seemed more spontaneous and happy, never shown more perfect abandon to the spirit of comedy than in the character of the masquerading Englishwoman. The scene in which she brazened out the tombstone maker, holding him up as an amusing specimen of Americanism, and finally baffling him off the scent altogether, was uproariously funny. It was, moreover, played with such inimitable adroitness and finish, such skill and self-repression, and the note placed so true that the part was never permitted to drop from the legitimate to the domain of farce. Her rapid transitions of speech also, from the exaggerated English accent to the homespun vernacular of Indiana, raised gales of laughter without compromising for a moment the subtlety of the drawing. Such complete success in a part so remote from, say, *Tess*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Hannele*, or even *Becky Sharp*, only increases our wonder and admiration and prompts the question, Where does the versatility of this remarkable actress end? Even her face lends itself to a process of transfiguration, and there were moments when the features seemed to lose their familiar outline and shine from some inner radiance that was indefinable.

A word must also be spoken for Florine Arnold's effective and tremendously amusing characterisation of *Mrs. de Salle* ("Maw") and for Kathleen MacDonell's portrayal of the technically difficult, semi-hysterical rôle of *Violet*. Not a detail was lacking in either portrait.