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THE STAGE AND ITS PEOPLE; MANY WELL REMEMBERED HERE

MISS BUTT SIX FEET TWO; VOICE IN PROPORTION; A BOSTON CRITIC'S VIEW

She is to Sing Here—St. John Favorites on Broadway -- New Play for Edmund Breece -- Percy Haswell in Keith Theatres--Tyrone Power Leaves Faversham

St. John people are to hear Miss Clara Butt, English contralto, in the Opera House on January 29. Here is what Frederick Johns writes in the Boston American of her appearance in Symphony Hall there:—

Much was expected of Miss Clara Butt, the English contralto, who appeared at Symphony Hall yesterday afternoon, but not nearly so much as was granted a rather flabbergasted audience.

For when the door leading to the platform opened out walked a giantess of a woman who dwarfed her accompanist, the piano, and even made the great organ look ordinary.

Six feet two is said to be Miss Butt's height, and one can well believe it; but so perfectly proportioned is she and so attractive as well that only by comparing her with other objects such as the door, can one realize how unusual she is.

Her voice is as extraordinary as her physique, for it is of tremendous magnitude. Her forte would smother the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and her fortissimo would make the syren of the Mauretania sound like the peeping of a little bird.

It is one of the most beautiful voices I ever heard. Despite its great size, it is a very flexible voice, with a lovely quality in the upper register, and glorious sonority in the lower part. She sings with a finish that would shame many lyric sopranos, and one of her most effective songs was coloratura.

The programme ranged from German classics to English ballads and was tremendously enjoyable. Kennerly Rumford, the English baritone who furnished half the concert, proved very acceptable, but he was not a phenomenon like Miss Butt.

It will be of interest to the friends of Edmund Breece in St. John to know that Werba & Luescher, in New York, on Saturday, completed the cast for their new production "The Master Mind," a new play from the pen of Daniel D. Carter, in which Mr. Breece is to star. In addition to Mr. Breece, those who will be seen in the stage interpretation of Mr. Carter's latest work are Katherine LaSalle, Dorothy Rossmore, Wm. Riley Hatch, Morgan Coman, Elbert Dexter, Walter Allen, Edward Gillespie and J. Archie Curtis The production is to be staged by Robert Milton.

Among the players now on Broadway are three former St. John favorites, Lyn Harding, late leading man with Grace George, in her production of "Just to Get Married," which she gave here last season; and Bruce McRae and Robert McWade, jr., two former Harkins' favorites. They are playing in the same show, "Years of Discretion," a Belasco production concerning which the critics are divided, some being well pleased and others disappointed, but the actors get their share of praise which, being unanimous, is apparently well deserved. Here is what the Billboard said:—The acting saved the performance from falling into mediocracy. Every part was well played, and the company gave the impression of an all-star company producing an average play in a way that made it appear far above the average.

Another former St. John favorite who made a hit with one of W. S. Harkins' companies here a few seasons ago is making a name for herself, or perhaps it should be said, has made a name for herself in the Great White Way in New York. This time it is Mary Ryan and a picture of this pretty and clever little artist appeared on the front page of the New York Mirror this week in a colored scene from "Stop Thief," in which she is playing with Richard Bennett. The play has "caught on" with New Yorkers, and is destined for a long run, in which Miss Ryan will share honors. A prominent critic writing most favorably of the play said:

"Stop Thief is most decidedly amusing and well-nigh unbelievably 'rapid-fire.' Episodes follow upon episodes with a swiftness that leaves one gasping—they are almost cinematographic—yet not lacking, for all their speed, anything in plausibility. The action of the piece is continuous, but a merciful management lowers the curtain a couple of times to allow one to catch one's breath. Stop Thief is really too funny for it to be safe to give it to us all at once. A deaf old lady has her ear-trumpet stolen and you laugh. "The best detective in the State of Rhode Island" has his watch 'pinched,' and you laugh. The bride has all her wedding presents stolen, and again you laugh. It does not become monotonous. In fact, the biggest laughs were when somebody looked suspectingly at somebody else. To say that it was probable and impossible, plausible and ridiculous is only to say half of it. Mr. Moore is clever to the point of genius in constructing his farce."

Bequests to the amount of $30,000 have come to the Actors Fund of America, $25,000 of which was bequeathed by the late Henry B. Hyde last week, and the other $5,000 from Mrs. Martha Brisze, an actress, who died in Dorchester, Mass., last year. The discovery was made several years ago that Mrs. Brisze had made such a provision in her will leaving this amount to the Dramatic Fund of America, which was dissolved several years ago. The probate court of Boston held that the Actors' Fund of America should receive the money.

A Shakespeare Record

The longest run of any Shakespearean tragedy since the days of Edwin Booth is now in progress at the Garden Theatre, New York, with John E. Kellerd and his all-star company. On New Year's Day Mr. Kellerd gave his fiftieth consecutive performance of Hamlet. In spite of counter attractions and new plays the production continues to draw large audiences, demonstrating that Shakespeare, when properly presented, is a popular attraction. Mr. Kellerd's interpretation of the leading character has brought forth high praise from all the New York critics. In the way of scenic investiture and other details, nothing is lacking and ever since the beginning of the present engagement the offering has proved a source of infinite delight and enjoyment to the more serious-minded theatre-goers. The original cast is still seen and includes Theodore Roberts, Amelia Gardner, Edward Mackay, Harvey Braban, Charles A. Stevenson and Marguerite Campbell.

Thomas Richards, the actor and leading man for Lulu Glaser, who was placed under arrest in Pittsburgh a few weeks ago charged by his wife with non-support and desertion, has settle dthe case. Richards agreed to pay nis wife $20 a week. He made out a check for $1,000, a payment of fifty weeks in advance, and handed it to his wife's attorney.

A statement of Mascagni about his forth coming opera "Parisina," has provoked a storm of protest from the religious press. Mascagni has set a libretto by Gabrield Annunzio to music, and it is denounced as sacrilegious.

D'Annuunzio gives much cause for offence by setting the main love scene in the famous sanctuary of Loretto which angels are traditionally reported to have removed from Palestine to prevent its profanation by infidels. The drama, which is essentially a poem of blood and passion, with a ghastly climax, is replete with D'Annunzio's warm sensuality, and religious opinion is outraged by the association of such a worldly story with Italy's holiest shrine.

George Backus, who was in St. John with a Harkins' company a few seasons ago, and who recently closed an engagement with the Coming Home to Roost Company, has been engaged by Klaw and Erlanger for an important part in Primrose, the play in which Elsie Ferguson is to be starred. It will go on the road for a few weeks, when it opens in New York for a run. Mr. Backus will play the part of the father.

Harry H. Forsman has closed with The Gamblers and has been engaged to open with Way Down East a week later, playing the professor, a part he originated eighteen years ago and played for five consecutive seasons.

"Way Down East," which was first produced eighteen years ago, began an engagement this week at the Broadway Theatre, New York, under the management of Wm. A. Brady. The production is being offered with all the original accessories of cattle and horses, and with a special cast of players familiar with all the traditions of the play.

Percy Haswell

Percy Haswell, an old friend with St. John audiences, who has just returned from abroad, has been booked by Alf. T. Wilton for a tour of the B. F. Keith theaters and other houses booked by the United Booking Offices. She opened last week at the Maryland Theatre, Baltimore, presenting her one-act playlet, Master Will's Players by Allen Fawcett. Miss Haswell will be supported by Regan Hughston and Alfred Hudson, and is under the personal direction of Lee Grove.

John W. Ransone has commenced a starring engagement under B. C. Whitney's management, in the one-act play of Dorothy, which he opened in Chicago. Mr. Ransone is ever fresh in the minds of the theatre public as the German brewer, from Tsin-tsin-nati, in the Prince of Pilsen, which unctious role he created and played for several seasons in this country and in London, and to which characterization the operetta owed much of its vogue. He has also just finished writing a musical extravaganza entitled Find the Thief, which is said to bristle with Ransonia, by those who have read the book.

Will C. Randall, former theatrical manager, once a partner with Charles Frohman in the theatrical agency business, after a period of absence from his usual field of activity, is about to re-enter it as purveyor of novel attractions, on original lines. Mr. Randall will open offices somewhere in the vicinity of Broadway and Forty-second street, New York.

The Irish repertory players of Lady Augusta Gregory who appeared in the States have returned to America and are playing in Chicago. After Chicago they will tour the west and possibly the Pacific coast, before returning to New York for a spring engagement. The company includes, besides Lady Gregory, Arthur Sinclair, J. M. Kerrigan, Sydney Morgan, J. A. O'Rourge, Nugent Monck, the manager! Sarah Allgood, the leading woman; Eileen O'Doherty, Eithne Magee, and Nora Clancy, who did not appear with the company last season, but who has since its return to Europe become the wife of Frederick O'Donovan, who played the title role in The Playboy of the Western World, the play which nearly caused a riot in New York. The couple are enjoying this as their honeymoon trip.

Marie Dressler has filed suit for $24,000 in the supreme court in New York against Weber & Fields. The actress says she had a contract in "Roly Polly" at $1,500 a week, and that it was broken at the end of four weeks. The defence is that Miss Dressler broke the contract herself.

Power and Faversham Part

Tyrone Power, who last week left the New York company, which is playing "Julius Caesar," after a disagreement over various matters, is going out in Shakespearian repertoire as soon as the details can be arranged. He said so himself. Mr. Power played in St. John some years ago.

Mr. Faversham, in an interview, said his contract with Mr. Power would prevent the latter from starting a rival Shakespearian company, particularly one to play "Julius Caesar," and that he would ask for an injunction if Mr. Power attempted to do anything of the sort.

Mr. Power said this was not so, and that as nobody had exclusive rights to "Julius Caesar" or any other Shakespearian play, he was organizing a company. Mr. Power gave his version of the causes of his leaving Mr. Faversham's company. He said:

"Mr. Faversham's statement as to the cause of my leaving 'Julius Caesar' is entirely misleading and subtly calculated to convey the impression that I have been guilty of a breach of professional etiquette. He says:—'Jealousy of a fellow player being given as my only excuse for leaving, knowing full well that no such feeling possessed me. It is idle to even refute such an absurd utterance.

"But Mr. Faversham does know that I was grossly insulted in his company; that my performance of Brutus has been hammered and well nigh ruined. Indeed, he had expressed the greatest sympathy for me, but begged me to put up with the almost unbearable conditions for the sake of the enterprise.

"Suffice it to say that matters reached a climax and I was compelled to send in my two weeks' notice. To this Mr. Faversham replied that it was a matter of utter indifference to him when I left; that the customary two weeks' notice was in no way obliging him; that, on the contrary, he had an understudy prepared to take up my part immediately, and that so far as he was concerned I could go at once without inconvenience to him or to his company."

Mrs. Ellen Bergen Hopper, known on the stage as Nella Bergen, has begun an action for absolute divorce against De Wolf Hopper, the comic opera star, before the Nassau County Court, at Hampstead, L. I.

Justice Scudder took the papers in the case, including the affidavit on which the action was based, under advisement and reserved decision. Notice of the suit was served on the actor by publication, Samuel B. Hamburger, counsel for Mrs. Hopper, contending that Mr. Hopper was out of the state and that all efforts to reach him in person had been futile.

The affidavit constituting the bill of particulars was signed by John F. Craven, of No. 59 West Forty-fourth street, Manhattan. Mr. Craven swore that he and Hopper visited a house in New York in July last and there Hopper committed indiscretions which gave his wife grounds for filing her suit for absolute divorce.

Mrs. Nella Bergen Hopper is the fourth wife of De Wolfe Hopper. He married his first wife in Ohio before he entered upon a stage career, but a divorce made it possible for him to marry Ida Mosher, who was a member of the old McCall Opera Company, in which Hopper played a leading role.

This union did not prove a happy one, and the courts were appealed to, and their verdict made it possible for Hopper to marry diminutive Edna Wallace, who scarcely stood knee high to the towering Hopper. Much surprise was manifested at this union, for Broadway gossip had long since coupled the names of De Wolfe Hopper and Della Fox, co-stars in that popular comic opera, Wang.

After a few years of apparent happiness dissensions crept in, and Mrs. Hopper fled her husband's company, which was presenting "El Captain." She named Nella Bergen as corespondent. Mrs. Bergen was the divorced wife of James Bergen, also an actor.

Hopper and Mrs. Bergen were married in London before a registrar on October 2, 1899. Mrs. Edna Wallace Hopper later married A. O. Brown, a Wall street broker, whose sensational failure occurred a little before the wedding.

Henry Kolker, who produced "The Christian" in St. John some years ago, playing the role of John Storm, and who was also at one time lead with Margaret Anglin, is being well received in Chicago in an adaptation from the German of "Our Wives," in which he is supported by another St. John favorite, Gwendoline Piers, who won distinction in the days of Daniel Frawley in this city.

Valeska Suratt, now touring in "The Kiss Waltz," has commissioned a well known author to write a play for her use next season. It is her own idea that she shall portray Venus, Cleopatra, Josephine, Dubarry and others, including herself.

The Messrs. Shubert have in preparation a new musical comedy for James T. Powers which will be produced upon the conclusion of Mr. Powers' tour in "Two Little Brides."

"Romance" by Edward Sheldon, author of "The Nigger," "Salvation Nell," and other successes, will soon be produced by the Messrs. Shubert.

De Wolf Hopper and his associates in the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company are planning means by which to raise a fund for the erection of a monument to the memory of the men whose genius gave the world so many delightful light operas.

Howard Kyle, recently the head of the Howard Kyle Players, has been engaged for the role of Simeon in the forthcoming Century Theatre, New York, spectacle, "Joseph and His Brethren." Another engagements for the same play is that of Frank Woolfe, who was Lewis Waller's chief support in "Monsieur Beaucaire" last spring.

William Hammerstein has closed negotiations with Jesse L. Lasky whereby he will present at the Victoria Theatre, New York, in the week of January 6 a tabloid comedy called "The Earl and the Girls" The Courtney sisters will be featured, and they will be supported by R. N. Cory and Vincent Erne, from London. The company has fifteen mambers. The book is by William Le Baron and the music by Gene Buck and Dave Stamper.

Miss Evelyn Provost, who is popular in Brooklyn society, cousin of Mrs. John Jacob Astor, and a granddaughter of a former mayor of New York, has decided to give up pink teas, dinners and such friolities. She has joined a Schubert company which is rehearsing "The Kingdom of Destiny."

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CLEAN, HOME-LIKE PLAYS AS OPPOSED TO THE RISQUE ONES

"I am a firm believer that, in the abstract, theatre-goers want 'clean plays,' said A. G. Delameter, a well known producing manager of New York city, "and consequently it is my theory that they will pay better in the long run. It is useless to suppose that the theatrical manager of today is risking thousands of dollars and weeks of hard work, for sheer love of dramatic art. It is dollars and cents with him just the same as it is with any other business man, and consequently he will produce anything which he thinks will spell victory in the box office. He is not conscience stricken, except when the public refuses to spend the dollars. And to smudge over plays that are quarantined against decent society they have coined the phrase 'modernism.' Virulent, indecent, smutty stories, which no decent man is going to take his wife or daughter to see, are not successful outside the greater cities, and then only when presented by some dramatic star of unquestioned drawing power; Leslie Carter's "Zaza," Francis Starr's "The Easiest Way," Ethel Barrymore's "Mid Channel" are all illustrations. What would these plays amount to if it were not for the great dramatic ability of the star who presents them?

"Now take the reverse side of the question. We all know the tremendous success of "The Music Master," "Shore Acres," "The Old Homestead," "Beverly of Graustark," and scores of others I could mention. This, then, is the reason that no play from the establishment of A. G. Delamater shall be in environment, plot and text anything but what is eminently fit for ladies and children; plays that shall have for their moral that which must do good. Plays like "Freckles," teach a lesson, which does the utmost good when seen by children and its story is of that texture which admits of discussion in 'the bosom of your own family.' We do not need to interpolate any 'modernism' if you please "Freckles" teaches a lesson, stronger than many sermons delivered from the pulpit. And this, if you add commercialism into my business is where I can hold my head straight in the air, without need or impulse to blush.

"There is just a semblance of pardonable pride to me in the thought that I succeeded in securing the play rights to Mrs. Gene Stratton Porter's "Freckles;" not from the commercialism which might be contained, because it is already a great success, but from the standpoint that it was through my past record and present motto of 'producer of clean plays' that Mrs. Porter consented to give me the rights, not alone for "Freckles" but for all her stories. She will tolerate no 'modernism,' which will be attested by all readers of her books; they are as pure in sentiment as the driven snow, every one of them. When it is considered that there were many prominent producers after these rights, the victory was a double victory. Commercialism, if you will, but without the excuse of modernism.

"If with such commercialism, we can still go on trying our very best to keep the standards of the stage morally and socially higher than ever, we shall be doing great good."

NEW MOVING PICTURE ART

Six Thousand Drawings to Make a Cartoon Show Life on a Screen

(By Windsor M'Cay, Creator of "Little Nemo," Mr. Bosh," Etc.)

I believe I have discovered a new art. I have not copyrighted nor patented the idea and hope to see artists take it up. Since all time people have visited galleries to look at pictures that stand still forever. The time is coming when the public will not be satisfied when they see a picture standing still. The Angelus, the $150,000 painting. will be a disappointment because the public will wonder when the man and woman pick up their basket of potatoes and walk away with it. Sixteen pictures go through a moving picture machine in one second of time, 960 pictures a minute. This is going to scare a whole lot of artists away from the scheme, yet I predict present obstacles will be overcome. My two pictures at the Grand will be compared to what will be done like Robert Fulton's first steamboat is compared to the "Lusitania."

And yet it is hard for the audience to realize when looking at my feeble effort that the figures are not alive. It is pretty hard especially for one to realize that when Nemo is drawing the princess, he is looking merely at newspaper cartoons moving instead of a living child.

Only one man that I know of so far has attempted to draw pictures that move. He made 30 drawings for a month, when he had finished 800. It then dawned upon him very forcibly that his month's work would go through the picture machine in less than a minute. Not only his friends but his physician advised him to quit. When an artist draws 16 pictures and sets them up in front of him in a row and says to himself. "Those 16 pictures are going through a moving picture machine in one second he will undoubtedly give it up and not go farther. Any artist who can draw any object from all angles can make his drawings move, but the greatest artist in the world cannot do this unless he has unlimited patience.

I have been approached by a party who is indirectly connected with the Society of Natural History who stated that this society would gladly pay any price for the bringing back to life of the Dinosaur and the Diplodicus. Why! I can make any beast that lived a million years ago live, eat and fight as they did before the glacial period. In fact, my next picture will be along those lines.

My "Mosquito" shown at the Grand this week, is a ridiculous acting fellow which I made because it was simple to draw and I could find out more aoout this new art. I am convinced now that I can produce mermaids, sea-serpents, centaurs, and the fanciful dragons of legend—make them walk and prance with an easy grace as if they were alive before you. I do not know if the newspaper cartoonist should worry but it would be something frightful if an editor should order his cartoons must move hereafter. Think of a cartoonist having to sit down and draw 6,000 piceures for the morning edition! Yet the opportunity is here to make people laugh longer and louder than ever any living thing can do. I will advise any artist attempting to draw pictures that move that he must not draw anything that can be done by people posing or with papier mache "props" because he will not get credit for his work, The people will say it was done with "dummies" or wires, or other trick schemes. He must draw something that could not be produced any other way. There is absolutely no way possible that my "mosquito" could perform the way he does except by drawing him, and it took 6,000 drawings to make him cut up the way he does. I have heard women scream and men shudder for the pain that the man apparently suffers when this mosquito stings him. Those people do not realize that the man, is simply a newspaper cartoon and suffers no pain.

When I started my first picture they called me crazy mad. No moving picture concern would listen to me and one man would loan me $5,000 at the drop of the hat for the use that I wanted to put it to except one—that I couldn't put one nickel in that foolish moving picture scheme. Not a soul do I know of who had the least faith that I could make drawings live. Now I can get unlimited backing from hundreds of sources.

A bell bearing the date, 1702, and marks indicating that it once belonged to Queen Anne and was presented by her to Trinity church of Newport, R.I., has recently been found there. The bell has been stored away under a stage in the guild hall of the church for years. No one thought it was of any importance until it was hauled out and examined by Rev. Stanley C. Hughes, now rector of the parish, a few days ago. The bell is 2 1-2 feet high, and is marked with a broad arrow. All of the bells given by Queen Anne to American colony churches were so marked.

PROGRESS IN THE WORLD OF THE "MOVIES"

Tufts Professor Sees Time When They Will Be the Real Thing in College Life — Marion Leonard and the Press Agent

Because of the fact that Marion Leonard is well known to local picture followers, the following from the "Billboard" should be of interest:—What is probably the most outlandish and likewise the crudest attempt at getting publicity for a moving picture actress, or, in fact, any other kind of a performer has just been tried, according to the practical confession of the press agent, by the Monopol Film Company, in the case of Marion Leonard.

Early this week I. Bernstein, press man for the Monopol Company, sent to the theatrical journals of New York city a photograph of Miss Marion Leonard and a long story about her being the greatest motion picture actress in the country and about her salary of $1,000 per week and several other things which sound fishy.

Two days later a neat notice reaches us from Lionel L. Lawrence stating that he has secured Miss Leonard to work in a vaudeville sketch with Merschall Mayall. He calls attention to the fact that her salary with the Monopol was $1,000 per week and the fact that she is the highest salaried moving picture actress in the world (which she is not by a whole lot) and asks that her engagement be given publicity.

A call at the offices of Lionel E. Lawrence brought forth two telegrams from Miss Leonard who is now in California, one stating that she would accept the engagement at the end of the Monopol engagement and the other accepting the terms of the contract with Lawrence.

At the offices of the Monopol Company the representative of The Billboard put it up to Bernstein point blank that the whole affair was an arrangement of his to create publicity for Miss Leonard. The first release in which she appears is soon to be made. Bernstein was frank about everything else concerning the affair but absolutely refused to deny that the job was put up by him or anyone else.

In the meantime the theatrical papers are printing the story about Miss Leonard's engagement by Mr. Lawrence and her enormous salary, and even some of the dailies are using it.

The funny part about the whole situation is that on the day Miss Leonard left New York for California, to take the leading part in the production there, she is said to have reported at the offices of a prominent picture producer in New York and offered her services for less than $100 per week.

Miss Leonard's contract with the Monopol Company was never signed by her. Stanner E. V Taylor, her husband, drew up the agreement with the Monopol Company and signed it himself to include his wife as leading lady and himself as director. Notwithstanding the fact that she has no contract with the Monopol Company, there is much talk being circulated about the Monopol Company suing her for breach of contract and Mr. Lawrence swears that he will feature her in his sketch regardless of the Monopol contract.

Miss Lawrence may sometime appear in Lawrence's vaudeville sketch. She probably is at liberty to do so any time she wants. But Bernstein's refusal to deny that the Lawrence engagement is merely a ruse cinches the fact that it is a put-up job.

"Fifty years from today a college faculty will consist essentially of a president, a janitor and a moving-picture man," declares Dr. Edwin C. Bolles, professor of American and English history at Tufts College, in discussing "Movies That Talk." He added:—"The professors will be able to give their lectures without even entering the class room, the moving picture films and records will reproduce their voices and every one of their characteristic gestures and postures. So complete will the lectures be in detail that examinations will become obsolete. We will be able to see and hear our actors and actresses and even the great opera singers while they are taking a holiday trip through Europe."

The Aqueduct division of the New York police force was loaned recent to a company to assist in the production of a film entitled, With the Mounted Police. William Garwood played the lead and looked more like a genuine policeman and less like an actor than many of the regular members of the force. The Board of Water Supply has arranged with the company to have the picture shown at the board's annual entertainment in the Palm Garden on January 19. Another time when the Thanhouser Company insisted on getting the genuine article, came in the production of a picture called, The Evidence of the Film. Bonds were needed in the development of the story, and instead of using "fakes." President Hite sent to the National City Bank of New Rochelle and secured $20,000, that there might be no flaw in the reality of the picture.

War Cloud, a full-blooded Sioux Indian chief, is now the proprietor of a motion picture theatre in Jamaica, L.I. Occasionally he appears on the stage himself, having had considerable experience giving Indian sketches in vaudeville.

One of the most beautiful studios of this country is springing up in the Hollywood section, where Manager E. V. Taylor of the Monopol Western Company, is getting into action. Bungalows, extensive stages, dressing rooms, store houses, lattice fences and splendid landscaping are in progress. In the midst of this busy scene Mr. Taylor already is putting on a big, three-reel feature. his first here. Marion Leonard, leading lady of the company, has recovered from a near attack of pneumonia and is playing.

Motion pictures now are being shown on the French line ocean steamships to the apparent delight of the sea-going public. On the France, Provence and Touraine, sailing to and from New York and Havre, programmes, mainly composed of scenic pictures, are well received.

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PANTOMINE SEASON SWELLS THE THEATRE CASH RETURNS; NEWS OF THE LONDON STAGE

Beerbohm Tree Left Legacy to New York on Recent Visit—"Hallo Rag-time" at Hippodrome—Barrie's Skit Calchers on—Society Leaders Before Footlights

(Times Special Correspondence.)

London, Dec. 28—We have all been so busy with pantomimes and other kindred entertainments that there has been little time for anything else. When you consider that the number of pantomimes produced in the West End and suburbs of London amounts to more than a score, you will understand that dramatic critics have had more than their full measure of work cut out for them during the last few days.

"The Sleeping Beauty" at Drury Lane has naturally claimed and received chief attention; it is upon Arthur Collins' customary scale of splendor and easily puts everything else of the sort into the shade. There is no need to enter into a detailed account of its many attractive features, enough that it is well up to the recognized Drury Lane standard.

Pantomime in this country is a dish that never or rarely fails; when it does the only person to be blamed is the purveyor, who has either neglected his duties or does not possess the experience to profit by the opportunities afforded him. As a matter of fact many of the provincial theatres virtually exist upon their pantomimes. During the remainder of the year they just manage, if they are lucky, to make both ends meet. For their profits they depend upon the six weeks extending from the end of December to the middle of February.

Tree's Return

Beerbohm Tree is back in London, but I have had the chance of only a two minutes' chat with him. Brief as our interview was, however, it proved sufficiently long to show that he was immensely pleased by his stay in New York, and that he looked forward to his return there with the liveliest expectation. There is always a fly in the ointment and in Tree's case it turned out to be a bad tooth which had caused him a great deal of pain and discomfort. He has bequeathed it to a New York dentist. Its memory, however, still lingers with Tree as he has not yet quite recovered from the results of its extraction.

Next week, managers whose present attractions happen to be showing a drooping tendency, will make a real start with rehearsals of their new pieces. There is always a desire to hold over novelties until the end of January, so that the first rush for pantomime may be over and a comparatively clear field ensured them. At the St. James' George Alexander, has assembled the artists engaged for Karl Vollmoeller's fantastic Chinese play "Turandot " on the stage some half dozen times, but the proceedings have been of a distinctly desultory character. On Monday the company will begin to put their shoulders to the wheel in earnest. In a previous letter I indicated that the fortunes of the piece would largely depend upon the efforts of the four principal comedians. I may now add that these are Edward Sass, Fred Lewis, Norman Forbes (a younger brother of Forbes Robertson), and Vivien Reynolds, the last being the St. James' stage manager. A stronger team could scarcely have been got together, and as they are to be allowed a good deal of latitude in regard to the development of their parts the issue of their endeavors may be awaited without anxiety. "Handsome" Jack Barnes is to play the role of Princess Turandot's father, Evelyn D'Alroy to be the princess and Godfrey Tearle who, young though he be, is pretty certain before long to join the ranks of West End actor-managers, is to be her lover. The scenery, an exact replica of that used by Reinhardt when he did the piece in Berlin, has been made in Germany, while the author himself has returned to London to instruct the artists in the business respectively arranged for each.

It is a particularly interesting experiment, this new departure by George Alexander, who seldom plays the part of truant in his own theatre. But he is a man of many occupations and really stands in need of a rest. As an untiring member of the London County Council he has to keep a watchful eye upon public events. When he joined that body it was with the firm determination to act up to his responsibilities. I have know him on quite a number of occasions to put his understudy on at the St. James' rather than neglect a meeting at which he thought his presence might be necessary. Although late to bed he is always an early riser and as often as not if you ask for an appointment you will find that the time named by him coincides rather inconveniently with your own breakfast hour. His theatre is run on strictly business lines; these he is the first to observe, thus giving him the right to complain if others are less mindful.

Louis Meyer also will be starting preparations for his production of Gladys Unger's play "The Son and Heir," at the Strand. For close upon six months Evelyn D'Alroy has held herself free to play the leading part—it was, indeed, she who brought the piece to Meyer. But the obstinate success of "The Glad Eye" has prevented the realization of this intention. And just as it seemed likely to be fulfilled the offer to go to the St. James—an offer too flattering to be refused—came along. So Ethel Irving is to have the character. Later she will resume West End management on her own account. Of that she has already had some experience both at the Criterion and at the Garrick, although in one or two instances her choice of plays proved not altogether fortunate. Of new pieces she has had plenty of time to accumulate a good store, so that we may expect to see her, when at last she makes another start, in a series of carefully selected and interesting roles.

A Skit By Barrie

The presentation of the new Revue, "Hullo, Rag-time!" at the London Hippodrome possesses two decisive claims to notice, first, in that it is a sort of apotheosis of what I am tempted to describe as America's national dance; the second becuase it contains a fifteen minutes' skit upon the censor and his methods. This has been hailed as the gem of the production, but only one critic, so far as I have seen, has recognized it in the hand of J. M. Barrie. The thing was really done by the author of "Peter Pan," although he refused to have his identity acknowledged or his name printed on the programme. However, it so evidently bears his sign manual that I am surprised it was not at once universally spotted. The trifle hinges upon the recent craze shown by dramatists for introducing a bedroom scene into their plays. At the Hippodrome it is not, however, the censor who raises objections, but one of the characters, an architect, who, on professional grounds, insists that the playwright cannot have his bedroom at one point because it would interfere with the staircase; at another, because it would stand in the way of the fireplace and so on. Barrie does some pretty hard hitting at actors and actresses through the medium of a couple of music-hall artists whose dignity will not allow them to be ranked with members of the theatrical profession. The sketch is a capital bit of fooling and quite in the author's best satirical vein.

Charles Hawtrey is full of his coming production of George Birmingham's Irish comedy, "General John Regan," at the Apollo. The event is underlined for January 9. Hawtrey has persuaded his old friend Leonard Boyne to join the cast and may well be congratulated on securing so admirable an actor. Boyne is Irish to the backbone; long as he has been on the English stage he has never got rid of his delightful brogue. I suppose he is well over sixty; nevertheless he retains all the buoyancy, the freshness and the semblance of youth. If I remember rightly his last appearance in the West End was in Lewis Waller's revival of "The Rivals." In that he stood out in the strongest relief, outdistancing all his competitors. Oddly enough he struck me as the living image of Henry Neville, one of the best romantic actors we ever had. Neville, also, could be perfectly and splendidly modern; his performance in "The Ticket of Leave Man" was about as finished a bit of portraiture as anyone could desire to see. Granting that Boyne has an effective part in "General John Regan" he ought to run Hawtrey himself very hard for first place in the race for popularity.

The private theatrical season in society has begun with great eclat. The Duchess of Westminster, organized a pretty entertainment at Eaton Hall, Chester, wherein she herself appeared as a seventeenth century serving wench in a one-act play entitled "At the Golden Goose," and her sister, the Princess Pless, gave a musical monologue. "The Eternal Feminine."

The programme, which for variety rivalled a vaudeville show, also included moving pictures of the Balaklava charge and a performance by a brilliant young American pianist, Arthur Shattuck. The show was open to the public at theatre prices, the proceeds being devoted to the duchess' pet charities in London and Chester.

Another interesting show was given by Lady Churston, formerly a musical comedy actress Denise Orme, in her private theatre at Ugbrooke Park, Devon. The piece was "The Dollar Princess," which had a successful run at Daly's Theatre, where Lady Churston was the star. Lady Churston played the title role, assisted by a company of amateurs.

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