

THE DRAMA IN NEW YORK

By JULES ECKERT GOODMAN.

NEW YORK, Jan. 22.—(From The Journal's New York Correspondent.)—Ladies and gentlemen, we have here a fine collection of plays written for your delectation by the choice and master spirits of our age. Some of them I would be glad to state are not new. One or two perhaps are a trifle shop-worn. Others, though we have had them in our stores for some time, are as good as new; indeed, are now shown for the first time.

and this gives a literary atmosphere to writings. There are many defects which can be picked in this play. In the first place it has a tendency to be too preachy and is clogged at points by dialogue and sentences which are not needed for the action. Yet with everything said against it that justly can be said it remains a delightful comedy of rather reaching meaning.

"Sweet Lavendar." This is especially so of "Sweet Lavendar," presented for something over the four thousandth time by Mr. Edward Terry, though for the first time by him in America. There are people who will tell you that "Sweet Lavendar" is Piner's greatest play. It belongs, of course, to his earlier and "pleasant" work. No play was ever more aptly named. Sweet it is, saccharinely, syrupy sweet, and redolent with household sentimentality. It is too late in the day to speak about this play, save by way of comparison with the author's later work. "Sweet Lavendar" has been probably Piner's greatest "popular" success. To call it his greatest artistic success would be like calling "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" Shakespeare's masterpiece.

It is not hard to see wherein the appeal of this play consists. It has nothing to do with "problems" of any sort. It has little to do with real characters, for even Pheny is in a way a "type." It belongs to a fairland of sentiment, some Bohemia, a desert country by the sea, where strange, cruel things happen until a *deus ex machina* steps in and rights all wrongs in a twinkling. That joyous last act, with a set of coincidences that makes probability look like a fraud, is a wonderful survival of the sort of thing that used to exist and persist in the old comedy. It is a time straight at the heart-string and there you have in a nutshell the reason for its popularity. Moreover, like the aforesaid family weekly of two decades ago, it has nothing at all objectionable in it, save possibly in Lavendar's sentiment, and that is sugar-coated. It is sweet lavender, and for those who do not like lavender or prefer it rather pungent than sweet, it will be found rather overpowering. For those who do care for the type of play which is homely and simple and tender, it will always have a strong appeal and deservedly. To compare it, however, with such a product as "The Gay Lavender" is to say by way of showing out what Piner has worked to his present high position, is unfortunate, to put it mildly, and a wrong both to this play and to the other play.

Mr. Terry's work is splendid and especially to be commended for the reason that he does not spare his hero. As portrayed by this actor, there can be no doubt what kind of a man Pheny would be in a little glamour put upon his weakness. Pheny drunk was not a pleasant sight, and Terry does not try to make him so. On the other hand, hating a slight trace of the grotesque at times, he does give to the character a pathos which causes pity and compassion. The play is thus, in spite of all that can be said against it, worth seeing again.

Mr. Henry Arthur Jones. Somewhat the reverse of the medal is seen in Sir Charles Wyldeham's revival of "The Case of the Rebellious Susan." It has been something over ten years since this play was produced here at the old Lyceum theatre with a cast containing Herbert Kelcey, W. J. Le Moyne, Charles Walker, Fritz Williams, Isabel Irving, Bessie Tyree and Mrs. Charles Walcott. Seeing it again with Sir Charles' excellent company shows that the play has lost little of its appealing power.

Lady Susan Harabin is one of Mr. Jones' most felicitous characters, and her "case" proves one of his happiest themes. There is a fine romantic flavor to everything that Mr. Jones writes which at times approaches poetry, as for example in the instance of "Michael and His Lost Angel." He is, or at least he was in the past, dead in earnest.

The "Ideal Marriage." But Mr. Jones did not leave the problems of the problems broadens from another couple, two young people of still another "ideal," who marry, as they would put it, in order through mutual sympathy to obtain mutual freedom and mutual benefit. These are the victims, alas, the man who would "stamp himself upon the age" and "the woman who has a mission." The man in his egotism thinks that the woman will produce "an atmosphere" conducive to his greater development; the woman believes that her freedom will thus be assured. Result: the man ends up with a black eye and the woman is arrested for public speaking.

"Final" to complete his picture Mr. Jones showed the old bachelor who had never married because of an ideal held long in his heart, and the widow, also with an ideal; the two broad, yet sympathetic, not foolish in their ideas of marriage, eminently sane and of the mind that goes to make happiness. It is worth while even at this late day to capitulate again this play, for its production at the present time gives it the importance and shows that it has lost little of its primal value. It is a splendid piece of work, admirably conceived and admirably worked out. It is full of keen insight into human nature and human institutions. It has brilliant as any since the days of Oscar Wilde. Even when presented by the second-class stock company it is found to be a good acting play.

Sir Charles' production is, as far as may be judged after this lapse of time, the finest the play has received here. The entire company is excellent, and as for Sir Charles himself, his acting has that finality and finesse that go to give it absolute quality. As Lady Susan, Miss Moore is seen in even better light than in the two previous plays, which is saying a great deal.

"You Never Can Tell." To work out the plays previously presented and come to those which some time ago but produced for the first time here, we have Mr. Arnold Daly in Bernard Shaw's "You Never Can Tell." Mr. Daly is a young man and he is daring. Last year he made something of a sensation in "Candida," which he followed up with "A Man of Destiny," and "How He Lied to Her Husband." Finding that the public took kindly to the writings of Mr. Shaw, he comes out this year with another comedy. It remains to be seen how the venture will prove. Fashionable audiences have been attending and evidently the appeal has been to the intellectual class. It was noticeable that several of the audience had books of Mr. Shaw's play under their arms.

Just why any one should think it necessary to have a copy of the play under your arm in order to enjoy it is hard to see, unless the idea is that you can understand Shaw by tactical absorption, as it were. I daresay one can get as close to him that way as any other way. Before considering this play it might be well to bear in mind Mr. Shaw's estimate of himself. "I first caught the ear of the British public," he writes in the preface to his "Three Plays for Puritans," "to the blaring of brass bands, and this is not at all as a reluctant sacrifice of my instinct of privacy to political necessity, but because, like all dramatists and mimics of genuine vocation, I am a natural-born mountebank." If we take Mr. Shaw at his own estimate, it will be interesting to watch his "tricks" as exhibited in this play of his. The program calls it a comedy; as a mat-

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ter of fact it is intellectual farce. Sure it contains, of course, else it could not be Mr. Shaw's. At bottom it is a

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Luther Long and David Belasco. More extended notice of this play must be reserved for later. At present all that can be given is the story of the drama and some notice of the artists. The following short account from the World gives an idea of its character:

In "Adrea" Mrs. Carter impersonates the blind dress to the throne of the island of Adrea. In the Adria, realm of her Army, her sister, the young sister, Paul, is married to a young man of her name.

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