

HYSTERICAL GACKLES HEARD IN THE THEATRES

Modern Vehicles of Amusement Have Punch in the Ribs for All. Whether They See the Joke or Not—Restfulness of Old-Fashioned Comedy.

By J. F. S.

W HATS in a laugh? Some several years of experience in watching laughs, in hearing them and occasionally indulging in them authorizes the answer that there is a great deal. That most laughs are hypocritical, hysterical, and can be turned on and off with the facility of operation of a lawn sprinkler is unfortunately but is no reason for banishing them forever.

If it were not for a few real laughs, found here and there in the sea of giggles, the theatre has over the church is that you can laugh unrestrainedly in the latter. It is conceived to make you laugh. The oftener you laugh the better. The trouble is that there are so few things to be seen that inspire laughter that is spontaneous and unaffected.

The usual person goes to the ordinary farce comedy or musical comedy in a state of hypnosis. He laughs but his laugh has the same relation to a real one that the antics performed by a mesmerist's subject at the beck of the hand held to walking, running or jumping performed at the will of the person himself. He laughs because he is told to, not because he wants to or even knows that he actually is laughing. The result is palpably evident to anyone who stands at the theatre door after one of these performances and watches the people streaming out. Almost to a man they are so weary that they can hardly make their way to a car or carriage or automobile. They are tired out, not because they laughed but because they were driven into laughing. The mere act of laughing hurts no one. But to be chased around and poked at and stuck under the ribs when you least expect it and to be turned over and tickled again is nerve-racking in the extreme. A child that is tickled into laughter usually grows up to be a nervous wreck. Heaven only knows what will be the fate of a race of men and women that are subjected to the same dangerous treatment.

The pleasantest thing about Sheridan's comedies is that in them he resorts very little to this mechanical tickling process. You feel that you can laugh without hearing the crack of the whip to compel you to. He doesn't stretch you on the rack and force you to laugh or die. And his reward is that you laugh because you are pleased. True it takes some time to readjust oneself to the change. The subject awaking from his trance is naturally dazed. He feels his way carefully before doing of his own volition what he previously has been compelled to do. But the healthy ultimatum replaces the artificial. Lady Teazle and Mrs. Malaprop, "Bob" Acres and Sir Peter, each in his way, has much more of the real comic about him than, say, Hans and Nix put together. Hans and Nix, it may be necessary to explain, held forth at the Baker last week to the accompaniment of much noise and tumult on the part of the gentlemen themselves and a great deal of agonized writhing, punctuated by unnatural screams, on the part of their audiences. As Hans and Nix warmed up to their work and grew more lively the people in the house grew more distraught. They soon lost all control over their actions and became as though in a nightmare. When it was over and the curtain brought them out of their spell they came to with a start, groped their way out of the building as best they could and went to their beds worn out, sleepless.

Incongruity, as a source of comic effect, is a never failing source of amusement as well. It formed the basis for one of the best things in "The Road to Yesterday" which the Baker players gave so dramatically at the Bungalow last week. Reformado Jack, hero as he was, didn't hesitate to jump out of the window when he and his lady-love were attacked by the enemy. It was a ludicrous and entertaining view of a hero. It was one of several things that lifted "The Road to Yesterday" above the mediocre. But although the playwrights were sometimes illuminated by a streak of humor and reduced their mock heroes to the absurd in a rather clever fashion the Baker company was not troubled by any such double-dealing, nor did it lend a hand to it. Miss Jewel was as wrought up over it all as though she were playing Ophelia. Nor was Mr. Ayles a bit behind her. He acted and acted and acted. And when two of them did not suffice Mr. Gleason gallantly came to the rescue, wearing a villainous beard and striding around in an alarmed manner. It was all acting, and acting of the most intense sort. Tragedy dripped from the finger tips of the entire company.

How often is the chorus girl sent weeping to bed? From various hysterics it seems that the much abused young woman is nightly thrown into hysterics by the cruelty of her detractors. The eminent young author, Richard Harding Davis, is her latest champion. According to Mr. R. H. D. the young lady works hard all day, manicuring, massaging and bleaching, spends a few hours with the poets, reads in the classics and ancient literature another hour or so, goes to the theatre, dances her best, and after a frugal repast, devoid of joy, awakes in the morning to see herself pilloried in the stocks. This sends her back sobbing to bed.

The thought of the young woman sobbing her heart out drives Mr. Davis into a passion, into such a passion indeed that he comes right out boldly in black and white and calls A. B. Walkley an ass. It seems to be a matter for the chorus girl, R. H. D., Mr. Walkley and the ass to fight out among them. The unfortunate part of it is that Mr. Walkley should be dragged into such company.

PROMISES MADE BY THE PRESS AGENTS

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its dramatic intensity by its realism and adherence to dramatic form.

The scenes of the play are located in Montana in the early days of railroad building in that state, and the principal characters are twin brothers, Jack and Bob Morley, one of whom is a man of honor, and the other a train robber. Bob is arrested for robbing a train, which had in fact, been despoiled by his twin, but the mystery of the relationship is not revealed until the brother, Jack, is shot by a member of his gang just as he is about to rush to the aid of his relative, who is about to be hanged.

Coupled with this there is a pretty love story, the whole being enlivened by unusually bright comedy and character drawing of power and attractiveness. The play will be staged on a scale of splendor unusual with popular-priced attractions, and the interpreting company is one of even strength and dramatic poise.

The Grand.

Following up the strong vaudeville program which has held sway at the Grand for the past week, and which closes tonight, Sullivan & Considine send another big bill for this week, starting tomorrow afternoon. On this new bill the feature will be Lind, the artistic dancer. One of the striking features of Lind's specialty will be the costumes. These are the most beautiful and gorgeous ever worn by an artistic dancer in vaudeville. There is not a woman in Portland who will not appreciate these creations of the Parisian dressmakers. The dancing is the acme of grace and art.

"Billy's Girl" is a playlet in which Alice Mortlock & Co. will appear. The plot revolves around the mistaken identity of a country girl and a well-known



Charles Connors, Comedian at the Lyric.

THEATRICAL NOTES

The Sicilian players, who are to appear in America under the management of Charles Frohman, will terminate their present engagement in Berlin October 31. From Berlin the organization goes to Vienna, and then sails for America to begin its New York season at one of Mr. Frohman's theatres. Headed by Mimi Aguilera Ferrau, the company includes some 50 odd artists, and the having a repertoire of more than 20 realistic Sicilian plays.

Charles Frohman has obtained for England and for America a new play, "Arsene Lupin," a kind of French "Raffles" written in book form as well as in the form of a play, by Francis de Croisset. "Arsene Lupin," which goes to the Athene theatre, Paris, next Monday night, has proved to be one of the most absorbing detective stories of modern Paris life. Its story concerns the meeting of Miss Armande, a woman who are both thieves, but who abandon their career of thievery because of their love for each other. Mr. Frohman will produce the play in New York before he gives it a London production.

James J. Hackett is planning a tour in a repertory of his former plays, including "The Walls of Jericho."

A new book from J. M. Barrie is on the way. It is understood to be a sequel to "The Little White Bird," which was published about five years ago. "When Wendy Grew Up," is said to be its title.

A fine set of the first four folio editions of Shakespeare's plays which belonged to the late Bishop of Truro will be sold in London next week. These folios are all in choice condition.

Gertrude Coghlan is writing a biography of her father, the late Charles Coghlan, which will be published in September next.

A dramatization of "Molly Bawn," a novel written years ago by "The Dutchman," is being produced in Philadelphia recently and made a hit. It is to be used regularly next season by Beulah Poynter.

A single firm of managers has received within the last few weeks some 100 offers for the production of the theme of thought transference that Mr. Thomas has employed in "The Witching Hour."

"Mater," the brilliant new comedy of "love and laughter" by Percy MacKaye now being presented under the direction of Henry Miller at the Lyric theatre, New York, is probably the greatest success of the new metropolitan season. Played by a splendid company, including Isabel Irvin, Charles A. Stevenson, Frederick Lewis, Hazel MacKaye and John Junior, it is giving a sensation as to many theatre-lovers as can crowd into the Savoy. The New York critics, almost unanimously, are enthusiastic about "Mater," and say that it raises Mr. MacKaye to the front rank of contemporary playwrights. The New York Sun, after a column of praise for the wit, humor and satire of "Mater," said the following: "Mr. MacKaye in such a play—a real live play with live characters. The performance gave thanks to Henry Miller. So do we all. Once more Mr. Miller has shown that he respects the best things of the stage. Once more he has given us the chance to listen to dialogue written by an author of brains and imagination and to see it acted with ideas in it. He has more firmly placed himself in the vanguard of American theatrical production."

Henry Savage's version of Franz Molnar's Hungarian play, "The Devil," will be given at the Lyric theatre, Fourteenth and Washington streets, November 13, 14 and 15.

Miss Adeline Genee, the Danish dancer, who danced her way into the hearts of all New York last season, will go on tour this season, stepping back into the limelight after her "The Kiss," in which she won victories last season. Miss Genee will be assisted by nine coryphees from the London Empire. She will play at the Lyric theatre, New York, and at the Lyric theatre, Boston. A comedy in two acts, "The Money Baiter," by George C. Overly and "Hunting," a comedy in two acts, by Klaw & Erlanger for the use of Miss Genee next season, in which the ballet, "The Dryad," will be introduced.

"The Mountain Boy," a play of contemporary life in Kentucky, by Marion Short and Pauline Phelps, is the next production of Klaw & Erlanger. The play will begin after the opening of "Little Nemo" at the New Amsterdam theatre. Donald Gallagher will play a leading part. Others in the cast will be Edna May Spooner and Howard Kyle.

"Wildfire," with Lillian Russell, has achieved a notable success. The play has demonstrated that Miss Russell need no longer depend on her reputation as a prima donna to entertain her audiences, but that she has reached the top of the ladder as a comedienne. Resigning as queen of comic opera, she has become the princess of comedienne. Miss Russell will play at the Lyric theatre in Boston, Philadelphia and Chicago before she makes the Pacific coast tour.

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OUR STAGE LOSES ITS BRIGHTEST STAR

New York, Oct. 31.—George M. Cohan has decided to quit the stage at the end of the present season and take a year's journey abroad. The young author-composer will write one more musical comedy, after which he will give all his time to comedy drama. Before going abroad Cohan will complete "The Xmas Doll," a musical comedy in which he will present his sister, Miss Josephine Cohan. It will be the most elaborate production that the young comedian has ever attempted.

Cohan believes that he can write a play without music and he is going to travel in an effort to get material for his new effort. "When the present season comes to an end," said Cohan, "I am going to throw two or three suits into a steamer trunk and grab a boat for Europe and travel my head off for about one solid year. My real reason for doing this is because I feel it's about time to write a real play, and I feel that travel is the thing to broaden one when one feels a trifle narrow, and so I'm going a-traveling to see and hear things and absorb and gather material for a play—a real live play with live characters."

"Before I start on this trip I am going to build a new musical comedy play for my sister Josephine. My parents will accompany her on her first individual starring tour, and I intend to surround her with an excellent company."

"The story of the piece is a sort of fairy tale. I will call it 'The Xmas Doll.' The production will border on the spectacular. There will be eight scenes in two acts and a cast, chorus and ballet of about 100 persons. The New York engagement will probably begin next September. This will be my biggest bid for musical honors."

"Thirteen" Superstition Again. New York, Oct. 31.—F. Ziegfeld Jr. has changed the name of the new musical production in which Miss Anna Held opens in two weeks in Philadelphia and is to appear later in the season at the New York theatre. Instead of the name being "Miss Innocence Abroad," the production will now be called "Parisian Model" was the greatest stage success Mr. Ziegfeld had ever had up to

that time and there are just 13 letters in the name. "Follies of 1907" followed and again the generally supposed hoodoo numeral stood for success for Mr. Ziegfeld. "The Soul Kiss" was next and with letters and spaces added, the total was found to be 13. "Follies of 1908" gave still further reason for faith in the "13" superstition.

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