



ALFRED BEST, THE SALT LAKE TENOR.
In the Part of Walter in "Tannhauser."

Usually it requires years of study abroad under the best masters of voice culture to become an acceptable grand opera tenor, and for that reason Mr. Alfred Best, late of Salt Lake, now with the Savage Grand Opera Company, is extremely fortunate. Mr. Best's rapid advancement with the Savage forces is only another example of the opportunity for American singers with this company. Owing to careful training, before leaving Salt Lake City Mr. Best's voice was already well placed, when he joined the company to sing second tenor parts. He was quickly made an understudy of Joseph Sheehan, whose top notes are celebrated, and it was not long before the conductors permitted him to take more important roles. He has already won success as the duke in "Rigoletto," and Mr. Savage has cast him for this role at the coming matinee performance here. In addition Mr. Best will be heard as Walter, one of the minstrel knights in "Tannhauser," and takes part in the minstrel contest in the Hall of Song, one of the episodes of the sonorous music drama.

presented some time ago with considerable success in the suburbs.

Sarah Bernhardt has purchased a five-act play in French, written by Rose Cleveland, a sister of ex-President Cleveland. Miss Cleveland has lived for many years in Paris. The play deals with an episode in the French revolution, with a leading part designed especially for the great French actress, and is nearly completed. Mrs. Bernhardt has already two acts of the piece in her possession.

The Deutscher Theater in Berlin has been using a revolving stage for revivals of "The Merchant of Venice" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." While one scene was proceeding before the audience the next was set on the visible half of the stage, and then swung into view the moment in which the first ended. Thus the comedies were played almost without cuts and with the speed that makes them true dramatic narratives.

Some time ago it was announced that Capt. Marshall was writing a play for Mr. John Hare. The play deals with the house of lords and with a young politician of Conservative environment who becomes a militant Radical. Negotiations are now proceeding which, if they come to a satisfactory conclusion, will result in this play being the successor of "The Mountain Climber" at the London Comedy theater.

The story that Bernhardt, after seeing Margaret Anglin in the great scene of "Zola," rushed behind the scenes and kissed the American actress fervently on both cheeks, and invited Miss Anglin to act with her, is denied. However, it might as well have been the truth, for such recognition would be nothing more than Miss Anglin deserves. She is a great actress in certain roles and she has the great dramatic success of the season in New York.

Conjecture has been caused among theatrical folk by the announcement that Maxine Elliott, wife of Nat Goodwin, had put on the market her fine house on West End avenue, New York. She will either sell or rent it. Miss Elliott is now traveling with her company. Goodwin is abroad. Miss Elliott bought the house in 1900 and took the title to it as Maxine Elliott Goodwin. It has five floors and is worth about \$35,000.

Charles Frohman has decided to make an elaborate production of "Jeanne d'Arc." This heroine, who has been seen in various dramatic guises during

With the foregoing play is given another by Barrie "Pantomime" on the familiar lines of the love affair of Clown and Columbine. This little comedy seems to owe something to the French, but Barrie has made it his own way and a very delightful little entertainment is the result. Lione Barrymore has the title role in "Pantomime" and her brother, John Barrymore, has a part in the cast.

The most Christmas of all the varied offerings of the week is called "The Christmas Man." The scene is set in a small town in the land of Santa Claus, where he and the family live and disport themselves. There are the usual characters called by different names to please the people who like this sort of production, and most of the characters, while called by names found in books for very little children, like Simple Simon, Jack Horner, Sledge Ham, form the same old familiar mixture of soubrette, funny man and girl-just-girl-in-large quantities. The names of the characters seem to suggest an effort to please the children, but perhaps it is for the ones in their second childhood that this jumble of absurdities is presented.

"A Scrap of Paper" is familiar to us from the Kendalls' excellent production given years ago and Miss Henrietta Crossman makes use of the plot and characters in new dress for her reappearance on Christmas day at the Garrick. The title "Mary, Mary Quite Contrary" is given to this version and the scene is brought up to date. We have become accustomed to seeing Miss Crossman in more dramatic environment and costume but her work in "Gloriana" proved that she could be as fascinating in a modern role as in the doublet and hose which she wore in "Miss Nell." The part of Miss Mary suggests Miss Hobbs in some particulars, she has quite as interesting a personality and a will of her own which she uses ingeniously to get her cousin and hostess out of a mild little scrape, thereby setting herself into one. But everything turns out well and the sound of wedding bells is the last thing in the play.

Just why Alphonse Daudet should have chosen the name of the greatest poetess that ever lived, Sappho, ranked by the ancients with Homer, for his story of Parisian life will probably always remain a mystery. Sappho, but for Faustine or even Aphrodite? There are many names of characters in his story and legend that would be more descriptive and suitable for the purpose. When one remembers the description of Sappho, the little brown maiden of Lesbos, with no thought for anything except her art, which in its grace and finish has never been equalled, one cannot fail to see the absurdity in the situation of Fanny LeGrande, a middle-aged "femme du monde" posing for the status of Sappho, which Daudet makes the motive of his book and from which Fanny LeGrande takes her name. As if this were not enough, Daudet has added his mite of reality to the dramatic production that Olga Nethersole is using for this week at the Herald Square theater, and it is being served with all the savor of reality, but it falls of that) which characterized the much ad-

verted former production. Hamilton Revelle still plays the part of the burden bearer heroically.

The names of seven gentlemen are given as being responsible for the production of "The House of the Dead," another musical comedy, pantomime, extravaganza, etc. This also is a fairy story and John Hood, Chimerella, and Beatrice, and the other characters, if this is another play for the children and they respond to all this catering to their supposed tastes it may well be feared that there will be no little ones at home to enjoy the Christmas time. It used to be considered that home was a good place for children and everyone in fact at holiday time, but all that is changed now in many other comfortable customs, but it appears to be an unprejudiced observer that the pendulum is swinging too far the other way now and we are expected to return to our babyhood; indeed it is doubtful if even very young children could enjoy some of the silly plays that the public is expected to patronize. There is a number of number of shapely ladies masquerading as gentlemen in this play and a chorus of 200, which, with the scenery and costumes, is said to be the feature of the production.

At the Metropolitan opera house also, the Christmas activity is apparent. There will be nine performances during the week and on Monday evening as a special concession to the day, "Humperdinck's" "Hansel and Gretel" was sung. There was a Christmas matinee of "Das Rheingold" with Mme. Fremstad in the role of Fricka. On Wednesday afternoon "Die Walkure" was given with Mme. Edyth Walker as "Brunhilde." "Siegfried" will be heard on Thursday afternoon and on Friday the performance of "Götterdämmerung" will end a most astonishing production of the entire "Ring" cycle in one week. On Saturday afternoon "Lohengrin" will be heard and for lovers of the Italian music, "La Favorita" will be given on Friday and on Wednesday night "L'Elisir d'Amore" will be sung. It would be a herculean task for one to hear, understand and appreciate the entire "Ring" in one week, and the singers in the same parts would have to be different each day, the continuity of the drama must be discontinued. Probably the reason many people do not properly appreciate the wonderful genius of Wagner is that his works are not presented in the right way for their understanding. One must have time to think and to grasp the meanings of his music, and that cannot be done when one hears so many of his operas in such a short time.

"In 'Mlle. Modiste' one is not disappointed. Miss Schell has the part of a young girl working in a millinery shop in Paris. She has aspirations for the stage which are realized in the last act. Miss Schell makes a charming actress and she sings better than she is anything to remember or to particularly interest in the theme of this comic opera or its treatment. But it does not offend and that is the best of the days of French farces and distortions of French books.

ELIZABETH REMINGTON WILLIAMS.

NEWS OF THE LONDON STAGE.

Special Correspondence.
LONDON, Dec. 23.—It is now quite a lengthy time since there has been a new play by Capt. Robert Marshall. His last was "The Lady of Leeds," which failed so badly here that it was not even tried in the United States, and perhaps this setback, after his long run of successes made the author of "The Duke of Killarney" think that he needed a holiday. Anyhow, he took himself off to the south of France, and for several months didn't write a single line.

Now, however, the dramatist is back in London, and brings with him a play which has already been "placed," and which may make something of a sensation, especially on this side of the water. For its central character is nothing more nor less than a stage counterpart of the English "Witch of Endor," or Lady Randolph Churchill, and one of the most picturesque figures in British politics today. The only difference is that the young politician in Capt. Marshall's play is a Conservative, and a lord-in-fact, the house of peers will have almost as much fun poking at it as it did in "Joan's."

These liberties are quite likely to be resented by all concerned, in which case it will be the second time that Capt. Marshall's daringness has caused commotion. King Edward, it may be remembered, was highly annoyed by some of the slings at crowned heads which his matinee, when the occasion was celebrated, someone asked Mr. Warfield if playing the same part so many times consecutively did not at last become intolerably wearing. "I should go quite crazy with it," replied Mr. Warfield simply, "were it not for the saving fact that one's audience changes nightly. The consciousness each night that one has fresh mental material to work upon both cheers and invigorates me, and to using the same old means. It is like using the same chisel on continually changing models. One forgets that the tool is the same, and thinks only of the plastic result."

Thomas Dixon, Jr., former divine, now playwright and author of "The Clansman," is himself hammering his new play into shape in New York. Mr. Dixon is tall, athletic, nervous, forceful-capable of bending people to his purpose. He knows his play through and through. Woe to the actor who thinks he knows more than Mr. Dixon! "My interpretation differs from yours," said one venturesome actor at the beginning of the rehearsal. "Your interpretation" thundered the playwright, "is wrong. I have lived with this creature of my brain for ten years. You have toyed with it for about 15 minutes. Now whose interpretation shall we adopt?"

For the first time on record, an actor is about to run for parliament. The theaterian in question is "Ben" Nathan, who will stand for a district of Birmingham at the next general election, and if he should happen to be sent to Westminster the thing would be incongruous enough, for Nathan's last part was not very dignified one of "Reddipunch" in "A Chinese Honeymoon." That, however, was several years ago. Since then Nathan has been interested in quite a prominent theatrical agency in London. This has just been decided to enter politics rather than return to the theatrical profession. The possessor of a good deal of genuine ability it is understood he has been invited to stand for the Birmingham constituency, as a Liberal and there seems a more than fair chance of his election.

All Paris is marvelling over the discovery that one of its most popular singers is a male Trilby, having been literally mesmerized into fame 15 years ago. It is well authenticated, but just been told for the first time, apropos of a recent action by the town council of Marseilles. This was a refusal to allow a hypnotist named Picquard to hold a seance in their city. It seems that Picquard is well known in the south of France, and it was at Toulon, in 1890, that he played "Eugene" to the singer already referred to. During a seance there, Picquard, as his habit is, hypnotized a number of the audience, drew them by his will power on to the stage, and made them do as he pleased. As a general rule they did so very badly, but among the number there was a sailor lad, named Ludovic, who sang delightfully, imitating Paulus and all the popular singers of the day. Barely he woke him up again, Picquard ordered Ludovic to fetch a broom next day at the same hour, ride astride it from the other end of Toulon to the theater, and still

astiride his broom, to come and sing. Next day the hall was packed, and the road between it and the home of the singer was lined with amused spectators, waiting for Ludovic. He came, dressed as he had been the evening before in his fisherman's cap and jersey, rode through the town on his broomstick, and sang better than ever. When he awakened he was furious with Picquard, but his anger dropped when the management of the theater engaged him to sing on excellent terms. At his debut he was a failure, owing to nervousness—there was no Picquard at that time—and his engagement was a very short one. But Ludovic was plucky and intelligent. Picquard had taught him that he had a voice, and he worked hard to train it. He sang his way up the ladder, and he is today one of the most popular singers of his kind in Paris. The name which he has taken is Mayol, and it is the fisher lad of Toulon who "created" the huge successes "Vieux couplet" and "La Maiteliche," and earned a princely income in the Paris cafe concert.

It is seldom that the leading character in a piece is played by four people at the same theater, but that is what has happened at the London "Vaudeville" where "The Catch of the Season" is running. The part of the heroine of this musical comedy was written originally for Miss Dore, who is the wife of Seymour Hicks, its author, but when the piece was first put on, Miss Terriss was ill, and could not appear, so Miss Dore was chosen in her place. Miss Dore played the part for a while, but then Ellaline Terriss recovered and took it up. Soon afterward, however, Hicks's plans necessitated a provincial tour for "The Catch of the Season," so his wife had to leave the London cast again, her place being taken by the younger sister of Zena Dare, Phyllis, who has played the heroine ever since. Now she has been obliged to withdraw, owing to a prior engagement for one of the pantomimes, and Madge Crute, who played "The Little Maid" in America, has taken the part. And still the tangleful piece runs on. It has now been played at the "vaudeville" 540 times, but shows not the slightest sign of wanting popularity.

Victorian Sardou's tremendous energy and genius for invention still show in the slightest sign of flagging. In spite of the fact that the famous playwright is now well on toward his 55th birthday, a London actor-manager who saw the Grand Old Man of French drama, in Paris the other day, declares that he found him apparently as hale and hearty of any of us; not only capable of working from ten in the morning until six at night but actually doing it, and in every respect a long way from Dr. Coker's lethal chamber for the 40 and odd.

But the most interesting piece of news regarding Sardou which this visitor disclosed to me was that the doyen of French dramatists is writing a new "Scrap of Paper." It is over 40 years since his famous comedy of that name took both French and English-speaking playgoers by storm, and now he is hard at work on another piece on the same lines. At present three acts of it are complete, and Sardou expects to finish the rest one before long, but the fact that the piece is not yet finished has kept a profound secret, and only a few of Sardou's intimate friends knew about it. The veteran playwright hasn't yet decided on a name for his new play, but in it he gives a new and surprising twist to the story of "A Scrap of Paper." His comedy of 40 years ago was of course concerned with a sheet of paper whose discovery would reveal his heroine's past in an unflattering way. Now there is again a tell-tale "scrap" which is an evidence of by-gone folly for the part of a lady, but this time the heroine wants to find the missing document in order to prove the loyalty of a later lover. Try as she will, however, she cannot establish her case. Sardou expects to declare her heroine blameless when she knows, and wants the world to know her otherwise. And my informant says that M. Sardou has built up his story so ingeniously that he cannot be quite dramatically concerned lest the unhappy lady should eventually be unable to find the proof of her in-

discretion. Of course no arrangements have been made regarding the play's production, but Sardou hopes that it will be seen not only in France but in England and America too. Many changes have been made in "Peter Pan," revived here this week at the Duke of York's, since the famous first night of a year ago. A gorgeous scene has been put in, with adorable mermaids, and plashing waverlets, and Peter Pan's "boys" all swimming about; and with a rock in the middle of it wherein thrilling adventures with the pirate chief take place. It is a little too much like Christmas pantomime. The chief, and almost the only change in the cast was the substitution of Clary Loftus for Nina Boncioulet, and that change also was in the direction of Christmas pantomime. The introduction of new musical effects suggests the idea that Mr. Barrie would make yet another revolutionary success if he would turn his hand to out-and-out musical comedy. If only some one would come along who could supply the right sort of music. I believe English comic opera would get the same kind of an uplift that Gilbert and Sullivan gave it, and for which it has been waiting ever since.

CURTIS BROWN.

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SILENCE, dark and profound, broods over the Theater, and will continue to do so until the 29th when the popular musical play, "The Yankee Consul," forms the bill. The company will be headed by the young prima donna, Miss Vera Michelena. In the interim, Manager Pyper, his house attaches and the members of the orchestra are cultivating the acquaintance of their families and occasionally visiting the several other play houses of the city. After the 29th the Theater will have but few closed nights until the end of the season.

"Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" is the next play at the Grand, the Mansfield version being presented. The first act opens in front of the vicarage, showing Dr. Jekyll's residence. Utterson and Lanyon are discussing the theories of Dr. Jekyll. When the doctor arrives, Utterson and Lanyon depart, leaving Jekyll alone with his sweetheart, Alice, the vicar's daughter. Jekyll, realizing that he is going to be transformed, tries to get to his house, but it is too late. The transformation takes place. He chokes Alice. The vicar comes to his daughter's rescue and is choked by Hyde. In the second act the police think they have Hyde cornered when Dr. Jekyll appears. During act 3 the police have Jekyll's house surrounded and Dr. Lanyon is sent for the drug that will transform Hyde into Jekyll. The shock is too much for Lanyon, and he dies. The last act finds Dr. Jekyll with but one dose of the medicine left; he takes this and has his last interview with Alice. After the next transformation takes place, Hyde reigns supreme. When the officers break in the doors, he takes the poison and dies, but in death he returns to Jekyll's person.

The attraction at the Grand the latter part of next week will be in the Sun Minstrels, who will appear for three nights commencing Thursday. This organization is well known all over the United States, and is headed by artists of long experience in black face entertainment. Mr. Sun writes that his attraction this year is the strongest he has ever organized, the costumes, scenery, electrical and mechanical effects all being new and the best that money can buy.

Commencing this afternoon, the Lyric announces the Broadway Thrill, in a lively extravaganza headed by Mildred Stoller and Johnny Webber. The closing burlesque is called "At the Bottom of the Sea."

Business during the past week at the Orpheum has taken a wonderful spurt with the result the house has been sold out nearly every night. During the week swinging doors have been installed in the long hallways leading to the balcony, and a screen placed immediately in front of the parquet entrance so as to protect patrons from draughts.

Next week it is promised, there will be a bill which in every respect will come up to the one which drew so heavily this week. By way of a headliner, Al Hazzard, the ventriloquist comedian and cornet soloist, has been secured for a 30-minute act. Next week's playlet, which is a feature of the regular Orpheum bill, will be in the hands of Estelle Wordette and company who come here from Minneapolis with "A Honeymoon in Catskills." This sketch has been receiving favorable comment from the press in other cities on the Orpheum circuit and is said to be decidedly hilarious. The Three Lucifers, brother and two sisters, in an acrobatic dance turn, are included in the program. The troupe of performing dogs which made such a hit with the old and young folks this week will be supplanted by Barnold's Dogs and Cats. While there are a number of performing dog acts on the vaudeville stage today, cats are at a discount from the simple reason that they are among the most difficult animals to train and can never be depended upon to perform their allotted stunts. Mrs. Barnold is one of the few animal trainers who have solved the problem. Kemp and Pearl, singers from the sunny south, and the Kinodrome with a new set of motion pictures including the thrilling adventures of Raffles, the Amateur Cracksmen, go to make up the balance of the bill.

THEATRE GOSSIP

"The Rye House Plot" is the title of a new play on which Mr. Cosmo Hamilton is at present engaged for an important theater in London, the hero being a duke in search of a "genuine" girl, owing nothing of her beauty to the arts of the toilet.

Lillian Russell has gone abroad for a holiday. Her venture into vaudeville houses was not as successful as she had anticipated. The frank audience there rather took her for granted and evidenced to be more interested in other turns.

Without any particular ceremony veteran Joseph Murphy bade farewell to the stage Christmas week at the Murray Hill theater, New York. He was 71 years old then and is considered the richest actor in America, his wealth footing up about an even \$1,000,000.

According to present plans, John Drew is to act in London next spring, presumably in "De-Laney," the play of Augustus Thomas, in which he is now appearing as himself. If we remember rightly, Mr. Drew has not acted in London since he was the leading man of Daly's company.

Mr. Forbes Robertson has been compelled to quit the stage, temporarily, by an obstinate attack of influenza, which has put an end to the run of Mrs. Ryley's comedy "Mrs. Grundy," at the Scala Theater in London. It may be revived again, however, a little later on, although a new piece is spoken of.

Miss Kate Rorke, the popular English actress, has just been appointed "professor of dramatic art" at the Guildhall School of Music, in London. Despite her new duties, she hopes soon to produce at a West End theater Mr. Fernand Hume's play, "Honors Divided."

PLAYHOUSES OF THE METROPOLIS

Special Correspondence.
NEW YORK, Jan. 1.—Considering the offerings for Christmas week in the dramatic world one can make no complaint regarding quantity; seven new productions were given on Monday; concerning the quality of these plays, however, another story may be told. We are accustomed to expect light and frothy things at the theaters at holiday time and most of these plays make no undue strain on even the most indulgent mind; but this has been true of the productions given throughout this season. Even the "oldest inhabitant" of the theatrical world would have trouble to recall a season of such dearth of ideas and interest.

The most ambitious play that made its bow on Monday evening is J. M. Barrie's "Alice Sit-By-the-Fire," in which Ethel Barrymore appears. As may be inferred from the title and from knowledge of Barrie's former work, this play contains delightful humor with a little gentle sarcasm and reveals the writer's unerring insight into the working person. This play deals with the mental attitude of a young girl who has been away from her parents' influence for a long time; and, though Mr. Barrie does not say so, and though Mrs. Barrymore does not seem as if she must have been seeing some of Bernard Shaw's plays, her ideas are so colored with truths and untruths and allities regarding men and women and life in general. She imagines that her concealing her inmost adventures and through her mistaken views, and a desire to right a wrong that never existed, she works very hard and nearly succeeds in overthrowing the entire household. Before too much harm is done, however, the mother grasps the situation and cleverly straightens affairs. One might expect Miss Barrymore to play the part of the daughter "Amy," but she is the mother "Mrs. Grey," with a son, a daughter and a baby; charming, but, as all stage babies should be, invisible.