SPORTS AND THE DRAMA

A BOOM FOR CYCLE RACING.

Many Interesting and Novel Wheeling Contests Are Scheduled For the Coming Season.

JIMMY MICHAEL'S PLANS.

[Copyright, 1898.]

This season is likely to witness the best bicycle races ever seen in America, for never before at so early a date have so many important and interesting as well as novel contests been arranged. The sport this year is on a businesslike as well as a sporting basis, and the outlook was never brighter for a great racing season.

One of the first as well as most interesting of the big match races will be the 26 mile contest at the Willow Grove track, near Philadelphia, between J. Frank Starbuck, the professional middle distance rider, and Edward Taylor, the Frenchman. The race is to be held on May 28, and each man is to be allowed 39 pacemakers. Starbuck is a Philadelphian and gained considerable renown last season by his various attempts, in only one of which he was successful, to defeat Jimmy Michael in a series of middle distance races. This season he intends to devote most of his attention to long distances and is sanguine that he will be better able to compete against the crack riders than he was last year.

What will certainly be one of the most sensational match races of the year, if the contest takes place, will be that between Charles M. Murphy of Brooklyn and E. H. Anderson of Hoodhoos, Ill. It is proposed that these men shall race for a mile paced by locomotives, the contest to be held somewhere on Long Island where two tracks run parallel for a distance of 1½ or two miles and the stretches are reasonably level and where spectators may find favorable positions from which to see the men risk life and limb for fortune's favors.

Arrangements for the ride itself are completed, and the selection of a location is all that delays the final announcement. The board track for each rider will be as wide as the rails will allow. Each locomotive will be followed by a car, which will be occupied by guests. On the back of this car will be a wind shield. Upon this shield a black line will be drawn, and upon this the rider will have to glue his eyes with terrible intentness. On the track will be a second line over which he must travel. Deviation from this, caused by the slightest wobbling, is likely to propel the rider to almost certain death. The track will be boarded for a quarter of a mile ahead of the start and for half a mile beyond the finish.

Murphy and Anderson have had experience. Murphy once followed a quad down hill, near Brooklyn, with a strong wind at his back, making the mile in 1m. 4-5s. He also planned to follow a locomotive, but Anderson carried out his idea while Murphy was in Europe. The spring of 1896 Anderson covered the mile under these conditions in 1m. 2 4-5s.

Anderson used a gear of 120 in his ride, while Murphy's machine was geared to 96. Murphy says that it is not possible to make a mile in a minute behind a locomotive, as he thinks these engines cannot get under way quick enough in a quarter or half a mile to wind the rider up to the proper degree of speed.

Multicycle racing is destined to enjoy a boom this season. Arthur Gardiner, Karl Kaser and Charles Miller started the ball rolling with their sweeping challenge to meet any triplet team in the world. This trio broke the hour unpaced record of the world at Belair, Fla., last March by covering 28 miles 28 yards in an hour, with nothing to break the wind for the big machine. This performance was remarkable, inasmuch as it is the greatest distance ever covered in 60 minutes by any contrivance propelled by human power. The men composing the team are individually remarkably strong. Karl Kaser, the champion of Switzerland, is the Bandow of the cycle track. Miller, who won the fast six day race, has proved that his endurance is wonderful and has given evidence of possessing remarkable speed. Arthur Gardiner the Chicago sprinter, has been in the front rank of short distance riders, both paced and unpaced, for several years.

Their challenge was accepted almost as soon as issued by A. C. Mertens, the five mile champion; Earl Kiser, the half mile champion, and Nat Butler, the great handicap rider. Kiser and Mertens, with John S. Johnson as the third man, have records as members of a triplet team. Last October they broke the record for a mile unpaced by covering the distance in 1m. 0 4-5s. at Kalamazoo, Mich. The wheel used by them in that trip was a road machine, and they are confident that with a racing triplet, properly equipped, they could do much better.

Besides the above mentioned teams there are three others in the field for honors among riders of the three seaters. Swarbrough and Sager of Denver rode 26 miles 1,262 yards in an hour on a tandem a few weeks ago, and the National Track association will add a mile and match the trio against the winners of the first mentioned contest. Then Tom Eck has a team of which he expects wonders, composed of Gougoltz and Lambrecht, with Jaap Eden, the great Dutch champion, as a mate. Fulbert and Wheelock, the English tandem champions, with Charlie Wells added, comprise still another three which will take a hand in the game. A contest of the five teams is said to be in process of arrangement. Should it come off it will undoubtedly be one of the most interesting races of the present season.

Jimmy Michael has signed a contract with the American Cycle Racing association to ride six races under its management during July and August. He will receive big money for these half dozen events, for even though he loses he is to get $15,000, and should he win all six his earnings will be about $25,000. None of the races is to be less than 15 nor more than 32 miles. The dates and tracks on which they will take place have not yet been decided, nor have the men been selected who will try to beat the invincible little Wolverman. Tom Linton will probably be one of Michael's opponents, for he is very anxious to lower the colors of his fellow countryman and thinks that he can do so.

A very novel and exciting race has been arranged for the opening of Woodside track, in Philadelphia, on June 4. It is to be at a mile, flying start, and each of the six contestants will be paced by his own tandem team. These pacing teams will carry their men clear to the race. The purse offered is $600.

After many weeks of talk a series of match races was arranged between Michael and Zimmerman. Six heats, best two in three, will be contested, and the pacemakers will carry the men from start to finish. Each man will be allowed ten men, mounted on any style of pacing machines. The stake is $1,000 a side. The American Cycle Racing association promised the backing for Bald and Shafer for Michael. The first race will probably be held in New York in June, the second in Buffalo and the third, if necessary, at a place yet to be decided upon.

Among the many contests that are likely to be decided on the Fourth of July is one of special interest. Miller has accepted the challenge of Schinnerer for a 24 hour ride, and it will probably be pulled off on that date. Miller's manager has stipulated that the purse be for not less than $500 a side and that each man provide his own pacemakers.

There is a strong probability that the champion of America may this year be a foreigner. Last season and at times previous no one except a rider whose home was within the domains of the United States was allowed entrance to the championships. It was very much of a question, whether Loughead, the Canadian champion, should be permitted to retain the championships he won at the Philadelphia meet in 1897. The racing committee decided, however, that as Loughead had raced so long in the United States he was practically a local rider. This season the rules have been amended, and any rider, no matter where his home or what his nationality, may compete for the championship of the United States.

Much greater interest is added to sprint and middle distance racing this season owing to the presence of the champions in those classes of France, England, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and Italy. Any one of these may become the premier cyclist of America, and many foreign riders will endeavor to carry the championship emblem of this country to Europe.

There will be but one champion this year, and he will be the leader in points when the final race shall have been run and the computation made. Points will count only in championship races. A win will score six, second place four, third three, fourth two and fifth one. Only five men may start in the field of a championship struggle, and from work will thus be reduced to a minimum.

There will be two circuits this season, the national and international, controlled by two racing associations. Regular followers of the national circuit will be Bald, last year's champion; McFarland, Stevens, Nat Butler, Caldwell, Coburn, McCarthy, Kimble, Kiser and many others, including the team of the National Cycle Track association, consisting of Cooper, Tom Butler, Linton and 38 pacemakers, some of whom are themselves prominent handicap riders.

Over the international circuit will travel what is styled the "flying squadron," and they will ride against the cracks of the national circuit at every opportunity. This "flying squadron" includes among its members many foreign champions, namely: Jaap Eden, champion of Holland; Jean Gougoltz, a French champion; Kaser, the Swiss champion; Lehr, champion of Germany; Schrader, champion of Denmark; Chinn of England; Momo and Sebastian and others from Italy, the two Johnsons—John S. of Minneapolis and John S. of Worcester—and A. C. Mertens.

Jimmy Michael, Taylore, the Frenchman, Titus and "Majah" Taylor, the colored racer, will ride on an improvised circuit. These four men, together with the 40 pacemakers for Michael, will insure large entry lists for races to be conducted in connection with the middle distance contests.

With all these crack riders and the three circuits the people of the United States will surely have a sufficiency of splendid bicycle racing this season, and together with the match races the season of 1898 will certainly be a record breaker.

LEO STHERINGTON.

A FORMIDABLE WAR TRICYCLE.

[Copyright, 1898.]

Wheelmen are confident that they will play a not inconspicuous part in the present war against Spain. A New York genius has equipped a tricycle with a Maxim gun and a complete outfit. It is designed to be operated by three men. The riders shown in the illustration are lined in front, Titus at the rear and Cooper in the middle. The latter is supposed to be leading a band of cavalrymen to an exposed point where assistance is required.

THE STAGE FOLK.

Grace Filkins, remembered as the Daughter in "Shore Acres," intends to star if possible next season.

Otis Skinner is to discontinue his career as a star and play next season with Joseph Jefferson in "The Rivals." Whether or not Wilton Lackaye will be a member of that company is said to depend on the fate of his drama made from Lever's novel "Charles O'Malley."

Miss Viola Allen is to begin her tour next October under the management of the Lodge company, probably in a dramatization of "The Courtship of Miss Standish."

The chief incident of "The Bell Ringers," a new play by Sutton Vane, occurs in a church belfry, where the murderer, by reason of his trade, is compelled to toll the funeral knell of his victim.

Plans are being made for the formation of a stock company in New York city with the novel feature of traveling stars. Branch companies are to be established in other cities, making a sort of circuit over which the stars will travel. Thus instead of shipping an entire company from city to city the star, male or female, will travel in solitary state and reflect on the money saved in railway fares.

Mark Twain will prepare several plays for performance in this country, including "David Tarsier" and "In Purgatory."

Olga Nethersole has been excited to protest by the performance of a sketch based on "The Light That Failed," by Courtenay Thorpe. Miss Nethersole says that Rudyard Kipling has authorized her to use the novel and given permission to nobody else. The sketch recently given in London was acted several years ago in this country.

Sol Smith Russell, it is said, will soon bring out a new play by Clyde Fitch.

"The Freshwater," which Louis N. Parker has written for E. S. Willard, is a farcical comedy, with its scenes laid during the time of the Seven Years' war in France. The hero, who is a ne'er do well, becomes a soldier of fortune after his uncle has disinherited him. On the death of this uncle the estates are offered to either his niece or her cousin, whom he has disowned. The news reaches the hero first, and she starts to claim the estate, meeting on her way the cousin, who is also hurrying to arrive there first and establish his right. The two meet, and the girl is helped to the castle by her rival. She succeeds by a trick in gaining admission first, but subsequently surrenders to her cousin.

James Doel, now 84 years of age, is believed to be the oldest living actor in England. He was a general utility man and acted in minor parts with the elder Kean.

WOMEN AS PLAYWRIGHTS.

Latest Success of Marguerite Merington—Work of Miss Morton and Mrs. Ryley.

NOTABLE FEMININE TRIO.

The hit scored at the Fifth Avenue theater, New York, by Minnie Maddern Fiske in Marguerite Merington's latest play, "Love Finds the Way," has served to bring the charming young authoress prominently before the public once more. The story of the career of her former comedy, "Captain Lettarblair," should also serve as an incentive to aspiring dramatists to persist in their work when tempted by repeated discouragements to abandon hope.

Among many literary productions, including clever magazine articles, the "Captain Lettarblair" of Miss Merington was her most notable previous effort, being successfully produced at the first performance by E. H. Sothern in the Lyceum theater, New York city, in 1891.

It was written especially for the actor, who had a kinsman on his mother's side named Lettarblair. This gentleman who spoke English with a slight Irish accent. This fact gives a cue to the personality of the stage hero. A trial matinee was given in October, and the next morning's press made it evident that the play was a success, a great triumph for the initial production of a first dramatic effort.

"My chief aim," said the playwright, in speaking of this drama, "was to make the character that of a perfect gentleman in every respect, but, about all, Irish."

Joseph Jefferson read the play when it was nearly finished, and as a result of his advice the dramatist was obliged, as she expressed it, "to almost spoil an idyllic love story by putting into it a badger villain, because the eminent actor insisted that the public demanded a deep dyed scoundrel at all hazards and would not be content without one." His real words were, "My dear child, you have made your hero so superhumanly good you have to make your villain black in proportion in order to bring out the high lights of Lettarblair's character."

Consequently she turned her comparatively mild mannered rogue into a forger and a thief. At that time, in addition to her literary work, her duties as a teacher, being tutor of Latin and Greek in the New York Normal school, Miss Merington was also president of the alumni association of that institution.

While "Lettarblair" was still in the chrysalis stage the authoress made a short visit to Halifax. Hearing that her mind was occupied with the inception of a military hero, her friends there tendered their aid to give a soldierly coloring to her romance. She was taken to a barracks square and invited to observe that a pump was the only picturesque feature in the landscape and reminded that the great Cromwell had constructed a whole play around a pump. Admission was granted her and her friends to the interior of a fort on condition that she would promise not to make drawings of it for the United States government, and finally she was escorted to the soldiers' quarters in the barracks. "Whatever you do," insisted her host, "don't forget to have lots of pipes about in your scenes and, above all, bills—stacks of bills."

Therefore she feels that poor Lettarblair's reduced circumstances are not a libel on the gallant officers of the British army.

Her latest success, "Love Finds the Way," which is said to be a "comedy of sentiment" suggested by an episode in a German play, ably presented by Minnie Maddern Fiske, is the current attraction at the Fifth Avenue theater, New York city. The story of the play is that the heroine, Madeline, who is a very wealthy cripple, determining to secure a husband, virtually proposes to his artist. The latter has a wife, from whom he has been divorced and whom he believes to have since died. She appears at the usual dramatically inopportune moment, when the prospective bride is arrayed in her wedding satin, and tells her story, but Madeline repulses her. The better sentiments triumph, however, and to save the hopeless wife the crippled woman rushes out into the snow, recovers the use of her limbs in a miraculous manner and thus informed, returns to the chief, in which a noble and affectionate physician, Dr. Lee, who has always loved her in secret, is at last recognized by Madeline as the real choice of her heart.

MISS MERINGTON.

Miss Merington, who is of English birth, came to this country when a child with her family. She is a woman of a nervous intellectual temperament, of medium figure, with dark hair slightly tinged with gray, thoughtful brown eyes, which lighten with animation in conversation, and features with a faint suggestion of sharpness, denoting keen sensibilities dominated by a fine identity.

Another well known woman playwright is Mrs. Madeleine Lonette Ryley. She was a few years ago the prima donna of the Dodge Comedy company and other similar organizations. She is a petite and remarkably capable young woman, and one critic wrote of her when she was a prima donna, "She is a comic opera singer with a sweet, pure voice, a soubrette who has won fame in a number of roles of that kind and an exquisite comedienne whose work has always been notably good."

When "The Lady or the Tiger?" was produced at Wallack's theater, New York, by the McCaull company, the metropolitan critics went into ecstasies over her vivacity and sleverness as Irene.

Her comedy, "An American Citizen," was the means of Nat C. Goodwin's greatest success on the stage. "The Mysterious Mr. Bagg," which gave Annie Russell and Joseph Holland a favorable opportunity to win the American public's applause, was one of the great "hits" of the past season, and in "Christopher, Jr.," which she wrote for John Drew, she thoroughly demolished the ancient allegation that "women have no sense of humor."

Mrs. Ryley has also written other plays, which have been accepted by N. C. Goodwin, E. H. Sothern, Herbert Kelcey and Effie Ellsler for production in this country, and one for Charles Hawtrey, which was presented recently with success in England. She possesses in marked degree the dramatic instinct, and from her long professional career her knowledge of the drama is thorough. Her life is an object lesson for women who would venture for success in the fields of dramatic literature. Her courage and tenacity of purpose are demonstrated by the fact that she wrote for seven years before she gained a hearing. Altogether she has written 27 plays and four comic opera libretos since 1890.

The first work of the new famous and wealthy Martha Morton (though her marriage a few months ago has changed her name) was "Helene; or, The Refugee's Daughter," in which both Clara Morris and Cora Tanner have starred. This was succeeded by a travesty upon the popular "May Blossom." Then came "The Merchant," which won for her the prize offered by the New York World for the best original American play and which she subsequently sold for $4,000.

This was followed by "Geoffrey Middleton, Gentleman," produced by the Proctor stock company. Since then she has written "Brother John," "His Wife's Father" and "A Fool of Fortune" for William H. Crane, "A Bachelor's Romance" for Sol Smith Russell and another play for a prominent London manager. Her royalties from the first two Crane plays aggregated more than $20,000.

Still new name added to the list of women dramatists who have begun—as that of Mrs. Evelyn Greenleaf Sutherland of Boston, who collaborated with Captain Charles King in writing "Foes Private." Her "Bas' Van" is a new set play of southern life, and "Robin the Bilent" and "Charterton" are becoming well known. "Bohan" was written for Alexander Salvini, and she has now the last character created by the gifted Italian. She is a society woman, who took up dramatic writing out of love of it, the emolument being only a secondary consideration.

ROBERT W. WILCOX.

Ye New Critic And ye Old Actor.

With the new school of acting, the new school of art, the new woman and the new almost everything else has come the new critic. He earns his bread not by the sweat of his brow, but by the vinegar of his pen. Now, the new critic takes himself seriously, very seriously, indeed. He revels in the joy of being inspired by the thought that he is the autocrat of the stage and that sighs, tears and lamentation follow in his wake of his tart pen. The new critic goes about with his nose in the air and a carefully and painfully acquired decadent expression. He wears green carnations in his button hole, drinks the quantity of absinth he can imbibe per day and, last and crowning woe, is never seen in public without a cigarette cilinched between the cruel teeth. He does not need to see the play, she avoids seeing it, says his imagination will work better without it; also our managers do well to wait for him and some years to meet him with a chill, often cranky and conservative editor in whose daily exchange grind is added the pleasure of reading it and the poisonous and painful things about the new critic's daily dose of vinegar, vitriol and vituperation, and the new critic goes home and tells his wife what a great man he is and attacks his employer for a raise in his salary.

Thus happily the new critic goes glibing down the stream of life, shooting his Parthian arrows wherever he thinks they will do the most harm, serene and joyous in the might of the pen.

Now, the average actor does not look at things in that light at all. His sad and pensive life of toil is far from being imbittered by the critic's haughty words, especially only when the epithets and epigrams are leveled at some one else in his company.

Mr. Louis James, who has yearly traveled from Bangor, Me., to Galveston and has amassed money with a registered list of 9,999 American cities, entertained a party of friends recently at dinner in a New York hotel with some of his impressions of the new critic. The guests included several other representative actors and managers, and a kindly, milk of human kindness spirit pervaded their remarks in regard to the critic. The very night before one of the most deadly of the craft had done his worst in regard to Mr. James' new play. Instead of feeling pressed because of such remarks as "the fat actor capered about over the canvas landscape like a mountain goat and at imminent danger of damaging the plaster nose" a most cheerful view was taken of them.

As one by one these gems of thought were read aloud to the company they were greeted by shouts of laughter. One long limbed actor had been fitted with the epithet "labyrinthian legs." The youth was a new recruit from a dramatic school, and he suffered mental anguish in the ratio of his inexperience. He was not present, however, and so the laugh went round.

"The new critic who is a professional user of the tomahawk is a great boon to the poor actor," observed Mr. James. "Hurt an actor's feelings? No, sir; and when you think of his low office receipts. And that criticism has helped mine. Here's to the health of the guyer critic!"

An Old Wheel.

J. S. Smith, a member of the L. A. W. in Baltimore, has a velocipede which he purchased in 1868 at a cash cost of $125. He declares that the machine was well made and that it is still in fair condition. Describing it, he says that the wheels are of wood, with light steel tires. The front wheel is 42 and the rear one 32 inches. The backbone is forged steel, beautifully curved, with a five inch steering head. The front forks are forged with a good deal of rake, and the handle bars are outrigged to the front like the outrigger of a racing shell. The cranks are five inches and the pedals three sided, made of hard. A flat steel spring runs from the head to the top of the rear forks, and to it the saddle is clamped. The latter is large and comfortably padded with hair and covered with corduroy, with a high pommel of patent leather. The backbone is extended out from the steering head and is surmounted with an eagle beak, which is gilded with gold. When the wheel was new, it presented a handsome appearance.