

The Secret of Success In Comic Opera.

By Frank Daniels of "The Ameer."

A SUCCESSFUL comic opera is made, not born; and the elements entering into such a success are many. People often think it sheer luck on the part of my manager, Kirk La Shelle and myself, that we have never had a comic opera failure. Many of

the heartlike box office sends through the play's arteries and veins, the play dies; that is all. I don't want to belittle the effect or influence of the newspaper critics' opinion on the worth of a theatrical performance, yet when the critic of one

power. You have all had some friend slap you on the back and say, "Don't fail to see such and such an opera." "Is it funny?" you ask. "Make you die of laughter." "How are the girls, pretty?" "Pretty!" And then he rolls his eyes and gasps: "Pretty! Say, nothing but long, sharp spikes along the footlights keeps you from climbing right on to the stage. Pretty! Say, if any one of 'em wants to break my credit along the line she can take her little hammer and begin at once. Pretty! Wow! What'll you have?" This, of course, gentle reader, if you are a man. If a woman, well, I don't think pretty girls will keep you away. You know the rest. You simply go and buy tickets.

Then the music. There must be a plenty of it, and it must be not necessarily so good as popular. We all hear about composers writing down the public; of composers who belittle their talents, and all that sort of thing. Well,

fine point. The costumes of "The Ameer" company have been most highly praised. They are deservedly praised. They are the creations of the best costumer in the country, to whom Mr. La Shelle gave carte blanche to make the costumes as he thought best. Mr. La Shelle gave him the liberty, told him the number of people in the company and the date the costumes must be ready. "I shall hold you responsible for their artistic excellence," he said. And that was all.

The scenery plays an important part in a production and should be of the best. In fact, I should say here that everything connected with a comic opera production should be of the best, the very best. Nothing is saved by getting cheap material. And this applies to all and everything, from the principals down to the programmes.

Through it all, from first to last, there is one thing which I sometimes think overshadows all else. I refer to the lights. A comic opera without sufficient lights is about as festive as a bottle without contents. The public can't know how important a part lights play in the success of a comic opera. The stage must be loaded down, so to speak, with noonday sunshine. And the lights must come from the front, the back, the sides and top, so as to prevent the casting of shadows. Too much importance cannot be placed in the matter of lights. The fact that the importance of lights cannot fully be appreciated by the public is because the public is not initiated in the mysteries of the business. Possibly some insight may be gained by one illustration. I depend a great deal on my facial expression for effects. In "The Ameer" I have a scene where I learn suddenly that some melon I have been eating is poisoned. Prior to the announcement I am on the broad grin. My face is aglow with the satisfaction which belongs to one who has just broken a prolonged fast with a most delicious meal. I do not start with surprise. I make no move with my body. My entire change of feeling from gleaming gratification to sudden fright and despair is told by my face alone. Unless the lights are of the brightest, the small gradations of change in my expression are not seen, and whatever effect there may be in what I have done is lost.

To return to the first requisite, comedy, I want to say that there cannot be too much of it. But there is no need to have recourse to anything that is vulgar, or even suggestive. My experience, which covers a generation, has proved to my satisfaction that there is plenty of good, clean, wholesome fun in the world to supply the demand. And it has been my pride that, though I have had audiences which have shrieked with laughter, nothing in my provoca-

"Pugilists I Have Made Famous."

Tom O'Rourke, the Manager of Fighters,
Tells of His Experiences.

THE majority of men interested in the art of boxing think that one of the easiest positions in the world is that of manager of pugilists. Their idea is that all one needs do is to get hold of some likely young fellow, make matches for him and pocket half his winnings. Now that is just where the rub comes in. First of all, as in the old saying about cooking a rabbit, you must first catch him. It takes a man who has had a long experience in ring matters to pick out an unknown and inexperienced young fellow who has probably never fought more than a few times and tell by watching his work whether, after careful training, he will turn out a champion.

Then, again, in the matter of making matches a great many managers come to grief. One must know the caliber of the men your protegee is going to fight, so as not to get him up against too hard a proposition at first. Nor must a boxer be allowed to fight too often and thus overdo his strength; nor, on the other hand, must his engagements be too far apart, so that he is idle and falls into bad habits.

It is the manager who hits the happy medium among all these pitfalls who is successful with his charges, provided, of course, they are good men to begin with. I attribute a great deal of my success in the management of pugilists to the fact that I am in a position to act as a second and can generally give good advice to a man from the ringside. I always watch both fighters very closely during the rounds, and if I see my man is getting the better of the argument I let him go along as he thinks best. Whether a man is winning or losing, it is always the best plan to keep on "jollying" him along and make him think he is bound to win and that the other fellow is getting the worst of it. It is of the highest importance to keep a boxer in a good temper when in the ring and not let him get worried. It is half the battle gained if he has confidence in himself and in his manager.

This last is the reason why many fighters lose when they ought to win. They have no confidence in their seconds and in many cases know more about the game than their would be advisers. I have always been interested in boxing and consequently have learned a great deal about the business in the years that I have been connected with it. The way I happened to start out as a manager of pugilists was this: I was living in Boston, and Ike Weir, locally known as the "Belfast Spider," boxed a lawyer in the town and received a trouncing at his hands. The "Spider" and his backers thought that he could do better and challenged the lawyer to another go for \$500 a side. I saw the first encounter and was so impressed with the ability of the lawyer that I offered to back him.

Some of the friends of the young lawyer heard of the affair and persuaded him not to fight any more, not because they were afraid he would lose, but because they thought if the matter came to the ears of the public his career would be blasted. It must be remembered that pugilism in those days did not hold the high place in public estimation that it has since attained. Instead of having the clubhouses, with every convenience, purses running up in the thousands of dollars, with lawyers, doctors and people of the best standing in the audience, fights in those days were held, as a rule, in secret. Instead of five ounce gloves, bare knuckles, skin tight or two ounce gloves at the most were used.

But to return to my story. When Ed Holske, who was backing Ike Weir,

heard that the young lawyer would not fight, he generously refused to take the forfeit and gave me three weeks in which to find a man to take his place. Going along the street one day, I saw Jack Havlin driving a coal cart. He had taken part in a few unimportant fights previous to that time, and I had taken a fancy to him and thought he had the makings of a fighter. So I stopped him and asked him if he would meet Weir. He jumped at the opportunity and fought him for four and a half hours in the woods in Rhode Island.

Soon after that I saw George Dixon beat a man who was 16 pounds heavier than himself, and I took charge of him. I wanted to match him against Cal McCarthy, who was then the feather-weight champion. McCarthy's manager told me first to put Dixon up against Eugene Hornbacher, and if he won, then McCarthy should give him a chance. So I arranged a meeting between Dixon and Hornbacher, and the colored youth knocked his opponent out in a round and a half. Then, as every one who has followed boxing will know, after a battle with Joe Murphy, which Dixon won in seven rounds, he was matched to fight McCarthy for the championship. The battle took place in Boston and lasted 70 rounds, when it was declared a draw. A little over a year later the two met again in Troy, N. Y., and there George won in 22 rounds, capturing the championship, a title he held until it was wrested from him last month by Terry McGovern. Had George taken care of himself during the past few years the result of his last fight would have been different. Terry is a good young fighter, but he lacks the experience Dixon has had, and had George met him in the shape he was in five years ago he would have won.

Dixon is a good example of the old style fighter, of whom John L. Sullivan is typical. Prodigious of his financial as well as his physical resources, he parted with his money almost as quickly as he got it. He is the only grateful fighter I have ever met in my whole career, and I have had to do with a good many in my time. It is generally the case that when you have done your best for a pugilist and managed his interests successfully he will suddenly leave you and, as likely as not, abuse you into the bargain. Of course, there are other exceptions, but George Dixon, who remembers past favors, are few and far between.

I have quite a string of fighters in my care just now, including Tom Sharkey, "Mysterious" Billy Smith, who has recently proved himself not such a back number as many people thought him; Bob Armstrong, the colored heavy-weight; Joe Walcott, the phenomenal West Indian welterweight; George Gardiner of Massachusetts, and Henry Lyons of Chicago. These are all good men at their different weights, and I am kept busy arranging and planning fights for them.

It will be noticed that I seem partial to colored fighters, and so I am. Negroes, in my opinion, are gamer than whites and can stand more punishment. Take Walcott, for instance. In some of his fights he has taken punishment which I don't believe any white man of his size could have withstood and not

have broken down. And yet Walcott is today better than he has ever been. Last year he made the best showing of his whole career in the ring, knocking out Ryan, Edwards and Creedon, three Australians. He also knocked out Jim Judge, Jim Watts, Bobby Doherty and Dick O'Brien and earned decision over Creedon in three limited round bouts. Walcott is only 5 feet 1½ inches in height and weighs in fighting trim 140 pounds. Yet his record shows that he has been most successful against pugilists heavier and taller than himself. He can stand any number of blows on the head and gives in return straight arm punches and body smashes with deadly effect. Walcott and Dixon have long been chums, and the latter's defeat at the hands of McGovern broke Walcott all up. He is now resting and giving his hands a chance to get into good shape, when he will again meet all comers.

There has been a good deal of talk recently of a party of American fighters going over to Europe to fight in Paris next summer. It is quite likely that some may go, and I am perfectly willing for any of my men to make the trip if a reputable man takes hold of the affair. However, I think that there will be too much going on and so much money hung up in purses on this side of the water during the next few months that the majority of the fighters will find it pay better to stay here. Fights between the heavyweights will be fairly numerous during the next few months, beginning with the Jeffries-Corbett battle next month. Jeffries will undoubtedly win that, but then he will have a much harder proposition to encounter in the person of Thomas Sharkey, who, I am of the opinion, will defeat the burly boiler maker. If he does, there will be lots of sport for the eye-savor is always spelling for a fight and is ever ready to give aspirants a chance to show their prowess.

Tom O'Rourke

TRICKY BALL PLAYERS.

"Ball players are tricky, and a veteran can make a bluff of touching a man that will deceive any one who is not directly over him. Especially is this true in double plays requiring quick action," says Al Warner. "When an infielder reaches for a runner and fails to get the ball on him, he does not hesitate a moment in throwing to first or second. The cranks consider the promptness and decision with which he acts as convincing proof that he has got the first man and is after the second."

"That infielder never misses a chance to make a bluff at the umpire who calls the first man safe, and he always has the people with him. It is a small thing to do and it is one of the heaviest handicaps an assistant umpire labors under. It makes no difference how well he is umpiring. If a ball player can give the cranks the impression that the home team is getting the worst of it he is sure to get a raw deal for the rest of his stay in that city. I don't blame an infielder for trying to get an umpire to give him a put out he is not entitled to, but he should not kick when he knows he is wrong and bring trouble to one who has done his duty."

THE COMEDIE FRANCAISE.

In the Comedie Francaise, the French government theater, 28 actors and actresses compose the society and divide between themselves each year as net profits \$200,000. This money does not go in largest part to two or three stars, but is graded according to length of service. Some \$2,500 apiece was drawn by the newest members last year and the oldest \$15,000. More than this after retiring at the end of 20 years every member is entitled to a life pension of \$1,000 annually.



"SAPHO" ACT II



WALTER PERKINS



JOBYNA HOWLAND

PLAYERS IN WHOM THE THEATER GOING PUBLIC IS INTERESTED.

One of the illustrations shows a scene in the second act of "Sapho," the play in which Olga Nethersole is now appearing at Wallack's theater, New York. She has just paid a visit to the rooms of the young artist (Mr. Revelle), and, before leaving, she decides that she will permanently cast her lot in with the young man.

Miss Jobyna Howland is one of the most beautiful and graceful of the prominent leading women of the American stage. She has been adding to her reputation by her excellent performance of Queen Flavia in James K. Hackett's production of "Rupert of Henzau."

Walter E. Perkins is the young actor who first succeeded in securing a hearing for "My Friend From India," written by his friend, Harry A. Du Souchet, and then created the principal character, playing it as it has never been played since. He is still appearing in the role, but will probably abandon it shortly in favor of another farce by Mr. Du Souchet and a dramatization of Mary E. Wilkins' human comedy of New England life, "Jerome, a Poor Man." Mr. Perkins occupies a unique position in the American theatrical world, and shrewd observers are of the opinion that he will ere long be recognized as one of the most potent comedy stars in this country.

Such people seem to fancy that we simply secure a libretto set to music and that then the company has nothing to do but learn the lines and act them out as we speak them. I won't say that there have not been successful comic operas produced exactly as they were first written. But I will say that I never heard of one; moreover, I never heard of any man who ever heard of one. When the author and composer think that they have turned out about the best comic opera ever written and hand it to the manager for production, he goes through it with cold, experienced, practical eyes. He slashes here and interpolates there to lick the thing into such shape as his experience has taught him the public wants. Some authors fancy a manager or star for whom the opera is written is actuated by the idea which frequently moves youthful critics to find fault lest they be termed too easily impressed. But such a fancy is wrong. Sometimes, in the operation of slashing and interpolating, no doubt, art suffers; but an opera must appeal to the public in order to live. If the public doesn't like it, the public will stay away. And without the

paper says that a certain performance is excellent and well worth the seeing, and another critic of a contemporary paper declares of the same performance that it is highway robbery to compel people to pay to see it—well, the readers of both papers are apt to think that something is wrong with at least one of the critics and go and see the play for themselves.

What makes a comic opera's favorable effect on an audience?

Comedy first, scenery fourth. A comic opera must by the very nature of things be funny. If it isn't funny, it fails of its initial and announced purpose. Then the girls must be pretty. There is nothing an audience repudiates so strongly as unpretty, not to say homely, girls. They may be all right in a dramatic performance. As we all know, some of our greatest actresses wouldn't even be allowed to compete in a beauty show, let alone win the prize. But not so in comic opera. The girls of comic opera are chosen by the discreet manager first of all for their beauty. He knows how potent they are in magnetic

without taking time to combat that kind of talk, I want to say for a comic opera composer to succeed he must write what the public wants, or the public won't come. When a composer wants to know what sort of music I prefer: I say, "Whistlers. Punctuate the score closely with whistlers." By whistlers I mean music which tickles the audience and which remains with those who hear it and is hummed and whistled by them on their way home from the theater and the next day and for a long time afterward. The more they whistle it the better they like it. They talk about it; come again to the theater and are the means of others coming. And that's what I mean by whistlers.

I haven't classed costumes as one of the requirements, because I regard them as part of the girls. Poor costumes make pretty girls unpretty. When you hear of a company with a lot of pretty girls, you can make up your mind that the costumes are pretty. The costuming of a comic opera is a great business. It is, of course, very important. But I think that my manager, Kirk La Shelle, has it down to a

tions of mirth has ever been found objectionable from decency's point of view.

I don't think that a comic opera will ever be written which will please all the critics. But I do think that "The Ameer" is the best modern comic opera that has been written. Certainly the receipts and enthusiasm show that it meets with the public's approval. "The Ameer" is an excellent sample of what a comic opera should be. It has been found to be a strong, coherent piece of work. There is no reason why a comic opera should not be interesting in itself. Its story should be strong and cumulative and at the same time very funny, as is "The Ameer." Librettists sometimes are apt to slight the collateral parts. They write the star part and let the others, so to speak, take care of themselves. This places too great a burden on the star. He has enough to do in discharging the duties connected with his own part. He should not be expected to carry the whole show on his shoulders.

Frank Daniels.

THE THEATRICAL WORLD.

What is said to be the first production of a Shakespearean play in the Japanese tongue in the history of the stage was lately given by a Japanese company in Boston. "The Merchant of Venice" was played with scenery painted in Tokyo, and the company interpreted the lines with much meaning. Odette Tyler, it is reported, is becoming

ing weary of "Phroso" and is working on an adaptation of "Young April," a story of modern fashionable society, for next season.

Henrietta Crossman is going starring in Bronson Howard's "One of Our Girls." This is the play in which Helen Dauvray signalized the most brilliant period of her career, and through it E.

H. Sothern also first came into prominence.

The Passion play will be enacted at Oberammergau 27 times during the coming summer, the first performance occurring on May 21. A new auditorium, accommodating 4,000 persons, has been built.

It would appear from the box office returns that "Ben-Hur" and "Zaza" are among the most notable record break-

ers in the matter of receipts this season.

As said, have ranged in round numbers from \$12,000 to \$18,000 weekly for over a period of a month and a half, and for the latter the weekly average during its long run has been \$16,000.

Ada Lewis, whose portrayal of low feminine types has found the highest critical praise, is now an active member of the Klaw & Erlanger company play-

ing "The Rogers Brothers in Wall Street."

As going to show the demand of part of New York's cosmopolitan population for amusement, it is said there are three theaters on the east side of town devoted to the Hebrew drama.

One of the dreams of the black face comedian W. H. West has been to dramatize minstrelsy. The same gentleman says there is nothing more

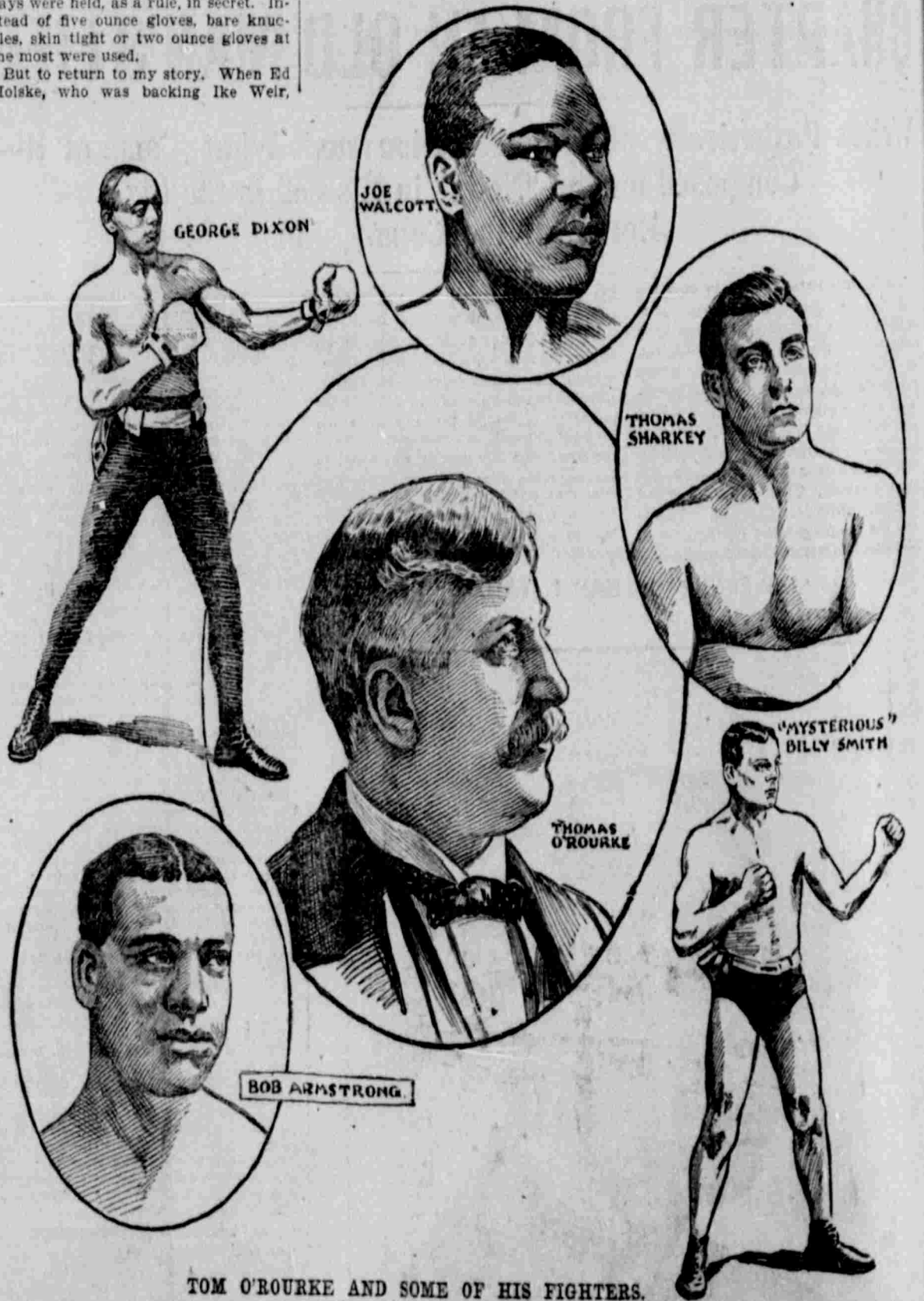
healthful to the skin than the use of black cork. It removes impurities and clears the complexion; black heads and pimples are unknown to the man who appears in black face.

An artistic imitation of the Shakespeare house at Stratford has been built on the grounds of Wellesley, the woman's college.

It is told in a Paris paper that a French dancer who has been exciting

that excitable city went to a public park in her sleep and, mounting a bench at 4 in the morning, went through her dances.

Virginia Harned will play Ophelia when E. H. Sothern makes his revival of "Hamlet" in the spring at Daly's, New York. Only a few cities will be visited, including Washington, Cleveland, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York.



TOM O'ROURKE AND SOME OF HIS FIGHTERS.