

## PLAY CRITICISED BY THE PLAYERS

How the "Ben-Hur" Performers Regard the Drama  
In Which They Appear.

"Ben-Hur" is a play that interests not only the auditor, but the actor or actress playing a part in it. Ordinarily the actor and actress take no more interest in the part than they play or in the drama itself than the faithful worker takes in his or her endeavor to perform the service required in a painstaking manner. In "Ben-Hur" every artist appearing in a character feels the influence of the unusually magnetic interest of the entire production, and I think I may truthfully say that this interest increases with every performance, when a realization of some new

the actor who participates in it. "Ben-Hur" in its artistic completeness appeals powerfully even to those who take part in its presentation.

*Adeline Adler*

FROM MISS RICCARDO.

I have appeared in important roles in several notable productions made both in this country and in England, but I feel free to say that none in which I have played has ever made such a strong appeal to me artistically as has

of watching the play from the wings. To my mind "Ben-Hur" will have a lasting influence for the better on the American stage, and, for that matter, on the stage of the world. Its producers have spent money most lavishly in its production, but these expenditures have been guided by an artistic instinct which is not only most commendable, but distinctively novel.

*Conrad Rudolph*

MARY SHAW'S OPINION.

How does "Ben-Hur" strike me as seen from behind the footlights? As the most magnificent spectacle in which I ever took part. That fact, however, does not affect me so powerfully as the exquisite taste of the decorations, lighting, costumes, groupings and music. One feels in each of these the master hand of the true artist, and the ensemble is beautifully harmonious. Never before have I seen a stage spectacle drama which, from the wings, betrays no garish, vulgar spots. In "Ben-Hur" the eye rests with delight on color schemes of rare beauty, on groupings that are a succession of pictures, and the ear is ravished with music which

ought keeping with the subject and does Mr. Kelley, the composer, great credit. The production, under the direction of Mr. Ben Teal, needs no comment; it speaks for itself.

*Frank Mordant*

W. S. HART'S OPINION.

A rare combination of genius between author and dramatist, one who serves literature as his mistress and the other who serves the stage as his master; the best efforts of a talented company, industry and private worth displayed by innumerable stage mechanics and an absolutely open managerial purse backing the entire enterprise insured for the play "Ben-Hur" a happy and prosperous life. Yet all this would have gone for naught had it not been for the public—the great public's favor.

The public cannot instruct the scene painter how to paint, the carpenter how to build, the stage director how to move his characters, or the actor how to so move properly; but the know, when the work is done, whether or not it is well done. They justly admire or condemn the whole picture.

Back of the curtain line all seek to sustain their individual work. They are

## THE LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP.

Erne and O'Brien to Box For the  
Title of A Comparison of the Men

THERE has probably never been a time when there was so much activity among boxers as is now being shown. More "star" events have been held or are scheduled to take place in the near future than have ever before been bunched together in the same space of time. Beginning of the 1st of January, the McCoy-Maher, McGovern-Dixon and McCoy-Choyenski fights took place in such rapid succession that the sports have hardly had time to recover from the effects of one encounter before they were called upon to witness another.

New York was the scene of all the battles mentioned, and as a matter of fact, that city is the center of affairs connected with boxing in the east. The reason for this unwonted activity in the fraternity is the fact that the New York legislature may repeal the Horton law and thus cut off all chance of holding such encounters in the Empire State. It was this fear that led Corbett and Jeffries to agree to come together in the ring in March instead of waiting until next September.

The next fight of any great importance is the one scheduled to take place at the Broadway A. C., New York, on the night of Feb. 2, between Frank Erne and Jack O'Brien for the lightweight championship. As everybody knows, these two met last December at Coney Island, and their bout resulted in a draw after 25 rounds of hot work. Opinions as to the merits of the two men are widely divergent, each having a strong following.

Erne, being the champion, was of course the public favorite previous to the last encounter, and many of his admirers still retain their faith in him. Erne won his title by defeating "Kid" Lavigne last July, and, of course, technically holds the championship until he shall be wrested from him by a defeat. The lightweight problem, however, is in a sufficiently muddled state just now. There are more good men in this class than in almost all the other divisions put together, and new aspirants who must be considered are popping up every day.

Not many years ago Jack McAuliffe was head and shoulders above all of his contemporaries. After him came George Lavigne, who also for a long time was really in class by himself, there being no one able to hold his own with the Saginaw lad in the ring.

Just now, however, the conditions are very different. There are 12 or 15 high class lightweights, half of whom are so evenly matched that the title of champion is likely to be tossed around from one to another for some time to come, and it will be mighty hard work for any one of them to hold the laurels in his grasp for any great length of time.

Among the aspirants for the title now held by Erne are Jack O'Brien, who will try to wrest it from him next Friday; Joe Ganz, who has posted his money to fight the winner of the forthcoming encounter; George McPadden, "Spike" Sullivan, "Kid" McPartland and Eddie Connelly. Every one of these fighters is clamoring for a chance to show his ability and is more than anxious to fight at a few weeks' notice, and each has also a big war with which to back himself.

This list, while necessarily incomplete, is sufficient to show what a plethora of good material there is lying around among the lightweights and is ample evidence that the man who shall prove absolutely his superiority to all of his mates will be as much of a wonder among the lightweights as is young McGovern among the featherweights.

Notwithstanding the fact that Erne and O'Brien recently met and fought to a draw, the "dope fiends" are playing their trade just as industriously as ever. Those persons who pin their faith to "comparisons of pugilists" judged by their work against other men are not unanimous, however, in their opinions as to which man will win in the forthcoming battle. Those who contend that Erne will best O'Brien point to the fact that the former required but seven rounds in which to knock out Dal Hawkins in San Francisco last March, whereas O'Brien could only win the de-

cision from the same man after going the limit of 25 rounds of hard fighting.

O'Brien's supporters, on the other hand, point with equal pride to his fight with Jim Foss and Jack Downey last August, in both of which he scored knockouts, in 8 and 19 rounds respectively. The best that Erne could do against these two men was two 20 round draws. It must be said in Erne's favor, however, that it is over two years since he met them, and the natural and true inference is that he has improved vastly in that time.

The fact that Erne engaged in but three fights during 1899, aside from his draw with O'Brien, does not admit of much flattery on the basis of analogy. O'Brien, on the other hand, took part in 14 battles during the past year, of which he won ten and drew four. As a matter of fact, this business of comparing fighters by means of their records against other boxers is seldom, if ever, a true or even a fairly accurate test of their ability, for it can easily be proved by analogy that Terry McGovern, the featherweight champion, can defeat Jim Corbett, the ex-champion heavyweight. This on the face of it is, of course, perfectly absurd.

Speaking of McGovern, that sturdy young Brooklynite is certainly making hay while the sun shines. A good many people think that this double champion is attempting too much by taking on all comers at the rate of two or three a month, and point to other fighters who have ruined their chances by just such actions.

With Terry, however, the case is different from that of almost every boxer who has preceded him. He never drinks or smokes and has no other bad habits. Consequently he is always in good shape and does not require a lot of hard work previous to every fight to put him in condition. As a matter of fact, he always does enough work in the gymnasium every day to keep in good trim. Besides, almost all of his recent battles have been so easy for him and of such short duration that they have not been as much of a strain on his constitution as would be an ordinary bout with his training partner when preparing for a fight.

Indoor sports are now attracting the attention of nearly all athletes, and basketball, water polo, running and jumping under cover and such games are getting their full measure of attention. One of the principal events to vary the monotony of training during the winter months is the annual carnival of sports given by the Knickerbocker A. C. at Madison Square Garden. One of the chief features of the affair this year will be the attempt by Ray C. Ewry of Purdue university to break the record for three standing jumps. Ewry is undoubtedly the finest standing jumper in the world. The old record without weights is 31 feet 6 inches, made by B. Dougherty of Boston in 1891. Ewry will easily shatter this performance, as he has continually done over 36 feet in private. Another interesting event will be the mile relay race between teams from the universities.

Just now, when athletics of all sorts never had more rosy prospects in America, the outlook in the British isles is rather gloomy. The willingness of English athletes to volunteer for service in South Africa has been shown to be just as strong as among ours during the Spanish war. As a consequence of this drain there are serious doubts among Harvard and Yale men whether they will be able to induce the Cambridge and Oxford teams to make the proposed trip next summer for a return set of games. Nothing has been definitely settled as yet, but the general feeling at New Haven and Cambridge is that the games be postponed.

The University of Pennsylvania finds herself with such a plenty of rowing material that it has decided to send a crew to Henley next summer to compete in the international eight oared race, besides entering crews for the annual events over the Poughkeepsie course. No American crew has competed in England since 1896.

EGBERT LEONARD.

## WAITING FOR THE DEATH.

Richard Mansfield once had a call from a budding dramatist who displayed a remarkable idea in connection with play building. The young man explained his story with enthusiasm. There was originally in it, and, though there was not a character suitable for himself, Mr. Mansfield permitted the author to read the entire scenario. Page after page was read off, and the plot thickened and thickened until the last act was reached. The story even here sped merrily along until it was quite apparent that the climax was close at hand. The playwright read boldly up to this point and then finished abruptly. "Then he died," he proceeded to smooth and fold his manuscript.

"That's scarcely satisfactory," protested the star. "How does he die? You mustn't leave it solely to the imagination."

"But I don't know myself."

"That's most extraordinary!"

"Not at all. The death hasn't come yet."

"The death hasn't come. I've ordered it, and it'll probably be on the next steamer. At the latest it should be here in a week."

Consternation was beginning to seize the usually imperturbable actor. He hinted for further particulars.

"Well, you see," continued the street dramatist, just as we make new plays and sell them to actors and managers. He has a knack of turning out strong original finishes, and I thought I would try him this once. Two of his deaths have made sensations in well known melodramas, and a friend of mine has a gem of a death for a novel he is finishing. I feel confident he will send me a very good death, indeed, and you see that's all the play needs."

## JEAN DE RESZKE AT HOME.

As a turfman Jean de Reszke stands at the head of the long list of sportsmen who reside in Russian Poland. His colors have been borne to the front in many of the principal stakes in Hungary, Austria and Russia. He is an extensive breeder as well, and horses bred by him have been uniformly successful, and held their own against the crack racers on the continent of Europe. Moreover, he is a student of the turf and is an expert on breeding. In reviewing the results of the contest between American bred and native born product in England a few years ago, the great singer decided that a union between the thoroughbreds he owned in Poland, who are descended from such great horses as Kibber, Buceaner and others of fame, would bring about results that would prove both profitable and satisfactory.

On his last visit to this country he devoted much of his time to studying the blood lines of the American thoroughbreds and made his selection of brood mares almost wholly of his own selection. He visited Rancocas, followed the mares he desired, paying the strictest attention to their make up and conformation, and purchased 12 of them, for which he paid \$35,000, and shipped them to his farm in Poland.

De Reszke is modest and retiring in his ways. He does not desire notoriety through the press. He stands on his own merits, and, like his thoroughbreds, he is game to the core, possesses speed and stamina and is capable of holding his own in any company, whether on the operatic stage, the turf, the boulevards of Paris, the Strand in London or on Broadway in New York.

## GILBERT'S FIRST LAW CASE.

W. S. Gilbert, the celebrated librettist, recently told some friends the story of his experiences before he went for the stage, when he was a barrister waiting for his first brief. It was long in coming, and when it did come Mr. Gilbert determined, of course, to make the effort of his life.

He was intrusted with the prosecution of an old Irish woman for stealing a coat, and, when he began the speech that he had prepared and rehearsed so carefully, the old dame at once began to interject: "Oh, ye devil, sit down!" "Sit down, ye spalpeen!" "Ye're known to all the police, yer honor!" After some minutes of this abuse Gilbert asked the recorder's intervention, but that official was too busy laughing. So the effort of his life was not a success.

Richard Mansfield in the spring expects to produce a new play based upon the career of King Frederick William I of Prussia.



ACT II  
"NAUGHTY ANTHONY"

## ATTRACTIONS AT NEW YORK THEATERS.

At the Herald Square theater, New York city, "Naughty Anthony," a farce in three acts by David Belasco, is the current offering. The play is not worthy of the man to whom we are indebted for "Heart of Maryland" and who is the adapter of "Zaza" and the co-author of "The Wife," "The Charley Bail," "Lord Chumley" and "Men and Women." The principal episode is a patent pandering to depraved tastes. It shows a handsome young woman peeling off silk stockings, pair after pair, while she sits upon the floor. It has practically nothing to do with the slight story of the piece.

At the Casino the perennial Edward E. Rice is supplying one of his characteristic entertainments, "Little Red Riding Hood," in which the title role is enacted by Miss Ethel Jackson. Matinees are given daily, and the general impression appears to be that, while "Little Red Riding Hood" will not set the Hudson river on fire, it will nevertheless make a pleasing temporary entertainment.

Inspired by the theme of the play, weeps along as integral a part of it as he dialogue. If I were obliged to describe it in a few words I should say, "Exquisite taste throughout." The most human scene to me are "between rocks in the treme" where the haggard, haggard, haggard slaves wait in dumb despair for death, and the "leper" scenes, where suffering humanity is pictured reaching out for help to the great white light of some imagined good. The Oliver scene, with its "Lord help us or we perish" in dumb appeal as a vision, is strangely affecting to participate in. For some reason it is exhausting, perhaps because the deepest emotions are touched powerfully in that few minutes of strained attitude.

but component elements, therefore bad judges of the work as a whole. The public sees the work as a whole, and in their opinion Rome must rise or fall. To my mind, to the dramatist of "Ben-Hur" should go an especial need of praise. His imagination is essentially poetical; he invests the play with all the interest of a living being and makes the auditors follow its progress and trace the movements of the actors with a never flagging interest. There is no humor in the play; therefore it is the more singularly successful. It belongs to and is part of the school of romanticism, the desert, the sea, primal Rome and the so beautifully and deftly presented approach of our Saviour.

*Mary Shaw*

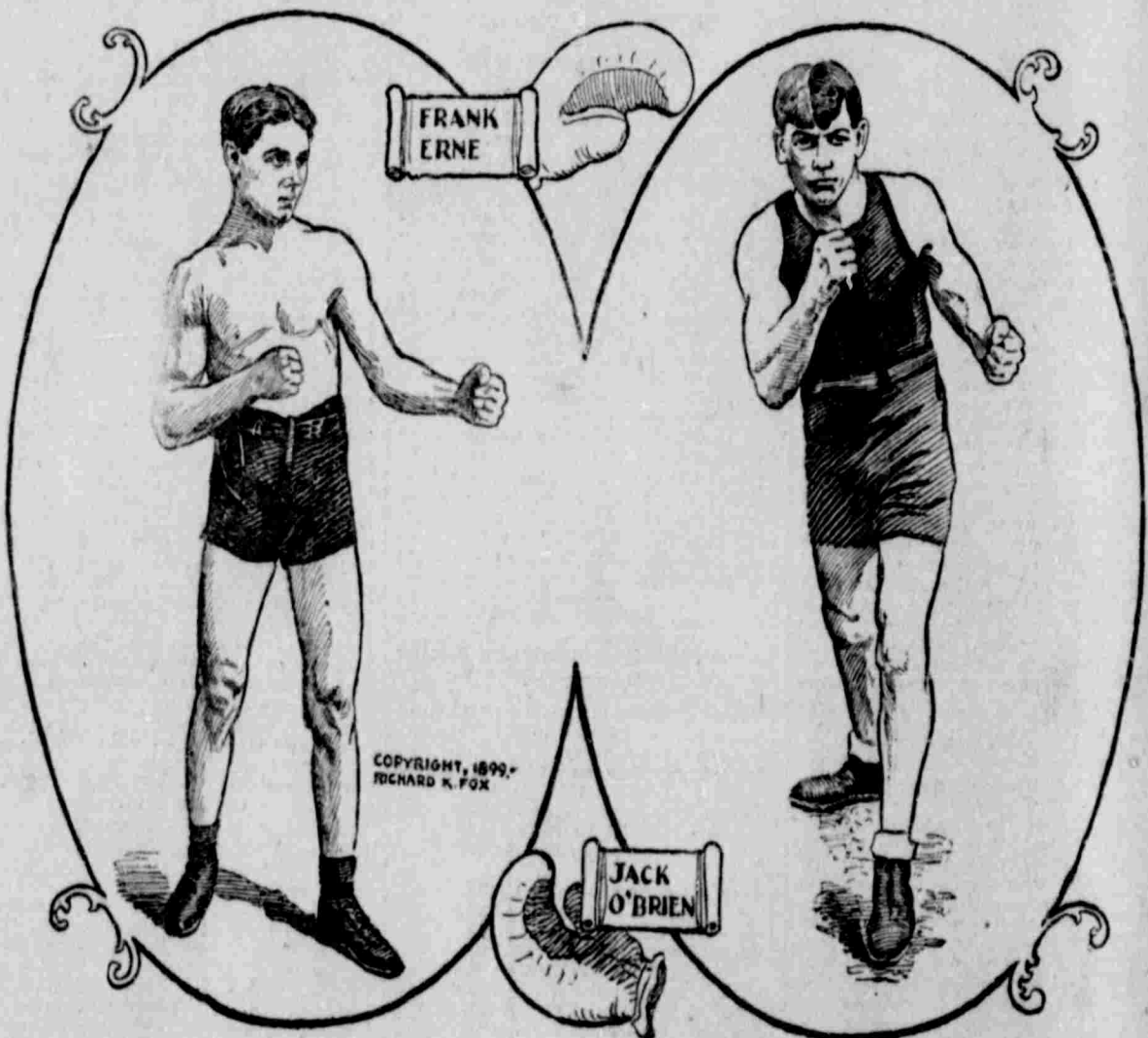
*W. S. Hart*

## BROUGHT DOWN THE HOUSE.

Miss Marie Wainwright narrates an absurd instance that nearly threw her off her balance during a first night.

"Perhaps you remember," says she, "that as Dame Hannah, in 'Ruddigore,' I had to go on with a small dagger, with which to threaten the wicked baronet's wife. When my turn came round, the dagger was nowhere to be found. Nothing would induce me to go on without my property, and, although Mr. Barrington implored me to go on without it, I was resolute. At last Mr. Barrington grew desperate, and, forcing something into my hand, absolutely pushed me on to the stage. And what do you think it was? A large key. I continued to conceal the absurd makeshift from the audience, but when I had to hand my supposed dagger to Mr. Grossmith he most unkindly gave me away. 'How can I kill myself with this thing?' he said, holding up the key in its entirety, which produced a perfect howl of laughter, and for minutes we were unable to continue."

Concerning "The Girl From Maxim's" Charles Frohman has issued an offer of \$50,000 to the critic who can produce as good a farce.



MEN WHO WILL FIGHT FOR LIGHTWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP.

## THE AMUSEMENT WORLD.

The English playwrights have followed the Americans in eagerly seeking out successful novels for dramatization.

It was 21 years ago that Weber and Fields began their career on the theatrical stage together.

Haddon Chambers is so impressed with the success of John Drew in "The Tyranny of Tears" that he has declared

his intention of coming to the United States in March for the express purpose of seeing his play as interpreted by Mr. Drew and his splendid company.

Zangwill is evidently not worried over the failure of his "Children of the Ghetto" in London. When a friend confided with him about the company coming

back to this country, he replied it was not a loss, as it was a case of "small profits and quick returns."

Liszt began sketching his "Faust" in 1846, completed it in 1857 and it was first performed in Weimar at the Goethe-Schiller celebration in 1857.

Egerton Castle, one of the authors of "The Pride of Jennico," is the owner of the Liverpool Mercury. His best known novel, outside of "The Pride of Jennico," is perhaps "Young April." Mr. Castle is an authority in England on fencing and heraldry.

Twenty-four actors and actresses and 35 managers have filed petitions in bankruptcy since the national act was passed. But as the total number of petitions filed have been 1,974, the theatrical percentage is not so big after all.

The Wagner theater at Baireuth, Germany, has been condemned as unsafe, and its use next summer has been forbidden by the local authorities.

A new opera, in which there is at least the suggestion of money, is entitled "The Trip of the Billionaires."

W. A. Brady will star his wife, Grace George, in an adaptation from the French called "Man and Wife."

Sir Arthur Sullivan writes most of his music in the country during the summer. He writes very little in London, where he has a superbly furnished flat in Victoria street. He is a night worker and scarcely ever uses the piano in composing his music.

Robert B. Mantell made his stage debut as the sergeant in "Arrah na Pogue" in England in 1872.

Joe Hart is writing a companion sketch to "Naughty Anthony" called "Saucy Cleopatra."

The gypsy violinist, Rigo, of Princess de Chimay fame, has gone on the vaudeville stage in Paris and is said to have arranged for London and New York.

The first English opera of which there is record was "Dido and Aeneas," produced in London and at Chelsea, England, in 1679.

Alfred Nossig is the librettist of Padrevsky's opera, which as yet, however, has not been christened.