

LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

THE NEW DICKENS

PUNCH keeps a sharp eye upon the provincial press, with the laudable purpose of collecting any blunders that may help to make the British Isles a more cheerful place. *Punch* usually succeeds. This is one of the most recent bits of treasure-trove:—

From a cinema advertisement:—

MRS. WIGGS OF THE CABBAGE PATCH.
A Great Screen Version of Charles Dickens' Famous Story. — *Scots Paper*.

To be followed, we presume, by a film of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, the well-known American novel by Alice Hegan Rice.



AN UNCORRECTED MISPRINT IN KEATS

A CORRESPONDENT of the *London Times* points out a probable misprint which has gone uncorrected in all the editions of Keats that he has been able to examine. The error occurs in line 75 of the poem 'Teignmouth,' an epistle to John Hamilton Reynolds:

High reason, and the *love* of good and ill.

The suggested reading is 'lore' for 'love.' Keats probably never saw the poem in print, and although usually his handwriting is extraordinarily clear, such a printer's blunder is very probable. The proposed emendation has in its favor Keats's well-known partiality for the word 'lore.'

Sir Sidney Colvin, undoubtedly the most eminent living authority upon Keats, says that the new reading 'is not only sense in itself, but corresponds strictly to Keats's usage in another place, viz., *Lamia*, Part I, lines 189 and 190:—

A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core.

He also says, 'I am astonished that neither I nor any other commentator or editor of the poet — not even Professor de Sélincourt — should have thought of it before.'



IN THE GERMAN THEATRE

ALTHOUGH a gulf separates the German stage of 1914 from that of to-day, the effects of the war, which are as plainly discernible in the theatre as in any other department of life, have not been altogether disastrous. Some of the older writers seem to have changed little, but a new spirit is abroad among many of the younger dramatists and poets. The natural reaction from militarism has produced a horror of brute force — a change of which symptoms existed before 1914, but which is in the main due to the horrors of four years of conflict.

Dramatists, producers, actors, all show the differences that the war has made; but in some respects these differences actually favor artistic development. The financial stringency that affects all Germany has forced the directors of most theatres to seek for beauty through a severe simplicity of staging rather than in lavish costuming and elaborate scenery; and the difficulties under which the artists work have — as is common enough in any branch of artistic endeavor — become spurs to success with new methods that might otherwise never have been tried.

This is particularly true of the designing of stage settings, in which Emil Pirchan, one of the younger men, stands as the representative of the newest ideas, in contrast with the

veteran Reinhardt, once himself an innovator, who is now following successfully the methods that won him fame before the war.

Reinhardt's productions at the Grosses Schauspielhaus are on an heroic scale. The theatre was constructed for him by Professor Poelzig, who made over the old Circus Schumann into a kind of modern Greek theatre. Three quarters of the vast amphitheatre is given over to the audience, and the last section of the circle is transformed into an enormous stage in several tiers, while the old ring of the circus is used as a projection of the stage among the audience, reaching farther forward than even the old proscenium stage. Here battles are fought, here processions form, and across these tiers storm the mobs in *Julius Caesar*.

By making use of the unusually large space at his disposal and employing supers in numbers unheard-of up to this time, Reinhardt has secured extraordinary effects, which have been at their best in some of the Shakespearean productions, where processions, mob scenes, and battles are hard to make effective in an ordinary theatre. While engaged in the Grosses Schauspielhaus, Reinhardt has also been busy with productions of less magnitude but equal interest in the Deutsches Theater, the scene of his earlier triumphs and experiments.

The former Royal Theatres, now the State Theatres, whose productions were once the embodiment of everything bourgeois, have turned over a new leaf. Max von Schillings has assumed direction of the Opera, and Leopold Jessner of the Theatre. The staging in both has been entrusted to Emil Pirchan, a Munich artist who, though young, is already famous. Pirchan outdoes Gordon Craig in his uncompromising struggle for simplicity. He reduces his stage pictures to the least possible

number of elements. A wall with a door in it, a flight of stairs, and some curtains, a couple of pillars — these suffice to give his productions broad backgrounds of massive color, with which the costumes of the actors are brought into harmonious contrast. Craig's most ruthless simplifications seem elaborate when compared with Pirchan's stage pictures. The contention, long advanced by theatrical rebels, that poetic and literary as well as the strictly dramatic values, affect the audience more powerfully when there is nothing to catch the eye or divert the attention, receives abundant justification in this work.

The success of these revolutionary ideas is helped along by the financial situation in Germany, for Pirchan's settings have merits other than artistic. They can be built very cheaply; and since the German producers must now economize in every direction, Pirchan is in high favor among them. For once poetry and profit walk hand in hand.

Catholicity of taste, the preëminent characteristic of German audiences before the war, is as marked as ever. The German classics, the younger German playwrights, classics of France, England, Russia, and Sweden, and a fair number of the modern dramatists of many of these countries, receive almost equal honors. There has been no delay in reviving the Shakespearean productions, which have been for many years among the most significant German contributions to theatrical art.

The large and beautiful People's Theatre, which in 1918 passed into the hands of Friedrich Kayssler, has produced Schiller's *Wallenstein's Tod*, and the State Playhouse has produced his *Maria Stuart* and *Wilhelm Tell*, as well as Goethe's *Torquato Tasso*. The tendency to rant, which was the bane of the German classical stage before 1914, has almost disappeared under

the new régime. Leopold Jessner at the State Theatre insists upon his actors' giving the classics the same naturalistic treatment that they accord to plays of the day. During the latter part of March Herr Jessner's theatre was playing *Die Sterne*, a play by Hans Müller, founded on Galileo's struggle with the Church. Herr Müller was in high favor with the Kaiser during the war on account of his patriotic play, *Könige*, and *Die Sterne* must have been equally acceptable under the Prussian absolutist régime, showing, as it does, the free thinker Galileo broken and forced to recant his theories in accord with the demands of the established powers. An especially interesting scene is the appearance of John Milton, still a youth and an ardent hero-worshiper, come to bring a greeting from Oliver Cromwell to the aged and broken Galileo.

One of the most recent of Sudermann's works, *Raschhoff*, a powerful drama of modern life and problems, has met with great success, constituting something of an epoch in recent dramatic history. A translation of some scenes has just been published by one of the oldest of the Italian literary reviews, *Nuova Antologia*.

Hasenclever, one of the most brilliant of the younger generation of dramatists, possesses ideas of his own as to lighting effects, which he has been able to test in the *Kammerspiele*s production of his *Jenseits (Beyond)* — a play reminiscent of Maeterlinck's *L'Intruse*. *Jenseits* is practically a duologue between a young widow and the friend of her husband who brings news of his death. The third character is the disembodied spirit of the husband, who watches his widow fall hysterically into the arms of his friend. The lighting is of peculiar importance in this play, since the action takes place on a bare segment of the stage, so darkened

that the audience sees only half of a room, a house, and a roof.

The firelight illumines the faces of a man and woman who crouch before the hearth. Slowly the moonlight discloses the figure of a sleep-walker emerging from an attic window, and a weird luminous patch presently glows on the back of a chair. The power of two remarkable scenes gives distinction to a performance which has been justly condemned for its confusion. In one of these the emotional wife scatters flowers on an empty bed, shrouded in black, and in the other she croons over her unborn babe, and, in imagination, rocks it to sleep.

Arthur Schnitzler is not the only Austrian dramatist of importance in modern German drama. Anton Wildgans, who won fame with his lyric dramas during the war, has just become director of the Burg Theatre, the most important playhouse in Vienna. Franz Werfel, Carl Schönherr, and Max Brod, among the most talented of the newer dramatists, are all Austrians. Wildgans's Biblical drama, — or, as he calls it, 'mythological song,' — *Cain*, has already been produced, although it still awaits its Berlin *première*. It contains only four characters: Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel. The action takes place in a rocky wilderness and in Adam's cave. The metre of the verse is very free, strong, and primitive, breaking into rhyme only occasionally, and subtly modulated to emphasize the difference between Abel, the sunny, sturdy herdsman, and Cain, with his 'snake nature.' Though he seeks his ends only through force, greed, and envy, Cain is represented as a very human creature, hungering for the love and understanding denied him by the brutality of his own nature.

This highly poetic drama is characteristic in two respects of the latest German drama. It shows some traces of

one of the most dominant contemporary themes, the misunderstood son, which is treated also in Wildgans's *Dies Irae* and which, indeed, obsesses half the younger German writers, from Hasenclever on. Even more characteristic is the passionate revolt against the reign of brute force, an attitude largely grown out of the horrors of the war, but symptoms of which were discernible even before hostilities began. Hasenclever, von Unruh, Schickele, Werfel, Goring, and many others, are in the full tide of reaction against the 'might is right' school of thought. But the revolters do not always hope for great success. These are a few lines from *Cain*: —

EVE

Yet what a light!
 What sudden light —
 No greater than an eye,
 Shining in blue,
 Mirroring heaven —
 Rises, grows, rises!
 Already reaching to the clouds,
 It is ether, is the sun!
 It moves the birds,
 It calls the flowers,
 Wakes the names of things,
 Looses the tongues of men,
 That they may ring with song:
 Ever, O ever again
 Shall Abel be born!

CAIN (*terrible*)

And ever again
 Shall Cain
 Destroy this Abel!

EVE

Then woe upon the earth!
 Woe!

The first production of *Reigen* (*Round Dance*), a Schnitzler play written twenty years ago, has caused an outburst of German Puritanism. It was too much for the staid citizens of Vienna (it appears there are some), where it was driven from the stage; and at Munich the hostile element in the

audience employed walking-sticks and stink-bombs as the most effective means of registering their views of dramatic ethics. Under the protection of the Security Police, the play has been drawing large houses in Berlin, although one raid with the odorous bombs occurred.

Reigen is a rather curious piece of dramatic structure, consisting of ten dialogues, in which a succession of social types dance wearily about the altar of Eros — not the laughing god of Anacreon, but the dismal deity of a modern city. The dialogues are so arranged that each character appears in two of them, each time with a different partner. Street-walker and soldier, soldier and serving-maid, serving-maid and young gentleman, young gentleman and young wife, young wife and husband, husband and girl, girl and poet, actress and nobleman, nobleman and street-walker, pass over the scene, one pair after another, and as each pair finishes its turn, one of the partners whirls off the stage, leaving the other to meet the next comer. In the end, having shown them all, Schnitzler leaves off with the street-walker with whom he began.

Nothing in the play is really offensive. The observation has the typical Schnitzler keenness, the dialogue is brilliant as ever, and the humor is both sharp and subtle. But in the printed plays Schnitzler sometimes has recourse to asterisks to eke out his dialogue, and at the corresponding points in the play the lights go out. This is sufficient excuse for a hue and cry which comes, not, as might be expected, from the clergy, social reformers, and professional moralists, but from the younger men of the west end of Berlin, many of whom had a hand in the Kapp rising. Under the monarchy the censor would probably have suppressed this performance, just as it would have stopped a recent performance of Oscar

Wilde's *Salome* at the Budapest-erstrasse Theater. The hand of the republican censor is at present laid far less heavily upon the arts; but, partly for political reasons, the censor makes amends by drastic regulation, which has almost wiped out the night life of the capital.

Shakespeare is as popular as before the war. Max Reinhardt has staged magnificent performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Merchant of Venice*, and *Julius Cæsar*, although his *Hamlet* was less successful. The State Theatre has produced *Richard III*. The New People's Theatre has given *Pericles* and the *Comedy of Errors*.

Reinhardt conceived his *Midsummer Night's Dream* as a fairy spectacle, in three pictures, a treatment of the play which would probably have delighted Shakespeare himself, for there is good reason to believe that he originally wrote it for outdoor performance with the richest mounting possible. The opening scene was played before a background of heavy curtains, which opened presently, disclosing a fairy forest, where curious shapes of ferns and fir trees loomed fantastically under a warm dark sky glimmering with a thousand stars. There was no break in the performance until the close of Act IV, when a brief pause prepared Reinhardt's audience for a production by that no less famous producer, Bully Bottom.

Who but Reinhardt could have introduced the Russian ballet in a Shakespearean production without giving it a disastrously exotic flavor? Oberon becomes a dryad, so long of figure and so green of face that he at first barely emerges amid the trees. Titania's crown is wrought of the birch leaves

that form her garment. Puck is brown, squat, hairy, perhaps more nearly the Robin Goodfellow of popular tradition than Shakespeare would have wished. In the mysterious light, while the sky fades to gray and silver translucence, other fairies clad in floating draperies of diaphanous green dance elfin dances, which half allure, half tantalize the eye, so subtly do they merge into their woodland background.

Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *The Ideal Husband*, and *Salome*, have all had recent performances. Bernard Shaw, who has long been popular in Germany, though not in France, is represented by *Pygmalion*, *The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet*, *The Man of Destiny*, and *Cæsar and Cleopatra* (a Reinhardt production at the Deutsches Theater).

There have been a number of Ibsen productions, but the most successful Scandinavian play was Strindberg's *Dance of Death*, in which Tilla Durieux, who played Eliza in *Pygmalion*, interpreted the wife, torn by mingled love and hate. The settings for this production may fairly be charged with morbidity. The round doors of the turret dwelling disclosed an interior entirely black — black furniture, black hangings, black costumes — relieved only by an evil red glow at the window and a savage gleam from the eyes of a half-seen, silently crouching animal. So evidently unhealthy was this performance that a more robust rendering of *The Father* at another theatre gave a certain relief, even to the admirers of Strindberg. The intense seriousness with which these plays are taken is indicated by the total absence of applause. The audiences are mainly young men and middle-aged women.

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