

THE THEATRES.

The "Bostonians" opened their season of opera at the Chicago Opera-House last evening with Offenbach's comic opera "The Poachers," the text by Oscar Weil. Like so many other comic operas, one of the principal features of the plot is the masquerading of a young woman in masculine apparel, with the various complications which arise therefrom. The story of the opera is as follows: Monsieur de Birague, who is supposed to have died some twenty years before the opening scene of the opera, was in some manner dispossessed of his estates by his cousin, Count de Campistrous. The former took to poaching, for the double purpose of gaining a living and annoying his cousin. His only daughter, Bibletta, he dressed as a boy and educated her only in his own occupation. Dying, he leaves to her the command of his band of poachers and the name which he assumed, "Rastamagnac," which is the terror of De Campistrous. At the opening of the opera Bibletta—or, as she is known in her male attire, Bibletto—ventures into the village to meet her only confidante, Ginetta, who is that day to marry a mule-driver, Marcassou. The bridegroom surprises the disguised woman exchanging tender confidences with Ginetta, and makes a scene; but the latter coolly informs him that Bibletta is her foster-brother, and drives her intended nearly frantic with her flirtations with the supposed youth. She takes occasion, too, to assert her independence in a way that is highly exasperating to the rustic. The Count and his son Theodore next appear, hoping to catch the poacher, whom they understand to be among those gathered to attend the festivities. Bibletta in the meantime assumes her proper dress and the young Theodore, who has been carefully kept away from female society, sees her and falls in love. A serenade is finally sung to the newly-wedded couple. Marcassou comes out to expostulate with the serenaders, among whom is Bibletta, again in male costume, and is thrown by them into the collar. Bibletta is recognized and threatened with arrest by the Count, but escapes by claiming to be Marcassou, the husband of Ginetta. From this time on the whole action is due to the complications arising from the confusion of identity, until in the last act everything is made clear by the usual explanations. Miss Marie Stone as Bibletta-Bibletto sang unusually well and was full of vivacity. Her voice shows some signs of wear, it is true, but less, if one may judge from last evening's performance, than it did last season. Miss Juliette Corden is rather slight in figure, graceful, and spirited. Her voice is somewhat peculiar, with a tendency to an acid quality in the upper register, especially when forced. Her enunciation is good, and she made on the whole a rather pleasant impression. Mr. J. A. Montgomery was the Count, and Mr. F. W. Miller his son Theodore. Neither has any striking vocal powers, their acting being the most satisfactory part of their work. Mr. Harwood was the mule-driver, Marcassou, and he made the most of the opportunities which his rôle offered for the burlesque of a rustic's stupidity. Mr. Frothingham as Hibes was fearfully and wonderfully made up; in fact, his ugliness was enough to give one a nightmare. Miss Muna Cleary as Burades, Mr. Langlois as the barber, and Mr. Nichols as the innkeeper were acceptable in their small parts. Both chorus and orchestra are good. The performance was spirited, full of fun, and the audience, which fairly crowded the theatre, was lavish of its applause.

Two Irish plays that make a strange contrast are at leading Chicago theatres. "The Colleen Bawn" at McVicker's and "The Irish Minstrel" at the Chicago Opera-House. The former, which Mr. Boucicault took from Gerald Griffen's novel "The Collegians," has been the model on which hundreds of Irish dramas have been shaped. "The Irish Minstrel," by Marston, is one of the latest impressions of the seemingly imperishable type. Withered and dusty as Boucicault's famous play has become with the lapse of time it still exhales some of the sweetness of its pathos, while all the vitality in its artificial imitation is inspired by the personality of an actor, young, amiable, and ambitious, whose looks are fixed upon the future as closely as Boucicault's affections are wedded to the past. In Scanlan the aged comedian may contemplate again his own youth; in Boucicault the boy may see an ambition that has run its course, reaped its honors, and done everything but rested. The stage, like the old world she poses, grows wantonly weary of her lovers, casts off the old and takes up with the new, and is, perhaps, just as attractive in her palat, and wrinkles, and flaring fineries to him who reluctantly turns away as to him who with ardor woos her. To those who watch her line of lovers come and go the sight is a tragedy of comedians such as they themselves never dream they play. The freshest dramas grow stale and musty, and the most strenuous art flags and tires; and the favorite actor shares the same fate, for his triumphs are in the past, and a younger generation looks to artists who are cruder and commoner, but are a part of itself. Yet that which survives even a few years the changes of taste must have a little (if it be but a rapidly diminishing) value; and so for "The Colleen Bawn," wretchedly played at McVicker's, let there be the concession of toleration for old time's sake, and for its author, who still persecutes his youthful heroes, the tribute of respectful consideration. Mr. Scanlan's due is merely good wishes, for his play, "The Irish Minstrel," is a bore to the present and will hardly endure to bore another generation. With his tuneful voice and genial humor the young comedian may yet tread some of those higher paths of popularity which Boucicault has long ago explored.

"The Woman-Hater," which was made known to Chicago play-goers by Mr. John Raymond during his last engagement at Hooley's, is by Mr. D. D. Lloyd of New York, who has in other works distinguished himself in play-writing. The amusing satire, "For Congress," in which Mr. Raymond was popular, was from his pen, as was also "The Drummer's Daughter," a serious drama which was brought out at Wallack's last season. "The Woman-Hater" is a farce of the prevailing German fashion, which devotes several acts to a quick succession of ludicrous incidents, making probability throughout subordinate to fun. The plot concerns itself with the adventures of Samuel Dundy, an old bachelor with a Weller-like abhorrence of widows and a Pickwickian perversity of falling into their meshes. The first two acts are lively and entertaining and the fourth is ingenious in construction and witty in dialog. The third drags considerably, partly because it is not acted with the liveliness necessary to farce, but also because it is not closely knit in construction. Mr. Roland Reed may congratulate himself, however, in having in "The Woman-Hater" a farce superior in cleverness to those that at present satisfy a degenerate taste. It is better, too, than any in which he has recently appeared, and it may serve to lead him by pleasant stages to the fields of light comedy. His acting in the part of Samuel Dundy is characterized by keenness and precision. A somewhat too deliberate manner in a piece of the ruttish sort is all that detracts from the vim of his work. The company does not shed lustre on the work, but is moderately capable. If the soubret would conform to civilized customs in costume it would be an unprecedented thing for a soubret to do, but it would be not the less a change for the better. A fairly large crowd at the Columbia applauded "The Woman-Hater."

Barnh Bornhardt's one-act piece, "Ceel Tuora Cela," which will be brought out at the Odéon, is a brief but rather complicated bit of dramatic machinery. There are in it an old father, his wife, and his nephew, a child in a cradle, a son, and an old family retainer. The nephew is a celebrated doctor, who has been in love with his aunt, and who is the father of the baby which the General believes to be his own. The lover, however, is hated by his mistress, who concentrates her affection on the child, and cultivates the society of her elderly husband. The curtain rises on the sickbed of the child. The mother is mourning and cannot be comforted. Her agonies is rendered more poignant as she must call in as physician her old lover, the father of her son, for if she does not do so the General will suspect that something is wrong. The critical situation is finally solved by the death of the child, and the mother rises from her mourning reinstated in society. Such, vaguely, is the subject of the great tragedienne's first venture before the public in the character of a dramatist. She expects great things from the final scene of her rather dolorous sketch, and her friends are sanguine as to her success.

In the production of "Elaine" at the Madison Square Theatre, New York, Frederick Robinson will play the Lord of Astolat, originally played by Harry Edwards, one of the authors of the piece; E. M. Holland will be Sir Lancelot; Miss Belgman, a debutante, will be soubret as Lianyd, while Miss Russell and Miss Burroughs will play Elaine and Guinevere respectively.

This will be the first New York appearance of Miss Burroughs in two years. It will be remembered that this piece, of which Mr. George Parsons Lathrop is one of the authors, was successfully brought out last season at an "Authors' Matinée." It was done in Chicago last summer and received with esteem.

Those who like farce of the bolsterous order will find "The Humming Bird" at Hooley's a little better than what Salisbury's Troubadours are in the habit of furnishing—praise, it is hardly necessary to say, that is comparative rather than absolute. Mr. Salisbury, who gave his name to the troupe, is absent and not missed. He has found a field better suited to his talents than the comic stage in the management of the Wild West show in Europe. The vigorous vivacity of Miss Nellie McHenry has not, apparently, been abated by time.

The National opera company last evening opened a week's season at the Exposition Music-Hall in St. Louis, with a splendid performance of Rubinstein's "Nero." All the singers were in excellent voice, and the phenomenal tenor of Elyva created a sensation.

Mr. Fred J. Eustis, a musician, who was formerly the husband of Miss Ida Bell of Dixey's company, was married last week to Kate Uart of the "Corsair" troupe. Mr. Eustis was the author of several burlesques that failed in this city.

The undergraduates of Cambridge, England, intend giving a performance in Greek of "Oedipus Tyrannus" to all their friends who speak ancient Greek. An amateur band will render music specially written for the occasion.

"A Rag Baby," with Charlie Reed as Old Sport, drew a large house to the Academy. Good patronage, also, was enjoyed by the Byrons in "The Pacific Track" at the People's.