

Mantle Sees 'Astor Case as a Broadway-Hollywood Drama

Great White Way Is Loyal to Playwright

Picture Folk Fear Star's Big Courtroom Scene Is a Cinema Fadeout.

By Burns Mantle.
NEW YORK. — [Special.]—Theatricality the town comes slowly out of its summer siesta and stretches sleepily in the direction of the early activities of the approaching fall. I come home from the cool evenings of the north to find Broadway sizzling with the heat of the sun and the revelations of the Mary Astor case.

Picture folk assure me that whatever the settlement of the case, and however Miss Astor may come out of it in respect to her rights as a guardian and a mother, she unfortunately is through as a screen favorite. Not because the League of Decency will turn thumbs down upon her, but because such is the fate of all who are thus publicized in the cinema world.

Few Stage Stars Suffer Materially from Scandal.

That doesn't happen in the theater. The history of the drama is striped with scarlet pasts that have blazoned to the world. Yet few have suffered materially as a result, and no careers that I recall have been completely extinguished following such unhappy exposures. . . . Doubtless, causes contribute to this contrast in attitudes. For one, the exposure never has been quite so complete in the theatrical world. There were no tabloids in the past to lend excitement and completeness to the revelation. Neither were the participants as candid in their admissions.

For another and equally important reason, the stage star in such a case was known, by reputation, only to thousands. The picture star literally is known to millions, and deified by a majority of those millions. The screen star represents an imagined perfection. The stage star, however glamorous, has been seen in person and in the flesh. He may be revealed as a gorgeous somebody, but he still is no more than recognizable human, with protruding ears, perhaps, or a funny nose. The screen star's fall is Humpty Dumptyish—complete and messy. The stage star may be toppled from an equally lofty pedestal, but he falls lightly, like a blown eggshell, and lands a little cracked, but intact.

Broadwayites Reject the Evidence in Astor Diary.

If you had asked Broadway six months ago to name the one of its favorite writing lads least likely to become involved, even by back stage or back studio gossip, in such a Hollywood affair as the Astor-Thorpe case, George Kaufman would have been the first one named. For that matter, Broadway doesn't believe it. Will it accept the evidence of a diary kept by an "infatuated dame" against the clean, white record of the first wit of his day?

Talking with William A. Brady in Lakewood last week, I was impressed by the enthusiasm with which he is approaching the new theater season. This, insists Mr. Brady, is going to be the greatest year the legitimate theater has known in a decade. Even now, says he, it is impossible for a producer who has a play he would like to show to the country at large to get a theater in any of the major centers. He admits that this is due in part to the fact that so many old-time playhouses have been taken over by motion picture promoters, or abandoned to other uses, so that the supply is definitely limited. But beyond that fact he hears a distinct and reverberating call for drama in the flesh. Boom times, says Bill, are here again, or soon will be.

Young Picture Audiences Also Interested in Stage.

I accept this veteran observer's enthusiasm with reservations. Undoubtedly, the theater slowly is building a new and interested following out of the thousands of young people who have been raised on pictures and recently learned of the drama through their school work. The legitimate stage still holds a percentage of its older public that has grown a little weary of a skeletonized menu these last

CO-STARS IN "MARY OF SCOTLAND"

Katharine Hepburn and Fredric March are shown here as they appear in the new picture, "Mary of Scotland." This film is being held over for a third week at the Palace theater.



ten years. But to continue to build and to hold the new following, the theater will have to produce something more than promises and an occasional outstanding success. I am, however, assured by the top men among the producers that they are planning to send more plays touring than they have for a long time, though the list still is fairly meager. Sam Harris will tour Jane Cowl in Katherine Dayton's and George Kaufman's "First Lady." It is John Chapman's opinion that he should send Mary Astor out in a No. 2 company. George Abbott is opening a second company of "Boy Meets Girl" in Boston next month, and will play the first company in a part of the eastern territory. . . . Max Gordon, still convinced that clean plays are in demand, will continue the tour of "The Great Waltz," which did so well last season, and add Helen Jerome's "Pride and Prejudice" to its touring list, with most of the New York company in their original roles. That would mean the return of Adrienne Allen and Colin Keith-Johnston from England, to play Elizabeth and

Darcy, and probably the retention of Lucile Watson and Percy Warren, who played Mr. and Mrs. Bennett in this Jane Austen classic. New York Gangster Drama Soon Coming to Chicago. Norman-Bel Geddes is sending "Dead End" to Chicago in September, and the westerners' reaction to this typical New York gangster drama, with its vivid and authentic touches of life on New York's east side, is awaited with some curiosity hereabouts. Of course the road will see Helen Hayes and "Victoria Regina" as soon as the New York run, to be resumed Aug. 31, is finished. Miss Hayes is not one to let Katharine Cornell get too strong a hold on the affections of the country's playgoers without offering them a rival personality to consider. The "Vic-

torle" production is pretty heavy, but Gilbert Miller will send it into all the major centers, and probably continue the tour through to the coast.

The Theater Guild will have at least two major productions touring the first half of the winter and probably later. These will be Robert Sherwood's "Idiot's Delight" and S. N. Behrman's "End of Summer." Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne will be the stars of the former, and Ina Claire the star of the latter attraction.

The reorganized Shubert firm will tour the "Ziegfeld Follies" and be interested with A. H. Woods in a tour of the melodrama, "Night of Jan. 16," and with Morris Gest in the tour of "Lady Precious Stream," the Chinese classic, which is a novelty drama of superior quality.

D'Oyly Carte Opera Group Back in America for Tour.

The D'Oyly Carte Opera company, which made so great a hit wherever it was heard two years ago, is back in America. It will have a twelve week season in New York, and then tour rather extensively during the holidays and probably well into the spring before returning to England. . . . It certainly looks like a good season for ingénues. There will be nineteen of them in George Kaufman's and Edna Ferber's "Stage Door," which has to do with a club residence for actresses. There is a considerable number engaged for Philip Barry's version of "Spring Dance," which is a story about college girls, originally having been written by Eleanor Golden of Smith, and staged at that seat of learning in 1927.

Now I have word from Emmet Lavery, who wrote "The First Legion" for an all-male cast, that he has a new piece called "Daisy Chain" or "Lark on the Wing," which has to do with life at Vassar, and has not so much as a single male person in it. "Daisy Chain" is to be tried at the Pasadena playhouse next month, and is hopefully looking toward Broadway for a later hearing. Mr. Lavery tells me that "The First Legion" still is playing in Europe, having scored a definite hit in Budapest and Vienna, and being booked in Paris and London for the coming season.

STAR OF CHEZ PAREE REVUE



Honay Bailey, star of Chez Paree's summer cabaret production, teams with Lee Sims in songs and piano specialties. This partnership is famous in the cabaret field.

"Follies" Coming

THE 1936 edition of the "Ziegfeld Follies," starring Fannie Brice and Bobby Clark, will begin a Chicago engagement in the Grand Opera house the latter part of September. The "Follies," which played all last season on Broadway, is in rehearsal preparatory to a reopening on Broadway, a subsequent engagement in Chicago, and a coast-to-coast tour.

Fanny Brice's last stage appearance here was in the 1934 "Ziegfeld Follies." In this revue she offers her "Baby Snooks" character in Hollywood, a travesty on modern dancing called "Modernistic Moe,"

and a burlesque of an amateur trying out on a broadcast. Bobby Clark, formerly of the team of Clark and McCullough, will make his first stage appearance without his late partner.

The production was staged by John Murray Anderson, who directed the 1934 edition. The sets and costumes were designed by Vincent Minnelli, who staged "At Home Abroad."

Jackie Heller Sings in Vaudeville Revue on State-Lake Stage

JACKIE HELLER, singer, is the headliner of the new stage show at the State-Lake theater. He leads a new revue entitled "Rhythm Revue." Other acts on the program are: Hal Abbott and Jean Turner, in "Rhythm from Monte Carlo"; Ben Kysts' Variety Co-eds; Gale and Carson; Earl La Vere and Helen Ware, comedians; Verne Buck, and the State-Lake ballet.

The new stage bill at the Chicago theater contains Edgar Bergen, ventriloquist, and his company in a one-act playlet, "The Operation"; Nick Long Jr., dancer, who recently appeared in the motion picture, "Broadway Melody of 1936"; Gracie Barrie, Ziegfeld "Follies" singer, and Mickey King, aerialist. The Fred Evans ballet group presents two dance sketches, "Knock Knock," and "Masques."

"Follow the Stars," with a cast of 30 entertainers, is in its third week behind the Palace theater's footlights. The revue will continue for the duration of the run of "Mary of Scotland." In the cast are Vic Oliver, Alphonse Berg in his "French Dressing" novelty; the 16 Bebe Barri girls, the Gilbert brothers, the Robins family and Caryl Gould.

Gilbert Centenary.

Plans to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Sir William S. Gilbert have been announced by the American Gilbert and Sullivan association, from the Park Central hotel, New York, its headquarters. A series of dinners and concerts in September and October will be climaxed on Nov. 15 with an all-evening opera festival and a banquet.

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