



MISS COLLEY AT KOSTER & BIAL'S

JOHN DREW AND ISABEL IRVING IN THE TYRANNY OF TEARS

MINNIE MADDERN FISKE AND MAURICE BARRYMORE IN "BECKY SHARP"

BECKY SHARP IS NO LADY

By Alan Dale.

HOW deftly simple, how archly pious, yet how inexpressibly beautiful were our cunning little essays on Becky Sharp last week. If Thackeray could have dropped into New York from the celestial regions how amazed would he have been at the majestic attitude which most of us dared to assume. And how he would have chuckled in his sleeves. He would have seen critics doing their best to explain away poor Becky's moral defects (and Becky had very few original ones in "Vanity Fair" for the benefit of young people who are allowed to go unmolested to see "The Girl from Maxim's" who are permitted to discuss "Paradise" at the dinner table, and whose grief for the fate of poor Zaza is ascribed to a "sympathetic nature.")

Thackeray would have wondered where on earth he was. He would have set to work to realize his paradise of contradictions, and he would have become greenly jealous of Shakespeare, who is allowed to be as rude as he likes, because nobody dares to say a word. I can imagine Thackeray remarking, "Well, I suppose they don't receive Adam and Eve in New York, because the mother of us all didn't carry a marriage certificate in the pocket of her fig leaf apron. And how against them must lie at the almost infernal loathsomeness of King Solomon's! I positively tremble to think that they would do it. Mr. Feltzger. Probably they would pretend, but the only reason she took possession of Joseph's coat-of-many-colored was to put it up into a essay quilt for Mr. Potiphar's bedstead."

Poor Becky! She herself would have had a convulsion of mirth at the pretty little ribbons of her character, mostly written in this ingenious strain: "Becky Sharp was no lady. Miss Sharp was an extremely dangly person. She seemed to love lots of gentlemen, and fate overtook her at last. No self-respecting person can like Becky Sharp. She was invented by Mr. Thackeray, who wrote 'Pendennis' and 'Esmond.' Mr. Thackeray is not as pure as Miss Laura Jean Libbey, or as human as Mrs. Hall-Restorer Ayer."

The best of it all was that we seemed to imagine nobody had read "Vanity Fair," and that Thackeray was some novelty just appearing in the pages of Scribner. Imagine explaining Becky at this stage of the game to the extent of a couple of columns! Just think of trying to whitewash a character that will live forever as one of the most daintily clever, inimitably reckless and gorgeously humorous types ever created by pen and ink. (Please let me smile for a moment. Thanks so much! I feel better.)

Mr. Winter, in a lordly three-volume tribute, outlined that Mrs. Fiske had given "a great impersonation of intrinsic wickedness, fraught with the obvious and perfectly conventional moral that evil is hideous and is predestined to ultimate failure." No, you don't, Willie. Nay, nay, Becky was not a failure, in the way that she looked upon failure. At the beginning of "Vanity Fair" Becky was a pauper. At the end of "Vanity Fair" Becky was far more comfortably situated as far as the goods of this world go. Vice is always predestined to failure—unfortunately. Look at the horrible people who are rich and happy. Look at yourself, Willie, and look at me, both of us good, but poor.

There is nothing funnier than New York when it does a moral can-can. So much that is palpably improper is allowed to pass that positively you feel as though you were surrounded by Pecksniffs when it comes to turning up your nose at Becky Sharp. The discovery of Becky with Steyne by Rawdon Crawley never even disturbed us when we read it in the novel. But because it was staged a few of us professed to believe that it was too realistic. I suppose this is due to the fact that what you learn in the company of other people is more awe-inspiring than what you learn in the religious obscurity of your library. But this is lumbering and rank hypocrisy. If you can stand the routing of Becky in a novel you can certainly stand it on the stage, where it was shown more cheaply, more conventionally and less satisfactorily.

I suppose that if "Vanity Fair" were written to-day, and published for the first time in New York, it would be reviewed as "unpleasant" and dismissed in a paragraph. "This Thackeray," they would say, "might make distinctly black scenes. We confess to a feeling of nausea at this hopeless cynicism of the book. Give us Anthony Hope, and our little tin idol, Rudyard Kipling. Where is our Kipling, our vicille Kipling?" But, you see, "Vanity Fair" has been accepted as a classic, and we can't go back on it. It is no use struggling and spouting. Every critic, of course, knew this, but still—well, you see, there was Becky supping with Lord Steyne, the decayed old rake, confronted suddenly by the vision of her own injured husband! Of course Mr. Langdon Mitchell was forced to utilize this incident. That it attracted undue attention was simply because "Becky Sharp" as a play is stupid, dull and lifeless, and nothing occurred on the stage of the Fifth Avenue to interest us until that luckless scene took place. I saw a first-nighter—one of the most inveterate theatre-goers in New York—sleeping soundly through two acts. His head nodded peacefully; his breath rested musically from his lips. He was the picture of comfortable lethargy. He woke up at the third act. It had life in it—wicked life—but it was the life that Thackeray pictured.

"If I were," says "Vanity Fair," "to give a full account of her proceedings during a couple of years that followed after the Curzon street catastrophe, there might be some reason to say that this book was improper. The actions of very vain, pleasure-seeking people are very often improper. As are those of yours, my friend with the grave face and snooty reputation—that is merely by the way; and what are those of a wear-out without faith or love or character? Dear old Montreal with its cry of "Degenerate!" Still, there is no reason why we should take our cue from the provinces. Not long ago that lordly old centre, Paterson, N. J., objected strenuously to the appearance of Scotchmen in kilts, but surely New York is not going to throw stones at the Highland laddies. These are little controversies that merely add to the gaiety of nations. Probably if Becky Sharp had taken the trouble to secure a moral, respectable, family-friendly divorce from Rawdon Crawley, giving him the custody of the child and the right to marry again, Montreal would have cried "Regenerate!" Instead of "Degenerate!" But you can't bring classics up-to-date without ruining them. Becky Sharp's morals lacked the saving grace of long skirts, but Thackeray made them, and you can't build Dewey funnies around them without injuring their symmetry. Thackeray had the courage of his convictions. He didn't ask you to worship over Becky. He didn't ruin an incomparable work by causing her at the critical moment to cry out, "My saluted mother!" and instantly become a paragon of virtue. That is what our modern novelists would have done in order to get their story "accepted." You weep your noses red, my little ladies, at Canille, who dies, and at Zaza, whose heart is "in the right place," because these ladies, both as tainted as poor Becky, were both lacking in humor and managed to entangle themselves in your sympathies. If Becky had indulged in a picturesque death scene in the last act, in which, as the sinner, she forgave everybody for everything (sinners are so generous and forgiving!) and confiding her child to her bosom had covered him with the lattice of her eyes, Montreal would have said: "How beautiful!" and our moralists would have said: "What a salutary lesson!" As a matter of fact, Becky Sharp teaches no lesson. She was wicked on account of innate cussedness, and you might as well put a coat of whitewash on Popsy as on this little lady, with the negress-moral.

Becky Sharp was no lady. We knew it before we went to the theatre. Characters can't go into the playhouse evil and come out good. The theatre enters black and comes out white. It is rather too much to expect that for \$2 you can get the devil of fiction changed into angels of the stage.

It is a great mistake to dramatize popular books. They all lose by the transaction. Becky Sharp lost none of her immorality, but her jollity, her good humor, her art, her sarcasm, her graces, were all sacrificed. The stage Becky Sharp is a very tame act. The real one was a wonder.

But if Thackeray dropped down from the celestial regions, wouldn't he have some fun?

ALAN DALE



FROM THE GHETTO AT THE BROADWAY

MORE EASE FOR ACTORS.

By Miss Jessie Wood.

IT is easy to see that life on the stage breeds a love of luxury, though not always of refinement. Ladies who sit on gilt chairs in Louis XV. parlors and drink out of empty Sevres cups do not care to go home to plain pine wood and weak tea. Ladies who come on three times in a play to say, "Where is papa?" "I think I am unwell," and "Now my end is accomplished," wearing two hundred dollars' worth of the clothing to each weighty sentence, naturally rebel at the simple shirt waist and serge of those who have never emulated the example of the Queen of Sheba.

When a man wears red heels to his shoes, uses a diamond snuff box and spends his time in plaster and cardboard palaces, as a natural consequence who would scoff at them, remember they are HER ideals, and therefore very satisfactory to attain.

But in her life there is one crumpled rose leaf—alas! how crumpled.

It is the period of one-night stands. You will never meet an actress and seldom an actor who does not murmur sadly at this. Some times a fellow actor, anxious to acquire Bohemianism, owns to liking the journey. But he omits to mention that the journey is a horrible imposition—torment, the quintessence of discomfort, the reason of gray hairs, wrinkles, drink, ill-vice and immorality.

Now, it seems to me horribly unjust, that actors and actresses should have to go on one-night

What does it give them in return for this almost ascetic life that is forced upon the suffering travellers? Bad cooking, close quarters—perhaps a temperance hotel, sometimes (high of that)—no amusements, perhaps—in short, nothing desirable but their salaries.

Now, why should these curled darlings be sent to Wahoo and Cedar Rapids? Why shouldn't Wahoo and Cedar Rapids come to them?

As the mountain came to Mahomet, let the one-night stand come to the actor.

Here, unctuous manager, you, who make so much money out of this hard-working race, let me take your fine broadcloth label between my index finger and thumb, and thus bottling you, tell you how to transact your business. So many good people write and tell me how to do my work, and so many actresses and actors give me the proper directions for dramatic criticism, that I am really glad to be able to reciprocate.

I would suggest that tickets of admission should be issued, with railway fare included, to these Western theatre-goers. If they would taste the sweets of theatre-going let them also taste the grit and clinders of travelling. Let special expeditions be run from Peoria, Lincoln, etc., to New York theatres, and thus the amusement of an Americanized French farce would be mixed with the experience and polish of travel. But it doesn't matter whether the country people would like it or not, or whether the managers think the enterprise good or not. It is of the actors and actresses that I am thinking, and it is for them that something ought to be done, and done quickly, in regard to this horrible outrage, the one-night stand.

Why should they ever leave Broadway—dear Broadway, where they are so happy? They ask so little; they only ask that that little should be thick and rich. It is so cruel to send them to these Devil's Islands, where there are no luxuries and diversions; where they cannot smell the Waldorf cooking, or get a Shanley lobster, for months. Their lives are hard enough. Every actress of minor reputation has at least twelve other actresses wishing for her demise—I've been told this—and the tedious study involved in speaking three paragraphs and wearing six gowns is very exhausting.

Something ought to be done about the one-night



SOMETIMES COMPANES STRIKE A TOWN WHERE THERE IS NO FLORIDA WATER. THREE HOURS OF THIS IS EVERY EVENING ENGENDERS LUXURIOUS TASTES.

The Eden Musee has proven a veritable Eden for the multitude of strangers now in the city. The cinematograph views are changed every week and the evening concerts are of the usual high order.

Manager Hlee's "Pops" on the stage of the Casino Theatre to-night will include Hory Von Schuler's "Mirror Vitae," seasonally realising the Ober Ammergau "Passion Play," Moss, and Mme. Beque, Miss Etta Stetson, Baroness Von Zeller, William Pruette, "Bob" Vernon, William Gould, Charles O. Bassett, "Mignon" Ella Chapman, Joseph Van der Bergh, Victor Barragau, Ruth White and Jack Raphael.

At Kelt's the selections for next week are of the usual high order. The house is enjoying great popularity and the auditorium is packed at every performance.

At the St. Nicholas Garden a special orchestral concert will be given to-night, and for Monday the bill is replete with strong attractions.

Richard Mansfield begins his annual engagement at the Garden Theatre on November 20, with "Cyrano de Bergerac."

Fred Williams, stage director of the Lyceum Theatre, is rehearsing Bradley & Frost's new farce, "Jonah and the Whale."

Rehearsals have begun already for the performance of "The White Squadron," which will take place at the Metropolitan Opera House in Admiral Dewey's honor on Saturday evening, October 1. Admiral Dewey has accepted the invitation to be present.

Murray Hill Theatre reopens for the season on September 23, with "In Mizouza."

Germania Theatre will be reopened on September 28, under the management of G. Anberg.

"Die Melstingerer," which will be given for the first time in English in America by the Castle Square Opera Company at the American Theatre on Monday, October 2, is in rehearsal.

"Weens of Tennessee" will be revived at the American Theatre for one week beginning September 23.

STARS IN VAUDEVILLE FOR THIS WEEK.

Most of to-morrow's vaudeville includes new matter or celebrities new to the music hall programme. The opening in a blaze of glory of Weber & Fields' and Koster & Bial's, with a wide range of new material, has led to the massing of strong bills at all the other houses.

At Proctor's Twenty-third Street Theatre Camille DeVille, who has forsown comic opera for this