

more special knowledge, more labor, and, perhaps, more brains. The world is full of humbug.

"Ties" is the brief title chosen for the translation of Hervieu's conversations. It serves well enough in the circumstances, though an ordinary theatrical audience would not be allured by the word.

John Blair acted an ugly, selfish, narrow-minded, and opinionated man, without any striking authority, but so as to make the personage sufficiently disagreeable. Florence Kahn, seemingly imitating some of Mrs. Fiske's tricks of manner, was effective in a larger way as the equally selfish and intolerant woman who, unable to destroy her home, defiles it. The situation in which this woman is placed in the last act might be made pathetic by an actress of larger experience than Miss Kahn, who, however, made it intelligible—which was something. In these scenes alone she made Hervieu's otherwise exceedingly uninteresting and objectionable heroine comprehensible.

The other rôles were filled by the veteran P. A. Anderson, Frederick Lewis, and Alice Harrington. It seems to be impossible to set a play well in the crypt of Carnegie Hall, but surely the gap in the back scene last night can be remedied.

The aesthetic value of such plays as "Ties" is very small. The moral of this particular play is not new or well illustrated. But Mr. Blair is sticking to his creed of presenting only such plays as the commercial theatre ignores.

"CARMEN" AT THE OPERA.

Reappearance of Mme. Emma Calvé in Her Favorite Part.

If on Monday night the illusion of continuity was strong at the Metropolitan Opera House, it was startling last night. It was the second subscription night of the series, and any one entering the house after the curtain rose on the second act, and previous to the appearance of Don José at the inn of Lillias Pastia, might have supposed that performances had been going on without interruption ever since 1897. Then Emma Calvé went away from us, and last night she came before us again as Carmen in Bizet's beautiful opera. She was apparently somewhat slenderer than of old, but in no way had the body or the spirit of her art diminished. She was welcomed right royally, and was applauded as a singer of her vocal and dramatic power deserves to be and always is by the metropolitan public of the Western Hemisphere.

It is much too late in the history of the world to lay the tribute of laudation at the feet of Bizet. "Carmen" is accepted as a masterpiece, and explanations of the nature of its greatness may be left to those who think that what they witness for the first time is new to all the world. Essays upon "Romeo et Juliette," "Carmen" and "La Traviata" will not find much space in this paper. A more fruitful subject at present is the familiar impersonations of Mme. Calvé and the unfamiliar ones of M. Alvarez and M. Plançon, who were associated with her last night, the former as Don José and the latter as Escamillo.

Mme. Calvé's Carmen has changed in none of its fundamental ideas. Before such changes can take place the leopard must change his spots, and the wonderful woman who sang and acted last night must get a new nature. It seems superfluous to lay stress on the beauty of Mme. Calvé's personation of the gypsy heroine of Prosper Mérimée's tale, yet when the interpretation comes before us anew we are perforce driven to voice our admiration. This is one of the truly notable operatic embodiments of our time.

Mme. Calvé not only looks the part, but she lives it for the hours during which the opera lasts. Every action is charged with a subtle eloquence, and throws light upon the emotions of the woman. Every look is a speech, every gesture a revelation. And how beautifully she uses her voice! She makes it a medium for the expression of every side of a passionate and changeable nature. Last night she sang the music with uncommonly good intonation, with ravishing beauty of tone, and with so many significant nuances that even those unacquainted with the text must have known what she meant. Her singing was a little less vigorous than it sometimes was of yore, and this gave a new aspect to her performance. But the conception of the character was the same as it used to be, and it was set forth in a convincing and masterfully dramatic manner.

M. Plançon had the most trying task of the evening—to seek for success in a part in which so many have failed. It is a mystery to most operagoers why so many baritones fail to convey to their auditors the grace, the dash, and the gallantry of Escamillo. But M. Plançon seemed to have solved the mystery. He certainly avoided the bottomless pit of non-success. He was a fine, commanding figure. His action was full of splendid freedom and vigor, and he sang the deceptive Toreador song superbly. In the last act he dazzled the audience with a brilliant costume. M. Plançon has added another to his long list of happy and fascinating achievements.

M. Alvarez was an excellent Don José. The part was to have been sung by M. Salza, but he was indisposed, and the principal tenor became his substitute. In the first act M. Alvarez sang well, but his flower song in the second was deficient in depth of feeling. However, he had his opportunity in the great scene at the close of the third act. There his robust and impassioned style was suited to the dramatic content of the scene, and he let himself loose in a perfect torrent of fury at Carmen. Again, in the last act, he had an opportunity for vigorous and declamatory song, and he made the most of it. His Don José was much more successful than his Romeo, and it is a pity that he did not make his debut in this part.

Mme. Emma Eames was the same lovely Micaela as of old. She was in good voice and sang beautifully. Her delivery of the romance in the third act won her unflinching applause. The small parts were in satisfactory hands, and the subsidiary scenes moved with smoothness and celerity. The chorus was acceptable, and the orchestra did its work most efficiently. Signor Mancinelli conducted with his usual skill. Tomorrow night "Tannhäuser" will be sung.

SOCIETY AT THE OPERA.

Many New Faces and a Few of the More Familiar Ones Seen.

There were many new faces in the boxes last evening and a few of the more familiar ones. Mrs. John Jacob Astor, who wore a gown of black lace, décolleté, and a sunburst of diamonds on her corsage, had as her guest her mother, Mrs. Willing, who was in gray. John Jacob Astor and Harry Lehr were also in the box, and a visitor was Senator Depew.

Mrs. A. Biersstadt, in Box 24, was in black velvet, with superb diamonds. Mrs. Edward Reeve Merritt and Mrs. W. Emlen Roosevelt were in Box 3. This was Mrs. Merritt's first appearance since the death of her father, Mr. Roosevelt. She was in black and Mrs. Roosevelt was in lavender.

Mrs. Frederic Benedict was in Box 22 in white. Mrs. Trenor L. Park, in Box 2, was in lavender satin and diamonds. Mrs. James Hude Beckman was the guest of Miss Corola de Forest.

Lady Colebrook and Mrs. Dodge were in the Whitney box. Lady Colebrook was in white with her famous pearls. Mrs. Joseph Stickney, in white and diamonds, was in Box 33.

Among others were Mrs. Anson Phelps Stokes, the Misses Stokes, Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, Mrs. Harry McVicker, the Misses Gurnee, Mrs. Frederic Pierson, Miss Leary, Mrs. H. F. Dimock, the Misses Bowers, Mr. and Mrs. William Rockefeller, Sr., Miss Eloise Chase, Mrs. John H. Hall, the Misses Hall, William R. Grace, the Misses Grace, Miss Susan de Forest Day, Gen. Roe, and Miss Josephine Roe.

"Belle of New York" to Tour Here.

Arrangements have been concluded for the tour of this country of "The Belle of New York" Company, which will arrive here from England Jan. 6. The first engagement will be at the Casino the latter part of January and will last two weeks, after which a tour embracing all the principal cities will be made, the season terminating in Boston early in May. The company, which is now appearing at the Shaftesbury Theatre, London, is headed by Miss Edna May. There will be some changes in the principal rôles for the American tour.

Company to Push "The Great Ruby."

A company, consisting of J. Wesley Rosenquest, Arthur Rehan, and George H. Brennan, has been incorporated to exploit "The Great Ruby" after March 1, when Jacob Litt's control of the rights of the melodrama will pass to the company for a period of three years.

Casino to Have a Souvenir Night.

It will be souvenir night at the Casino to-morrow evening. The occasion will be the one hundredth performance of "The Singing Girl." The souvenirs consist of handsome powder puff boxes with silver tops, on which in puff print the portrait of Miss Alice Neilsen will be found.

"A WONDERFUL WOMAN."

Special to The New York Times.

POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y., Dec. 20.—Tonight the Collings Opera House. Fannie Rice gave the first performance of her new play, "A Wonderful Woman." The name of the author is a guarded secret.

The new comedy is in three acts, with the scenes laid in New York City. Polly Perkins acted by Miss Rice, is an up-to-date woman, who is engaged in stock brokerage and speculation in Wall Street. She has a leaning toward Theosophy, and to gratify that fad imports a Hindu, who is supposed to be a master of the occult science, and claims to possess the power to separate the soul from the body and send it on a visit to the heavenly planets. He attempts to exercise this power on Polly Perkins and a female friend, with the most confounding and humorous results.

Miss Rice's acting was rewarded with five or six curtain calls by the large audience, which seemed to greatly enjoy the performance. Several newspaper men and managers who were present are of the opinion that in "A Wonderful Woman" Miss Rice has a valuable piece of theatrical property. The new play will be seen in New York shortly after the holidays.

JOHN BLAIR'S EXPERIMENT.

In Carnegie Lyceum last evening John Blair presented the second of his subscription plays, a translation of an exceedingly dull and needless French piece in three acts called "Les Tenailles." Paul Hervieu wrote the original, which was one of the series of prolonged conversations about marital relations and adultery with which Jules Claretie has all but wrecked the fortunes of the Comédie Française in his directorship.

Granted a fairly fluent pen and some reading of modern fiction, and it is a very easy task to turn out such a piece as this. The building of a conventional farce or melodrama for the entertainment of men and women of average intelligence requires