

TRAVESTIES AND GOSSIP OF A GREEN ROOM

By ELLEN LEECH

A WAY back in the earliest days of theater going, when the spelling was so delightfully vague, and so intrigues the imagination of today, may be found a description of a theater in which a section of it is referred to as a "tireynge-howse or green room," proving that beyond a doubt we are following an ancient and time honored custom in holding to and emphasizing this section of our modern theaters.

Of course when the primitive dramas or plays were produced they were not assigned a building at all but were given more often than not in the courtyard of an Inn, whence the retiring room of the actors was most likely to be the green sward surrounding the hostelry. Whether or not this influence of coloring was responsible the fact remains that the premiere green rooms mentioned are alluded to as deriving their names from the tinting of the walls. And we find the personality of these rooms has persisted and the elusive quality of their allure for the public has never waned since the first theater especially constructed for dramatic performances was built in London in 1576 by the actor, James Burbage.

Just how much precedent there may be for dining in the green room is a little vague, but tea, and we may guess, slightly more powerful cups were often passed, but whatever may have been the rule in the green rooms the fact that the audiences regaled themselves with food all down through the ages is an established fact. In case they did not come well supplied with nourishment it was sold them by vendors catering to all kinds of appetites. While this is no longer prevalent with us in a, strictly speaking, theater it is the very life breath, and sustenance of all roof gardens, which may be merely a reversion to the fact that it was in the gallery nearest the roof that eating in our theaters persisted the longest, though generally confined to the consumption of peanuts, the gallery becoming entitled thereby, and probably earning the epithet still, though, due to modern progress, the succulent nuts have shed their shells and now may be secured in smaller and less obtrusive quantities. And many of us on a visit to an Oriental theater seem to exist merely as a small island entirely surrounded by a sea of queer exotic delicacies, largely dominated by dried fish.

It matters very little however about the sanction of usage in this matter of dining as the custom adopted by the Pasadena Players of serving a cast dinner in the green room between one afternoon and evening performance of each production has proved such a delightful one. In the less affluent days, when the playhouse functioned less grandly on Fair Oaks avenue, the cast dinners were a part of the social life of the actors but they were given either in private homes, clubs, or occasionally the hotels but in planning the new theater, where every detail is worked out to such perfection, the

green room has become a charming salon, a friendly pleasant place where the cast may gossip or criticise, study or relax, as time permits, and where after every performance friends may gather for a word of congratulation,—or just words! Then the room is so charmingly adapted to the service of a dinner to quite a party of people as the two refectory tables, always a part of the furniture of the room may be utilized as tables of honor, with a long central section set up for the occasion. The dinner given in the midst of the season of repertoire last month was especially memorable as the guests of honor were Edith Lynne Matthison, Charles Rann Kennedy, and Edith Gage, who so delighted the community by their productions, "The Admiral" and "The Chastening," and who after dinner thrilled their auditors by a five minute travesty on the Russian tragedy of today. Mr. Kennedy later voiced his admiration of the work done here and of the encouragement offered to the future of the drama by such earnest and sincere work as Pasadena shows in our Community theater.

The season of repertoire which this dinner punctuated was intended, and provided, for a catholicity of tastes. From a program offering March Hares, Hedda Gabler, The Two Virtues, and Outward Bound, a choice could be made for every mood and all temperaments should have been satisfied. The principals seemed particularly well cast in these productions; Lenore Shanewise's interpretation of Hedda Gabler was unusually strong, but then the subtleties of her Mrs. Midget were most pleasing. Maurice Wells may not by nature be so temperamental as Geoffrey of the March Hares family but even so we might forgive him—that is, we couldn't resist his charm. Mrs. Palmer is so delightful in everything it is hard to differentiate.

In all this gossip to and fro, the question of the ultimate supremacy of the theater, it might be well to remember the very old proverb which tells us "It is not the weathercock that changes, it is the wind," and drama we believe to be eternal. We are always glad to find encouraging statements in the press, to hear them from lecture platforms, and to seem to gather them from the air around us, regarding the growth and progress of the drama within the past year or so, but coming right down to the voice of the masses nothing more to the point has been contributed than the opinion voiced by a fellow trolley traveler who, having corralled an auditor in a seatmate and compelled an audience by sheer vocal power, said among many things that the movies might be all right, though paid much too much but as for him he was getting tired of pictures he liked "to hear 'em say something sometimes, if it ain't only to swear,"—probably still holding fond recollections of "What Price Glory," and we echo more power to his voice, may his tribe increase and grow in appreciation.



THE COMMUNITY PLAYHOUSE, PASADENA, IS NOT ONLY THE DRAMATIC CENTER BUT IS A POINT OF CONTACT FOR MANY VARIED INTERESTS.