

PROVINCIAL

"JUST A WIFE OR TWO."

At the West Pier Theatre, Brighton, on Monday, November 24, 1919, Mr. Anthony Ellis presented the farce comedy, by Christopher St. John and A. L. Ellis (from the French of MM. Gerbdon and Armont), entitled:—

"Just a Wife or Two."

Victor Hamilton .. Mr. Leslie Howard
Mr. Drage .. Mr. O. Wordley Hulse
Henry Woolridge Mr. Alan Stephenson
Alexander MacKonnichie ..
Mr. Jack Verity
Ronald Lang .. Mr. John Killner
Gabb .. Mr. A. Bromley Davenport
Mr. Coote .. Mr. Stanley Killby
Alfred .. Mr. Arthur Bowers
Blanche Draga .. Miss Joan Chaloner
Janet Draga .. Miss Hazel Jones
Georgie Lemane .. Miss Jean Cavendish
Lulu .. Miss Violet Blythe-Pratt
Madame Robin .. Miss Joan Perrins
Gertie French .. Miss Ruth Evelyn
Julia .. Miss Elsie June

The scene opens in a charming Surrey garden belonging to Mr. Drage, who adores his roses and his daughters, Blanche and Janet. He is a gentle, absent-minded person, wrapped up in his wonderful flowers. The elder girl is engaged to Dr. Woolridge, who is away on an expedition in Central Africa. The younger has just become engaged to Ronald Lang. Suddenly there comes in the family lawyer, Mr. Coote, who has some good news to announce. He has that morning gone through the will of the late Sir Martin Wynne, who has left the residue of his fortune to his nephew, Victor Hamilton, subject to two conditions. This young man has had an unfortunate attachment to a sort of actress, and Sir Martin, desiring that he should settle down and become a respectable member of society, has bequeathed his fortune to him on condition that he marries one or other of Mr. Drage's daughters, the choice to be left entirely to the young man. On the day of the marriage the bride is to receive half of Victor's fortune. The young couple are also to be compelled to retain in their service Sir Martin's former valet and confidential servant, Gabb. Victor arrives, but neither of the girls wants to marry him, and he frankly admits that he does not want to marry either. He has seen far too much of one lady during the last three years to want anything but complete freedom. It would, however, be a great pity that the money should go to charities, so a way out is suggested. And this forms the material for the remainder of the play.

Victor becomes first the purely honorary and platonic husband of the elder daughter, Blanche, but as can be imagined, complications ensue on the unexpected return of Woolridge from Africa. Matters have now to be arranged whereby a divorce can be procured for Blanche, so that she can marry the doctor. But there seems to be no solution until as the result of a series of amusing situations it is resolved that Victor and Janet, the younger daughter, should marry on the same lines as in the case of the first marriage. This had been a complete success, and Victor had had a delightful time with the charming domesticity provided for him in his London home, and as much excitement as he needed in his constant travels abroad. The marriage with the younger sister, however, is not nearly so successful. Each gets on the other's nerves, and the situation is intolerable. Really, the young people are too much attracted to each other for their peculiar marriage to be a success. Only when, through the ingenious manoeuvring of the elder sister, they are about to leave each other, does Victor betray the secret of his love for his own wife, which is more than returned by Janet, the evidence of which the audience have seen in a delightful scene between the sisters. The bewildered mind of poor Mr. Drage, who has been much disturbed by the extraordinary matrimonial tangle; the intrusions of the valet, Gabb; and the adventures of a Scottish admirer of Blanche, all help in the unfolding of the plot, as well as in providing a succession of varied and amusing situations.

The play is full of humour. It is, moreover, presented by a first-class company. Mr. A. Bromley Davenport makes the most of the many opportunities given to him as Gabb, who has an astonishing way of making a muddle of every situation until it is absolutely hopeless. Mr. Leslie Howard plays the difficult part of Victor with much skill. Blanche and Janet are impersonated with marked ability by Miss Joan Chaloner and Miss Hazel Jones, and Miss Jean Cavendish earns golden opinions by her artistic work as a woman of the world. Miss Violet Blythe-Pratt has not a great deal to do as Lulu, a chorus girl, but makes full use of the opportunities afforded her. Mr. O. Wordley Hulse distinguishes himself as Mr. Drage. Mr. John Killner is prominent, especially in the first scene. The play is produced by Miss Edith Craig, with Mr. Arthur Bowers as stage-manager and Mr. John Killner as assistant stage-manager.

FRENCH FARCE MAKES HIT

LONDON, Eng., Dec. 19.—London is rather delighted over the French farce "Just a Wife or Two," which is being presented here. The play is from the pen of Christopher St. John and A. L. Ellis, who translated it from the French of Gerbton and Armont.

The story has to do with a certain young man, Victor by name, who has been left a large fortune, on the condition that he marry one of two daughters. He arrives in his full splendor, only to find that the girls are engaged, and that neither of them cares to marry him. However, the money is there and must not be allowed to go to waste. So we find Victor married to the first daughter, Blanche, on the condition that he be only an honorary and platonic husband.

Blanche's sworn love returns from an expedition to South Africa and wants his own girl back. Victor gets a divorce. In order to keep the money, he must marry Janet, the younger daughter. This is done, on the same condition that he married Blanche. After a while, Janet and Victor find that they really love each other, so they become husband and wife in earnest. In the cast are Leslie Howard, C. Wordley Hulse, Bromley Davenport, Jack Verity, John Killner, Arthur Bowers, Joan Chalonier, Hazel Jones, Jean Cavendish, Violet Blythe-Pratt, Joan Pereira, Ruth Evelyn and Elsie June. Edith Craig produced the play.

The New York Clipper, December 24, 1919