

whispering grandchildren, whose sparkling eyes reflect the love and pride that shine through the old man's spectacles, and who seem every moment on the point of flinging their arms around the happy old fellow's neck and kissing him for bringing them to such a delightful place. Lounging along the lobbies you may see a few young men, who cluster at the wings to study the faces of the seated audience; or perhaps a critic—that singular, semi-savage, all-knowing individual—whose matter-of-fact way of coming, glancing, and going, proclaims him somebody else than one who attends for enjoyment; perhaps such an one may stop a moment to be gazed at as though he were a wild beast, nod to a tall treasurer, to one or two acquaintances, and then vanish "like a guilty thing upon a peaceful summons." With the exceptions that the arm-chairs in the orchestra division are narrow, high, and exceedingly uncomfortable, and some of the side seats above are so high that a short person's feet must dangle above the floor, we can pronounce "the front of the house" at Wallack's most excellent, both in accommodations and in patrons.

We have also the highest admiration for the good taste and good common-sense shown in bringing this house to public notice. A Wallack poster is "a thing of beauty." There is no racking of the dictionary for high-sounding adjectives, but, with a modesty as commendable as it is rare, the simple announcement of the play suffices; while, most praiseworthy of all, the full cast appears, with the names of all the players in one size of letter—large and small, men and women, leading comedian and utility man, find their names before the public, and are justly proud of the way in which they are put there. The custom of other houses is generally to announce one or two stars in monstrous type, and ignore the remainder of the company altogether. This is discouraging and unjust. The first walking-lady is as much entitled to a place on the bill as the hero who does Hamlet; publicity is capital for her as well as for him; indeed, she needs it more in proportion as she is less known. Therefore we rejoice in the Wallack bill as simple justice generously extended, and, we doubt not, warmly appreciated. We know it is appreciated by the people, and often praised, to the disparagement of other houses, for the humblest artist has some friends, and those friends are always glad to see his name before the public. Of advertising, we may say the same for Wallack; he does not indulge in the sensation style at all, for which we thank him.

But we are rapidly filling our prescribed space without reaching the curtain. The public always find a good working company when Mr. Wallack is at the head of affairs. There are many as good or better artists, but no one has collected so many of them into a single company, probably because of expense. Boucicault came near it at the Winter Garden, but no other New York manager seems disposed to try. We think there is some complaint, and plenty of reason for it, that Mr. Wallack presents so few new faces. Year after year, the same old story and the same general distribution; it has in fact become too much of a good thing. Excellent people, and almost all superior artists they are; but novelty, change, something or somebody new, is a natural demand by the patrons of a theater—a demand which has here been almost ignored. Mr. Lester Wallack is a comedian of most excellent accomplishments and positive talent; but why should we have his name for ever in the leading part? why not now and then call in some stranger artist for his business, if for no other reason, just to see how inferior all others are to him? Certainly, it cannot be from apprehension that the judgment of the people might fall the other way. Then, too, Mr. Lester Wallack can afford to give other men in the company a trial in his line; change parts, for instance, with Mr. Fisher, and give the public a new enjoyment. We have no fault to find with Mr. Lester Wallack's acting, except a certain self-consciousness which is unpleasantly apparent in every part he undertakes, and the fact that he is so incompetent to identify himself with the characters which he assumes that in each he is the same handsome, dashing Mr. Lester Wallack and nobody else. Mr. Charles Fisher is one of the best actors and finest gentlemen on the stage; he brings to every representation the wealth of a cultivated mind, and acts his part with that scrupulous care which makes you feel the reality of the mimic scene. Equally at home in "Young Mariow," "Hotspur," or "Jesse Rural," he is perhaps the most valuable man that this company can boast. Then there are John Gilbert and Mark Smith, the stalwart representatives of "Old Men," whose places could not easily be filled in any sense, and whose acting is generally unexceptionable—always good. George Holland is a fine type of the old-school English low comedian, and, in spite of a heavy weight of years and feeble health, gives now and then a little of that uproarious fun that made people run after him forty years ago. Mr. Young is a low comedian of peculiarly dry, eccentric style, often rivaling the oldest of his compeers in quaint characterization. He does not get opportunities equal to his powers, but in spite of overshadowing greatness in others he makes his mark with the people. Mr. Floyd is a clever but immature young actor, affected with a *penchant* for imitating Mr. Wallack, a little too careless, and sometimes showing a want of earnestness in his profession, but still a favorite in his line of characters. Mr. Daly is another good actor of indifferent parts. Mr. Sefton is of the old school, a tolerable actor, but rather hard and repellent in style. Mr. Norton is at home in some dialogue parts, but does not seem to care much for the business of playing. These are all the gentlemen who figure prominently in the bills.

Of the ladies, dear, good Mrs. Vernon's sunny face should come first. Retaining in a wonderful degree the elasticity of youth, and possessing in its fullest extent the power of being natural, she is always most welcome in the cast, and carries with her the involuntary blessings of thousands who appreciate her rare endowments of mind and heart. May she live many long years to adorn and elevate the stage! Mrs. Hoy is probably more generally known as leading lady than any other in America. She is a remarkable instance of the power of cultivation; for we cannot believe that she ever had a natural genius for the stage. Her manner is severely cold, passionless, and unsympathizing; she does not speak to the heart, and rarely excites the kindlier sentiments, and fails utterly in sentimental parts. She is, *par excellence*, a "society" actress. With well deserved renown for faultless taste in dress, with a stately manner, graceful carriage, and aristocratic tone, she forces the highest respect from those who cannot assent that she is a first class artiste. These qualities, added to those of a more domestic nature, have made her a world of warm friends. Her benefits bring the largest audiences and the best people to the house—for the sake of the true lady more than the leading actress. And, as in the case of Mr. Lester Wallack, we suggest that even her great popularity might be occasionally disregarded, and other actresses tried in her characters, with satisfaction to the public. Not that we would dispense with her, by any means; but we should like to see if any other lady could act as well. Miss Mary Gannon, the gushing, jovial pet of New York, comes next. She is a rare example of the power of nature; her acting is not acting—it is a perfect photograph; she does not assume a character—she is the character, and forces you to forget the individual you see, for the one the authors drew. In her peculiar line she has no rival, and we have not yet had enough of her. Miss Fanny Morant does not strike us favorably; she is constrained,

WALLACK'S THEATER.

THE institution in this city coming nearest to what a theater should be, is that presided over by Mr. James Wallack. We all know who Mr. Wallack is; we know him as an artist of superior ability—a true artist, bringing careful and conscientious study and elevated thought to his aid; we know him as a legitimate manager—one who has, by long practice and eminent success in the profession, won the right to the highest position; we know him also as, *par excellence*, a gentleman, proud but courteous, reserved but warm-hearted, fitted by nature, education, and a life of varied experience, to stand beside the wisest and best of the land. Were men thus qualified the only directors of entertainments in this city, we might indeed congratulate ourselves. Of course, with such a man at the helm, Wallack's Theater is honorably famous for most of the conditions that lead to perfection. The house itself is warm, well-lighted (too well almost), clean, and singularly quiet. The approaches, offices, officers, and ushers are equal to their places, and people come and go with a feeling of thankfulness that so much has been done to make them comfortable. The house naturally repels the rougher sort of playgoers—the swash-bucklers of Broadway and the hi-hi boys of the Bowery; it is too nice for them—they feel out of place there. Therefore, Wallack's is the favorite house for ladies. They like its up-town location, its pleasant interior, so well adapted for showing toilets; its patchouly air of ultra respectability, so potently reminding one of an aristocratic mansion. On any fair evening, when the bill is at all attractive, Wallack's dress-circle (and by the way the house is about all dress-circle) rivals in fashionable show the opera itself. By inexorable necessity, the masculine portion of the audience is well-dressed and well-behaved, comprising a large proportion of solid citizens, whose gray hairs are not ashamed to be seen even in a theater; whose near neighbors are stately matrons, beginning the down-hill of life, or oftener the rising generation of

artificial, and cold to a chilling degree. Perhaps she might do better in characters of the eccentric type; but certainly the ordinary routine thus far falling to her lot does not seem to fit her. Not for want of care, but she seems to be doing an unpleasant duty, lacks interest, and fails to awaken interest in her auditors. Mrs. Wilkins, a recent addition to the company, we have not seen sufficiently to speak of with precision. Miss Madeline Henriques possesses talent, and has made some excellent progress. With proper opportunity we should judge she would become an actress of decided merit, and win a good position. Miss Ione Burke is undeveloped as an artist, but she has natural genius in abundance, and an adaptation for the stage which promises well. These two young ladies should, under the fostering care of the Veteran (than whom there is no better teacher), progress rapidly and surely. They have all the mental and personal requirements—study and practice can supply the rest. Mrs. John Sefton is a favorite, and fills her station creditably. The others we have not had an opportunity of studying.

With such a house and such a company, Wallack's stands first in America as a genuine theater. But we must, in candor, say that the lack of enterprise in procuring appropriate scenery and stage appointments has been painfully apparent in past seasons. The mounting of "Rosedale," however, which opened the present season, gives us, we hope, an assurance of a reform in this matter hereafter. For the elegance and splendor of the costumes and the toilets, this house has been justly celebrated, and with scenery and stage appointments to match, it will be as nearly faultless as we can expect a theater to be.