

The Things I saw in Berlin. („Drei-Groschen-Oper.“)

By Hannen Swaffer.

*The Sausage-Eaters.* I should never get used to these German theatre audiences, opera-lovers eating sausages in between the acts, Shakespearians filling themselves with layers of meat on bread. Scarcely one of them wears evening dress. They nearly all belong to the middle class, and they drink in not only the beer, but every word and every note. "Siegfried," unfortunately, at the other State opera house in Unter den Linden, is not so successful. I only heard the first act, because I was called away. That had Futurist scenery, Cubist steps leading into the cave where Siegfried makes his sword, curves put in exactly where they belong. The Germans are using their brains. We only knock our heads against the Wallstreet.

*Neither Rich Nor Gay.* Well, they have modernised not only Wagner and Shakespeare, but "The Beggar's Opera." They call it "The Threepenny Opera," and it is produced like that. Not only has it a new name, but a new plot and new music—yes, and modern clothes. So it is not "The Beggar's Opera," after all. The penny-plain, twopence-coloured idea begins with a piece of rag, stretched across the stage in place of a curtain, and on which is crudely written the name of the play. Then, when the curtain goes up, you see at the back an organ and two men playing saxophones. The music, written by a young German composer, is very modern. There is not much of it, but it illustrates how the saxophone, the most-hated of all American tortures, is being used in the new Germany.

*Strange Beggars.* Polly Peachum is the daughter of a man who sells old clothes to London beggars and who recites pious phrases, which he reads from a Bible chained to his desk. Now and then there is dropped from the flies a sign like "It is better to give than to receive," while magiclantern effects suggest scenery. On one side are some weird dummies, like a Chamber of Horrors, illustrating how beggars ought to dress to extort the most from passers-by. The rag-seller draws from his clients half their takings, and he gives them, in vulgar language now and then, useful advice. Polly Peachum runs away with Captain Macheath, pronounced "Mackie." He is the king of the beggars and crooks.

*More Grossness.* The wedding scene contains many indecencies, and when the thieves and beggars eat at the marriage feast some of them, especially a priest clad in a cherry-coloured robe, eat with grossness and revolting greed, one using two knives. One scene takes place in a house of ill-fame, where Macheath runs to escape from the chief of the London police force, who was formerly his friend, and who is dressed like an admiral in the Swiss Navy. They shut him up in a prison which consists of a thing like a cage at the Home for Lost Dogs at Battersea. There was a laugh when some tin plates used at the wedding were said to have been "stolen from the Savoy Hotel." — I should think the whole production cost about £30.

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