

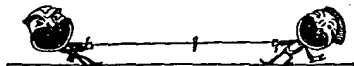


## Cohan Magic

MR. COHAN is well known as a wonder-worker with unprepossessing manuscripts but he never pulled a weaker sister than "Two Fellows and a Girl" through anemia to robust health.

Taken on the hoof, this little story of a girl who had two suitors and married one of them must have been just about as zippy as this brief but sufficient outline of the plot sounds. But somewhere between the birth of the gigantic idea in the brain of Vincent Lawrence, and its manifestation on the stage by Mr. Cohan with the aid of Ruth Shepley, Alan Dinehart and John Halliday, a shot of something was injected into it, with the result that what you see before you is quite pleasant entertainment, mild but pleasant.

There is something mysterious about its ability to sound thin and yet keep you interested. If we had more time we would go into the matter more thoroughly and figure out just what it is. The conversations between the girl and her two beaux couldn't be any flatter if they were conversations between your own sister and her gentlemen friends. The entire first act is so uninspiring as to be almost a human document.



THEN, in the second act, when the rejected suitor comes back after a five-years' absence to visit his successful rival and wife, the thing becomes almost offensively real. There is so much back-slapping and

"why-you-old-son-of-a-gunning" that you would swear that they were two real young men trying to pass off a feeling of embarrassment at seeing each other again. Mr. Halliday in particular slaps himself and Mr. Dinehart into what must be a rosy glow. When the action begins to drag, Mr. Halliday skates off into a corner and slaps his thighs until, if he had a welkin, it would unquestionably ring. And all this is by way of showing how glad he is to see his old buddy back again—you old dog, you.



THE last act contains more of the stuff usually associated with a three-dollar seat in the theatre, but even that, when you come right down to it, is nothing more or less than a nice little act.

And yet your general impression is that of having seen a good show. Part of this may be due to the ingratiating performances of the three title-rollers, Mr. Dinehart in particular combining to advantage what he has learned about acting with what he has learned about ordinary young men.

But there still remains the mystery of how so much that is banal and unexciting can be doctored up into something that is very seldom dull and at times is actually absorbing. The answer is of course Mr. Cohan, but how does he do it? For the funny thing about "Two Fellows and a Girl" is that, even as it stands rejuvenated, it ought not to be as amusing as it unquestionably is.

*Robert C. Benchley.*