The Theatregoer is free to admit that he was bored by Peleas and Melisande, and is sorry for any one who gained his only impression of the great actress from this play. The performance proved to his satisfaction that, whatever be the beauty of scenery or costume, the poetic or symbolic interest of the text, or the grace, beauty or elocution of the actors, extremely fanciful drama, whose interest is chiefly in the phrasing, must seem in the intense vividness of stage presentation utterly artificial and absurd. Maeterlinck's characters have existence only in the dreamiest imagination, and in flesh and blood become silly and grotesque.

Mrs. Campbell's Mrs. Ebbsmith and Magda well fulfilled the promise of her Paula Tanqueray. All are "problem" plays of similar character,—Mr. Pinero's much alike. As Paula Tanqueray tries to substitute honorable married life for her career of vice, so Agnes Ebbsmith tries to refine and ennoble her illegal relation with the man whom, she hopes, if it ever prove for either ones good, she will have the noble love to surrender. Both women fail. Paula because of her own spoiled and spoiled character and the difficulties of her new family relations; Agnes because, as she discovers, the man is not capable of pure and disinterested love. Agnes's temptation is then to sacrifice the nobility of their relation, and to hold her lover merely by her physical charm. Through long trial, with many pitiful surrenders, she fights her ignoble desire thus by dishonorable means to hold this contemptible man's affections. At last, tortured to a decision, she sacrifices the affection rather than her ideal. The story is unutterably sad, but less despairing than Mrs. Tanqueray.

As a play Mrs. Tanqueray is more effective, because simpler and from the start decisive. With Paula's first appearance we see her inherent weakness, and proceed through her dreadful struggles straight to a necessary end. Agnes's career is one of torturing and uncertain vacillation, closed, in some confusion, by triumph none too secure. Mrs. Campbell's acting is in both parts superb. Her slightly melodramatic manner seemed more in keeping with Agnes, the social agitator and lecturer. Her passionate jealousy, temper and scorn were more effective in accomplishing Paula's stormy ruin. With no mannerism or posing, she makes these two unhappy women beautifully, but oh, so pitifully, alive.

Mrs. Campbell makes delightful and legitimate use of gorgeous dress, never adopting any costume inappropriately merely for effect, and never "posing" to attract attention to herself on the stage. In Mrs. Ebbsmith occurs a striking dramatic use of costume. Agnes's lover wants her to go more freely into society, to dress expensively, and to lead a more brilliant life; but she is trying to purge out of their relation all the things that please merely the senses. So she appears in dresses the plainest and most subdued in color until, wild by any means to hold the man's slipping affection, she puts on a gorgeous black net dress he has bought her, and observes through bitter tears that her lover is by this sorry means reconciled and pleased. All the loveliness of the costume becomes loathsome.

Magda was played with equal power, but is, as a play, less interesting, because, instead of presenting one nature in conflict with itself, it presents a tyrannical, narrow-minded father irreconcilably opposed to his equally high-tempered daughter. Furthermore, Sudermann's work is less delicate artistically than Mr. Pinero's. For example, the comic character of Magda's aunt is exaggerated and tiresome beside Cayley Drummlle or the Duke of St. Olpherts. The villain is too impossibly cowardly and evil in contrast with the impartially pictured human characters both of Mrs. Tanqueray and of Mrs. Ebbsmith.

Timely for purposes of comparison was Mrs. Fiske's performance of A Doll's House, which seemed to the Theatregoer, considering the play and the entire company of players, really the best piece of the season. Ibsen's drama shows what the "problem" play may be at its best,—not narrow or morbid in interest, concerned, like Mr. Pinero's, with the idle rich and the dissolute woman, but with a familiar serious issue of common experience. Nora's happy home life is wrecked through her simplicity and ignorance of ordinary business obligations. She has