

A DANCE POETESS.

Isadora Duncan, Who Has Evoled Much Comment Abroad—Her Methods.

"A dance poetess" is something a bit new to the followers of theater or ballet in this country, but in Europe the unusual title has become associated with a young California woman named Isadora Duncan who has succeeded in setting Berlin and Vienna wild with enthusiasm and in turning Athens upside down. Miss Duncan is making a specialty of reproducing the old Greek dances in the old Greek costumes. This last business of digging up the graces of centuries past has come after Miss Duncan "illustrated" the songs of Ethelbert Nevin in this country, and then took a hard fall out of the "Rubaiyat" in Berlin. There is no denying that Miss Duncan is most graceful. There is also no denying the fact that she has gained



ISADORA DUNCAN DANCING.

[From a Painting by Kaulbach.]

much of her prominence because she has struck a novelty and has carried it through to the bitter end. In fact the whole Duncan family have studied ancient Greece and its customs to such an extent that they are now a bit weird to have about the house. It is said that Miss Duncan's brother insists on emptying half a glass of wine on the floor, whenever one is given him, as a libation to the Olympian gods. Miss Duncan herself wears the flowing robes of ancient Athens even in private life.

Miss Duncan is an unusually beautiful young woman and her every movement is the acme of grace. Her face is sweet and in her eyes lurk a subtle light which perhaps recalls the face of Beatrice Cenci or the even more puzzling look of Monna Lisa. It is rather startling to see her for the first time. She comes upon the plainly set stage quietly and unobtrusively, and the lights are turned low so that her face is but dimly seen against the background of the deep blue curtains. There is an orchestra, perhaps, usually only a piano, for Miss Duncan follows out her ideas of Greek simplicity. The unusualness of the costume in which she is clad is the first thing to strike the audience. Her robe looks a good deal like those which Botticelli seemed to suppose angels wore. Her face is not made up in the least and her legs and feet are bare. She says that she wears no fleshings, because it is her aim to restore the dance to its ancient simplicity. She follows out none of the conventionalities of stage dancing, and quickly shows that she knows none of the technicalities. Her dances are a series of poses and the attitudes those of the women who float upon the black background of the red Greek pottery.

Last winter Miss Duncan decided that she would go to Greece and show the people over there some few things about Greek dancing that they did not know. Now the good people of Athens are most patriotic and kindly and take a great interest in anything that dates back to the ancient days of their country's glory. Therefore when Miss Duncan was billed to appear at the royal opera house society people of Athens who had heard of her in Vienna told all their friends about her, and the house was filled on the first night of her appearance. Something came up so that the king could not occupy the royal box, but he sent Prince Nicholas in his place as he thought the entertainment worthy of royal patronage. Everything was right for a big triumph for Miss Duncan and Athens was ready to give her its best. But Miss Duncan is Miss Duncan. Therefore the sequel.

She came out on the big stage in her white garments and even Athens gasped a little at her startling appearance and the "simplicity" of her attire. Eight Greek boys in similar robes followed her. Every one waited for the dance to begin. But it was not to be. Miss Duncan stepped to the front of the stage and made a little speech in which she told the Athenians some few things about themselves that are always best left unsaid in Athens. And then she wound up her remarks by saying that the Greeks seemed to care nothing about their past and that she was going to do her share toward keeping the beautiful old customs alive. She continued in this strain until the audience was ready to throw things at her, and then she danced. The royal box feebly applauded at the close and the prince went home. Miss Duncan was a bit worried but wanted to go on and finish up her chances of success. She did, but only a few stayed to see her. She is not the most popular entertainer who ever went to Athens.