



## AMUSEMENTS

It was a good house that witnessed the third presentation of "The Charity Ball" at the Lansing theatre opera house Saturday night. He must be an unfeeling person who can see this play and not feel that there is that in it which pulls at his heart strings. It is a story so true to life, its sorrow is so real, its joy so natural, that one is engrossed in its gradual unfolding; and the lessons it teaches are most wholesome. It is fortunate that "The Charity Ball" has always been in good hands. First sent out on the road by Daniel Frohman, it is now in the hands of Gustave Frohman's company, which is as well qualified to present it as was its predecessor. The cast is a large one, and all the characters must be well sustained to preserve the harmony of the piece. Credit for the best work must be given to Mr. Gibney, in his assumption of the part of *Judge Peter Gurney Knox*; his characterization is said to be of his own creation and is certainly finished. Next should be mentioned Miss Mabel Strickland, as *Bess Van Buren*; as the ingenue she has a part prone to be overdone one way or the other, but her acting is pretty and natural. B. Howard, as the *rector*; Dorthea Usner, as *Mrs C. De Peyster*; and Bernice Wheeler, as *Ann Cruger*, all perform their parts acceptably. It must be said that the *Dick Van Buren* of J. Francis is not up to the average of the others in the cast. His poses are too stogy and his effects too studied to agree with the naturalness of the others. The thread of the story is carried largely by the *rector*, *Dick*, *Phyllis Lee* and *Ann*, some of the scenes being particularly strong and almost provocative of tears.

Sol Smith Russell, or as he now calls himself, "Mr. Russell, comedian," must have been highly gratified with the reception which he received in this city last week. Indeed, as he appeared before the curtain and made his exultant little speech, the immense audience and the enthusiastic plaudits may have caused him to forget for the time being that New York and other hypercritical communities will have none of him, and he may have deluded himself with the fancy that the Lincoln commendation was but a specimen of the universal tribute of an appreciative people to the only "legitimate successor of Joe Jefferson." But Mr. Russell, however great his success in the west and south, and we read only the other day that he has already accumulated several hundred thousand dollars, can never forget, for any considerable period, that in New York city the people smile at his most serious efforts, and what is worse, stay away from his performances. Every year he has made a determined attempt to compel favorable recognition in Gotham, and it is said he annually loses many thousands of dollars in these attempts. He has invoked the aid of the cleverest playwrights in the country in trying to find a play in which he could appear to the satisfaction of the people of New York. Boucicault did his best for Russell, but he did not attain success, and Kidder's cleverest work fell flat. The question is, can an actor whom New York refuses to approve, be great? The case of Richard Mansfield may be cited. He is probably the most unpopular actor in the country with the press and critics of New York; but Mansfield gets abuse, not ridicule, and his unpopularity is known to be due to his disagreeable personality—but with all the abuse the people of Gotham patronize him fairly well as long as he sticks to rational plays. Many intelligent and well informed people maintain that Sol Smith Russell is great, no matter what New York or any other effete eastern city may think, and they go to see him every year, and each time are more delighted than before. He has admirers among people who seldom go to the theatre, and to whom the advent of Sol Smith Russell is an event of big importance. On the other hand there are people right here in Lincoln who are unable to take Russell seriously, and who regard this comedian who is waiting for the descending mantle of Jefferson, as a presumptuous pretender. It can be said of Russell in all fairness that he is absolutely lacking in originality. He admits this much himself. Gifted with a some-

what remarkable voice which he uses with an artist's skill, he is an admirable mimic, and his close study of the methods of Jefferson has enabled him to exhibit that peculiar mellow quality of humor, that mingling of comedy and pathos, that are so characteristic of Jefferson. In his earlier plays, "A Poor Relation," "Peaceful Valley," etc., he gave almost perfect reproductions of Jefferson's subtle comeny; but the plays were not like Jefferson's plays, and the studied imitation was not so apparent as now, when he has given himself over wholly to the presentation of the plays in which Mr. Jefferson won fame. Russell said in his remarks before the curtain at the Lansing last week that as *Dr. Pangloss* he wore the same wig Jefferson himself wore in that character. Not content with presenting Jefferson's play and wearing Jefferson's wig, he used Jefferson's voice, and Jefferson's laugh, and Jefferson's walk. In fact the Jefferson business was very much overdone. Next year, it is said, Mr. Russell is to appear in Mr. Jefferson's famous characterization, *Bob Acres* in "The Rivals," and we expect to see a startling reproduction of the leg shaking with which Mr. Jefferson has made us familiar; and "Cricket on the Hearth," and "Lend Me Five Shillings" will probably be added to his repertoire, and eventually we shall see this "legitimate successor of Jefferson," as a second-hand *Rip Van Winkle*. The public will never see Mr. Russell except as an imitator—no one can deny that as an understudy to the greatest living American comedian he is more than passably effective.

Mr. Charles Dickson gave his first presentation in this city of his new play, "A Jolly Good Fellow," at the new Funke Thursday evening. In his new role Mr. Dickson presents, with the aid of a very competent company, a play entirely different from any of his former efforts, in fact the tone of "A Jolly Good Fellow" is one that up to the present time, has been laid before the American audience with the qualification—adapted from the French. A goodly portion of American theatre patrons never miss an opportunity to see plays of this character but come away apparently shocked at what they have witnessed and piously advise their friends to remain at home on such occasions. We are reminded of an oft repeated World's Fair story which we will risk again. "A certain minister of the gospel visited the fair and upon his return home advised one of his brethren to avoid the Midway Plaisance and especially the theatre at the end of the streets of Cairo. The second ministerial brother solemnly received this good advise, but immediately upon reaching Chicago repaired to the aforefaid theatre to see what he had been advised to omit. Upon his return home the first brother said to brother number two, 'of course you followed my advice?' Whereupon number two spoke and said 'not by a jugfull, I took it all in, and do you know the moment I entered that large fleshy girl with the short hair beckoned me to her and whispered in my ear, where is the Rev. Brother ——— number one.'" So with Dickson's play—they are all horrified yet they all attend.



MILTON NOBLES.