



Clay Clement has signed a contract with Ira LaMotte of the Schiller theatre, Chicago, to remain under his management for five years. Mr. LaMotte has arranged for a winter season in New York at a good Broadway theatre. Mr. Clement has enlarged his repertoire. He will play Mathias in "The Bells" and he will produce his own dramatization of Maarten Maartens' story, "God's Fool." Clay Clement has a Hans Andersen "Bilderbuch Ohne Bilder" style and Maarten Maartens' romantic simplicity and refinement can be moved from the novel to the stage without breaking the plastering by a playwright who knows his business.

John Drew, who will play June 1 at the Lansing, is one of the best and most polished of the younger school of actors. For a number of years he was Daly's leading man. Four years ago when he left Daly to star he was overshadowed by predictions of failure. He has a temperament, rare among artists, commendation or adverse criticism affect him not at all. It is strange that he makes so fascinating a lover. He goes about the one occupation that all mankind is interested in with such icy indifference—yet with such success that every girl in the room thinks the heroine a fool if she takes a little time to consider his proposal. An impertinent and useless race of critics has made fun of the matinee girls' darling without reason. The modern matinee girl of New York city is not to be despised. She goes to the theatre constantly. She has reached that point in her dramatic education by strict attention to the course in comparative matinees where mere good looks, including grace and technical excellence, have no effect upon her judgment. She recognizes talent as quickly and more generously than the critics do. Her appreciation has no newspaper reservations connected with advertising or with prearranged puffing of any other actor. It is genuine and very rarely undeserved. Occasionally especially if she is alone and has no one to express her admiration to, she writes a letter to her hero. If the actor had less vanity he would perceive that, in spite of what the foolishly honest girl says, it is not himself, but his ability to act certain parts that she admires, he would accept the letters with a bow as he does bouquets over the footlights, i. e., as a tribute from the dumb to one who has the gift of tongues. John Drew has been the matinee girls' idol for some years. Idolatry has only hardened his heart and iced his blood. In congealing, however, he has only gained in fascination. Mrs. John Drew, his mother, has made her Mrs. Malaprop a classic. It will hardly be played by anyone hereafter without careful reference to her reading and if any change is introduced there must needs be shown good reasons for it. Her son John's first success was in "Butterflies," which was written for him by Henry Guy Carleton. The part that was given to Olive May, who afterwards became Mrs. Carleton, overshadowed Drew's part and he got into something else as soon as the public would let him. The light comedy and mitigated tragedy parts that Mr. Drew has confined himself to cannot be said to show versatility, which is not saying that he has it not—he has been sure of himself in the characters he has presented. For this reserve many thanks

—to lighten hearts—not to weight them is a task in the sunshine. It lacks the strong lime light and black shadows of tragedy. Heroic proportions built for tragedy are much rarer than tragedians or than actors, who like Mr. Drew know their place. His acting has finish, delicacy, refinement. He is the product of two generations of actors and of half a life time's discriminating study.

Mr. M. B. Curtiss, who will play this afternoon and evening at the Funke, has played "Sam'l of Posen" for sixteen years. The Jewish race is easily caricatured and the stage has shown it no mercy. "Sam'l of Posen" is a penniless Jew boy who arrives in New York and begins to earn his living as a street peddler. It is as novel to see a Jewish character presented without prejudice as it is pleasant. The popularity of "Sam'l of Posen" is a rebuke to the impossible nasal monstrosity that appears in nearly every play. People laugh because they have always laughed at the caricature of a Jew and because they like to get even with him in some way. It is not a type, it is grossly unjust and it is worked to death. In Utopia where the stage is said to be reformed the stage Jew is not. Happiness to the world, weary is not so much the presence of bliss, creating particles as it is the absence of agonizing instruments. The modern drama has the heavy female in tights, the comedian whose only funny expedient is to play drunk, the sad man with the heaving chest and cork leg walk and the stage Jew on the stage and the girl with the large hat and the man who chews tobacco in the audience to arrest development.

The Methodist church and the drama are further behind the procession than any other two institutions. If they would get together the blind man might loose the bound man's hands and then the man who can walk could lead his poor blind brother to a celebrated oculist. Perhaps it is only cataract that threatens the future usefulness of our Methodist brother. An operation as severe as the one called "The Protest-

ant Reformation" might restore his sight.

Mr. Curtiss' Jew is a Jew still. He wears flashy clothes; he is an oriental; he has a heavy unmusical voice, a big nose, Egyptian gestures (you can see them cut on the reliefs in the temples), and a love of money, the result of eighteen hundred years, at least, of inbreeding. He also has fidelity, honesty, and a warm heart and he carries the sympathy of the audience with him from the first. Mr. Curtiss has been in Lincoln for several days on account of some miscarriage of his plans. He has used the time to rehearse his new play, "The Alchemist," which he intends to put on in a few weeks.

The all-star caste of "The Rivals" was of course a disappointment. A star cannot blend himself with others into a streak of light like the milkyway after doing his own illuminating for aeons. "The Rivals" by Jefferson, Mrs. Drew, Francis Wilson, the Holland brothers, Julia Marlowe Taber and other planets lacked perspective, atmosphere, composition. The stage was a picture made up of the middle centres of a lot of other pictures, held in place by paste. There was no background and no air behind and around the figures. The following is a New York critic's estimate of the performance:

Every actor in the Rivals cast the other day worked with honest zeal to get the most out of his part. The result, as may be imagined, was incongruous and unsatisfying. The ripeness of Mrs. John Drew contrasted glaringly with Mr. Crane's modern sense of art. The finesse and equipoise of Joseph Jefferson were jarringly offset by the grotesquery of Francis Wilson. Such a classic as "The Rivals" can only be made enjoyable when it is acted, as it was conceived, in a spirit of refined ultra-idealism. That spirit was palpably lacking in the performance of three members of the cast the other day. There was a discordant

clash between the mellow and the modern.

Mr. Jefferson's Bob Acres indeed held the whole thing together. It was the same exquisite, delicate personation that has come to be regarded as a chef d'oeuvre of the comedian's art. Never once realizing Sheridan's conception, it is, however, so infinitely delightful, so humanly comic and pathetic that the actor cannot be blamed for his irreverent trampling upon tradition. To see Joseph Jefferson as Bob Acres is to see the rarest and finest exemplification of the comedian's art that the stage of this country has produced for a score of years.

Mrs. John Drew's Mrs. Malaprop is, what it always was, quaint, finished and in the very spirit of the author's conception.

Nat Goodwin was not at his happiest as Sir Lucius O'Trigger. His brogue was hard and forced, and of the will-o'-the-wisp variety—now you heard it and now you didn't.

Mr. Crane's Sir Anthony Absolute had the merit of absolute sincerity.

Robert Taber balanced the cynicism and hypocrisy of Jack Absolute with just the right amount of earnestness and force. It was one of the satisfying performances of the day. Mrs. Taber's Lydia Languish was charmingly natural.

In the thankless parts of Falkland and Fag, the Holland brothers "fed" their comrades so unobtrusively that they deserve a very large meed of warm praise. They kept the parts where they belonged—in the background.

As much cannot be said for Francis Wilson's David. He evidently did not believe in abnegation. In his one "bit of fat" he elaborated and over-elaborated so extravagantly that he stood wholly out of the picture. His self-assertiveness nevertheless pleased the audience, and he was rewarded with two vociferous scene calls. His dialect, by the way, would have puzzled a philologist. Fanny Rice plucked as many laurels as came within her reach. She played Lucy with refreshing snap and intelligence.

Fregoli is doing the wonderful for New Yorkers by assuming all the characters in a play. He carries a company of eleven people, who are stationed in the wings and render him silent assistance. He changes his character at the same time that he does his costume. Those who have seen him say it is impossible to believe that the same person is before you who a moment before left the stage. His larynx has been removed and he can sing soprano, alto, tenor and bass with ease. If he comes this way let's go to see him.

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