

THE PASSING SHOW

WILLA CATHER

We have had the pleasure of hearing that remarkable young man, Willy Brumester, on his third American appearance. A marvel of technique, that blonde fellow. One wonders when and how in his short lifetime he has found time to master the resources of the violin so thoroughly, how he has attained that amazing certainty of execution and accomplished his astonishing pyrotechnical effects. His technique is little short of miraculous, and his fingers seem to accomplish the impossible. Such prodigious octaves, such liquid scales, such dazzling harmonies, such furious and defiant bowing. His method of attack is almost brutal. He is not a poetic virtuoso. His playing is almost entirely a matter of strength, endurance and digital agility, as Sieveking's too often was, and who will deny that both of these brilliant executants lack temperament?

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I see that Mr. Goodwin's first elaborate venture in serious drama is being treated in New York with the consideration which it deserves. Everyone is familiar with the schoolboys' hero, Nathan Hale, and everyone is familiar with Clyde Fitch, the dramatist who wrote "Beau Brummel" when he was twenty. "Nathan Hale," as presented by Mr. Goodwin, is a splendidly staged production; it deserves to, and doubtless will, succeed. As to the play itself, "Nathan Hale," like all Clyde Fitch's later works "De Grammont" and "The Moth and the Flame," it has brilliant moments, flashes of dramatic intensity almost, but not quite, great enough to redeem the whole play. It is full of good material, clumsily utilized. The first two acts are poorly constructed and wasteful in time and opportunity, contributing little to the serious motif of the piece. The first act is laid in the schoolroom at New London, where "Nathan Hale"—Mr. Goodwin—is making love to his oldest pupil, impersonated by Maxine Elliott and she is "the biggest girl" in very truth, as heavenly fair as ever but grown amazingly matronly and rather elephantine in the kittenish pranks of a school girl. But what a lover he is, that impudent comedian, Mr. Nat C. Goodwin, how fine and tender, and how incongruously delicate—for Goodwin. We used to catch glimpses of it in "The Gilded Fool" and "An American Citizen," but as this New England schoolmaster he is a Romeo indeed. He keeps Miss Elliott in for some imaginary offense when his other pupils go out at recess and tells her, "I wish life were one long recess, that I might keep you in forever." And she seemed to think that would be rather nice. He catches her arms across the school desk and murmurs, "My love for you has all the kisses the stars have given the sky since night was made." There is something as spontaneous about Goodwin's lovmaking as about his humor. Tenderness, not of the overdone, stagey sort, but quiet and manly, seems to be a part of him, and this rakish comedian has kept it strangely sweet and fresh and ingenuous through all these riotous years. This pretty love scene is interrupted by the tidings of the battle of Lexington. Hale announces his determination to enlist and the act closes.

In the second act, Hale, at a council of revolutionary officers held at a colonial mansion at Harlem Heights, offers to go into the British lines and secure the plans, so necessary to the success of the Continental army. Miss Elliott, in a somewhat stagey scene, played most artificially, urges him to renounce his

purpose and tells him that if he goes, it will be at the cost of her love.

The third act finds Hale in a tavern occupied by British officers. No sooner does the Continental spy enter, than the Britishers obligingly begin to unfold their plans, one of the many weak points which the dramatist has permitted. Hale is detected by one of the officers who has seen him in the school house at New London, and his sweetheart is sent for that she may recognize and betray him. She, however, is warned by the woman who keeps the tavern, and Miss Elliott arrives at a highly dramatic moment, denying all knowledge of Hale and demanding to see her lover, whom she has been told lies there wounded. The critical moment seems safely tided over, when Hale's old negro servant rushes in and by his blubbing affection betrays his master to a spy's death. This pitiful betrayal, by a blundering, well meaning old servant, after all Miss Elliott's fortitude, is excellent in its dramatic effect, and is a thoroughly legitimate and artistic device.

In the first scene of the fourth act, Hale, closely guarded in his tent, learns from his sweetheart's brother that his work has saved the Continental army and inspired every youth in the land to deeds of glory and patriotism, and that his sacrifice has not been in vain. Miss Elliott enters for a scene of farewell in which not a word is spoken; only a woman's anguish and a woman's tears. Anguish, alas, which fails to convince, tears which never fall. In the hands of a great actress, even of a truly emotional actress, it would be a moving scene. Miss Elliott tried very hard, but she failed utterly. She struggled with all her physical strength to break through that icy loveliness of hers, to make that star like beauty for a moment human and impassioned. She was neither indifferent nor cheap, only helpless.

The tragic ending of the piece is a daring and masterful stroke of art. The last scene of the play is the best; so good, indeed, that I fear me it will never be popular. It takes place in an apple orchard, a beautiful scene painted by Ernest Albert. It is one of the few instances I recall of sentiment in scenic effect. The dawn brightens from gray to red through the leafy apple branches, from one guarded bough the hangman's rope swings in the rising wind of morning. The scene opens in silence, without a figure on the stage, the suggestion of the rope has human interest enough to carry this unconventional treatment. As the east flushes rose, the birds begin to sing; then the sunrise floods the world with glory and hope, and the death knell drowns the matin of the birds. Hales' old pupils steal silently in and crouch down on the grass under the apple tree to see their master die. The condemned man is led in and takes his stand under the gallows tree in the young morning. When asked if he has anything to say, he lifts his face to the sunrise, and seeming with one glance to see all the glorious strife with men that he will never enter, all the deeds of manhood undone, all the youth quenched in a night, he speaks his only lines in that gruesome scene:

"I regret that I have only one life to lose for my country." The curtain falls slowly.

In such a character as this, Mr. Goodwin labors under obvious physical disadvantages. Nathan Hale was but one-and-twenty when he died, was a famous athlete and the handsomest youth in all the colonies. Now Mr. Goodwin has said a long and sad farewell to forty, and his "cheek is but a map of days outworn" at that. But for all that, he deserves hearty commendation for the sincerity and good taste which he displays in the part throughout. While Nathan Hale is by no means Mr. Goodwin's best

impersonation, it demonstrates beyond question his power of self restraint and a marked ability for serious drama. Ability, but scarcely aptitude, I think. When I saw him in this drama it did not occur to me, as it so often has when I have seen him play "The Gilded Fool" or "An American Citizen," that no other actor could play the part quite so well. He played the dramatist's character as it was written, and played it vigorously and well, but I missed the strong personal note which has given him the high place he holds in his profession. After all, the best thing about Goodwin is Goodwin, and he will have to go a long way to find anything better. He may make of himself a serious actor if he will, I do not deny it, but I say that God made him a comedian.

Miss Maxine Elliott steadily improves as an actress, and yet I almost wish she would be content just to be beautiful. I remember that there was a time when I took a very haughty attitude toward the beauty of professional women and considered it an index of insipidity. But I am beginning to find out how little of it there is in the world, and I take humbly and gratefully all that comes my way and I no longer scorn Julia Marlowe because she is so passing fair. But I am dodging the question. It is necessary to forget Miss Elliott's eyes for a moment and to say that "Nathan Hale" was written for her rather than for her husband, that she plays the leading part and that she is unequal to it. I have seen her do some highly creditable acting, but she does not do it in "Nathan Hale." In her lighter moments she is heavy and almost graceless, and in her emotional climaxes she is as hard as iron, displaying again and again a crudeness and self consciousness almost amateurish. I can only account for this latter fact by judging that she realizes that that part is too girlish for her and feels ill at ease in it. Her love scenes are thoroughly cold even when they are most emotional; there is no warmth in her caresses and no grief in her tears. It is a portrayal of frozen passions from end to end. Miss Elliott is a most tasteful and picturesque leading woman; she is not and never will be a convincing romantic actress.

It is unfortunate that for his first extensive effort in serious drama, Mr. Goodwin should have so uneven a play, and it is more than unfortunate that Clyde Fitch, who wrote a great play at twenty, should never have been able to repeat himself: "And too soon marred are those too early made."

PITTSBURG, PA.

BOSTON AND ITSELF.

An anonymous Boston correspondent writes of a postal card to the artificer of the "Busy World" department:

You seem to have very correct instincts, I cannot but notice how important a part of "this busy world" Boston is to you.

There are five cities in the country (including Brooklyn) which have more people in them than Boston has, and another (Baltimore) has almost as many, but there is no city, not even New York which has so many Boston people in it. It must be that which makes Boston so irrepressibly important. Out of her population of half a million there must be nearly 400,000 Boston people, the majority of whom sing praises to Heaven night and morning that they are not as other folks are, and that they live in Boston, conveniently grouped to set an example to the world. Quality counts for a great deal, and Boston abounds in quality. It is a handsome, lively, self-conceited town which takes itself seriously.—E. S. Martin, in Harper's Weekly.

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CLUBS.

[LOUISA L. RICKETTS.]

Seward, Jan., 18, '99.

Editor Club Department:

I send you this morning a few lines, bearing upon the proposed bill—which is to be introduced in our legislature for aid in supporting the scheme of establishing travelling libraries throughout our state.—Anything you can add by way of emphasizing the importance of this action, will be productive of good.

The State Federation of Womens' clubs has become a most potent factor in all social and educational movements of the day. This is the direct result of the earnest and faithful efforts to give to women the broadest training and the best preparation to fit them for whatever duty life may bring. Who can doubt the benefits that must result from the united and harmonious action of thousands of earnest and devoted women who are pursuing similar courses of study along the various lines of educational and philanthropic work? It means that this progressive Woman's Century is but the beginning of better things. It means, that the intent and purpose is "not to demand success but to deserve it." At the present time, our attention is especially directed toward the effort which is being made to secure an appropriation from the State legislature, to aid in establishing "travelling libraries." This system has been so successfully operated in other states, and has proven such a benefaction to the great mass of people who live distant from educational centers, that we would urge upon our representatives the necessity of immediate and favorable action. This we would ask in behalf of the vast numbers who live within the borders of our fair state, and who are deprived of the benefits and pleasure to be derived from having the best of books as a means for self improvement. Ignorance is at best a most extravagant and wasteful condition, and in view of the economic interests which all have at heart in legislative action, this must appeal to every thoughtful mind. By placing this system of "travelling libraries" upon a safe financial basis our legislative body will take one of the most forward steps of our boasted nineteenth century.

ELIZABETH C. LANGWORTHY,
President, N. F. W. C.

The North Bend Woman's club met in regular session Saturday, January 14. Mrs. Bessie Roberts kindly furnished a very affecting vocal solo, for the opening. Roll call responded to by quotations on bread. Subjects before the club today were Household Economics and Child Study. Mrs. Dowling introduced the subject with an interesting article on Bread. Mrs. Hiett's "Bread of other Countries" was very entertaining and instructive, showing that bread is the staff of life everywhere, though some writers are now trying to persuade us that it is the staff of death. Mrs. Maude Sherman gave many good practical receipts for sandwiches, after which we had samples of plain and fancy sandwiches which had been daintily and tastefully arranged on the table. They were thoroughly enjoyed by all present. Mrs. Wolf gave us directions for making different kinds of bread; as she is a well known good cook, they can be depended upon. Then followed a general discussion and talk about making and baking all kinds of bread. Many thought the whole wheat flour made in our home mill preferable to graham flour. A chapter on kindergarten work from one of Mrs. Elizabeth Harrison's books read by Mrs. Eigler was enjoyed by all. An impromptu talk on "Unnecessary disap-