

# At the Theaters



Emma Trentini -  
in "The Firefly" - At the Brandeis



Mary Marble  
-At the Orpheum-



Alma Stetler  
in  
"The Chocolate  
Soldier"  
-At the  
Brandeis-



Thurston, the Magician  
- At the Brandeis -



James K. Hackett  
- "The Grain of Dust"  
- At the Brandeis -

At least one manager reads this department of *The Bee*, for from him has been received a letter of some length in reference to the suggestion made last Sunday that the producers try the experiment of sending out good, but not high-priced companies for the purpose of presenting some of the higher grade of drama at popular prices. At his own request his name is withheld, but some of his statements are of interest, and because of their bearing on the broader aspects, and these may be quoted without any violation of confidence. On the main point, this manager says:

"There is no question in my mind, if they would put out, as you say, some of the old standard plays, with a competent cast at a low price, they would do some business; but the trouble is when they were putting out these sort of shows the city houses ever the country demanded so much of the receipts that the companies were forced to cut down their cast and production in order to live. In other words, the city popular priced houses killed the goose that laid the golden egg. . . . Then came along the picture houses and cheap vaudeville, and that with the depression over the country has made it almost impossible for a legitimate theater to live. The companies are demanding from 5 to 10 per cent more (of the gross receipts) than formerly, and printing, bill posting, stage hands, music and everything else has gone up, and the consequence is that more shows have closed this season than have played out. People are becoming more critical every year and harder to please. Managers must put more money into their shows and costumes, salaries of actors have doubled, traveling musicians and stage hands' scales are something awful, and the railroads demand a ticket for every performer and money for every pound of excess baggage, will not check frames, trunks nor bundles; theaters have multiplied all over the country, and if we are ever going to see any real money in the show business there will have to be some sort of a reorganization of the entire business."

These extracts fairly state the chief perplexities the manager is confronted with in his effort to make both ends meet in the operation of his theater, and deserve much in the way of consideration, even if the statements be not novel. It isn't good form to say, "I told you so," but the reader will pardon the reference here for this once. Fully twelve years ago this department of endeavor set forth the fact that theaters were growing faster than audiences, but the building of theaters went steadily on. Other features of the situation have been dealt with from time to time, and warning given against the coming of a day of settlement, which day is about at hand. It was because of this *The Bee* last week gave over some space to elaborating a suggestion whereby a portion of the theater's lost patrons and prestige might be won back, and why it is again giving consideration to the topic.

In answer to the assertion that "people are becoming more critical every year, are harder to please." The managers ought to welcome this as a sign of the intelligent interest taken by the public in the theater, and should give it such attention as would prove to the public that its intellectual attitude is appreciated. Instead of doing this the managers have made the mistake of presenting the same old things in the same old way, with the result that the public has turned to the movies, where at least novelty in situation is offered. Not a week goes by but one or another of the big producers announces that some one of his productions is a perennial, and that the people never grow tired of it; points to a big list of takings at the box office to support his statement, and confident in his own opinion, takes little heed of the request for a change. Then, all of a sudden, he finds the public is not in the mood to keep "the old favorite" forever afloat, and the "movies" get the blame for "killing the show business."

City house managers may have had

something to do with the decline of standard drama at popular prices, but they did not do it all; the producing managers must accept something of responsibility for leading the public to seek its entertainment elsewhere. Cheap and sloppy melodrama, presented by mediocre actors, illuminated by tawdry scenery and offering only mawkish mush, was set forth season after season at the popular priced theaters, until the patrons of those places were more than surfeited with the rubbish. Clean, wholesome, reasonable drama was not to be had. The popular price producers seemed imbued with the idea that the folks who paid 50 or 75 cents for a seat were not to be treated as rational, reasoning beings, but as "low-brows"—in fact, the distinction came to be current among the managers and was so expressed. One "author," whose "thrillers" had tremendous vogue for a time, said to the present writer a matter of ten years ago, while he was debating the subject, "You can't give it 'em too raw." And he practiced his belief to the utmost; no such thrillers as he prepared for the stage were seen before or since. The last reference to him in public print that is now recalled was in connection with publicity for moving pictures. His public turned away from his "raw" thrillers, and he followed it to the moving picture theater.

As to the cost of printing, bill posting, stage hands, musicians, railroad fare, and the like, it is submitted that burlesque houses, the cheap vaudeville houses, and others of the kind have to pay the same charges as the first-class theaters.

What is here contended for is that a very large proportion of the public would prefer to see a standard drama, presented by a small company to seeing a grotesque mixture of nonsense and buffoonery presented by a more numerous but utterly incompetent aggregation of misfits, such as generally makes up the "popular-price musical comedy" company. If it were serviceable as supporting the argument, the titles of many good plays that have not been seen in Omaha or Nebraska might be given, any or all of which would be welcome if it were possible at a price within the reach of the people. It would be necessary to outfit a company to present one of these plays with a collection of top-priced actors. One of the most successful companies ever sent on tour in the United States was the imported company that played "Buntz Pulls the Strings" at the Brandeis last season, and it is no disparagement to the histrionic ability of that organization to say that it followed in Omaha a company, the single star of which drew a larger salary than the entire weekly payroll of the "Buntz" company.

Every mail brings to the desk of the dramatic editor of any western newspaper announcements of new plays, of new companies, and new successes, few of which are ever seen outside of New York or Chicago, productions going to the storerooms or the scrap pile at the end of the metropolitan run, while the "producers" save the mark-outfit companies to drag through the "fall grass" plays that have been repeated over and over to the same patrons until each of the patient sitters out in front knows as well as the man with the prompt book what is coming next. And these people have lost their patience; they no longer go to the theater for their amusement, simply because the theater does not offer what appeals to them. The "show business" must be reorganized, if it is to continue, and the manager who first sets about to get his business in line with the intelligence of the country, who will offer modern drama at prices the public can afford to pay, is the man who is going to reap the big reward for his enterprise; and when he has made the start and proven the plan a success, he will find plenty of followers, for the professional showman is an imitative cuss.

While Henry Miller was in Omaha last week he took occasion to deny that he intended retiring from the stage to devote himself to producing plays and managing companies; also to deny that he had declared that all actors are overpaid, giving his version of the simple state-

ments that had been twisted entirely from their original meanings in order that a sensational turn might be given them. He did say in Denver that if his plans carry he might not again be seen in the west as an actor, for he is developing a big scheme that will take all his time in New York if it works out as he hopes.

It is one in which all friends of the theater will be much interested, but for the present Mr. Miller is keeping the details a secret, as he has no desire to anticipate his own actions. In connection with the salaries paid players, he did say that some actors have an exaggerated notion of their own value to a producer and cited some instances of recent experience. The names he referred to are those of men who are very little known, even among the profession, but who ask for their services figures that would not seem amply in connection with names that actually draw patronage to the theater. One who was asked to take part in a play Mr. Miller is producing, a man whose ability is not questioned, but whose name means nothing to the public, set his figure at \$750 per week, and another, even less prominent, asked \$500. It is against these that Mr. Miller directs his charge that actors are demanding more than they are worth for playing. Incidentally, Mr. Miller gave his unqualified endorsement to *The Bee's* suggestion that managers give the public decent drama at popular prices.

James K. Hackett will appear at the Brandeis this evening for an engagement of one performance in "The Grain of Dust." A slight outline of the play indicates its possibilities. Frederick Norman is a young New York lawyer, who has rapidly risen to the head of his profession, in those things dealing with corporations and combinations. He knows how to draw a plan that will take millions from the public and deposit them safely—and legally—in the coffers of the "trusts" and "interests." He is engaged to Josephine Burroughs, a belle of the season, although the date of the wedding is not definitely announced. The father of his fiancée, Isaac Burroughs, is a power in the world of finance, and the law firm with which Norman is connected looks after his legal affairs. In the office of Norman there is a demure little typewriter, Dorothy Hollowell by name, that proceeds to fall in love with Dorothy, who doesn't love Norman and tells him so. Yet for the love of the typewriter Norman breaks with Josephine, resigns from his law firm and starts to take upon himself the burden of a war with Isaac Burroughs for the mastery of certain corporations. In the meantime he marries Dorothy, and for many months is pursued by the demon of ill-luck until he is on his last legs. Then, to crown it all, Dorothy leaves him. At the crucial moment success returns to him and through a legal battle with Burroughs he regains his former position in the financial world. In the cast that Mr. Hackett has associated himself with is Beatrice Beckley.

Emma Trentini in "The Firefly," which has been proclaimed the biggest success that has ever emanated from the offices of Arthur Hammerstein, will play an engagement at the Brandeis theater of three nights and Wednesday matinee, commencing Monday evening, January 12. The play is full of exquisite haunting music, beautiful colors and splendid comedy blended into scenes of unusual beauty. The music, though not without its gay times, is thoroughly entrancing in that much of it is made up of wonderful dreamy waltz strains that are too tempting for analysis. Rudolph Friml, the Bohemian composer, who owes his chance

For the first time this season the Orpheum will this week offer a double headline feature. Equally prominent upon the bill is the musical comedy to be presented by Chip and Marble and the

sketch to be contributed by Clara Morton. Last season Sam Chip and Mary Marble were seen here in the quaint one-act musical comedy, "A Bit of Old Blam." This time they will personate amusing Dutch characters in their new piece by Herbert Hall Winslow, "The Land of Dykes," well designed as a medium for Clara Morton's versatility, the sketch called "Finding the Family" also affords her opportunity for three musical numbers, each one of which is said to be distinctive. She is assisted by Frank Sheen. "The King's Jester" is to be offered by Ed. Wynn, supported by a company of three players. In this offering Frank Wunderlee is the monarch with a perpetual frown. The whole kingdom is searched for a man who can bring a smile to the king's countenance. If the jester fails, it means the infliction of the death penalty. It is easy to see what fun Mr. Wynn, as the jester, would get out of that situation. A one-act play, "The Coat," by Ruth Comfort Mitchell is to be offered by Maude O'Delle, supported by four players. Two vaudeville entertainers, new to Omaha, are Cameron and O'Connor. Their offering is said to be exceptionally diverting. Known as the cowboy Carnos, Bill Pruitt, who comes from the Sun River country of Montana, has a natural voice with a range of nearly three octaves. Wheelmanship of an unusual sort is to be offered by the Heuman trio. Concluding the entertainment will be another special motion picture, "The Snakeville New Doctor."

Your old friend "Pat" White will be with us once more at the popular Gayety commencing with the usual matinee this afternoon. The management of the "Big Jubilee" has surrounded "Pat" White with the best cast he has ever had. Among them may be mentioned that well known black face comedian Dolph Phillips, the cude funmaker Tom O'Neil, the clever actor and singer Harvey Brooks and the two cabaret singers, James McInerney and Bert Jones. Anna Grant, Marjorie Mack, Winnie Crawford and Laura Houston. The chorus contains over a score of really pretty specimens of the pony or broiler class, while the stately show girls are seen in all the glory of handsome gowns. The performance is as funny as can be and as clean as a whistle. Starting tomorrow there will be a ladies' dime matinee daily all week.

Rex Adams and Eibel Adamson will appear at the Empress this week in a realistic sketch called "O'Yes-hawks." Its scene is laid in the back room of one of the cheaper saloons of New York and carries a well chosen cast and special scenery. The "Minaret Four," a quartet of harmonists and comedians, who have built up an enviable reputation on the vaudeville stage, will be an added attraction. Manola, the wire wonder, in a series of sensational feats, and Dallas Romans, "That Texas Girl," will complete the vaudeville offering for the week. A feature photoplay and number of comedy pictures, and also an educational picture are shown in connection with every performance. Four shows are given daily, making a continuous performance from noon until 11 o'clock.

## City Dads Will Call Executive Session to Create New Board

Following a conference with city officials T. F. Sturgess and Mrs. Paul Getachmann of the social service board announced that the city commissioners would call an executive conference to consider the board's suggestions that an ordinance be passed creating a public welfare board.

"I have not had time to take up the report for careful consideration," said Mayor Dahlman, "but we'll get busy on it soon." The report was referred to the mayor's department.

Mr. Sturgess said:

"We are greatly interested in the suggestion we made that a commission be appointed to study social and economic conditions and make remedial suggestions to the city council.

"Whether or not the work done in Kansas City and other places can be applied to conditions in Omaha is a question. We want to study local conditions carefully and find out exactly what is needed. That is why we recommended the appointment of a commission to do this work."

In the report of its year's work to the council the social service board said it was necessary, to secure thorough reforms, to have expert advice, considerable time to a study of conditions and recommend measures they believed would tend to improve social life in the city.

## MAJOR HARTMANN IS VISITING OMAHA FRIENDS

Major C. F. Hartmann, former post commander at Fort Omaha, is back in Omaha greeting his many friends here. "I am just here on an inspection," says the major, "for, although I am now stationed at Chicago, Fort Omaha is still under my jurisdiction. Of course, we are all interested in Mexico. What do I think of it? Well, now, don't you know, we army officers are subject to a recently issued order forbidding us to discuss such question out loud."

While Major Hartmann will re-establish his daughter in school at Brownell Hall, on her return from a visit to her parents during the holidays.

## WHERE TO KEEP PRISONERS BECOMING A BIG PROBLEM

An order from the county jail officials to those of the city lockup has been received, stating that owing to a case of smallpox no more prisoners would be accepted from the police department until fumigation had been thoroughly accomplished. The city jail is already well filled, and as to where the prisoners will be stowed is a question that is taxing the heads of the department.

## HARTE SLATED FOR HEAD OF THE COUNTY BOARD

A. C. Harte, chairman of the committee on roads of the Board of County Commissioners, is said to be slated for chairman of the board for next year to succeed Henry McDonald. The 1914 board has issued out of existence. A new chairman and heads of committees will take up their duties February 1.

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