

Gossip About Plays, Players and Playhouses

On one thing, Max Figman takes an interest in the doings of the world, and especially as affecting those who have been in the world of the theater. In this he differs from the great majority of our folk, who usually find sufficient in their own affairs to occupy their time and conversation. But Mr. Figman manages not only to look after the more general direction of his own company, the staging of the plays sent out under the direction of John Cort, and plans for the future, but to keep fairly abreast the busy world of men and women and to keep up a healthy interest in all. And for this reason he is a charming man to talk to. In a way his personality is reflected in the character he so delightfully presented on the stage for the last two seasons, that of the devil lieutenant in "The Man on the Box," the youngster who let his love for a joke lead him into a pickle, and his love for a woman keep him in until he had won her. And by that same token, a lot of folks in Omaha deprived themselves of a genuine treat in not going to see Mr. Figman while he was at the Boyd. It is true his stay was short, and it may be that arrangements could not be made to attend the theater during the time he was here, but a better known name might have crowded the house and yet no actor now before the public in this country could have furnished a better or more enjoyable performance.

Max Figman is not the only actor who has suffered because of this peculiarity of the Omaha public. Some of the best things ever seen at the Boyd theater have been offered to comparatively few people, just because the names associated with the characters were not so well known as to be household words. And, on the other hand, some of the noted stars of the country have played to all the people who could crowd into the theater, and presented the most wretched of plays. And still we keep on saying, "The play's the thing," and asking "What's in a name?" Right here comes the thought—of what good is dramatic criticism? It is small credit to the local guild at least, that so little heed is paid to what its members put forth as their opinions of the drama. Not that any of the Omaha critics ever undertake to make or break reputations, but on many an occasion have they recommended to the public a play or a player, only to see the suggestion of worth go unheeded. On other occasions they have been chided for not having denounced someone or something that a dissatisfied patron deems unworthy. But the critics go about their ungrateful task, conscious of having some reason for their existence, even if it be not apparent. Have we not seen? And who knows why?

To return to Max Figman. He has proven himself a comedian of the true order. He makes the audience laugh and cry by so many of the modern aspirants for honors in the line, and relies on a genuine sense of keen humor for his success. He treats his audiences as people possessed of intelligence and appeals directly to his intelligence in his attempt to amuse. In "The Man on the Box," he keeps the action of the play as far removed from the farcical as if it were a serious drama, and at the same time he keeps the fun fairly bubbling from end to end of the four acts. At no time does he take liberties with the verities, but, on the contrary, he studiously endeavors to preserve the realism of the situation, and by doing this he really enhances the value of his achievement. He has fairly learned a piece in the front rank among American actors, and it is strongly argued that when he comes again to Omaha, more folks go to hear him, for it is only rare assurance that is promised by his performance.

Francis Wilson's short engagement at the Boyd, to close the week, was one of the treats of the season, and was enjoyed by a large number of people. Not the least pleasing feature of the engagement was the discourse of the manager, which was held by Miss Mary Boland at the Boyd. It has been a frequent visitor to Omaha of two years, but never before has she shown herself possessed of so keen a sense of humor as that exhibited in "When Knights Were Bold." Mr. Wilson is the same very scintillating comedian we have always known, and is doing his best, that he has for several seasons, chiefly because he has a better opportunity.

The announcement of the personnel of the Woodward Stock company soon to open season at the Boyd, suggests that Omaha folks will have a plenty of indoor amusement until the weather gets too warm. With two stock companies bidding for public favor, the chances are very much in favor of good bills well put on.

Mr. Jack Barrymore's friends will soon see him at his word and quit trying to make an actor of him. He failed again in New York. Joseph Coyne had made a success of "Toddlers" in London, but that didn't make the play go with Barrymore the next in New York. Jack has a saying that he would rather be a "newspaper follow," and he may be allowed to pursue his bent. Even the mention he had in connection with the Theatre didn't help him.

OMAHA SURPRISES OLD LONDON  
Miss Lena Ashwell's Theater Run on Novel Lines.

LONDON, March 25.—(Special Correspondent.)—The theater world of London is undergoing many changes. Old conventional customs, are being broken down, and, such to the dismay of a fraternity of adherents to old discomforts, innovations which add to the pleasure of the theater, are rapidly being introduced. The various clubs of musicians, artistic and generally young theater-goers, such as a Gallery First Nighters, the Dramatic Players and the O. P. club, have helped this movement toward good drama to be in comfortable seats in a well appointed theater at a price not prohibitive to the person with small income. Mr. Barker showed what could be done in a public anxious to see productions of real value and now an actress-manager has established herself and helped the movement in a way which is causing the theater world much small amazement.

In the first place, Miss Lena Ashwell's theater is not too large—the Kingsway and it had refitted comfortably and artistically. Then she announced that she would play a price not prohibitive to the person with small income. Mr. Barker showed what could be done in a public anxious to see productions of real value and now an actress-manager has established herself and helped the movement in a way which is causing the theater world much small amazement.

Managers Wagenhals and Kemper, who have rendered several distinct services to the stage in this country, will present Blanche Walsh at the Boyd theater on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday evenings and a Tuesday matinee in "The Kreutzer Sonata," a tragedy of modern domestic life, written by the great Russian playwright, Jacob Gordin. All his dramas heretofore have been played solely in the Yiddish language. His methods are almost opposite to those of Pinero, who at present, perhaps, is held to be the best of the English dramatists. Gordin begins where Pinero leaves off. In "The Kreutzer Sonata," for instance, we learn the tragedy of the heroine's life when the play begins. It is a tragedy which one can see must inevitably involve both herself and her family as an ultimate catastrophe. Every means is used to bring this tragedy to its inevitable end. Knowledge of the fact spreads and precipitates one situation after another, until the final explosion can be no longer averted. Of course in the more announcement of Blanche Walsh's name the play going public knowledge that no fit appearance or trivial play is to be offered, but even Miss Walsh has not hitherto made quite such a radical departure as she is now making with Mr. Gordin's play and she has made no move that has been anticipated with keener interest than this.

Lillian Russell in her search for accuracy of detail in scenes for her new production, "Wildfire," made a study of the stables and quarters of the race track at Sheepshead Bay. All of the information gathered by Miss Russell was put to use when the second act of the

opened, then rush and scramble for tickets and seats in a dimly lighted, cold theater. Another long wait before the lights are turned up, the rest of the audience appears and the curtain rises on the first act of the play.

When Miss Ashwell resolved to arrange for the comfort of these ardent theatergoers by letting them book seats ahead of the pit and galleries themselves, she directed her attention to the fact that through all this discomfort for years they preferred to continue. But the management continued the arrangement and now the pit and gallery are full every night and seats are booked as far ahead as the business manager will allow them to be.

It would be difficult for Americans to realize the inadequate salaries given to workers in this profession in England. In the provinces a husband and wife will sometimes go on the road for \$5 a week between them, and the pantomime girl is wealthy indeed who is getting \$5 a week for two performances a day. The Actors' association has now fixed as the minimum wage to be paid an actor or actress \$10.

Here, too, the new Kingsway management has shown good sense. Good salaries are paid even to the people in the smallest parts, and as in a regular stock company the actor drawing the largest salary may play in one piece the leading part and in another make five lines to say.

In regard to plays produced, the English actor and the actor manager are constantly bawling the death of good plays. Frankly the want of a new play is one of the reasons which have brought about my retirement. I can find nothing of a novel nature to offer London. But bring me a new play with a suitable part in it and—

Another London manager wrote in the Daily Express: "Why do we produce more good plays? They don't exist. We are all trying to find them, but they aren't there." These two statements from authoritative sources, as well as the distressing statistics regarding plays produced during the last year have made people wonder just what is wrong in the state of Denmark. Last season out of a hundred plays produced or revived, not more than thirty paid expenses, and among the thirty only six ran for any length of time.

Of the seventy that failed absolutely, to please the public, some cost their producers from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Some managers think that they are justified in saying there is a dearth of good plays and a public more critical and exacting than ever to cater for. But the question is, are English managers good judges of plays?

It is a well known fact that actors are not and almost all managers here are or were, a committee appointed to read and judge the possibilities of all plays sent in, to judge them not as they are in their original state, but as they would be if slightly remodelled according to the whims of the drama.

The result of this has been, that in spite of the managerial cry that plays cannot be found, the two most successful pieces of the year have been produced at Miss Ashwell's theater, and both were by absolutely unknown playwrights. The first, "Irene Wycherly," ran to crowded houses four months, and the second, "Diana of Dobson," is likely to close only when the hot weather makes London a theater desert. Besides these two works of unknown dramatists, Miss Ashwell has six more plays that she intends using, all by playwrights equally unknown.

At a recent performance given by another of these societies that aim at art and culture a three-act drama was produced which made every critic in London say, "Why had he been all over London, to manager after manager? What manager could refuse a work so well conceived, so well written, so strong and human? Yet that piece has been all over London, to manager after manager, all of whom returned it with thanks."

One more example of what may help to learn nothing and forget nothing, the last play is given by Mr. Effe in his article. It is an anecdote of a young playwright whose play delighted London.

On the day after its production when it was loudly acclaimed a success a leading actor made the dramatist and his authoring him, congratulated him warmly, then gazing into his face with dreamy reverentness said: "But why, oh why, didn't you let me have it?"

"You did let me for six months," the young playwright blurted replied.

Apparently his manuscript had not even been read.

comedy, which is laid in a trainer's quarters, was staged, and Wednesday and Thursday at the Boyd theater the public will have an opportunity to note the result of her observations. John Hyland, the famous trainer, was Miss Russell's guide and mentor in her hunt for local color. Little Willie Cullian was her tutor on the duties of a jockey, and the racer Monoplist posed as a model for "Wildfire," the area in the Broadway and Hobart comedy. Miss Russell invaded every nook and quarter of a racing establishment, peering into obscure corners, chatting with the stable boys and petting thoroughbreds, and when she had finished her inspection she had acquired a fund of information that was invaluable in the staging of her play.

Pronounced interest will center in Sardou's "Divorcons," in which Grace George comes to this city direct from her triumphs both in London and New York. This play, made familiar by Rejane in French and Duse in Italian in its adequate adaptation, presents a comedy strain, tempered by the deeper feeling which permeates and colors the dialogue, that proves particularly congenial to Miss George's abilities. Her comedy touch is light and graceful and she sounds the note of pathos with an agreeable sincerity. While "Divorcons" is almost of another generation, its characters will be remembered. Cyprienne, the heroine, young, vain and fond of attention, is the wife of a man double her age, who, in his devotion to his inventions, forgets to testify the love he feels in an everyday thoughtfulness. Neglected and uncomprehending, Cyprienne encourages a young officer and plans to leave the man who flouts her. She subjects him to ridicule to gain her end, only to find her husband's perfect trust invulnerable to every attack. He ends by winning anew the girl he has married and shipwreck is

averted. The story is delightfully told—the man's generosity and the woman's caprice thrown into striking contrast. H. Reeves-Smith as the husband is particularly well cast and in "Divorcons" is said to have done the best work of his artistic career. Miss George and her company will be at the Boyd theater on Friday and Saturday evenings with a matinee on Saturday.

Bernard Daly in "The Kerry Gow" will be at the Krug for four days, starting matinee today. Much has been said of the play and of its star, so both play and player deserve honorable mention. The play teems with exciting incidents. It is a famous race scene which is staged in so realistic a manner that those who are accustomed to the pontes can hardly keep from betting. Mr. Daly's voice is a melody itself.

"Lost in New York" will appear at the Krug theater, three days, starting Thursday, April 8. The many types of characters that combine to form the population of the great metropolis are among its features. Blackwell's Island and the insane asylum are shown with such realism that those most familiar with East river, New York, and its adjacent territory, are as much deceived as the novices who have yet to see the original.

"The Only Way" opens at the Burwood theater tomorrow evening. The play is a dramatization of Charles Dickens' novel, "Two Cities," none of the intense interest having been lost in the process of dramatization. The work was done by Henry Miller, which is evidence of its worth. The important feature of tomorrow evening's opening performance will be the first appearance of the Burwood's new leading man, Wilfrid L. Roger. He has played leads with excellent and recognized stars and with the "Barbara Pritchard" company.

foreign artists will not attempt to learn any numbers in English, thereby depriving their programs many very excellent things by English and American composers.

If artists who sing in a foreign tongue wish to earn the willing dollars of the American people they should be induced, if not compelled, to do some things in the known language for the many of the occasion, for a moment, the great songs lose by translation, they should remember that there are nevertheless a few—many very good songs written in the language which is known and spoken here.

Would you, madame, sing a program of German songs in Paris? Or a program of French songs in Berlin?

And a still worse feature lies here, namely, that nowadays our American singers go abroad and learn some songs in foreign languages and come back to us with those songs, and sing them in foreign tongue, and on their programs scarce a group of songs in the language we use every day. This is a fault of almost all of the great recitalists in America.

Now, what does it lead to? It leads to the damnable and mendacious heresy that the English language for the United States has "thrown off the yoke" and that, but every dish on the menu is labeled in French, and we don't know what we are eating!

Well, that was discussed some weeks ago in this column. But today we are thinking of that other absurd contradiction and inconsistency—the matter of singing. We must sing in foreign languages. We cannot sing in the language of the people we are.

We use the English language for what is left of it when we dictate business letters, we use the English language in framing our laws; we use it in our congressional records, and in our state papers. We use it on the dramatic stage (occasionally) and in the lighter opera we hear a suggestion of it.

But when we come to the opera or concert, we, the proudest people on earth, the most exacting on some things, the most critical on other things, the most discerning of foreign experience—especially in matters of art—pay our good money out to hear singers sing to us in a language which we do not know, and which we cannot interpret. Is it not rather ridiculous?

Do you believe that the French people give very strenuous support to works sung in German? I don't think so. Do you believe that the Germans go mad over the works that are sung in French? I think not. Do you believe that the Italians want to be sung to in Russian or Scandinavian? Not so badly. But the English-speaking people of this country will pay for and listen to any language but their own.

Here comes to my rescue Mr. David Bishop, the dean of American singers, and a man whose pronunciation of the language he speak is a delight and a joy. Hear him as he says some things to the National Association of Teachers of Singing: "The only really bad thing about English, as a language in which to sing, is the bad English in which we often hear some singers sing."

It was said only a few days ago in Steinway hall, New York, and I think I will just leave those words for the consideration of the readers of this column. They cannot be improved upon.

The writer had a highly interesting enjoyable visit last week from the Russian baritone, Albert Wiegand, who has just returned to his native country. He has sung some of the leading organizations of London, New York and other places, and may possibly be heard here in the near future. He has been making a feature of rare Russian folk-songs, which have been a revelation.

THOMAS J. KELLY.

Musical Notes.

The choir of the Seward Street Methodist church will give a concert on Tuesday, when a cantata will be sung.

Mrs. Turner announces a recital by Mrs. M. M. Turner at the First Methodist church.

Mr. Cusack will play at Ames, Ia., on Saturday evening under the direction of Scandinavian company will be presented by Mr. Robert Cusack, violinist, and Mr. M. Van Noy, soprano, and Mr. P. Laux, basso. The Omaha Maennerchor, directed by G. H. Schaefer, will also be heard in two numbers. The veteran musician will conduct and will sell for revenue, when they should have been compulsorily distributed, free of charge.

But a worse feature is this, that the

He comes to the Burwood direct from the shubert theater, Kansas City, where he has been playing the leads with the Barker Stock company, from which organization he resigned to come to Omaha. Mr. Roger played "The Only Way" in Kansas City a few weeks ago. The advance sale for the coming week is particularly large, thus assuring Mr. Roger a most hearty welcome from Omaha's lovers of stock productions, than which no better were ever offered here than during the present season at the Burwood. Matinees will be given Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. It is announced that late-comers will not be seated until after the curtain has fallen on the first act. "The Butterflies," which has been pleasing immensely all the week, is the attraction this afternoon and evening.

Julius Steger, the distinguished actor and vocal singer, presenting his one-act drama, "The Fifth Commandment," will be the top-line attraction at the Orpheum today and for the ensuing week. Supporting Mr. Steger are Richard Malchen and Minnie Lee and specially engaged to take the part of a street musician with Mr. Steger is John Romano, the noted harpist. Elizabeth Murray promises her "coon songs," ditties and unforgotten humor that is always welcome. Carletta, "The Human Drummer," is declared a wonder in the way of contortions. Dixon brothers are versatile musicians who enliven their act with some of their own unique fun-making. C. Herbert Mitchell is an operatic baritone, who also delivers a monologue. Ciska Panna, the Hungarian cymbal virtuoso, performs a rarely heard instrument. The Hungarian cymbal is an instrument with a case much like a baby grand piano, containing the strings which the former strikes with a wand. Ciska Panna will also exhibit her troupe of trained pets in a variety of stunts. Bernier and Stella contribute an up-to-date singing and dancing turn. A new series of motion pictures will be shown with the kindred.

"The Boston Fadetees" will be heard at the Orpheum the week of April 13.

Frank Robertson—give two of his travels at the First Methodist Episcopal church this week. Monday night "Russia Aflame" will be his topic and on Thursday night he will take his audience through "Imperial India." "India," says Mr. Robertson, "is a land of striking contrasts between the very rich and the abject poor. In one small town in central India is a tomb built by a king for his wife that cost \$1,000,000, and hundreds of the natives in the same town die every year of starvation. Temples are built of granite and marble and carved with consummate skill, and ox carts remain the primitive and only mode of conveyance. Women are not permitted to pray in the temples, because they are not considered competent to working in the kitchen. Tickets for the travellings are on sale at Myers & Dillon's drug store.

Gossip from Stagedland.

"I have yet to see a woman's play in which the female characters shall be original and vital," declares Max Beerbohm, the English critic. "As portrayers of a sex not their own, men have a decided advantage over women. I have seen various plays in which the heroines were as real and vital as though they had been evolved from the brains of women."

The circus season begins April 2. Ringling Bros. have completed arrangements for a three weeks' engagement at the Coliseum. Single travellings are—Both 75c. Tickets on sale—MYERS & DILLON DRUG STORE. Doors open at 7 P. M.—No seats reserved.

Mme. Nasimova, the Russian actress, pronounced her name Na-ze-mo-va, with the accent on the second syllable. Her name is really Nasimoff, but she has taken for stage purposes the Russian feminine of the word, which is Nasimova.

According to P. P. Morse, a Washington, Clyde Fitch's "Gilda" will rehabilitate him in the estimation of American audiences and critics. His production of the play in London last year was considered even his best. Since "The Woman in the Case," "The Straight Road," and a few more plays, which have done the Fitch brand has been a dangerous decoration for a dramatic maverick. But this time he believes, will restore the playwright to popular favor and double the value to the eyes of the theatrical managers. The comedy goes into New York tomorrow, opening at Daly's theater.

Henry Miller cannot see any good in the "new theater" movement. He says he does not think dramatic art can be elevated by being made subservient to the whim of the rich.

"I remember many funny things about the old Bella Union," said Frank Lalor, comedian, in San Francisco. "It was there up to the latter part of 1887. For example one night a super who worked for about a day a tried to commit suicide. He called him Signor Nutty. He was an Italian, which accounts for the 'signor,' and he was a bit bewildered in the head, which was why we called him 'Nutty.' He fell in love with one of the charmers who disappeared but she refused to listen to his ardent protestations. So one night I found him back of the stage with a piece of a prop in his mouth. The other end of the hose was attached to the gas jet, which was turned on full force. I called for the ambulance, and poor old 'Nutty' was finally brought through all right. Next day I told Ned Foster about it. 'It'll be back for a week,' said Ned Foster. 'Don't you think we should do something for him?' 'Do something?' shouted Ned. 'You bet your life! Charge the son-of-a-gun for the gas!'"

"Jack Barrymore has made good in 'Toddlers,'" declares a Philadelphia reviewer. The adaptation from a French farce was intended for Joseph Coyne. Charles Frohman had planned for a starring tour of that comedian.

A humorous version of "Three Weeks," made from the novel by Clay M. Greene, was offered at a Lamb's gambol in New York. Alfred Hickman played the prince, and William J. Kelley appeared as Paul. There were other things on the program, such as "The Little Girl" and "No Time, No Place, No Girl." A sketch called "The Outpost" scored a big hit.

Francis Wilson is fond of golf. Richard Mansfield believed in walking. So does Belle Lush. The British swimmer is a proficient swimmer. Beerbohm Tree is devoted to riding, and David Warfield takes driving and walking. Jesse Colman is a base ball fan, and Chauncey Olcott is devoted to tennis and writing.

There isn't such a thing as a color line when it comes to advertising. Williams and Walker are going to import a chorus of Zulus from Africa for their show.

Joseph Coyne may be made a star next season by Charles Frohman and appear here in "The Molokuch," a play which has been on view in London for the last six months. Alexandra Carlisle will be brought to this country as a joint star.

Channing Pollock called for London yesterday to supervise the English production of "The Secret Orchard" at Terry's theater. "In view of about fourteen or so condemnatory criticisms of 'The Fool Hath Said There is No God,' which have appeared in the New York papers, it might reasonably be supposed that I would have something to say on the subject of criticism," remarked E. H. Rothen in New York last week. "And I have—but it is simply that I believe that the quality most lacking dramatic criticism here is that

AMUSEMENTS. AMUSEMENTS. BOYD'S THEATRE Tonight, Monday and Tuesday Special Tuesday Matinee WAGENHALS & KEMPER OFFER BLANCHE WALSH IN THE KREUTZER SONATA A DOMESTIC DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS. Wednesday and Thursday—Special Thursday Matinee JOSEPH BROOKS PRESENTS LILLIAN RUSSELL IN HER GREAT SUCCESS "WILDFIRE" SEATS NOW ON SALE. Friday and Saturday—Matinee Saturday W. A. BRADY PRESENTS GRACE GEORGE Assisted by H. REEVES SMITH and her London and New York Company, Presenting Sardou's Comedy "DIVORCONS" SEATS NOW SELLING. Starting Saturday, April 18, O. D. WOODWARD PRESENTS The Woodward Stock Company OPENING BILL JOHN DREW'S BIG SUCCESS "HIS HOUSE IN ORDER" Seat Sale One Week in Advance. Prices 10c and 25c

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