

### A THEATRICAL REVIEW.

Thomas W. Keene's Fine Production of "Richard III."

#### THE GREAT DECLINE OF TRAGEDY

Keene Compared With Other Actors of Ill. Class—Gossip About Martha Morton's New Play For William H. Crane—Maggie Cline and the Tank—Lawrence Hanley Is Star.

NEW YORK, March 15.—Thomas W. Keene has been attacked, ridiculed, patronized and "damned with faint praise" by the New York critics, who are, taken as a whole, an incomprehensible lot. A farce comedy with a popular and favor carrying star or manager is generally given a much larger space in the New York dailies as was devoted to Keene's excellent production of "Richard III" at the Union Square theater.

Mr. Keene may not be the equal of Edwin Booth, but Booth is no longer on the stage. Forrest, Barrett, Davenport and McCullough may have all been better actors, but they are dead. Henry Irving, Tommaso Salvini and Rossi may be Keene's superiors, but they do not live in the United States.

Therefore if comparisons are to be made it is obviously unfair to criticize Keene because his methods and his work are alleged to be inferior to those of some other actors who are either dead or visit this country at rare intervals, if at all. Relative estimates of this sort are usually absurd and always valueless, for there is no way by which their correctness or incorrectness may be proved. It is, however, fair that Keene should be compared with the contemporary actors of America who essay the same line of work.

In reality Keene is the only really well known tragedian in this country who sticks to the strictly legitimate, Frederick Warde and Louis James, excellent actors, are traveling as joint stars. They have both earned reputations in straight tragedy, but they have digressed a trifle and are said to be making a great deal of money with the talented Henry Guy Carlton's two excellent plays, "Memnon" and "The Lion's Mouth," the former of which is declared by some well known critics to be the equal of anything heavy written since Shakespeare's time. There are other younger tragedians, but these three men easily outrank them all in experience and demonstrated ability.

Robert Downing may perhaps be considered a tragedian, but his success—and there can be no reasonable doubt that he has been successful—has been in a great measure due to the spectacular and popular nature of his productions, of which the greatest favorite, by long odds, was "The Gladiator." Alexander Salvini may possibly be a great tragedian. He is a young actor of remarkable ability and attractive personality, but he very sensibly devotes most of his time to the romantic drama, preferring such types as "The Three Guardsmen," "Don Cesar de Buzan" and "A Child of Naples."

It will thus be seen that Keene is the only one of our actors with a general reputation who has stuck, single handed, to tragedy, and while such praise may not be a particularly great compliment at the present time, when tragedy is probably at the lowest ebb that it has ever reached on the American stage, it must admit that Keene, in my opinion, easily overtops his competitors. He is conscientious to a degree, his conception of a part is always artistic, if sometimes at variance with the popular idea, he is a beautiful reader, powerful and effective in climax declamation, and he can cross the stage gracefully or hold it alone without tiring his audience.

It has been asserted that Mr. Keene is intensely theatrical. This was true to a very large extent a few years ago, but time has greatly mellowed his methods, and in some respects affected his work injuriously. I think Mr. Keene's robustness and apparent sincerity have always constituted his greatest charm to me, and in parts where his natural inclination is allowed to have full scope and where the result is appropriate his superior is hard to find anywhere. Richard III is such a part, and at the risk of offending the coterie of New York dramatic critics I must take exception to their (in most cases) flippant or absurd comment of Mr. Keene's production of "Richard III." It was worthy of extended notice, and his work deserved unstinted praise.



LAWRENCE HANLEY

It is not fair because Mr. Booth is the recognized head of the dramatic profession in America to set his methods up as the unalterable standard and accept no other. No man on the stage is so thoroughly saturated with mannerisms as Henry Irving, and yet when he comes over here some of these same critics who sneer at Keene and affect to patronize him almost as though he were a beginner fairly slobber over the Englishman, entirely oblivious of the fact that it is not so much Irving's ability as an actor as his attention to the most trifling details of his always elaborate productions that has earned for him his present prominent position in the dramatic world. Irving's conception of a character is almost always correct. His execution of that conception is seldom if indeed ever devoid of faults.

I do not wish to be regarded as an unqualified admirer of Mr. Keene. His work in several characters is excessively displeas-

ing to me. For instance, I regard him as being entirely inadequate in that "fattest" of well known heavy parts, Cardinal Richelieu. But, take him all in all, Thomas W. Keene is entitled to be designated "a great actor."

This is the last week of "On Probation" at the Star theater. This farce has demonstrated how the people will follow an actor after he has once secured a firm hold upon their affections. "On Probation" is about as much of a farce as a play can be while Crane is a first class comedian, and yet I understand that the business has been so large that nothing but a contract with Miss Martha Morton, the author of "Brother John," which will be produced next Monday night, has prevented "On Probation" from running clear through to the end of Mr. Crane's engagement. This is a wonderful tribute to the genial comedian's ability and popularity.

By the way, it is reported that while Mr. Crane has declined the offer of the syndicate of wealthy men who were anxious to build a theater for him in this city he has promised to again consider the matter next year, so that if he should decide in the affirmative the house can be got ready before New Year's day, 1895. There has been some gossip to the effect that Robson and Crane may join forces next season, but this is mere Rialto rumor which is not entitled to the slightest credence. Those who are familiar with the relations existing between the two men never expect to see them together again on the same stage.

Upon the fate of "Brother John" will depend in a great measure the career of Miss Martha Morton as a playwright. If the piece should succeed, her services will be in great demand at a high rate of royalty, but if, on the other hand, it should fail, it will very naturally be argued that a person who writes a play so poor that William H. Crane is unable to make it "go" cannot be much of a dramatic author. Miss Morton's past work gives promise of great things in the future, and for the sake of the American drama it is to be hoped that "Brother John" will make a hit.

It is announced that Maggie Cline is to desert variety to become an exponent of the tank drama, which is a sort of offshoot of the variety stage, for without specialities the average play with "a river of real water" would not amount to much. "McCloskey," whom the buxom Maggie has thrown down so many times, will now have a chance to recuperate. It is also announced that Miss Cline, in the melodrama of which she is to be the "melo star," will do a couple of turns and will then leap into the tank, from which she will be hauled by the leading man. This individual will have to be endowed with considerable muscle to accomplish his task, with the necessary snap, for Miss Cline's figure is not that of a Venus, and her avoirdupois is very much in evidence. But the lady is a good deal of an artist in her way, and in the line of robustness Irish female singing she stands at the very tip-top of the ladder. She ought to make a success of her new venture.



NINA FARRINGTON

The few real actors on the stage will soon be crowded off if the pugilistic crazies continue. No sooner had Ed Smith denigrated to Joseph Goddard, the esthetic Australian champion who had no confidence in the theory of "knocking out," that his ideas on the subject were hopelessly incorrect than an "enterprising" theatrical manager telegraphed him an offer of \$250 a week to appear nightly with his show, week by week promptly and sensibly accepted, and Keene, Warde, James and Salvini are now trembling.

Fortunately for Booth, he retired in time, and it is not probable that the elder Salvini will tempt fate by inviting comparison with this new histrionic star, with the not uncommon name of Smith, which has so gloriously and so suddenly burst upon the dramatic firmament. It is also said that Bob Fitzsimmons has been offered \$1,000 a week as an inducement to transfer his knocking out efforts from the ring to the drama. And thus it goes. Verily, to paraphrase Bulwer-Lytton, "the fist is mightier than the brain."

The latest aspirant for stellar honors is Lawrence Hanley, who will begin his tour early next month. Hanley has been at different times the leading man of Booth, Barrett and other well known actors. He is but 28 years of age, but has had excellent schooling for the work in hand. He is handsome and of fine physique. The play which has been selected as the vehicle for Hanley's debut is practically "David Garrick" rewritten. It is called "The Player" and is so arranged that the best act from "Hamlet," "Romeo and Juliet," "Othello," "Macbeth" and others of Shakespeare's plays may be given. This amounts substantially to a nightly change of bill. Hanley is from the south and will begin his tour there. It is but fair to await developments before criticising the wisdom of the venture, but it cannot be denied that the masses are chary of giving their support to anything that even savors of tragedy. Still young Hanley may prove a genuine surprise and thus upset all managerial predictions.

It is said that Miss Nina Farrington, who is now on a visit to this country, is the most photographed actress of the day. She has been on the stage only about three years, during which time she has appeared principally in burlesque. She is now under engagement in London to appear in the forthcoming production of "Don Juan" at the Gaiety, but it is whispered that she may head an enormous burlesque company which will be organized in this city to tour the United States and Canada.

Miss Farrington is extremely pretty and has a superb figure. She set the dunes of New York raving about her when she appeared as the king of the chappies during the run of "Cinderella" at the Academy of Music. Miss Farrington was a member of Fred Leslie's company up to the time of that brilliant comedian's death. She is the daughter of Surgeon General Rose of the British navy.

OCTAVUS COHEN.

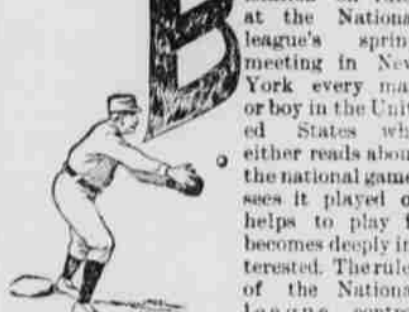
Debut of a London Prodigy. A 5-year-old violinist, Master Rhyll Bowen, made his debut in London at Gatti's Music hall, Charing Cross. The child played two fantasias on popular airs, such as "Home, Sweet Home," "The Last Rose of Summer" and "Love's Golden Dream," together with several Scotch tunes. He was loudly applauded for his efforts.

### TO INCREASE BATTING.

Caylor Thinks the Pitcher Is Curbed at Last.

#### PLENTY OF BASE HITS PROBABLE

A Surfeit of Them May Follow the Famine of the Past—The Different Attempts That Have Been Made to Diminish the Pitcher's Great Power.



BY THE recent legislation on rules at the National league's spring meeting in New York every man or boy in the United States who either reads about the national game or sees it played or helps to play it becomes deeply interested. The rules of the National league control baseball playing everywhere, whether it is amateur or professional. Therefore the radical changes made by the League in its playing rules will affect games universally for 1893.

The most important of these changes is that which puts the pitcher farther back into the diamond. The experiment is a daring one, and the most conservative among the baseball observers await the result with some misgivings. The increased distance is virtually five feet. Heretofore a line 5 feet from the home plate has been the limit of the pitcher—the limit of his approach to the batter in delivering the ball. He dared not get so much as the toe of his shoe over this line in stepping forward to pitch. Under the new rule his boundary line is put behind him—60 feet 6 inches from the outer edge of the home plate. One of his feet must be on this line when he begins to deliver the ball, and in delivering it he can take but a single step—not a jump—or about five feet. A long legged pitcher will be in demand, whereas a duck legged "twirler" ought to labor under a heavier handicap.

The new rule makes it much easier for the long suffering and much abused umpire. He need not now watch where the pitcher lands with his "forward" foot, but need only observe that one of his feet is on the prescribed line when the delivery begins.

To the superficial student of the game this change in pitching distance may appear less important than it really is. When it is remembered that pitchers like Mallone, Hecker and Morris in their day acquired a winning superiority by stepping with half their advanced foot over the line, some idea will be had of the difference which five feet more will make to the batter. The Players' league in 1890 put their pitchers back only a foot and a half, yet the batting was so much heavier on their fields than it was on the diamonds of the National league that they were compelled to return to the 50-foot mark so that their pitchers might not appear inferior.

The impression is widespread that the new rule will remove the crown from the pitcher's king; that hereafter he will be no more important than other members of the team. For several years the public has clamored and hungered for "more batting." Now they'll get it. There may be a surfeit after the famine in base hits. Too much of a change would be unpopular. And yet the summer's batting promises to be of the buff, bang, set-up-again kind. My modest opinion is that one season, or maybe a part of one season, will be enough under the new rule to make the baseball public pine for a few feet nearer relationship between the lordly pitcher and the vengeful batter.

The pitcher has been the personification of trouble to baseball legislators ever since the game became professionalized. He has slowly and insidiously overridden the restrictions set up by rule to curb his prowess. In the early seventies the rules required that he deliver the ball with the arm swinging almost parallel with the body. That was the pure "pitch," and in this delivery Asa Brainard was king. Gradually the pitchers began to raise the arm and swing it with an angle at the shoulder, which grew more and more obtuse. That made it necessary to adopt a rule declaring the ball to be illegally delivered if the hand passed through a plane higher than that which cleft the pitcher's belt. Immediately the fashion among pitchers in wearing belts became so changed that some of them wore uniforms after the style of the empire gown. To save trouble the legislators retreated and set up another barrier—rallied, as it were—at the height of the shoulder. Here trouble among the umpires became so general that the powers threw down the bars, removed all restriction and permitted the pitchers to throw from any plane within their reach.

During my experience as a magnate I conceived the idea of having a plate of smooth marble in front of the pitcher's box which should split him up the middle if he offended against the rule by overstepping the limit. Instead of fooling him he fooled me. In less than a month after the marble slab was laid down as a snare for his offending feet he was universally wearing a rubber soled lawn tennis shoe, and the marble slab was nothing but a tombstone over an idea that met an early death.

This time I can't figure out how the pitcher is going to escape the handicap. Perhaps he is harassed at last. Yet I'll not swear to it as a positive, forgone fact until several months of the new season have passed.

The pitcher has shown himself to be such a very slippery fellow that he may find a way out of the difficulties that now stand in his path. The flat bat of course is gone. R. I. P.

Another rule wisely restricts sacrifice hitting and gives the latter credit by excusing him a time at bat. Now he will not be asked to sacrifice his average whenever he sacrifices his chance. And it must be a sacrifice indeed. Flies to the outfield will no longer count as sacrifices; only an infield hit, which advances a base runner and puts no one out but himself.

The balk rule was changed so as to make it easier for the umpire to decide when a pitcher balks. The magnates meant well in the effort, but I doubt whether they succeeded.

The League championship season begins April 27, two weeks later than last year, and ends Sept. 30. The managers are trying to avoid the bad weather of early spring and late autumn. The Chicago Club is scheduled for 12 Sunday games at home. The Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Cleveland clubs refuse to play Sunday games at home or in the west. The only two clubs which join the Sunday playing division are the Chicago and Brooklyn. The latter will play on Sundays away from home only. O. P. CAYLOR.

### A Valuable Collection.

The collection mania has its victims among all classes of people, from the poorest to the richest, and very often queer traits of character are shown by the collections made. A successful Wall street broker has a collection that is unique, valuable and income producing. Blessed with abundant means, he has for the past five years been able to gratify his whim for the collection of bank stocks. His ambition is to have the largest collection of certificates of bank stocks in the world. His plan is to buy just one share of stock in each national bank. Recently he found that every national bank in New York city except one was represented in his collection. The exception was the Chemical, the \$100 shares of which sell for something over \$5,000 each.

After trying for a long while to find some one who would sell him a single share the collector came across three shares which were for sale in a lump. He could not get one alone, consequently he bought the three for a trifle over \$15,000. "I was led into making collections of bank stocks," said this gentleman the other day, "because I could not think of anything else to collect. Among my friends were collectors of pictures, bronzes, marbles, bric-a-brac, flowers, books, postage stamps, coins, musical instruments, glassware and almost everything else. I wanted to collect something that would be out of the ordinary and at the same time be of permanent value. Therefore I settled on bank shares."—New York Times.

#### Was There an Age of Copper?

M. Berthelot, the well known French chemist, in a communication to the Academie des Sciences, states his belief in the some time existence of an age of copper in addition to the three recognized archaeological eras of stone, bronze (copper and tin) and iron. He bases his opinion chiefly upon an analysis of a piece of copper which had been found by M. de Sazec in the course of antiquarian investigations in Mesopotamia, or Al Jezira, as the Arabs designate the famous stretch of country between the Euphrates and the Tigris. The fragment thus chemically determined proves to have neither tin nor zinc entering into its composition, there being simply traces of lead and arsenic.

Water and the atmosphere had made ravages into the specimen, which was practically a suboxide or a compound of protoxide and metallic copper. As the ruins from which the piece of metal was taken are authoritatively considered to be more ancient than even those of Babylon, M. Berthelot does not hesitate to promulgate the theory that an age of copper preceded the bronze and iron periods, especially as the examination of the component parts of a portion of a metallic scepter which, it is alleged, belonged to a pharaoh who reigned in Egypt some 3,500 years B. C., showed no sign of the presence of tin.—London Iron.

#### Position of Wood and Its Durability.

The problem has troubled many why two pieces of wood, sawed from the same section of a tree, should possess very varied characteristics when used in different positions. For example, a gatepost will be found to decay much faster if the butt end of the tree is uppermost than would be the case if the top were placed in this position. The reason is that the moisture of the atmosphere will permeate the pores of the wood much more rapidly the way the tree grew than it would if in the opposite direction.

Microscopical examination proves that the pores invite the ascent of moisture, while they repel its descent. Take the familiar case of a wooden bucket. Many may have noticed that some of the staves appear to be entirely saturated, while others are apparently quite dry. This arises from the same cause—the dry staves are in the position in which the tree grew, while the saturated ones are reversed.—London Tit-Bits.

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