

Percy Hammond's Letter

(Copyright, 1923.)
 NEW YORK, March 17.— The ways of the great actors are sometimes as inscrutable as those of a man with a maid or a serpent upon a rock. Here is Henry Miller, renowned for his astuteness as a showman, electing to appear as Pasteru, the French physician, in a biography of that noble chemist, whose life, we gather, was largely scientific.

Why, it can be asked, does Mr. Miller thus bestow himself on a role so absent from the routine glimmers? Pasteru was respectable though a ruthless germicide, and his career contained few of the elements of a hero in the theater. Such themes as perplexed his existence were not romantic. No women interfered with his investigations; and there is no woman in his play. His ardor in the pursuit of serums was dramatic, of course, but it was of the laboratory rather than the stage. He was not as interesting as his work. It was said on the opening night of the play at the Empire that most Broadway drama lovers believe Pasteru to be a brand of milk bottle, not a human being. Few of them were aware of his achievements in fermentation and the antitoxins; and he was known vaguely as something or other that Henry Miller was going to play. You may recall that Louis Napoleon Parker, author of "Disraeli," said that American thought Disraeli was a breakfast food until he came along with his drama and enlightened them.

These are exaggerations, of course, but even so, Pasteru seemed lacking in appeal to American showgoers. In France, as written by the younger Guitry and played by the elder Guitry, was a different matter. Mr. Miller, desiring to impersonate a benefactor, might explicitly have been attracted by a drama called "Edison" or "Hoover" or "Ford" or "Orville Wright." But he selected "Pasteru," and thereby added another to the many mysteries of the theater. Some time, no doubt, a play entitled "Willson" will be composed. It is interesting, it is not, to speculate on which Eugene O'Neill or Samuel Shapman of that period will re-create its great events; and which George Arliss or Henry Miller will endeavor to impersonate its leading role.

"Pasteru," however, has one subtle advantage. The compassionate healer who relieves human suffering is ever an endearing figure. Stricken, as you may have been, with a fever, you may have found nothing so heavenly as the physician who feels your pulse. Even though he be a surgeon, you confidently entrust to him your welfare, sure that his amendments of your person will be improving. The doctor who has what used to be called a good bedside manner is an auspicious spectacle for the time being, and he is among our best beloved. It is possible that Mr. Miller in choosing Guitry's play as his this season's implement thought of that valuable quality. At any rate, he represents Pasteru as a sympathetic country doctor, with whiskers and a bushy paunch, not as a nerve bacteriologist. And at the first performance his audience put its feverish little hand in his and trusted him very much.

Mr. Miller's reproduction of the scientist is therefore at least a thoughtful one. It inspires confidence, after the fashion of "Abraham Lincoln," and it is a testimonial to Pasteru rather than a play. It has, nevertheless, its theatrical incidents. One of these is the episode in which Pasteru, addressing the Academy of Medicine on the topic of smallpox, is heckled by his reactionary colleagues. These opponents are scattered throughout the audience, and they startle you by jumping up and shouting "I object!" proceeding thereafter to argue with the lecturer about microbes and vaccination. In my row on the opening night many experienced theatergoers were seated—Hanney Croft, Frances Stacy, Marie Wood, Blanche Bates, Margola Hillmore, Margaret St. John, Mrs. Arnold Bennett, Ruth Cratterton, Alice Brady, George Creel, George Jean Nathan, James Hamilton Lewis, and others. Yet they were all just as much astounded as I was when a dignified, quiet little fellow in our midst began to mutter and curse under his breath and to shake his fists at Pasteru on the stage. That, at least, was one of the thrills of the performance. Another was in the episode where a small boy came to the laboratory, his hands and legs lacerated by a mad dog. He was to be Pasteru's first human adventure in the prevention of rabies. Mr. Miller was very

Theaters



George Whiting & Sadie Burt
ORPHEUM

Jewell & Rita
WORLD

What the Theaters Offer

A NOVEL and unusual attraction will be presented at the World theater this week as its head-line feature in Richard Haveman's "Kings of the Forest and Desert," consisting of 10 lions, tigers and leopards. Haveman, internationally known as a trainer of wild animals, has a vaudeville act that is crowded with thrills and sensations.

Under the caption of "Miss Nobody," a musical comedy, is offered by Ethel McElroy and the Gotham City Four. Miss McElroy is a clever dancer while the quartet introduces a series of harmony song numbers. Joe Weston and Grace Eline offer comedy limitations of members of the upper and underworld with breezy chatter and song numbers. Two jovial feminine jesters, Jewell and Rita in a diversified program of comedy talk interspersed with song. "Making It Snappy," is the title of the new offering to be presented by Penman and Lillian. At the organ Arthur Hays will again introduce one of his original comedy novelty numbers, this time the tunes being of Irish swing. He will play two melodies at one time including "Stand Up and Sing" and "Annie Rooney."

The feature picture is a rib-ticking comedy drama of newspaper life called "A Front Page Story." It serves to present a capable cast of screen favorites including Edith Roberts, Edward Horton and Buddy Messenger. Last seen as the mischievous boy in "The Flirt."

At the Orpheum this week a court room drama, "Circumstantial Evidence," is to be presented entirely by men, with John Davidson heading the company of 12 American actors. Comedy and pathos are about equal, well balanced in the play. Mr. Davidson appeared in Omaha with Doris

Adaption of "Salomy Jane" Will Be Placed on Screen
 Waldemar Young has begun the adaptation of "Salomy Jane" from Paul Armstrong's play based on Bret Hart's story. This will be George Melroy's next Paramount production, following "You Can't Fool Your Wife," now in production at the company's Long Island studio. "Salomy Jane" will be produced on the west coast.

Keane in "Arsene Lupin." One of his memorable engagements was with Ethel Barrymore in "Lady Frederick." The bill is to have three featured acts: George Whiting and Sadie Burt in "Several Songs," Bert Fitzgibbons, "The original daffy dill," and Percy Bronson and Winnie Baldwin in "A Happy Medium." Whiting and Burt are known as two of the most effective entertainers and singers of songs on the vaudeville stage. Among comedians in a class by himself, his eccentric fun-making will be assisted by his brother, Lew. "A Happy Medium," is a combination of songs and clever talk. A pleasing act, "Dances Here and There," is to be presented by Misses Beatrice Gardell and Ruth Pryor. They will be assisted by Marcell White, Madelon and Paula Miller sing, dance and play the violin. Exceptional feats on the trapeze and flying rings will be performed by the Flying Henrys. Once again the cartoon comic, Aesop's Fables, will be shown on the screen. Other film features will be Topics of the Day and the Pathe News Weekly.

The first of a series of musical comedies will be presented at the Empress starting today. The Naughty, Naughty Musical Comedy company will be the first of its kind to play in Omaha at popular prices. They will be seen in two bills this week, the first one being "Four Jolly Bachelors" which will run from today until Wednesday and on Thursday the company will offer an entirely new show entitled "Oh! Baby." Among the principals are Faye Hammond, Ray Parsons, late of A. G. Field's minstrels, Howard Barlow, Billy Earle, William Bassoconi, Roy Harris, Arline Walker and Kate Parsons and a real singing and dancing chorus of 12.

"ERINGO BRAGH" DAILY MATINEE

Gayety

JEAN BEDINI'S INTERNATIONAL REVUE DIRECTED FROM THE OXFORD THEATRE LONDON ENGLAND

CHUCKLES OF 1923

STERLING JAZZ BAND
 BILLY WELLS AND THE ECLAIR TWINS
 CLIFF BRAGDON AND COO COO MORRISEAN
 GEORGE SNYDER
 ELAINE BRAYLEY
 WAYS WOMEN
 LONDON OXFORD GIRLS
 THE GREATEST SHOW IN THE WORLD FOR LEO HIMSELF

Prof. Jess Sutton, pianist of Sutton's All Star Empress Orchestra, will surprise Empress patrons during this week by playing a novelty piano.

Down Go Prices for Front Seats at New York Theaters

By SIM SILVERMAN.
 Written Exclusively for Universal Service.
 NEW YORK, March 17.—A sharp and permanent drop in theater admissions for the new season in the fall may be safely predicted. It will affect the theater of the drama and the musical comedy. One New York producer of extensive interests has admitted privately his intention of observing the warnings of this season. The public has balked at unattractive plays at unreasonable prices. The same producer is substituting visual evidence of his belief through presently opening in Chicago a new comedy at the maximum charge of \$2. He says that it is to be the box office figure of the future as it was in previous days. The exception may be the extraordinarily costly show at \$2.50.

Tendency toward a lowered scale is again indicated by metropolitan producers at popular price attractions. They are seeking to form repertory circuits of a restricted assortment of plays to travel at a scale of \$1. The movement is predicated upon the established and simple basis that theatergoers will not pay prevailing admission charges. Particularly in the hinterland have they proved it. Their show tastes have turned to local stock companies or community players, the latter often referred to as the little theater. Vaudeville and picture houses also have largely benefited.

The neglect of not indifference of the New York booking offices to "the road" with the consequent barrenness of touring desirable plays at reasonable figures have factored stock companies. The public at large, by its absence from the theater, has represented the caliber of play presented and its seal, until the lesson has been firmly driven home to the showman. It is that the countryside demands good shows at a proper charge. Without both it easily sidesteps the commercial theater.

The government is reported to have promptly annexed \$25,000 of the \$500,000 Jackie Coogan actually did receive from a moving picture corporation. It happened when an income tax return was made out for the boy of the films and the half million entered as part of his earnings for 1922. The money was paid over to Jackie's father in December as an advance payment to cover four pictures the boy is to make during 1923. It would not have been earned until those pictures were completed.

New York's Broadway is to have the world's largest dance hall, at Fifty-third street. Looked upon as another menace to theater patronage, the dance palace has thrived and made inroads in other cities with New York, comparatively, left alone by it. The dance palaces usually deplete balcony and gallery attendance in the show houses. A new building will go up on the Broadway site and the dance floor space, capable of accommodating over 3,000 people, is under lease at \$75,000 annually.

Salaries of the movie directors and actors in the film colony of Los Angeles and Hollywood have swiftly increased of late, due to renewed activity in picture making. Capable directors are mostly in demand, though all able players are under engagement. Lately out there a director left one concern paying him \$1,000 weekly for directing, to accept a similar offer with a competing producer at \$35,000 a picture and 25 per cent of the net profits each picture makes. His contract provides he shall not direct less than four pictures yearly during his engagement.

The revival of "The Merry Widow" in London provokes tremendous enthusiasm nightly.

Walter Hampden, the player of Shakespearean roles, may have his own theater on Broadway next season. It will be the National, which housed the long run of "The Cat and the Canary." Early this week it seemed most likely Mr. Hampden would secure the house on one year's lease at \$100,000 rental. If the deal is consummated it will be New York's only Shakespearean repertoire house.

Empress to Have Musical Comedy Along With Its Other Features

"It is plain to see that the people of Omaha are more or less saturated with the ready-made shows offered by the downtown theaters," says Manager Ledoux of the Empress. "All the recognized downtown straight picture theaters are presenting programs of the same routine, a weekly or educational, therefore, it is evident that such stereotyped sort of bills have lost, by this time, their novel effect with many showgoers. It is to meet a demand for something new that Mr. Ledoux, manager of the Empress theater, is changing his policy of vaudeville and pictures to that of musical comedy with vaudeville features and pictures. Musical comedy pictures, with straight picture theaters are presenting programs of the same routine, a weekly or educational, therefore, it is evident that such stereotyped sort of bills have lost, by this time, their novel effect with many showgoers. 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