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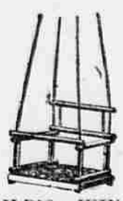

CAILD'S SWING, strong and durable, 25c

ASH TOY BUREAUS in all sizes, 5c, 10c and 25c up.

BLACK BOARDS —on easel, 19c.

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Boys' and Girls' Sleds, strong and well made, 25c, 49c and up.

Iron Sulkies, horses and drivers, 25c.

Iron Engines, two horses and driver, 25c.

AMUSEMENTS.

Last week was a trifle more prolific of good theatrical entertainment than the week before, but was, nevertheless, not a period which will be specially remembered or marked with a white stone. Stuart Robson's return in a Shakespearean comedy and a modern play only less ancient gave pleasure to many and was unquestionably an agreeable event. The quiet little drama of southern life—quiet save for one unnecessarily lurid touch of melodrama—which closed the week at Boyd's was worth seeing and would have been a source of delectation to starving theater-goers if they had only been willing to take anybody's word for its merit and go to see it. The Creighton presented nothing, or worse than nothing. That an Omaha playhouse should be forced to fill a week of its time with such insufferable rot and rubbish as "Hogan's Alley" and "The Broadway Girl" is not a gratifying commentary on the existing state of things.

Those, however, who, with a good deal of reason, are finding fault with the class of attractions which the local theaters are providing, may take comfort in learning that better things are in store for them, which will soon begin to come to pass. They must not hope for any very substantial relief until after the first of the year, for it is a startling fact, as indicative of the methods of the booking trust, that absolutely nothing is in sight by way of holiday entertainment at either house! Something may yet be secured for Christmas, but the chances of getting anything really meritorious at this late day are not so bright as to be dazzling.

The present month being cast, however, such attractions as "The Prisoner of Zenda," "Secret Service," and "The Wedding Day" will be offered, and such stars as E. H. Sothern and DeWolf Hopper among others during the month of January. Dr. Nansen, the Arctic explorer, who was to have lectured about the middle of the month, has been shifted to a date considerably later. What manner of company will present "The Prisoner of Zenda" is past conjecture, but it is pretty safe to be announced as "the original." Theater-goers who remember how near the real original the company was which presented this play here a year ago will make due allowances for such indication of managerial pride. Few of those who are in a position to know are so sanguine as to hope for a "No. 1" company, with William Gillette, in "Secret Service." If Mr. Gillette really purposes to come here with his play, the fact, so soon as it is definitely ascertained, will be joyfully proclaimed in these columns. Amid uncertainties such as these, admirers of Lillian Russell, Della Fox and Jeff D'Angelis may be reasonably certain to see these delightful artists together in "The Wedding Day," which they are booked to present in Omaha for one night only. Stars such as Mr. Sothern and Mr. Hopper cannot be duplicated, fortunately for the public which has to do with a syndicate not too scrupulous in observing distinctions between first and second-class articles; wherefore it may fairly be presumed that these two gentlemen will actually appear here next month, unless the trust sees fit to cancel their engagements outright.

The Creighton theater's change of policy, announced last week by The Bee, was apparently inevitable, and seems likely to be approved by Omaha theater-goers in general, however much they may deplore the reduction of their most comfortable playhouse to the permanent level of popular prices and vaudeville. Not enough meritorious and remunerative attractions being furnished by the syndicate to keep even one Omaha theater continuously open during the season, it will readily be seen that a second theater under the same local management must have a hard time to get any share of the business at all. And, since competition in this city is absolutely cut off, the second theater, if it books anything at all, must either take the very undesirable leavings,—the "Hogan's Alleys" and all that—or else do what Paxton & Burgess have very sensibly and properly done, dump the whole unsavory mess of inferior bookings and organize a permanent stock company.

The stock companies which are springing up all over the country are bound to be a factor of no small importance in the bringing about of a better and healthier condition in the theatrical world than that which now prevails. Years ago, before the development of the star system had made possible the existence of a theatrical trust, the stock companies were everywhere and from these unparalleled training schools came many, if not most, of those who are our best known actors today. The drift is once more in that direction and away from the starring idea. No syndicate could corner the market if each considerable city had its own independent organization of players, upon which it could contentedly fall back for theatrical entertainment if outside attractions were not provided. The performances of a stock company, the members of which are judiciously selected and intelligently directed in their work together, are in the nature of things more satisfactory to the average observer than those of any one actor, however great, who sets off and accentuates his own transcendent ability by surrounding himself with incompetents and graven images.

The scheme of the stock company is not untried in Omaha, the conspicuous success of the Woodward organization at the Creighton last summer being still fresh in the memory. The same plan, slightly modified, is working to a charm in Kansas City, where the results of the season thus far have been such as to amaze the inhabitants and to work a revolution in theatrical methods.

The company which will soon be permanently installed at the Creighton will be stronger, in numbers and in artistic ability, than that of last summer; stronger and better than the one which is doing wonders in Kansas City. The management asserts, in a word, that the best actors obtainable will be secured. It is not to be expected that great and well known names will be stuck upon the roster, for the prices of admission will be the same reasonable prices which prevailed last summer, but the company will be carefully chosen, with a view not only to present capability, but to future development as well. Such an enterprise should commend itself strongly to the masses of theater-goers who have neither the means nor the inclination to pay high prices for their entertainment. Its attractive features, however, will doubtless find favor also in the sight of the well-to-do, for there is no reason why a stock company of comparatively unknown but ambitious and constantly growing players should not come to be worth anyone's while to see and enjoy. If it should turn out otherwise there are always the specialties, —are to be the very best that money can obtain, and numerous enough to insure, with which at the Creighton—so the promise runs the play itself, a continuous three hours' performance ten times a week.

The newspaper war against the syndicate, first undertaken by the Dramatic Mirror and later waged mightily by the New York World and by a rapidly increasing army of influential journals all over the country, is going merrily on, with multiplying disasters to the trust and corresponding success to the opposing forces. During the week just past Joseph Jefferson and Augustin Daly have come out openly in opposition to the trust, and the scheme of organized rebellion among actors and managers is fast crystallizing into definite shape, although details are jealously guarded as yet and only generalities are given out for publication. Some newspapers are already assuming an attitude of derision toward the trust, as if it were even now a thing of the past; a foolish thing to do, without doubt, for the commercial ability and varied resources of the syndicate should not be underrated. The fight just now seems to be a losing one for the trust, but overconfidence in dealing with such adversaries is likely to lead to a postponement, if nothing worse, of the final day of emancipation.

When the discussion first began, as it were in a corner, it was said with some show of truth that the public cared as little as possible for the outcome of a personal quarrel between Mr. Harrison Grey Fiske and the amiable Jewish gentlemen, whose business methods he assailed. It soon transpired, however, that a broader and deeper principle was involved in the controversy than one of mere individual revenge; and the theater-going public and patrons of art in all its branches began to awake to the fact that their rights and liberties were threatened.

The situation is not even yet so well understood as it should be, and in answer to numerous requests recently received, which show a rapidly spreading interest in the subject, a short statement follows here, of the nature of the so-called syndicate, its methods and its aims. Such a statement cannot possibly be exhaustive within the limits of an article like this, but enough may be said in a few words to show to any thoughtful mind what an Old Man of the Sea is just now upon the shoulders of the American drama.

The syndicate, then, or trust, is a name given to the association of half a dozen men —by an odd coincidence all Israelites—who, from being inconspicuous booking agents or managers of individual theaters, have so developed that at present they own in combination, or control with all the despotism of ownership, nearly every first-class theater in the United States and absolutely all the high class stars and companies, with the exception of Minnie Maddern Fiske, Francis Wilson and James A. Herne. Their control of the American stage is so nearly complete that local managers are reduced to the position of mere janitors of their own houses, and actors are forbidden to read certain papers on pain of dismissal from syndicate employ, which, under existing circumstances, means farewell to the profession altogether. Moreover, the public, the ruling power of America, is told that it shall see certain plays at certain houses at certain prices or that it may not go to the theater at all.

Now monopolies are unpopular in this country on general principles. This people, at least nominally free, resents any attempt to abridge its liberty of thought, speech and action. It puts up with certain trusts which are protected by existing laws, and it might conceivably even submit to some great artist or syndicate of artists who should assume to coerce all the world's art and administer it for art's sake. But (aside from Mr. Frohman, who is in very bad company) what have the members of this theatrical trust done for the stage to entitle them to grasp its absolute control? Have they written or produced worthy plays, catered to cultivated tastes, or accomplished aught of lasting benefit to players or public? Have they not rather consistently striven to degrade the stage to the level of the box office, to fill the temple of art with money changers and to debauch that taste which it was their duty to uplift? The people of Omaha may profitably review the list of "Foundlings," "Never Agains," "Girls from Paris," lingerie, legs and lewdness and so gather data from which to formulate an answer.

If an extended unanimity of favorable press notices may be taken as an indication the engagement of Digby Bell in "The Hoosier Doctor," which begins with the performance today, is likely to prove a treat for theater-goers. The play is not of the kind usually presented on Sundays, least of all at Sunday matinees; although on the principle of "the better the play the better the deed," it is difficult to say why, what is really good should not be enjoyed as well on the first day of the week as on any other, provided the actors are willing to work on that day.

"The Hoosier Doctor," however, is rarely played on Sunday, for combined reasons of scruple, policy and utility. Manager Duncan B. Harrison was especially averse to the Sunday afternoon feature of the present engagement, fearing that the better class of amusement lovers would thereby be prejudiced against a really worthy attraction, and he only yielded to such an arrangement after a vigorous and prolonged protest. This explanation is given to set "The Hoosier Doctor" right with people who have their own very proper ideas about Sunday "shows" and who are not apt to countenance entertainments which may be so classed.

A little girl who goes to the theater as often as possible asked one who was posted on such matters what is to be at the theaters this week. "Hoosier Doctor" was the reply. The little girl was bewildered for an instant, but came bravely back with, "Dr. Hoffman. Who's yours?"

This is a true story and no press agent's fabrication. The Indiana physician, however, is welcome to any good its publication may do him.

Coming Events.

Digby Bell will begin an engagement at the Creighton of six performances, commencing Sunday, December 12, presenting for the first time in this city "The Hoosier Doctor," Augustus Thomas' new domestic comedy drama, which is said to be a fitting companion piece for "Alabama" and "In Mizzoura." Mr. Thomas' preceding successes. "The Hoosier Doctor," as its title implies, is a comedy founded on life in Indiana and depicts the various types of characters of that section of our country. In his latest departure Mr. Bell has achieved a distinction heretofore denied him and has universally secured the hearty indorsement and fulsome praise of the press throughout the country. The title role which Mr. Bell impersonates is reputed to combine pathos and comedy, as well as those pretty heart touches which "makes the whole world kin." The Hoosier doctor is a combination of self-sacrifice, gentleness and humor. He is a widower with three grown daughters and a mother-in-law, a spiteful, termagant type of female, whose sole object in life, apparently, is to find fault and in every way to interpose obstacles to his efforts to succeed in life and properly to provide for the comforts of the members of his family. The doctor's career has been a checkered one, until, as the comedy opens, he has just succeeded in graduating at the head of his class with honors as a medical practicioner. His mother-in-law's termagant qualities eventually become so unbearable that to secure the heart affection denied him at his own fireside the doctor consummates a clandestine marriage and through the dual life led by him in this secret marriage and the hours passed with his wife, whom he represents as a patient named Robinson, many contretemps arise and the particular comedy scenes of the play are developed until toward the finale a self-constituted whitecapping committee, headed by his mother-in-law, visits the doctor and his bride for the purpose of disciplining them in approved whitecap fashion.

The organization supporting Mr. Bell consists of the following well known people: Laura Joyce Bell, Mabel Strickland, Margaret Owen, Emma Butler, Viola Miles, Mamie Fulton, Estelle Marbury and little Ethel Vance and the Messrs. Arthur Hoops, Frank Monroe, Herman Hirshberg, Gage Clarke, Harry S. Robinson, Joseph L. Treacy, Bert Bayard, Charles Edwards, Edward Franklin and others. The engagement commences with an evening performance today and continues until and including Wednesday night, December 15.

Nellie McHenry comes to Boyd's theater this afternoon, tonight and tomorrow night in a new play, "A Night in New York," written expressly for her by H. Grattan Donnelly. The title expresses the entire plot, which consists of the adventures of Jefferson Manhattan, a gay New York clubman and Willowby Still, a New England clubman, who on the eve of their entering domestic bliss, scheme to go to the French ball at the Madison Square garden, without their intended wives knowing it and to have one jolly night of it in New York before settling down for life. Mlle. Henrietta, known as the peerless Peri, queen of the vaudeville stage, (Miss McHenry), while visiting friends in New England, assumes the character of Miss Henrietta, a quiet demure country maid, falls in love with Willowby Still and the marriage is to take place in New York. Mlle. Henrietta while in New York visits Mrs. Harlem (who is to be married to Jefferson Manhattan) and induces her to go to the gay French ball. Prominent in the company may be mentioned Richard Brown, William Hafford, Billy Barry, J. Hays, J. Kenny, Miss Mai Raymond, Miss Mildred Connors, Miss Viola Raynore and Miss Rosa Crouch.

Merely Players.

Eleanora Duse is said to contemplate enacting "Hamlet."

Henry E. Dixey will appear as a magician in London next spring.

Lillian Lewis has a "new and stirring" piece entitled "For Liberty and Love."

Fanny Davenport has given up trying to galvanize "The Saint and the Fool" into life, and closed her season last week in Providence.

Beerbohm Tree is considering a play in which Voltaire is the leading character.

Helen Lindner is now the smallest member of the Lilliputians, being a little less than three feet high.

Owen Fawcett celebrated the forty-fourth anniversary of his first appearance on the stage last Tuesday.

It is practically assured that Maude Adams will continue to star in "The Little Minister" at least another season.

John Philip Sousa claims to have written the book as well as the music of the new opera, "The Bride Elect."

Frank Ebert, the Lilliputian star, has never missed a performance or a rehearsal during his fifteen years on the stage.

Gage Clarke, stage manager of the Digby Bell company, is a relative and namesake of the secretary of the treasury.

New York is practically alone among the cities of the world in the unparalleled prosperity which its theaters are enjoying.

Philadelphia enjoys first productions, but objects to being known as "the dog" on which theatrical novelties are "tried."

A comfortable sum of money was realized at the benefit performance for "Old Hoss" Hoey's widow and mother last Thursday.

May Buckley, who made a pronounced hit in "The First Born," has been engaged by Charles Frohman for the Empire company.

May Vokes will "create" the part of an Irish servant girl in a new comedy, entitled "The Old Coat," which will be produced in January.

Mabel Strickland, who will be seen here as a member of Digby Bell's company, is one of the brightest and most promising ingenues on the American stage.

Minna Belle Bishop is a San Francisco girl, who has eyes like Maxine Elliott's, and who hopes to duplicate the success of that fortunate young woman on the stage.

Robert N. Stephens hopes to follow up the success of "An Enemy to the King" with a new play which he has just completed and the scene of which is laid in colonial New York.

Japanese laws now prohibit a theatrical performance lasting more than eight hours. Plays in the first class theaters begin at 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning and last until after sunset.

John Drew and Maude Adams appeared together in the comedietta, "Mrs. Hilary's Regrets," at the Actors' Fund benefit in New York last week. Drew played an Irish doctor with a brogue.

In spite of the malignant opposition of the trust, Francis Wilson's recent engagement in Philadelphia was so conspicuous a financial success that he will soon return to that city and produce his new opera at the same house.

The new Hoyt play, "A Night and a Day," will not be produced immediately, owing to the indisposition of the gifted author. Meantime Otis Harlan will be featured in one of the "Stranger in New York" companies.

Richard Mansfield, without waiting for the close of his engagement in Philadelphia, which he is playing at a trust theater, stated his position with respect to the trust last week in unmistakable language in a speech to an audience, which applauded his fearless utterances to the echo.

"Hampton Roads," a play treating of the historic encounter of the Monitor and the Merrimac, was produced in Davenport, Ia., last week by local talent. It is the work of Charles Eugene Banks of Chicago and Prof. C. G. Cook of the Iowa State university, who hope to put it on the road.

Julia Arthur, who has made a sensation in Mrs. Burnett's dramatization of her own novel, "A Lady of Quality," has been moved to declare in a before-the-curtain speech that Clorinda Wildaire is "a needed lesson in social ethics;" and some moralists are quarreling with the actress' taste and with her conclusions.

Boston papers are granting a charming license to the press agent of Margaret Mather, who is described as possessing a peculiar claim upon the gratitude of Bostonians by reason of her direct descent from no less a personage than the great grandmother of Cotton Mather. Her family crest is said to adorn "everything that the actress uses," and even to be tattooed upon her bosom. All of which has a most important bearing upon the public interest in her performance in "Cymbeline."

The London Era, in the course of a long review of the methods of the theatrical syndicate in America, says: "The dramatic profession in England has its troubles and anxieties; but at present, at any rate, its members do not groan under the yoke of a legalized despotism, which can only be compared to the Irish Land league or the French Convention Reign of Terror."

THE CHAMPION GLUTTON.

Ate a Meal Prepared for Eight and Called for More.

A recent article in a Sunday issue of the Philadelphia Times concerning the wonderful feats of "Jersey's oyster eater, Ira Chazel, who has an appetite for the bivalve that has not been satisfied, and who has swallowed 400 at a sitting," has led to an inquiry as to one Gotlieb Scheerer, who was supposed to have flourished in Philadelphia some years ago, and to have been possessed of an inordinate appetite, especially for oysters. This name will bring many amusing and fond recollections back to the minds of numerous old-time Philadelphians, relates the Times. Gotlieb Scheerer! My! my! my! What a man he was! What an appetite he had! Every one knew him. He was such a unique figure in Philadelphia life in his day that he is well worth talking about. He came to this country from his native Alsace when he was about 24 years of age, and always spoke with that peculiar singsong of the French and German accent that betrays the Alsatian origin. He was a man of giant frame, but not remarkably stout, because his weight of 290 pounds was carried by a stature of about 6 feet 7 inches in height. He kept a boot and shoe shop on the west side of Sixth street above Market—a small two-storied store—where he worked himself at the trade of St. Crispin, turning out most excellent footwear, for which he charged high prices and was patronized only by those who were rich in this world's goods. Of course, this was before the days of fine factory goods. He made money and saved it. He was a hard-shell democrat, and during the Polk-Dallas presidential campaign he bet every dollar he had in the world on the success of the ticket which those men headed, and thereby won about $15,000. That was his start in well-to-do life. Thenceforth he bet largely on each succeeding presidential election—always on the democratic side—and in this way amassed a fortune of about $60,000. Then he abandoned the shoe shop and became a well known character about town, known personally by sight to almost every man, woman and child in the Quaker City.

Many stories are told of Scheerer's prowess in eating, but the truth of the following is vouched for as having been told by himself of himself:

He was one of a party of eight who ordered dinner in Guy's hotel, then the leading caravansary of the day. When it was spread upon the table, which was bountifully burdened, Scheerer said to the landlord in amazed tone: "Whose dinner is this?"

"It is for you gentlemen," said the landlord.

"Impossible," said Scheerer indignantly, "I can eat everything there myself."

"If you do," said the landlord smilingly, "it will cost you nothing, and I will supply another dinner for the other seven gentlemen, also, without cost."

Without a smile Scheerer sat himself at the table, stuck a napkin between his collar and neck—why many heavy eaters and men of porcine traits will imagine they are in a barber's chair when they are only at a dining table is one of those unexplainable things that Divine Providence may some day explain—and proceeded to masticate a devastating path through the eatables that confronted him. He not only absorbed the dishes, but he let the plates escape only after violent cleaning with remnants of the bread and pickles and condiments followed into his insatiate maw. The landlord's eyes bulged out upon his cheeks. The other visitors, who knew Scheerer, laughed themselves into tears. When the wreck of the meal was complete the amazed landlord, turning to a waiter, said: "I have lost. Order another dinner for seven."

"Why for seven?" said Scheerer calmly. "Am I not here? Waiter, make it for eight; I would like to dine."

How is that for an anti-climax to a story? In the old Franklin house, on Chestnut street, below Fourth, during one of the Christmas holidays there was a 17-pound turkey presented for lunch. At that time they charged only a fip—that was 6¼ cents for a drink, and 6¼ cents for a small lunch of turkey and beer. Scheerer came into the hostelry just as the turkey had been placed on the table and had not been touched by a knife. To the waiter he said: "I will give you a levy (12½ cents) if you will let me take a cut off of the turkey myself." The waiter smilingly assented, whereupon the giant Alsatian took the carving knife and cut off one of the fowl's wings. He then lifted the remainder of the bird out of the dish and placed it on two plates, put side by side, and then and there he ate every portion of the turkey, except the bones; less, of course, the one wing, and for this "slice" paid a single levy, to the grief and chagrin of the proprietor.

Scheerer once made a bet of $100 that he would eat a dozen raw oysters covered with brown sugar. The eating was to be done at Harmer's, Broad and Chestnut streets. Of course, he won, but so that his adversary should be entirely satisfied that he had won fairly he ate a second dozen in the same way, ending the repast with four dozen fried. They were all Saddle Rocks of immense size.

In the Mansion house, in Reading, Pa., where he was stopping to breakfast, the table was a long one, running the whole length of the room, and the entire meal was placed at once. In front of where Scheerer sat was a large dish of hard-boiled eggs, about five dozen in all. He emptied the dish on the table cloth and then "hulled" all the eggs, putting them back into the dish and after preparing them with salt, pepper, butter and vinegar, cut them into small pieces and ate them with a tablespoon. When he had finished he called the German waiter girl and asked for more. She replied, "Vell, you don't get no more; you vas a hog."

One night he went into Guy's when it was celebrated for its deviled crabs, and at that moment a waiter brought up from the kitchen a large platter containing about three dozen of the delicacies. Scheerer looked at and smelt of them, and said, "Put them away for me, I will take a few oysters first and the crabs after." Just then a gentleman coming up to the eating bar said to the colored waiter, "Sam, give me one of those crabs." Whereupon Scheerer said, "No, sair; I have secured all dem crab for myself," and he ate them all, after eating fifty raw oysters. For home use he never bought a roast of under twenty-five pounds, and boasted that in his house there never was any cold roast beef for supper.

Gotlieb Scheerer was fairly intelligent, knew nearly all the public men and was tolerated by them. He had a great admiration for Mr. Buchanan. He would bet on anything, but always wanted odds. He was of a happy disposition, but when he became angry he grew so excited as to be hardly intelligible in his talk. He was proud of having been a shoemaker and a "self-made man." He evolved into the business of lending money on usurious interest, and during the war he lost much in that way.

A year or two before his death he was waylaid and assaulted at night by unknown persons. He was then very old and weak, and probably never recovered from the blows.

Three-Cent Fares Not Profitable.

DETROIT, Dec. 11.—The Evening News will say: A report comes to the News from a high source, in fact from several sources, that the Detroit railway (3-cent fare railway line) was unable to meet the interest on the bonds when the latter's payment became due. There also comes a reiteration of the report that Tom L. Johnson declines to keep a promise, alleged to have been made at the time of the so-called consolidation of the Citizens' and Detroit companies, that if the Detroit did not earn enough above operating expenses to pay its bonded interest he would see that it was paid.

The News also quotes a business associate of Albert Pack, president of the Detroit railway, as saying that the payment of 3-cent fares in Detroit had been a failure.

Petition for Stay of Execution.

LIBERTY, Mo., Dec. 11.—Rev. Mr. Ewing, a prominent local divine, will leave for Jefferson City tonight, bearing a petition signed by members of the William Jewell college and many other prominent citizens, urging an extension of time in the execution of Filicide William Carr, set for December 17. When told today of the petition in his behalf Carr paid no attention and refused to say a word about it.

Gets Pay for Injured Kidney.

KANSAS CITY, Dec. 11.—Tenna Winslow, who sued the Knights of Maccabees for $25,000 for dislocating one of his kidneys, while initiating him into the local order four year ago, was today awarded $10,000 by a jury in Judge Gates' division of the circuit court.

Student Volunteer Convention.

CLEVELAND, O., Dec. 11.—The third international convention of the student volunteer movement will be held in this city February 22 to 27. It will be the largest and most powerful student gathering ever held. Fifteen hundred delegates will attend the meeting.