

ART ON THE AMERICAN STAGE

Greater Progress Here Than Abroad Toward a Higher Standard.

SIGNIFICANT SIGNS OF THE SEASON

Good Plays Taking the Place of Farce Comedy and Bad Melodrama—Drama Free and Flourishing.

On the authority of no less considerable and immaculate a reporter than M. Clement Scott, American playgoers have learned, with gratification tempered by surprise, that in this country drama is far freer and more flourishing than in London.

I am prepared to accept almost any and every statement concerning the stage (except, of course, as to the women of the stage) that Mr. Scott may make. And though for once he may be mistaken one of his most pious wishes for fact, I will not quarrel with him. For he has only anticipated fact.

Certainly, even now, the drama to which the more speculative of our theatrical managers have accustomed us has been free enough.

Free? Yes, in some instances, to the very point of obscenity.

That it flourishes—unless commercially—it might be hard to prove. And it would seem incredible that Mr. Scott, who is notoriously indifferent to the materialities, should stoop to the consideration of anything as vulgar as mere boxoffice receipts.

York and in the other leading cities of this land, in every age—may five—farce comedy with its inanity of plot, its pitiful vulgarity, its mechanical dexterity and its buffoonery, was popular. A playwright who has since attained some distinction in more worthy fields told me—ten years ago—that it was the height of his ambition to reach the great heart of the people by inventing its farce comedies. Mr. Hoyt made, I am told, three-quarters of a million with his wild, though usually smart, grotesqueries—clear evidence, were any needed, that while he was earning the money the public, or rather that portion of the public which enjoyed his chaff, was grossly ignorant of art.

And where today is Mr. Hoyt? Where are Hallen and Hart? And where, if he stuck to his farce comedy, would the ingenious author of "Why Smith Left Town" soon be? Remember, Mr. Dockstader was once popular.

Heaven forbid that I should throw stones at any of these gentlemen. They have served their purposes. They have served the purposes of thousands, ay, and of hundreds of thousands, of excellent, honest, ingenious, but, I am afraid, half-cultured playgoers.

So, too, in our innocent youth, some of us have relished what to the children of England is still the greatest of all plays, our "Punch and Judy."

To Matthew Arnold (who, in everything except drama undoubtedly had taste) Mr. Harrigan was a genius. And where is Mr. Harrigan? Gone. Gone with the old moons, and snows, of yesterday.

For, surely, surely, despite our managers and despite the heads of our theatres, and despite the world moves. And art moves. Drama, the most readily appreciated, and withal not the least noble, of all arts, our managers will gradually be educated. Are not critics? Ah, who knows? A beginning has been made. In a small way, I know, in the teeth of derision (that would not matter) and of apathy (which, unless shaken, would mean everything).

Five years ago—I speak shamelessly—did we not see "Harrigan at the Fifth Avenue"? And, though it failed; though, that is to say, it cost money to the managers who produced it; who then saw it has ever forgotten the impression it made on him?

More recently—and once more I speak very shamelessly, openly glorying in the share I had in the offense—did we not see some sort of an attempt to found an independent theater?

Brief as was the career of that enterprise, it lasted long enough to give us two marvelous object lessons—the "John Gabriel Borkman" of Ibsen and the "Gran Galeoto" of Echeagaray.

Critics may laugh at such efforts and managers may mourn over them, but they are not vain. A honest effort to advance art and to proclaim truth is ever vain. Something remains, when the names of the men who may have been associated with the efforts have gone out of our memories. Others, in whose minds seeds had been sown, will renew the fight, perhaps successfully.

My masters, the world moves. Conventions are assailed. Recently another onslaught on the conventionalities and the untruths that cleave to our stage has been made in New York. Mr. Zangwill (aided, it is but fair to add, by James A. Herne, a pioneer of the true drama in America) has introduced us to his dramatized "Children of the Ghetto."

Greater than all these, deeper than all these, stranger and finer than "El Gran Galeoto," more beautiful and infinitely more significant than "Cyrano" (I write this feelingly and blush not for my brazenness) is a play which E. H. Sothern has promised to produce (experimentally at least) at Daly's, "The Sunken Bell," a work by Gerhart Hauptmann, a pioneer of the new dramatic movement.

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What is "The Sunken Bell"? And who is this Hauptmann? He is a poet, one of the few poets who in our day have been blessed with the dramatic spirit. In Germany he has since the production of his first work ("Before Sunrise") by the Freie Bühne (or Independent Theater) in Berlin, been recognized as the head of the new realistic movement. He is a young man still—hardly older than Rostand. And his range is far wider, while his insight into the soul of humanity is far more profound than Rostand's is or is ever likely to be. In "The Weavers" he produced an epic of misery and in so doing evolved a new stage technique. Imagine a drama without a hero, without a heroine, without a love interest. The people, instead of the usual sentimental yearnings for happiness, substituted for the sweethearts and the villains of convention. And the effect? Prodigious. Heart-shaking.

Now for "The Sunken Bell." It is the antithesis of "The Weavers." A poet tragedy—or, as the author has named it, "a fairy play." But a fairy play, such as a young Goethe might have conceived; a human tragedy, dressed in the form of a dramatic allegory, with fantasy not unworthy of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," or a "Tempest" to brighten it, and a general theme recalls in turn "Prometheus" and "Faust," and the story of Icarus.

The hero—an idealist, dreaming of a marvelous peal of bells that shall ring a new gospel of joy and light and freedom through the world. The heroine—a child of impulse, symbolizing nature. There is a victim, too, a hapless wife, who drowns herself. And there are villains (of a queer kind); a woodsprite and a watersprite. The play is a poetic parable.

Franks at the Footlights. We may see other dramas, strange and perhaps, to some, bewildering, this season. Mr. Blair, an actor who attracted favorable attention by the admirable work he did two years ago in what was known as the Criterion Independent theater production of "El Gran Galeoto," announces that he will present in New York a number of modern plays—five or six of them.

"Galeoto" is a play which E. H. Sothern wrote it as a lesson in charity and his chief character (as Ernesto, the hero, tells us) does not appear on the stage. For that character is really Calumny.

The "Little Eoyll" of Ibsen (whereof the tendency more inspired by Tolstoy's "Kreutzer Sonata" and a remarkable strong drama, by Richard Voss, entitled "Guilt," are also on the list.

One other play promised by Mr. Blair may be mentioned, "The Heather Field," of Mr. Edward Martyn. Much has been written of this work (the best in plan, but less so in execution) and "repellant" than some dramas of the Norwegian master, by Mr. William Archer, and Mr. George Moore. It was originally presented in London, this year, by the Irish Literary theater. The subject and the author look so Irish. And the hero is again a dreaming idealist.

What reception will these works meet at the hands of the public to which they will appeal? That is for the future to decide. But I am hopeful.

They will be sneered at—every one of them—of course. They may not please. But they will hardly meet indifference. The list of patrons published by Mr. Blair—includes such representative names as W. D. Howells, Sir Henry Irving, Bronson Howard, E. H. Sothern, Gerhart Hauptmann, George Gould, Charles Frohman, Israel Zangwill and Recorder Goff—should assure them at least courtesy.

And these plays will be seen in Boston—perhaps also in Philadelphia. There is hope for the true drama in America. CHARLES HENRY MELTZER.

Officer Kills a Murderer. RALEIGH, N. C., Nov. 21.—Ex-Sheriff Pritchard and accor Blaylock of Mitchell county yesterday attempted to murder a man named Hunneycut, an alleged murderer. Hunneycut shot Pritchard and Pritchard a moment later killed Hunneycut. Pritchard, who killed Hunneycut, is brother of United States Senator Pritchard.

Then— Ah, you see what I am slowly coming to. Yes. Then we will swear by the real realist; by Beque and Porto-Richo and Sudermann and Ibsen and Bjornson and Gerhart Hauptmann.

To nine-tenths of the American critics, to ninety and nine-hundredths of the American public, and all the American managers, these men (familiar to the playgoers of Germany and Austria, and of Norway, as household words) are still anathema. "They do not pay."

What of it? Unless rumors lie. "The Girl from Maxim's" has not "paid" either. "My Innocent Boy" was not a huge success. "Collette" has not proved all that it was cracked up to be.

Art and Prosperity. Art, at the outset, may have little enough to do with commercial prosperity. "Cyrano" is an exception. And, admirable though it seems, perhaps "Cyrano" will be forgotten after a season or two. To love art, you must see it and hear it frequently. How can great dramas or great comedies become popular if our managers persist in not producing them? How could Wagner ever have won his hold over us if, braving ridicule and indifference, while it was worse than innocent, you must see it and hear it frequently. How can great dramas or great comedies become popular if our managers persist in not producing them? How could Wagner ever have won his hold over us if, braving ridicule and indifference, while it was worse than innocent, you must see it and hear it frequently.

Yet Wagner reigns, where once a quarter of a century ago—Bellini and Rossini reigned. We have left our fancy for coarse chrome lithographs. And we are building permanent arches. The production of good plays will lead, ere long, to the popularity of good plays. Then

STYLISH GARB FOR MEN

Fancies in Gloves for Morning, Afternoon and Evening Wear.

WHITE FRONTS FOR SWELL OCCASIONS

Decline and Fall of the Dinner Coat—Cut of Fashionable Trousers—Notes on Vests, Neckties and Shirt Studs.

NEW YORK, Nov. 16.—There has been no article of masculine apparel more thoroughly abused than the little hob-nailed dinner jacket, known in England as the Cowes coat and on this side as the Tuxedo. For a number of years now men have been forcing the comfort of the Tuxedo as far as they dared, appearing at the theater, in hotel dining rooms and even at small dinners in the less garish, which is nothing more nor less in reality than a smoking jacket, and introduced for use only on the most informal and Bohemian occasions. This winter a stand has been taken against any further excursions of the dinner jacket into the realm of smart society and the man who wears one when he dines in public with women or when he dines at home with any save his immediate family is well out of line with the present rules of good dressing. At a music hall, in the company of men alone, or at the club, a dinner jacket is appropriate, elsewhere its appearance proves its wearer is either indifferent or ignorant of the customs of his sex.

From London have lately come a fresh supply of white evening waistcoats, ornamented with gilt buttons, and already a few of the early adopters of the new style, in the form of a pair of one-button gloves, having the backs of heavy undressed brown or gray castor leather, the fingers showing large gussets at the base of every finger and the palm ridged to give an effective grip on reins or levers.

During the coming season white waistcoats will be worn almost exclusively at balls and at the opera and no man who knows anything of the taste that now prevails over his wardrobe will dare wear a suit of the new immaculate shirt front. The perfect expression of current fashion, as well as good judgment, is a pair of medium white pearls sewed into the linen. A smart man or two last year tried to introduce colored pearls, but the majority decided the suggestion unwelcome and a couple of handsome pearls so fixed to the gold studs as no setting shall be visible is the acme of elegance.

As good pearls cost more than the average man is willing to invest in his evening toilet, a concession to economy is still made with smaller pearls, though there is every argument in favor of the jewelers can and do sell imitation pearl studs that defy criticism and that are within the reach of any man's purse.

Relating to Trousers. The outside seams of evening trousers have been undergoing an amount of manipulation that has left a good many honest souls wondering what the outcome would be. The whole matter has resolved itself into the conclusion that if you wish to affect the purely American taste in tailors, you will appear in the clean lines of a close-fitting garment in what every expert and disinterested tailor earnestly recommends. To the knee the line of the garment slopes tapering and below this point there is an undeniable outward spring for though the perfect trousers leg is cut in the form of a curve like a faultlessly proportioned Greek column, it should appear absolutely straight.

It is not yet too early to make conclusive observations concerning neckties and gloves in theaters and restaurants, with important exceptions, dull black silk neckties, instead of satin, with evening dress when the waistcoat is of black goods matching the coat and trousers.

Gloves for All Seasons. In the evening, the opera, the theater party and the box, all balls, night weddings and exceedingly large dinners call on the glove of ceremony, namely, the ivory white glove or dressed kid. It is a glove stiffened with white silk and fastened with two large white buttons. American men, hitherto rather oblivious of the law regulating the wearing of gloves, are yielding more and more to the grip of the close-fitting white kid, and the man in the theater or opera box, or even in the opera orchestra, next to the gloves in place through the evening. This is heroic, because white gloves are uncomfortable and costly, and so great is the horror with the fashionable youth of appearing in an evening glove from which the first freshness has been brushed that he carries several pairs with him to balls and changes as often as three times in the course of a busy evening.

For less formal evening functions than those enumerated above, pearl gray goes with white pearl buttons, and much worn, while for afternoon weddings, calls, receptions, etc., gray and buff-colored suede, or undressed kids, are imperative. Two large pearl buttons at either wrist serve as a fastener for these, and men who lay great stress on detail denounce as "intensely vulgar" any patent clasps on the afternoon hand coverings. It is quite another matter

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concerning the morning glove. One large brass snap-shoulder holds this firm, and extremely heavy dogskin of a tan, brown or red brown color, showing rather massive seams, is the choicest article. This glove serves for riding, but the automobilist or the man who handles the ribbons in the park, pulls on a pair of one-button gloves, having the backs of heavy undressed brown or gray castor leather, the fingers showing large gussets at the base of every finger and the palm ridged to give an effective grip on reins or levers.

JOYFUL SURPRISE. Sight Given to a Woman Who Was Born Blind. A few days ago, relates the Portland (Me.) Express, Miss Alberta McKinnie looked out of the windows of the "suggestion room" at the Eye and Ear Infirmary and burst into tears. Other patients have looked from the windows of the infirmary and shed tears caused by suffering. But Miss McKinnie wept for pure joy, and she prayed God and Dr. Holt alternately. Small wonder that she did, for upon her has been wrought a truly modern miracle. Blind since birth, the achievements of modern science have given the sight that for twenty-nine years have been denied her.

Miss McKinnie belongs in Rockland, and she was born blind. Over each eye a congenital cataract obstructed the vision. She lived with relatives who clothed and fed her. One day a stranger saw Miss McKinnie and looked at her eyes. He told her that he believed if she would go to the Eye and Ear Infirmary an operation might be performed that would enable her to see. The neighbors scoffed. It was ridiculous. But hope found judgment in Miss McKinnie's breast and her one thought was to come to Portland. Rev. Mr. Woodman of Rockland interested himself in her, and she was sent here for treatment.

It was a delicate and peculiar operation. Dr. Holt performed upon Miss McKinnie. When he removed the two congenital cataracts, it is an operation that is usually unsatisfactory. A white substance which was about the color of milk and the consistency of butter was spread over each pupil. It could not be removed by cutting away like a hard substance. Instead it had to be stirred up, so to speak, and then the doctor trusted, in a great measure, to absorption to remove it.

For fourteen weeks the patient has been at the infirmary. The operation has been performed by easy stages for the purpose of watching and studying each change. Little by little the milky cataract disappeared, until now but a small white speck remains on each eye, and it is thought that these will disappear in time. In all probability another slight operation will be performed to correct a slight crossed effect that appeared in the restored organs.

When the final operation was performed the eyes were bandaged and carefully kept from the light for several days. When they were strong enough to be fitted with glasses it was a difficult task to find just the kind that she needed, but it was finally accomplished. Dr. Little placed them on Miss McKinnie and led her to the window for the first time.

It was almost like being born into a new world for Miss McKinnie. Of course a good many things she had a general idea of through hearing people talk about them. Directly opposite the infirmary a man was walking about on the flat roof of a house. It was the first object her eyes rested upon. "What is it?" asked Dr. Little. "It must be a man," she answered. So on, one by one, different objects were pointed out and she was asked to tell what they were. A man with a pair went by. She said she thought that must be a pair because she had felt of one while she was blind. Just then a dog went by in the street. She stared in astonishment, and then cried out: "Oh, that's a dog! I never imagined it looked like that." Trees were a mystery to her. Their spreading limbs and autumn-tinted foliage held her spellbound. She had never seen colors before. Electric cars were a wonderful thing, as was the electric light. She could not understand the power that was back of them.

When asked what her feelings were when she first found out that she could see, she replied: "Well, I don't know as I can tell you. My eyes seemed to be swimming in water and I thought I was looking at a lake. This mist slowly cleared away, and then I saw the face of Dr. Holt. Oh, it was the first face I had ever seen, and he is the

best man in the world! I shall bless him until my dying day.

When asked if she had been out, she said: "Oh, yes, several times. I can't describe to you my sensations. I have seen so much that is beautiful and I have so much more to see. I am learning to read now, and have got so I can pick quite a good deal out of a newspaper. I have read some by means of the raised letters provided for the blind folks, so it hasn't been so hard to learn the letters in print. If I could stay here forever I would be perfectly happy."

While similar operations have been performed, it is seldom that they result so successfully as this one. To give an idea of just what her sight now is, it may be said that ten-tenths represent the normal or perfect vision. Miss McKinnie can see four-tenths. With the glasses that have been fitted to her eyes she will be able to see better than many people who have a full vision, but who have such affections as nearsightedness, etc. She will be able to read, and even now she says she can almost thread a needle. Her eyes are now to her, so to speak, and as soon as she gets used to them she will use them much better. One peculiar thing that can be noticed about Miss McKinnie is the change of the expression of her face. It is well known that blind people have expressions faces as a rule, particularly those blind from birth. It was so in Miss McKinnie's case. Why should it be otherwise? What could she know of the beauties or humors that produce the various expressions in the faces of those who can see? She did not know what it was to laugh, but she does now, and so, little by little, each new thing that she sees produces some new emotion that causes the hitherto impassive countenance to light up with all the emotions of other mortals.

J. D. Bridges, editor "Democrat," Lancaster, N. H., says: "One Minute Cough Cure is the best remedy for croup I ever used." Immediately relieves and cures coughs, colds, croup, asthma, pneumonia, bronchitis, grippe and all throat and lung troubles. It prevents consumption.

Issue Negro Kills His Father. LOUISVILLE, Ky., Nov. 21.—Special Agent from Owensboro, Ky., says: "Chas. Barnett, a negro having lunatic, today cut off his father's head with a hatchet. The murdered man was 75 years of age. Barnett was arrested."

Smuggled Gems May Be Imitations. NEW YORK, Nov. 21.—In order to settle the question as to the genuineness of the great quantity of pearls found in the bag-



MISS MINNIE MADDERN FISKE AS "BECKY SHARP."

Yet, by comparison with what was in a near past, even as an art the drama has made wondrous strides of late in these United States, for need one be a madman or a visionary or a fool or an advance agent to venture the assertion that within a short time, possibly to be measured by months, possibly by years, our stage will have advanced so far (as to the plays if not the players) that it will legitimately be able to look down on the sadder stage of England.

The art of a country, and the progress of its art, is not to be gauged only by the reverence or irreverence with which it treats past masterworks.

Judged by that test, indeed, we might be found wanting, seeing that despite the phenomenal and still inexplicable success of a "Romeo and Juliet" revival last season, Shakespeare is not popular here.

But, happily, progress may be shown, even as retrogression is shown, by the attitude of the public towards living dramatists.

Whatever Mr. Scott may tell us to the contrary, in matters of art the majority is always wrong at first. Later, when a few have discovered and waged war for the new light in art, the minority will become the majority.

"Cyrano de Bergerac" was discovered, not as you imagine, by the mass, but by the chosen and privileged cohort known as the Tout-Paris. They—numbering some hundreds indeed—rose on the first night of "Cyrano" and acclaimed its author. And it was their example that we imitated, or if you prefer it, followed here (without, as I have sometimes suspected, wholly understanding it) when we applauded that fine play of Rostand.

Farce Comedy on the Wane. On the other hand if we find we are discarding and growing ashamed of the lower and more trivial forms of stagecraft, turning our backs, for example, on farce comedy and preferring comedy; or if we are learning to discriminate between the mock drama that depends for its property on clothes (it has been connected with such things myself) and the true drama, that depends on nature; or if, again, we are showing ever so small an appreciation of the imaginative and the poetic; be sure that we are progressing alike in taste, in wisdom and in civilization.

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