

ABOUT PLAYS PLAYERS AND PLAYHOUSES

Chauncey Olcott afforded the only rift in the "popular price" clouds that lowered over Omaha staged last week. He was warmly welcomed, but he didn't afford the only relief offered from the deadly monotony of the deluge of melodrama and cheap comedy that swept through the local theaters. Those who attended the Krug during the first half of the week were treated to a departure in the way of a rural play that is really worth while. Lawrence Russell has given us a set of characters and a series of plots drawn from life on the farm in which no exaggeration may be detected and in which no, false note is sounded. Each is set forth, clear cut as a cameo, and as close to life as a mirror's reflection. Not only does the story deviate in a considerable degree from the commonplace and accepted basis for a "rural" play, but its working out is along lines sufficiently novel and original to increase the interest felt in the main theme. Handicapped by the unattractive title of "The Pumpkin Husker" the piece did not draw so well as it deserved for many were deterred from attending by the apprehension, quite natural, that they were to be regaled with the banality and coarse vulgarity that passes for wit and humor in the average "rural" drama. Those who did go, however, to a honest sale, but who, without rant, without bluster, its speeches being easy and modest, its situations fresh and natural, and its whole construction excellent from both dramatic and literary standpoints. Before leaving, Omaha, Mr. Russell announced his intention of rechristening the play, and it is to be hoped he will succeed in giving it a more attractive title, for it is too good to be hidden under such a name.

With the opening of the Orpheum today the winter season in Omaha has fully begun. Business has been good at both the Boyd and the Krug, though neither house has as yet presented any really strong attraction. The day of the "time fillers" is nearly over, though, and the good things will soon be given their innings.

System is as essential to success in the show business as in any other; in the case of a large organization, such as those which present the musical comedies or other first-class attractions, system is so necessary that without it the company could not exist as an organization a fortnight. Some of the features of the management of one of these big traveling companies have been touched on, but mainly in a general way, and little of the detail is known about them outside of the circle of those actively engaged in the business. It may be questioned if many of the members of one of the companies is in any degree familiar with the operation of the machinery of which he or she is a part, save where it touches them. One of the most interesting points in the management of a large show company is the wardrobe, which has to do with its wardrobe. In the modern production no pains or expense is spared to make everything look real. The time when the sham in material things could be made to "go" on the stage has vanished before the penetrating rays of electric and calcium lights, and under the glare that is nowadays turned onto a stage "picture" the jockey who undertakes to strut in peacock's feathers is quickly exposed. And the "people down in front" have come to be educated to point where they expect nothing but the best of the real article and the manager who succeeds must furnish it in large production. Naturally, this has added a big item to the bill of expense for equipping and maintaining a company, but the manager for public support is so keen that the manager looks carefully to containing his company that he does to any other single point. In the matter of caring for these costumes, which are so expensive and often so fragile, much ingenuity and many labor-saving as well as cloth and fabric-saving devices have been adopted, and the handling of these is one of the principal factors in the routine of company life behind the scenes.

Principals in the cast take care of their own costumes, that is, they go to their dressers and other assistants who see that the delicate and costly fabrics are carefully packed and unpacked, and are given only the tenderest treatment while not in actual use on the stage. But the "chorus," which includes all that part of the company, male and female, that is required to look in their dressing rooms at the theater, is frequently more elegantly dressed in more costly materials than fall to the use of the principals, and its members have no maids or valets on whom they can depend in the hurry and anxiety of the thousands of dollars' worth of dresses and furnishings that go to make up the equipment of a modern chorus.

Mrs. Katherine Keele is a modest little black-eyed woman with a soft voice and a quiet manner that is a welcome business method and experience. She is mistress of wardrobe for "The Prince of Pilsen" company, and as such has as much to do, probably, as any other woman connected with any show on the road. One morning during the time she was in charge of the wardrobe for the "Princess" company was in Omaha she was found under the stage at the Boyd, busily plying a sewing machine, while she altered a pair of jockey trousers so they would fit a new girl. Then she had to fix over an "Archie" dress for another girl, and finally she had to reconstruct a "city" dress, this time a considerable feat, for the girl that had worn it rejoined in a thirty-two-inch bust and the one who was falling heir to it measured forty-two around what is called the chest in men's sizes. For girls come and girls go in comic opera companies the same as elsewhere, and the different costumes are known by the names of the scenes in which they are worn.

"Watching after the wardrobe keeps me pretty busy," she said, talking as she worked, "but the system for handling the garments is so nearly perfect that it reduces the work to a minimum. But everybody must work together, or the system

will go wrong. To begin with, I am held responsible by the management for the care and condition of each garment, and in turn, I hold each of the chorus girls and men for the care and condition of the costumes they use. It is simple enough, and only suffers through the carelessness of some of the individuals, but we have a way of making the careless individual settle for any damage or neglect of the costly articles handed out, and so the costumes are finally pretty well looked after. When the company is finally made up and the day for dress rehearsal comes, each individual is furnished with a complete outfit of all that will be worn by him or her during the production. This is handed out in a bundle bag, and from that time on each must look after that bag and its contents during the time of the run. This bag is so made as to exactly hold the costumes for each with the exception of the hats and shoes. For these separate bags are given out. Each bag is marked with the name of the individual to whom it is issued, and is thus easily identified. When the show moves each is returned to me, carefully folded, showing the name on the outside. I am allowed one hour from the time the curtain goes down on the show to the time the trunks are ready for the train. So far this season I have found forty minutes long enough. When we come to the next stand the girls are notified to be at the theater at a certain hour, when the bags are again handed out, giving them ample time to prepare for dressing for the opening chorus. Hats and shoes are taken care of in the same way. If a girl comes careless and leaves any part of her costume outside of her bag she is fined. The men are treated the same way. All the costumes have proper hangers, so that coats, jackets, skirts, and the like are not allowed to get out of shape for want of correct treatment. Very few of the girls are careless, although a careless girl is not made much the better by being fined. The fines range up to a dollar. One of the men was fined a dollar this morning for leaving a pair of trousers on a settee in the dressing room.

Mrs. Keele stopped her machine long enough to go with a tall girl who had just joined the company, to see if the rebuilt brooches would fit. On her return she took time to show the special trunks in which the costumes are packed, explaining the conveniences, and how it is possible to stow away the whole lot and get every trunk locked and strapped in forty minutes. The bags the girls use are made of stout canvas, each furnished with loops at the mouth for hanging to the wall, and each so made as to contain the several costumes intended, with their hangers. Other features of her work were explained, such as the constant vigilance required to keep everything in perfect condition, the mending and the like. From the time the girls dress until the curtain goes down there is a constant demand for the services of a seamstress, for not a loose button or a strained seam or anything of that sort is to be trusted to hold during an act. From time to time costumes are thoroughly gone over to see that each is in perfect condition. Dresses last fairly well, for they can be better taken care of, but the gloves and hats and stockings and ties—well, they don't last so long. Everything bought is of the best; experience has proven that it doesn't pay to buy cheap stuff. About once in six weeks all the stockings have to be replaced, and ribbons, and gloves and the like get quite so often, although Mrs. Keele cited the instance of the long white gauze gloves worn by the Heidelberg students here. They had been bought in Chicago but ten days before, yet an entirely new set was to be given out at Denver because the ones in use had not proven serviceable. Stockings are bought in sets and must be of the shades to match the costumes, and as all are silk, they become quite an item in the expense bill, for the delicate colors come high in price at least. These are given out to the girls with the understanding that they must be made to last a certain length of time. If one of the girls wears hers out too soon, she is charged with a portion of the cost of a new pair, usually half. So it is all along the list, and the rules that apply to the girls are made for the men also. It isn't that the management is parsimonious, but gloves at \$2.50 a pair and silk stockings at top price, and lace at \$1.75 to \$2.00 a yard, and ribbons from 85 cents a yard up, and hats with feathers at milliner's prices, and "that sort of thing," as Artie says, are not intended for playthings, and if the young persons to whom they are entrusted for show purposes are given a practical notion of the expense attached to the costume of a company, they are more apt to aid a little in keeping down that expense by being careful. Mr. Savage is a most liberal provider, never stinting any of his productions in costumes or accessories. He maintains large warehouses in both Boston and Chicago, wherein are stored the goods that are retired for the time from active service. He hasn't just yet determined what to do with them, but he is prepared to equip a number of musical comedy companies at short notice if he sees fit.

Coming Events. At the Boyd this week the offerings will include two melodramas and one musical comedy, occupying six nights and three matinees. On Sunday matinee and evening comes "The Village Parson" on Monday "The Deserted Bride" begins an engagement of three nights and a matinee, and on Friday evening "The Storks" will be here for two nights and a matinee. "The Village Parson" is a play of high moral character and sterling worth. Much one much praise has been bestowed by press and public upon the piece wherever presented. The scenery is new and beautiful, with complete settings for each act, and the cast is a strong one in every detail. "A Deserted Bride" has made an unequalled hit in other cities. It was written by Fitzgerald Murphy, who has written several very successful plays. The leading role is assumed by Rosabel Morrison, well remembered for her clever work in "Past and Present" and "Carmen," and she is supported by a clever company of players. The play is an American comedy drama with touches of pathos and a lot of comedy. Tears alter-

ed with smiles and the sensational incidents and scenes follow each other in such rapid succession that a person has no time to get weary. "The Storks" glories in the possession of bright wit, popular music, pretty scenic displays, beautiful costumes and handsome and youthful chorus girls. Its wit, beauty and song is presented in such succession that the auditor at times is fascinated and the average theater goer will exclaim "The Storks" many times and enjoys it as much each succeeding time as on his initial visit. "The Princess Chic" will be the attraction at the Krug theater for four days, opening this afternoon. It will be its first appearance in Omaha, and a general pretentiousness, but the possible inference that the cast and production has suffered by this change of policy should be immediately dispelled. The production this year surpasses all previous ones in the matter of cast, scenic equipment and general pretentiousness. The prima donna is Vera Michelena, daughter of Fernando Michelena, who was leading tenor for the Emma Abbott Opera company for many years. She joined "The Princess Chic" to play a minor part last fall, but she never sang it for the reason that the first rehearsal the company had, her remarkable talent, voice and histrionic ability were immediately demonstrated and she was given an important part in the cast. In a short time Manager Slocum arranged for her to assume the title role, which she sang in Omaha last season, and her success was immediate and pronounced. "The Princess Chic" music is tuneful, catching and pretty, affording an opportunity for some excellent ensemble numbers, as well as those given to principals. The supporting company is composed of many well known people, such as Forest Huff, Thomas C. Leary, Beatrice Bronte, Effreda Bussing, George Thomas, Fred Baily and N. E. Daigault. The chorus consists of a bevy of pretty girls, who are also excellent singers. The production is so well planned, giving a rich new frame to an old picture. The engagement is but for four days, with the usual matinee on Wednesday.

"The Scout's Revenge," which will appear at the Krug theater the last half of the week, beginning Thursday night, is a romance of Texas life. The hero, Buck Hanshawe, is a young government scout and Olive Benton, the heroine, is a southern girl. They fall in love, Olive's father favors the suit of Wilfred Castro, a blackguard, in reality head of a band of robbers, and in the end Buck succeeds in landing them in state's prison, and Castro is killed. The comedy characters are not dragged in without rhyme or reason, but each and every one has direct bearing on the play itself. With matinee and evening performances today the Orpheum will launch the sixth season of high-class vaudeville in Omaha. It offers a bill of eight acts, varied and garnished with some novelty, for half the performers have never played here, while the remaining promise good acts. The announcement of the opening has brought about an abnormally large advance sale of tickets for the week. The play-house itself having been retouched and renovated, shows the efforts of the management in added comfort and elegance. One of the features of the bill is a class depended upon, in my favor will be the Kaufman troupe of fancy and trick bicyclists. At their last appearance here there were six of them and now there are seven. Their "stunt" will include a number of new tricks and daring feats. James J. Morton will be among those to come for the first time. He will contribute a monologue and other than to say it will be aimed at the ribald description is impossible as he differs much from his guild, it being said his work is largely of the impromptu kind and fitted to occasion. Heedy and Mealey played "the most peculiar comedy before the public," are also initial bidders here. Their "turn" consists of acrobatics intermixed with fun-making. Rosie Rendle, the European eccentric transformation dancer, with a pretty costume for every change of step, will be the chief attraction. Tom Brown will give imitations of a variety of boats, birds and characteristics and give one of those exhibitions of whistling that have established him in vaudeville. Lavender and Tomson, sketch artists, return with an entirely new set of features. They will be offered in the Golden Gate Quartette and Miss Fannie Winford. Some timely motion pictures will be shown by the kinodrome. As heretofore, the doors will be opened at 1:30 for the matinees and 7:30 at evening performances. The dates of performances and prices remain as on former seasons.

Klaw & Erlanger's magnificent production of "Ben Hur" will occupy the stage of the Boyd theater for the entire week of September 28, and the week of Wednesday and Saturday. Coming so close on its great engagement of last season it will no doubt be welcomed by the thousand who were unable to secure seats on that occasion. The advance sale commences on Thursday morning, September 21. There are so many scenes of absorbing interest in this great play that it is almost impossible to select those which are by almost universal consent called the most prominent. From the theatrical point of view the chariot race is unquestionably the greatest incident in the play, but the scene of the healing of the lepers on Mount Zion with its deeply impressive suggestion of the almost immediate presence of the Nazarine, arouses the most tender interest.

Gossip from Stagedland. Blanche Ring made a hit in her new musical comedy, "The Jersey Lily," by Hobart and DeKoven. Incidentally, she is said to be the whole show; without her "The Jersey Lily" becomes a withered flower. "Drink," a play made by Charles Reade from Zola's novel, was given its first performance at the Academy of Music in New York Monday evening. Charles Warner and his company were the starring role and was very warmly welcomed. James K. Hackett opened the new World and Fifth Street theaters Monday night in "John Ermine of the Yellowstone," a drama based on the Remington novel. The star and the company are given credit for a smooth performance, but the play is pronounced inferior. Mrs. Plake's appearance at the Manhattan theater, New York, on Monday evening in "Mary of Magdala" was notable for the warmth of her reception and for the announcement that William Winter, the critic of the Tribune, the author of the best based on the Bible drama, "The King," the musical comedy which Dick Ferris has equipped for the road this season. Winter's play is the star of the American composers, one or two living compositions and several dead ones. And at that the piece bids fair to be a success. On Monday evening the Frohman production of "Clytemnestra" was made in New York with Tyrone Power in the title role, despite the threat of Harrison Gray Peck who proceeded against Mr. Power for breach of contract in leaving the Mrs. Plake company. He played "Judas" in "Mary of Magdala" last season. Rosabel Morrison has the part of Penelope in "Ulysses." Her matronly figure and her face look much better than that of Penelope.

Corinne Paulson, piano studio, 45 McCague. Miss Boutler, piano, McCague building. Miss Blanche Sorenson, voice, 556 Farnam block.

Chorus. Ye councilmen! Ye councilmen! Fill up those holes we pray, With asphalt or with concrete. Fill up those holes today. And then methought the scene was changed. New earth there seemed to be, On some warm, sunny day. The people drove not on the streets, No living mortal could. Chorus, etc., etc. I think that that is about all of the song that it is safe to print today. The teachers are now all back at work and Omaha is as busy musically as ever, and just as badly in need of a studio building and recital hall. This project should be talked up continually by the musical people, not with any intention of hope of getting the people of Omaha to build such a place for art's sake, but for the simply cold business fact that here is a crying need for such a place. Perhaps the beautiful new market-house, which we read so much about, could be moved to a better location and used. Seriously, there is a good investment open there. The real estate exchange and other associations are continually talking about good investments here. Let them look up this idea and see whether a good, three-story building, suitable for studio, with a hall for concerts and a small hall for informal receptions, would not pay. I say it would. I know it would. All one needs to do is to investigate. Find out how many teachers would be willing to take studios. Ascertain from say fifteen of our best known studio-renting teachers how much rent they have actually paid and can show receipt for in the last five years, and it would astonish you.

Miss Marie Swanson, the well known harpist and pianist, has returned from Chicago and has resumed teaching. Mrs. Muensterfer has begun her season's work with encouraging prospects. Otto Beindorff has also opened a piano studio in town. He has just returned from a five-year course at the Royal conservatory at Leipzig. Mr. Heath, who had a studio at Omaha last season, has gone to Chicago where he has secured a free scholarship in one of the musical conservatories there. Mr. Lee G. Kratz has once more returned to the downtown churches, having been engaged at the First Presbyterian church as choir-master for the coming year. THOMAS J. KELLY.

AMUSEMENTS. NIGHTS—15c 25c, 50c and 75c. KRUG THEATER. MATINEES—Best Seats 25c 1st 25c 2nd. Starting Sunday Matinee, September 20th. 4 NIGHTS AND SUNDAY AND WEDNESDAY MATINEES. John P. Slocum Presents

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ness fact that here is a crying need for such a place. Perhaps the beautiful new market-house, which we read so much about, could be moved to a better location and used. Seriously, there is a good investment open there. The real estate exchange and other associations are continually talking about good investments here. Let them look up this idea and see whether a good, three-story building, suitable for studio, with a hall for concerts and a small hall for informal receptions, would not pay. I say it would. I know it would. All one needs to do is to investigate. Find out how many teachers would be willing to take studios. Ascertain from say fifteen of our best known studio-renting teachers how much rent they have actually paid and can show receipt for in the last five years, and it would astonish you. Miss Marie Swanson, the well known harpist and pianist, has returned from Chicago and has resumed teaching. Mrs. Muensterfer has begun her season's work with encouraging prospects. Otto Beindorff has also opened a piano studio in town. He has just returned from a five-year course at the Royal conservatory at Leipzig. Mr. Heath, who had a studio at Omaha last season, has gone to Chicago where he has secured a free scholarship in one of the musical conservatories there. Mr. Lee G. Kratz has once more returned to the downtown churches, having been engaged at the First Presbyterian church as choir-master for the coming year. THOMAS J. KELLY.

AMUSEMENTS. BOYD'S... Woodward & Burgess, Managers. TODAY AT 2:30 TONIGHT AT 8:15 THE VILLAGE PARSON. MATINEE—25c and 50c. NIGHT—15c 25c 50c 75c. MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY. Matinee Wednesday.

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