Gossip of Plays and Players

MANAGERIAL announcements are not as a rule safe guides for plans for the winter season at the theaters. It has come to be the custom with the managers to make a lot of promises along about this time every year, and take chances on filling them later in the season. Perusal of the various interviews, typewritten circulars and other sources of publicity affected by the managers indicates that the coming season will not be particularly notable for novelty, but will have a good deal of interest just the same. Omaha is to be favored, early and late, with several things that were missed last season, but which will be as welcome now as they would have been, probably, when they were fresher. In this regard Omaha is little if any different from a number of other western cities. The unusual draft made by New York last year on the few ventures that were really entitled to be called successes made it a dreary, weary time for the outlying "provinces." As one after another the attractions went on the rocks on Broadway, the big shows that had gone on the road were called in, and this left the western end of the circuit all but dry until the east was ready to call it off for the season. The routing of the companies last season, too, was responsible for a great deal of confusion that will not likely be experienced again this year. With the Shubert-Fiske-Belasco combination to spur it on to better endeavors, it is quite likely the "syndicate" will pay a little more attention to where it is sending companies on the road, and thus a more consecutive season will be secured for the attractions. In fact, a number of weaknesses that were very apparent last year will probably be corrected, and the general prospect for a prosperous and brilliant season at the western theaters may be looked for. The only thing that may mar this is the possibility of the Klaw & Erlanger syndicate massing its attractions in the east, where the rival syndicate has most of its theaters, for the purpose of "competition."

Dates for the opening in Omaha are decided on for two theaters and tentatively fixed for two others. The Krug will begin its winter activity on Sunday, August 13, with Lincoln J. Carter's well known "Too Proud to Beg." The Boyd will open on August 21, with May Irwin in "Mrs. Black is Back." The Orpheum will open on September 3 or 10, and the Burwood is to be opened on one or the other of those dates. Unless all plans miscarry, six weeks from now will find four theaters in full activity in Omaha.

When the curtain goes down at the Boyd theater tonight Omaha will have said farewell to the Ferris Summer Stock company. Not a little genuine regret will mark this occasion, for the Ferris organization has come to be more or less of a local institution. For four summers an organization under this name has held forth at the Boyd theater, affording wholesome and enjoyable amusement for the people at a reasonable charge. Nothing startling in the way of dramatic production has been undertaken at any time, but the plays offered have been clean, interesting and well put on. Competent actors have been engaged each season, and the performances have been dominated by intelligence and taste, so that the regular patrons of the company have been furnished dramatic entertainment of a really high order at a very moderate cost. Over and above all things, the presence of the summer stock company at the theater has afforded a place to go in the summer. Not that Omaha is devoid of places where an hour of leisure may be spent during the summer season, but this has merely widened the opportunity for selection by one more. That this has been appreciated may rest on the result as measured by the patronage. Only during the hottest of weather has the attendance fallen off during any of the seasons, and while the nights were at all cool and comfortable, as they have been this summer, the theater has been well filled at each performance, and when a popular play was being presented it has frequently been uncomfortably packed. This is the best indication that the people appreciated the presence here of the Ferris Stock company. For the last two seasons it has been Ferris in name only, Dick Ferris, the originator and owner of the company, having been here but a short time during the seasons. This has not detracted in any way from the efficiency of the organization, nor has it militated against the success of the undertaking.

Some of the members of the company have come back to Omaha season after season, until they have acquired something very like a "home" in Omaha. Among these may be mentioned Miss Marie Pavey, who has been the leading woman of the organization for the last three seasons, and Miss Hattie Carmontelle, who has played "characters" during the same time. Miss Carmontelle is an experienced actor, with a name already established before coming to Omaha. She has shown herself possessed of the faculty of assuming almost any role and giving it intelligent life. Her work has always been of the conscientious, painstaking sort, and she has been an immense favorite with Omaha audiences. She will be followed by the good wishes of a host of warm personal friends, who esteem her as much for her warm-hearted womanly nature as for her histrionic ability. Miss Pavey had had some stage experience before coming to Omaha, but, a mere girl, she only promised that real ability as an actress into which she is now coming. Three years of constant work in stock during the summer and on the road during the winter has done a remarkable deal in broadening and maturing her. She can scarcely be said to possess genius, but she does have talent, and of a rare order. To this she adds a naturally studious bent, and that excellent quality of mind that does not permit her to be satisfied with present achievement, but continually spurs her on to other endeavors. She has temperament and intelligence, a good stage presence, a voice of purity, strength and sweetness, and a nature that is not spoiled by what success she has attained. She knows that victory on the stage comes only after hard work, and she has the courage to work hard. If these qualifications mean anything at all, they mean that Miss Pavey will yet be heard from on the stage. She is surely destined for better things than have yet fallen to her lot, and when she does come into her greater success, no where will she be more sincerely congratulated than in Omaha.

The passing of the Ferris Stock company will not leave Omaha without this excellent form of theatrical undertaking. It simply makes way for the return of the Woodward Stock company, under the direction of Woodward & Burgess, who will install a permanent organization at the new Burwood theater and who expect to open that house very early in September, offering Bronson Howard's popular play, "Shenandoah," for the first week. A portion of the new company has already been selected. Miss Eva Lang, a young actress of demonstrated ability, who has already been seen in Omaha, will be the leading woman. Harry McKee, who has been here with the Ferris company, will be the comedian of the new organization. Cecil Owen, well remembered here as a clever and capable actor and a most accomplished gentleman, will be the "heavy," while his wife, Miss Dolly Davis on the stage, will be the ingenue of the company. Mr. Todd of the present Ferris company will remain with the new company, and very likely Mr. Beebe and Miss Curry will also. Harry Long will have the stage direction at the Burwood, and his wife, Mary Hill, will be in the company for "utility." The leading man has not yet been signed, but negotiations are under way for a well known eastern actor, who has had much experience in stock companies and who is known as a fine actor.

Miss Pavey expects to join forces in England with Bert Coot at once in a vaudeville sketch. She will leave Omaha early this week, and will very likely go to London direct. After a short stay in England she and Mr. Coot will return to America, where they are booked over the Keith circuit. Miss Carmontelle will accompany Miss Pavey. Miss Minnie Church will go to New York, where she expects to join one of the Shubert companies for a winter's tour. Mr. Bostwick will go to Chicago for a short rest. He will be with Robert Mantell or Walker Whiteside during the winter season. Mr. Barbour will probably go to St. Joseph for a few weeks. Beyond this he has no plans for the immediate future. Mr. Blaylock will go at once to his home in Des Moines, where he intends to rest for a while. Mrs. Blaylock is in poor health and during her convalescence they have no plans other than to stay at home.

Some Actor Stories.

Announcement that Nat C. Goodwin has extended his real estate interests in San Francisco will not cause surprise among his friends. They have known of his fondness for 'Frisco, and they have known, too, that the comedian, though of convivial tastes, has never lost sight of the main chance or forgotten the sayings of Poor Richard which he learned at his mother's knee.

Mr. Goodwin is an actor of exceptional gifts. John E. Dodson thinks and asserts that the American stage has no comedian who can equal him and the British none who can excel him. But he is also a good man of business, and this is just what some other excellent comedians do not try or wish to be.

Behind that saturnine humor, beneath the show of contempt he affects when he talks of materialism in art, commercialism in the theater and "the despicable spirit of trade that spoils acting nowadays," Mr. Goodwin conceals love for a bargain, passion for an investment, sneaking sympathy with speculation, and a minimum of admiration for successful "graft." Under such conditions why shouldn't a man turn to San Francisco?

One habit, ruinous to thrift, Mr. Goodwin avoids before all others. He does not borrow or lend. Early in life a brother actor decoyed a five-dollar note from his wallet, and when, several months later, the creditor ventured to mention the matter to the debtor with all deference to the latter's sensibilities, he was met with this reply:

"Nat, my dear boy, I'm surprised, I may say I'm astounded, that you refer to an incident of such a personal nature. Why, don't you know that when a man accommodates a friend in the way you accommodated me, he never expects to get the money back? It is a gift, my boy, a gift and always considered a gift. Please don't speak of it again. I would not wish anything to mar our friendship."

There have been moments when Mr. Goodwin has been extravagant of speech, but the best authorities acquit him of being extravagant with his bank account. There is nothing "Scotty" about him. Few are better posted than he concerning the ways and means of saving an honest dollar on Manhattan island. If there be a French table d'hote whose cuisine he has not sampled, it must be one opened to the public since he last left town.

"No, gentlemen," he will say, when an attractive device is laid before him for reducing his roll, "I did play Bottom once, but please do not think me an ass all day."

There is a home behind the scenes in which the actress spends much of her professional life—the dressing room, her "professional home," it might be called. Here she changes her personality so far as outward appearance is concerned, to suit the character she is to interpret. Its door closes upon her, opens to let out some one else. Julia Marlowe goes in, out comes Juliet! Disappears Mrs. Leslie Carter, reappears Adrea! Flits in Maude Adams, flits out Lady Babbie. The wizard has waved his wand, the rouge tipped hare's foot, and presto, change! 'Tis all part of the great mystery of "behind the scenes," between which and the spectator the footlights form a barrier of fire. It would scorch him if he dared attempt to break through. Only the "lines," the personal magnetism of the actress, and the "atmosphere" of the play (if it is lucky enough to have "atmosphere") can cross it, and always from one direction only, from stage to audience.

Probably no actress on the American stage is as well aware of the changes that have taken place in dressing rooms as Mrs. W. G. Jones, the Nanny of "The Little Minister," the Nurse of "Romeo and Juliet," and probably the most legitimate successor of the late Mrs. Gilbert as the "Grand Old Woman of the Stage."

In 1837, before her marriage, she was a member of a stock company in Philadelphia, playing at one of the leading theaters there. The dressing rooms were small, stuffy affairs, without ventilation except over the transoms, the walls and floors bare. In those days the call boy did not go to the dressing rooms, knock on the door and call the actress by name when it was time for her to go on the stage, but every member of the company was known by a number, and he simply would sing out "Number ——!"

Mrs. Jones was married from the theater in which she was then playing, and after she left the company it was forty years before she returned to that house. When she went back, after that long lapse of time, she did not find the slightest improvement. Forty years had passed, yet the dressing rooms were still bare, without running water and without ventilation to the open air. Really, it is only during the last ten years that any genuine improvement has taken place in the dressing rooms throughout the country.

Now it has become worth while for an actress who is high enough up in the profession to play fairly long engagements to take hangings and ornaments along with her in order to give a homelike appearance to her dressing room. Some of the "old-timers," however, cannot be persuaded to do this, because there is a superstition among them that if you fit up your dressing room prettily you will not remain long enough to enjoy its home-like atmosphere—that the place in which you are playing will not be a success, and the engagment will be shortened.

Mrs. Fiske probably is the only player in this country who is fortunate enough to have a dressing room exclusively for her own use. At her New York theater, the Manhattan, the room, or rather rooms, reserved for her are never occupied by any one else. When she is away from town on tour the rooms are locked and remain unoccupied until her return.

The rooms combine the artistic and the practical. Besides their primary purposes, they serve also as an office, where Mrs. Fiske dictates her letters and transacts the round of business matters that comes before her. In addition, therefore, to the dressing table, mirrors, makeup conveniences and other appurtenances that are part of every dressing room, Mrs. Fiske has a desk, whose pigeonholes are filled with manuscripts and papers, a letter file and a desk telephone—all factors in the busy workday of a woman who is not only an actress, but also a stage manager and in direct personal charge of her productions.

Stageland Gossip.

"The Catch of the Season" has passed its 250th performance at the Vaudeville theater, London.

Messrs. Klaw and Erlanger have engaged Edgar Atchison Ely for the Drury Lane spectacle, "The White Cat."

James W. Herbert, jr., has been engaged for "The Belle of the West," and is to play the part of a Chinaman.

Miss Ivy Trautman, who played with E. H. Sothern in "If I Were King," has been engaged for "The College Widow."

William H. Crane has returned from abroad and will spend the remainder of the summer at his country place, near Cohasset, Me.

Sam Bernard, in "The Rollicking Girl," will play the hundredth performance of this merry musical comedy at the Herald Square theater, New York, on August 7.

Charles Dillingham has engaged a singing comedian from London named Leo Mars as a member of the cast supporting Fritzi Scheff in "Mlle. Modiste."

Lillian Russell had a fall lately from a horse, which resulted, it is said, in a broken rib. To add to her misfortune, on her way to consult her doctor her automobile broke down.

It is said that Burr McIntosh, who since his retirement from the stage has been very successful in photography, is going to the Philippines as official photographer for the Taft party.

Wilton Lackaye will this season travel 12,500 miles on his tour, which will be chiefly to the Pacific coast, beginning about the middle of August. He will be under the management of William A. Brady.

It is now said that before E. H. Sothern and Julia Marlowe return to the United States they will appear in London in one or two of their Shakespearean plays. If this plan is carried out they will be supported by an English company.

Mathilde Cottrelly has been engaged for Maxine Elliott's company in the Clyde Fitch comedy, "Her Great Match." Madame Cottrelly was formerly known as a favorite comic opera prima donna. Others engaged for the same company are Herbert Standing, Charles Cherry, Nellie Thorne and Felix Edwards.

Music and Musical Notes

JOSEF HOFMAN has been writing some good stuff for the Philadelphia Ledger, apropos the experiences of a virtuoso before different audiences, and also he touches upon the problem of program making as applied to the understanding of various communities. Part of what he says seems to fit our own case so well that I have put together the paragraphs which seem most to the point. Here they are:

The only criterion by which a pianist like myself can gauge the musical taste of a community is by the appreciation accorded him in the various cities he visits. But this is not such an uncertain thing to go by after all.

A virtuoso makes up his program in advance and usually makes it "to measure," to fit his audience, less severe for the smaller than the larger cities, taking it for granted that in the former musical culture is less highly developed. The artist should not be blamed for this. I for one am convinced that the educational value of a concert is utterly lost upon an audience if the program transcends its power of appreciation. While I never would stoop to play anything unworthy of an artist, I see, on the other hand, no reason why the simpler and perhaps more brilliant works of a master should not be played to an audience which cannot follow him in his loftier flights. Art must please. It must, of course, go much further; it must move, edify, uplift—but it must please first. Pleasure, as distinct from mere amusement, is the gate through which art has to pass in order to reach the finer sensibilities of the audience. Hence programs must, within reason, be "made to measure."

But in accepting the size of a city as a standard of its musical taste I have met with some wonderful experiences. Sometimes I have found small cities capable of appreciating musical works which would have tested the capacity of a metropolis. Cities I never had heard of before were extremely appreciative of high-class music, while some places with an established reputation as "musical towns" were sore disappointments. This was not the rule either way, but it occurred too often not to challenge attention. The reason is perhaps that a town with the reputation of being musical ceases to work on its own culture, while a town without such renown is ambitious to acquire a musical standing.

What I have said about the standard of musical appreciation in various cities is not mere talk; it is the result of my own personal experience. In some cities an artist faces audiences who are fully conversant with his career. There he does not feel as if he were playing "on approbation." The mysterious and yet undeniable current which connects the artist with his audience (critics included), he finds it ready and waiting for his touch when he enters the stage. There is no "warming up" needed; neither for the audience nor for him. He feels that the best he has to give will be understood. And then he gives—gladly, and gives generously, lavishly, like a prince.

The next night he plays elsewhere. The audience knows the artist's name from the advertisements, but his career, his personality, what he stands for in the musical world, are as a sealed book to his hearers. He appears, and feels the gaze of mere curiosity upon him, curiosity mingled with an almost disconcerting, critical, inquisitorial stare. Ah, where, then, is the prince of yesternight? If arrogant of disposition he scorns his audience and assumes that they are not "up" to him. But if well bred, he will look into himself for the reason of this drastic difference. In many instances he will be unjust to himself—but he feels like a pauper just the same.

The audience thus is a powerful factor in the artist's psychic relations, but it is by no means the only factor. There are many others. Foremost among them are the acoustic properties of the hall. If they are bad, the artist is mercilessly put upon the rack of torture. He gropes for a way to adjust his playing to the hall; he tries to decrease the volume of sound or to increase it, he experiments with the pedal; he resorts to this, that and the other mode of accommodating the touch—and he keeps on to the end of the program—and yet all in vain. A substantial toothache is far preferable to such an experience.

There are two distinct classes of musical people in Omaha—the ones who are really up to programs such as Ysaye and the Sauret Trio played last winter, (and who would like to have heard Bispham in one of his German lieder cycles rather than the pleasing recital which he gave), and the ones who love music, but cannot sit through a classical program without getting dreadfully tired. The way to build up a firm musical foundation on our city is to try as far as it is possible to cater to both classes; toll the 'popular ones' into a love for better compositions by giving them a few numbers they like on a program, and make the "serious ones" see a little through the eyes of those who have yet to grow to their musical stature. Last winter in Omaha was a phenomenal season musically. Enthusiasm should be beginning to simmer for next year's good things.

Sir Edward Elgar, while in New York, distinguishing himself by perpetrating the following interview. The worst of it is that upon sober reflection, it is perfectly true from the standpoint of aesthetics. Let us say it softly—he seems to have overlooked our latest tune of inspiration,—the one to which our soldiers in Cuba did such brave and wonderful things. Just at that period "A Hot Time" made its cyclonic appearance; our men marched and fought to its swinging strains. Sir Edward has yet to fight a battle (I believe); maybe he would change his mind about "Yankee Doodle" being "stark idiocy" if he had to face a thunderstorm of bullets. When President Roosevelt was given his banquet in the Alps at the St. Louis exposition, and the magnificent orchestra discoursed through the evening the numbers which brought the crowd to its feet cheering, were the good old patriotic tunes which stand for bravery and achievement. One can't read the Englishman's comment without feeling a little resentful:

"The English national anthem is the silliest thing imaginable; the words are stupid and some of the lines won't rhyme, and altogether the man who sings it and thinks of what he is saying can't respect himself. The music is good enough, because it was stolen from the Germans," said Sir Edward.

"Your national hymn is even worse than England's. You haven't got any regular, legitimate national song, but you have four wh'ch seem to rank about equal in popular estimation. There is 'Yankee Doodle,' which has words that are stark idiocy, while the music would set the teeth of a buzzsaw on edge. Then there is 'Hail, Columbia,' which is nearly as bad in every way as 'Yankee Doodle.' 'The Star Spangled Banner' is a song that begins so low and goes up so high that nobody can sing it, which is the only advantage it has. And there is 'America,' with words that run a little smoother than ours, but are every bit as silly. In fact, I don't know anything more exasperating than the first verse of 'America.' It is enough to turn a cat against milk.

"I suppose the reason for the badness of national hymns is that they have sort of grown up without any proper attention, being given them when they were young."

MARY LEARNED.

Notes and Personals.

The choir at Trinity cathedral is somewhat depleted during the summer vacation.

Mrs. W. W. Turner is taking Mrs. Urquhart's place at the First Church of Christ (Scientist) during the latter's vacation.

Miss Clara Eckstrom left last Tuesday for New York City. She opens next month as leading contralto in Savage's "Woodland."

Mrs. L. Crofoot, the very efficient secretary of the Tuesday Morning Musical club, starts for Hyannisport, on Cape Cod, Saturday with her family. Mrs. Crofoot has done some wonderful work the last season with Mr. Wilczek.

AMUSEMENTS. AMUSEMENTS. AMUSEMENTS. AMUSEMENTS.

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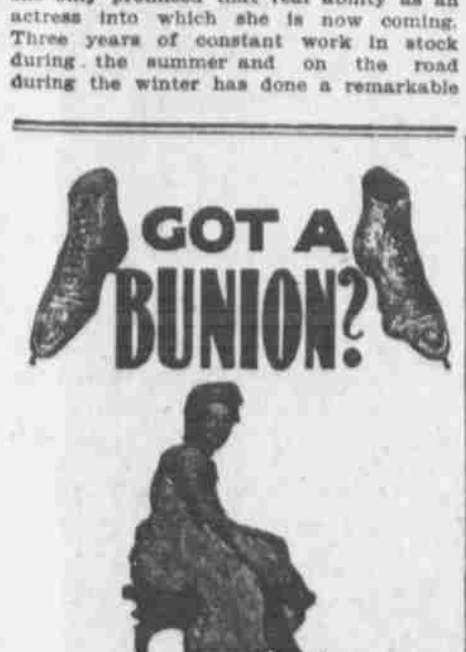

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