

# Gossip About Plays, Playwrights and Playhouses

OMAHA'S theatrical season is now fairly opened, or will be after today. The winter season at the Boyd opened most auspiciously on Monday evening, and the weather has brought to us some thing like the prosperity that has known since the beginning. The "Arizona" engagement was one of the most successful ever noted at the Hudson & Judah houses. This afternoon the Gaiety will swing into line, and next Saturday night the Burwood will go into commission, and the winter's whirl will then be under way. All over the country the theaters are opening to unprecedented patronage, and the men who have the management of the enterprises are greatly encouraged by the outlook. Locally the promise is excellent, for the attendance at the Boyd and the Krug during the week was most satisfactory, and the coming of the other houses means merely an addition to the opportunities for the public to obtain amusement. Going to the theater is a habit, and one that has been carefully cultivated in Omaha. It is doubtful if another city in the country has so many confirmed patrons of the stage, in proportion to its population, than has Omaha. The men who direct the destinies of the American stage realize this, and in the future, as in the past, Omaha is to share in the best the theater has to offer.

One of the gratifying conditions at the beginning of the new season is that the popularity of American authors continues. Last season patriotic sentiment was somewhat puffed up by the fact that the only real successes scored were secured by American authors. Not all of these had to do with American topics, but that is not so essential. It really should be accounted an achievement to an author from this side can meet those abroad on their own grounds and take the ground from them. Most of the pretentious productions this season are American plays by American authors, and nearly all of them deal with American topics. For the first time in his career as a leading light comedian John Drew is enacting the role of an American in a comedy written by Augustus Thomas and located at Newport and New York. Maxine Elliott has another play, which mingles Americans and Germans, with the scenes in Germany, and other openings point with equal certainty to the success of the home-grown writer. George Ade, for example, will bring his plays of different sorts on the stage. This season one vaudeville sketch, and one enterprising New Yorker has figured out that his income from these will reach \$100,000. Barris and Shaw will be about the only Englishmen represented on the American stage to any great extent during the season, and the continental writers seem to be hopelessly neglected. Talk is heard of reviving "Sowing the Wind," which will bring Henry Arthur Jones back to notice. Hal Cain is kept to the front by "The Production," which is being most pretentiously produced and somewhat chivalrically received in New York. It is a typical Cana play, melodramatic in its every aspect, crude in its construction, with moments of intense intensity followed by anti-climactic periods, and dispelling the impressions created by the forceful intervals, and proceeding along its way by reason of the author's will rather than from any inherent impulse of its own. In this it differs in no way from "The City," "The Christian," or "The Eternal City," and will very likely have a similar vogue.

Along these lines John Corbin writes in the New York Sun:

In recognizing the native drama our public has never been backward, as the success of our playwrights, major and minor, and our critics have not been equally hospitable. Lowell once said that he would not give a certain condemnation in foreign lands. That is a sad phenomenon, and trying to provincialize the American mind, and stamped us as indeed provincial it is the partial and grudging praise we dole out to our artists. If Raymond, who has never exhibited abroad how many of us would think it a crime to write a play. Have we not recently turned our eyes inside out on the subject of that cosmopolitan distance Henry James, who has been called the Americanist of Howells, intense alike in his qualities and his defects? Our reviews about in articles about the Black and White, Hauptmann, D'Annunzio and the rest of the American stage. The English biographer of Shaw and another has written one of Finero. Surely what American dramatists have done for the world, and for us deserves consideration, and perhaps one's attention.

It cannot yet be said that any of our dramatists has done what we have heard of, though all of them have had plays produced abroad with marked success. We have no complete list of the plays that have been produced, but it is possible that our public is not so provincial as we are. In the matter of sheer comic force and verve, and in the matter of light and sparkling wit, our dramatists have equalled the best of the world, and on a somewhat higher level, Richard Harding Davis, Ethel Barrymore, and Augustus Thomas "The Earl of Pawtucket," his light has been hid under a bushel. English

matrical burlesques are a poor and heavy second to the interludes which Edgar Smith has written for Weller and Phelps, and as was George Ade's "Sultan of Sulu" in technique and finish, the satirical idea on which it is founded is as original and penetrating which Gilbert never equaled. No English melodrama that now comes to mind is more moving than Augustus Thomas' "Arizona," and none exhibits a technical proficiency and technical facility of effect comparable to that of Gilbert's "Secret Service" and "Sherlock Holmes." The English drama, as a whole, is commonplace humors of life in "The County Chairman" and "The College Widow," and in the aristocracy of nothing. With the exception of Hoyt of all these writers of what, without undecision, we hope, may be called the minor forms are now adorning the stage, and the coming season have promised pieces for the coming season. Exuberant gaiety and alert mentality—the broad humor and alert mental shock to the nerves—these are the qualities of the American play.

In the more requiring forms of dramatic art, they have fallen short of excellence. It is not for the lack of persistent and intelligent effort, nor for the want of the genius of the great English genre comedies contained the germ of character which is the foundation of the drama. It has been made the occasion of legitimate drama, and he has confessed an ambition to write more seriously on more serious subjects in "The Other Girl." Mr. Thomas essayed dramatic comedy, and in the matter of technique and in the larger implications of his theme, he is not far from the best of the modern English drama. The play, which is a study in the art of taking a certain class, and only a few of those who receive their education in doing so with ease and grace, and only a few of those who expect to be called before the curtain at the close of an act, and most of them expect at some time during the progress of the play to be called upon to make a speech, just as the Wolf Hopper expects to be called to recite "Casey." The curtain speech is as carefully prepared and recited as any of the lines set down for the part, and it is amusing to watch some of the ways adopted by the recipients of these favors from the public in making their acknowledgments. Lawrence Cross, for example, gives one the impression that he has never been asked before to respond to the popular demand for a "few well chosen words" and goes about the matter with an assumed awkwardness that easily deceives the most discerning. Some who have had the opportunity to see him in other cities know that he does the same thing every place and says the same words, fitting them appropriately to the locality. It would be rather embarrassing to forget the name of the town in which you were playing, wouldn't it? It is related of some eminent actors that they have committed this most grievous fault. So far as it is known it has happened but once in Omaha and that was down at the Orpheum last winter, when one of the actors thought he was still in Kansas City and used some geography that was all right down at the Kaw's mouth, but which sounded rather queer in Omaha. If you should happen to see Mr. Reiter this afternoon he may tell you the circumstances. Nat Goodwin, Frank Danile, in fact nearly all of them, have their different ways of responding to the demands for a speech, and only one of the great actors ever resolutely refuses to come before the curtain for a talk. William H. Crane positively declines to do so, and his impression may have been created by his assumption of a character by injecting what he calls "the personality of Billy Crane" into the performance at any stage. Many people hold with Mr. Crane.

Ethel Barrymore didn't make a speech, but she did much better. As the curtain was raised the fair Ethel would be discovered heading for her dressing room. She would turn with a look of amused wonderment on her face, and come running down to the footlights, where she would nod in the most friendly way, with a most engaging smile, and shake her head in a deprecating negative. Again and again she does this, a little running back from one entrance and then from another, always with the most sincere appearance of girlish delight, just as Sunday herself might do it, never for a moment "getting out of the picture," but always giving the audience a glimpse of the Ethel Barrymore who is simple and unaffected way is the most charming thing

about her. It is no wonder she is successful in the role she presented here, for it is quite like herself and hardly an assumption at all. She had three days in Omaha besides the two she played, and spent her time just as a heady girl would. Rehearsals on the stage at the Boyd took up the morning hours. Here she labored with the members of the company, especially with her long brother, John, of whom the family hopes to make an actor despite his expressed preference for newspaper work. Up to date John hasn't shown any very remarkable talent for the stage, while he has done some newspaper work that has looked upon by his fellow toilers as good. After rehearsals at the Boyd, she went to the country and went to the ball games. The entire Sioux City series was witnessed by Miss Barrymore and some of the others of the company. She played no favorites, did exhibit keen interest in the progress of the games, and proved herself sufficiently versed to enjoy all that was enjoyable in them. All of this goes to show that she has not been much spoiled by the success that has seemed to come to her almost without her asking, and that her girlishness is still untinted by the soberness of hard work.

Yet Ethel Barrymore knows what it is to work hard. She has the reputation of being one of the most entertaining story tellers. This reputation probably has its root in the fact that the comedian makes it a rule never to relate any anecdote which would be a waste of three minutes at the best. These are a narrative about a little girl of his acquaintance who was asked in school to tell how many bodies congress was divided. To the surprise of the teacher and the delight of the class she was lady answered: "Three—civilized, semi-civilized and savage."

"I shall never forget," said Ethel Barrymore to a friend the other day, "the first time it flashed on me that I was a star. I went early to the theater to see a play, and I saw a man in the audience who I knew. He was a friend of my father's, and when I next saw him I simply went up in the air and cried. I had dreamed of that sign for years, and now it was before me. I was a star, and I was a star."

Charles Warner is to arrive in this country shortly and will give a condensed version of his powerful play, "Drink," at the Orpheum. "The Quiet Country," by Eugene W. Presbury, a comedy in three acts was produced Tuesday, September 5, at Rand's opera house, New York, by Henrietta Crossman. George Ade has delivered to Charles Sullivan, who has written it, a play, "Just Out of College," in which Josephine is the heroine. It is to be produced over seventy people will be in the production. Professor Olla, who was one of the stars in "The Two Orphans" last season, has decided to go into vaudeville again. She will be in the city for a few days, and will be seen at the Orpheum theater, first at 10 o'clock on Tuesday, and then at 8 o'clock on Wednesday. "The Orphan" season at the Orpheum theater, first at 10 o'clock on Tuesday, and then at 8 o'clock on Wednesday. "The Orphan" season at the Orpheum theater, first at 10 o'clock on Tuesday, and then at 8 o'clock on Wednesday.

Edward Abeles and George Boniface, Jr., will be the principal comedians with Ethel Barrymore in the new play, "The Four Leaf Clover." Martina Morton has arrived in Omaha to give a series of musical comedy will begin this week in the city. Henry W. Savage denies emphatically that Raymond Hitchcock is to play "Easy Money" at the Orpheum theater. According to Manager Savage, Hitchcock is doing nicely in the new play, "The Quiet Country," and is the season of the season, and possibly next season. Helen Templeton will be the opening feature of the new Colonial theater in Chicago, which begins its season early next month. It will be a new venture for her, as Miss Templeton is to appear there as a star in the new play, "The Quiet Country," which was written for her by George M. Colman. E. H. Southern and Julia Marlowe open their season in Cleveland early in September. They will be seen this year in "The Merchant of Venice," "The Taming of the Shrew" and "Twelfth Night." 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