

Gossip About Plays, Players and Playhouses

WITHOUT attempting to predicate a conclusion on the fact, it may be stated that the cry is for more. Acts that were but a little while ago frankly conceded to be "shines," and by common consent relegated to the "honeytanks," are now getting back to the big houses, and "polite," "advanced" or "twentieth century" as the case may be is compelled to hustle for attractions to warrant the display of electric lights over the front door. It is the harvest time for the man or woman who can do a stunt that will bring a laugh, squeeze a tear or cause an astonished crowd to gasp. Competition among managers is never as fierce as now, and the patron of the variety show never stood such a good chance of getting his money's worth as he does this season. It would be a waste of time to speculate on the outcome of the rivalry, just as it is impossible to recall the labored articles written a few years ago to prove that vaudeville was a fad that was about to expire in America.

MAY DRAMATIC CRITICS LAUGH

Novel Question is Agitating Paris as Sequel to Production.

PARIS, Oct. 19.—(Special Correspondence.)—On your side of the water, if one mistakingly thinks that the attractions of the new theatrical season is "My Wife," the adaptation of "Mlle. Josette, Ma Femme," which was made by that transplanted American dramatist, Michael Morton. The last named piece crowded the Paris Gymnase for months on end, but no such fortune has come to its successor, "Joujou Tragic." Indeed, has been the fate of this "Joujou" (or Toy), for it had a run of exactly two nights, one of the shortest on record in Paris. In its case, in fact, one of the most stringent rules of the Society of Dramatic Authors was broken, that powerful organization having fixed three performances as the minimum which may be accorded to a piece. It is not likely, however, that the Gymnase management will be penalized, for its case was desperate. "Joujou Tragic" having practically been laughed off the stage.

More of the pity, since the piece was the first dramatic banishing of a gifted young author, whose years number exactly 21. Names of class in her name and her poetry and culture already have made her something of a celebrity, but she has yet to learn the dramatist's art; perhaps also to acquire a sense of humor, of which faculty there was little evidence in "Joujou Tragic." Its heroine was an aunt, and for some unknown reason aunts are associated with comedy. The most famous example is "The Aunt of Chaucer," as they call her in France. But Mlle. d'Orléans' aunt, or rather the one in her play, was designed to stimulate our tear ducts rather than our risibilities. A mistake, then, to have given the part to Polaire, whose meter is the comic. "Joujou Tragic" proved to be a rather ill-considered production. The aunt specifically found an admirer in her nephew and there was love-making in Venice and finally discovery by the woman's husband. This is a "scene" between uncle and nephew and finally the murder of his aunt by the latter. Then certain.

The audience at the "representation general"—largely made up of critics and their friends—laughed uproariously, and this behavior has led to a brisk discussion in the press of Paris. Have critics a right to laugh or otherwise express approval or disapproval in the theater? someone has asked, and columns of opinions pro and con are solemnly being printed. Luckily for them

advance forgiveness for the actor folks and for himself, and then spreading over all a mantle of charity that is always thick if not broad. When the occasion comes that he may laugh, should he not have the privilege? It may be that the case is like that cited in Paris, wherein the writer sought to evolve a tragedy and produced something the critics and the public insisted on treating as a comedy. At such a time why forbid the critic the small boon of showing that he is merely human, and say he may not laugh when all his fellow men are laughing?

Criticism of the drama is not taken so seriously in America as it is in Europe. Over there it has been demonstrated that a critic may make or mar the success of a play. Such a time may come in America. It has been proven very conclusively that they can not yet make a play in this country. One of the instances of this is afforded by the fate of "The Struggle Everlasting," in which Miss Florence Roberts was recently seen in New York. It was generously praised by all the metropolitan critics, and warmly endorsed by the leaders. Mr. Royle was credited with having written a remarkably strong drama, and in a way that warranted success. Miss Roberts and Mr. Arthur Byron were warmly commended for their excellent work in enacting its leading roles, and the whole thing was recommended as a drama of pitch and desert. But, as one critic will it appeal to the public? It evidently didn't, for Miss Roberts' New York engagement has been closed, and the play has been sent to the storehouse. It was too intellectual. In the meantime, the Cohan drama and the Clyde Fitch affix the mark of delighting the folks of Gotham, and the music halls are nightly filled to the overflowing. If the critic can not laugh while at the theater, he surely does when he finds himself behind the closed door of his den. He can't look at what is going on at the theater and keep from laughing.

In Kipling's account of the dolness of the jungle folk we find all of them taking life seriously, attending to business in a way their human cousins might all but the banderlog. These run about from place to place, eagerly imitating all the other animals, themselves and to some extent mankind. But the banderlog, no matter how many enterprises his members engaged in, never makes any. Before the end one thing was complete some restless member of the tribe set about another, and in a little bit all had followed him and the original undertaking was left half done. And so, lion and tiger, wolf and bear, peacock and elephant and snake and bird all looked down on the monkey as being hopelessly imbecile. In some measure the American theater magnates recall the banderlog's misapprehension of energy. No sooner does one hit upon a plan for cutting the dollar from the public pocket to his till than the others fall over one another in their haste to imitate him. Mr. Charles Frohman bethought himself of a plan to occupy his stars during such time as they are on the four-day ferry between New York and London, and announced that he would produce the Frohman plays with the Frohman stars on the ocean liners, going east and coming back at him come the K. & E. people and the Keth people and the Orpheum people, and now the vaudevellers are to revert right along at "two a day" just the same. It may be an evidence of enterprise, but at this distance it looks like an exhibition of banderlogian propensity rather than of reasoning intelligence.

Just where it will all end no guess will be ventured. Large salaries and easy work are enticing stars of every magnitude into the vaudeville work and will the cry is for more. Acts that were but a little while ago frankly conceded to be "shines," and by common consent relegated to the "honeytanks," are now getting back to the big houses, and "polite," "advanced" or "twentieth century" as the case may be is compelled to hustle for attractions to warrant the display of electric lights over the front door. It is the harvest time for the man or woman who can do a stunt that will bring a laugh, squeeze a tear or cause an astonished crowd to gasp. Competition among managers is never as fierce as now, and the patron of the variety show never stood such a good chance of getting his money's worth as he does this season. It would be a waste of time to speculate on the outcome of the rivalry, just as it is impossible to recall the labored articles written a few years ago to prove that vaudeville was a fad that was about to expire in America.

It was not in Antoline's theater that these critics yielded to mirth, for that manager would not have hesitated to eject the laughers after the first act. HAYDEN CHURCH.

Comings Events. Cyril Scott and "The Prince Chap" will be at Boyd's theater for three nights, beginning tonight. There is lots of novelty and interest, we are told, in "The Prince Chap." Its run in five New York theaters reached a total of 209 performances. "The Prince Chap" is reviewed as a play for people who like a bit of sentiment, who cling to the old beliefs about home, love and women, a play in which laughter rings true with delightful recurrence. This is true notwithstanding the fact that in two of its acts the scene is laid in an artist's studio and the story concerns itself with people who are leading a Bohemian life. There is a mild sort of Bohemianism in "The Prince Chap," but it is not the kind described in the fiction writer's guide to the Latin Quarter in Paris. In the last act, where "Billy" has to inform Claudia that she is a grown woman—dangerous ground—the author, Edward Peple, and star, Cyril Scott, are said to be exceedingly adroit. The incident of the revelation is managed so skillfully that the quality of wholesome sweetness is never once disturbed. We shall have the best of the members of the original company in the presentation of "The Prince Chap," including Charles E. Wells, George Schaefer, Duane Wagar, Wallace Erskine, Ida Stanhope, Kathryn Rivers, Mary Keogh, Arnold Rays, Albert Powers, Helen Pullman, P. B. Randall, Catherine Cameron, Beryl Pullman and others.

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The Burwood, starting tomorrow matinee, will offer twentieth century vaudeville in an elongated form, the program being composed of nine acts instead of five as heretofore. Only two performances will be given daily, the hours being 2:30 and 8:15. The bill to open tomorrow is composed of Abdul Kader and his three wives, Aiena, Beja and Fatma, who present an act of artistic merit. The rapidity with which these strange people produce immense paintings is little short of marvelous. Sugimoto's Japanese troupe of seven will also offer an act out of the ordinary, their acrobatic work and posturing being of great skill. In pantomime work Silent Tail will be featured, and Von Kaufman are dated for a hilarious sketch. Bessie French is an operatic vocalist of much attraction at the Krug theater for two days, starting with a matinee today. Apropos of this, the play is always entertaining and instructive. "The Volunteer Organist" has been given an elaborate and costly stage setting and a fine cast and the drama is sure to play a very successful engagement if the advance sale is any criterion.

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