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Gossip About Plays and Players

OMAHA theaters had a rather warm time of it for the first week of the season, although it was due to the weather rather than anything else. At the Boyd an unusually good melodrama, presented by a remarkably strong company, received such scanty patronage as must have reconciled the management to the two dark weeks that will succeed. It is hoped that by the time the house is opened again the public will be in the humor to take its pleasure at the theater. At the Orpheum the week was a good one from the box office standpoint. The Krug presented three attractions, and did its usual business. At the Burwood the new stock company was presented and cordially welcomed. This organization shows many elements of strength and ought to become very popular. Miss Elliott, who has lost none of her former popularity, shows herself to be an even more capable actress than was believed by her friends and promises to give many a delightful performance during the winter season. Mr. Grew will be as well liked as any leading man Omaha has ever had, and the others are all doing well. The outlook at the Burwood is very encouraging.

MANY ACTORS STILL ARE IDLE

Theatrical Season Opening Late This Year.

NEW YORK, Sept. 5.—The present theatrical season opens unsatisfactorily for actors generally. Whatever their summer trials may be, in September they expect to find employment, or at least the promise of speedy work, and they are happy at that prospect. This year, however, the engagements have not materialized. There are, in fact, just about as many actors out of employment now as there were last March, when the secretary of one of the largest actors' societies said that there never had been so much distress in the profession as came under his observation then.

"I should say," Secretary Seyboldt of the Actors' Society of America told a Sun reporter, "that about three-quarters of our members are still out of employment, which is an unprecedented thing at this season of the year.

"When one takes into consideration that many of them have been idle since last December the difficulties of their situation may be understood. The dullness just at this time is greater than it was a month or six weeks ago.

"The early openings are over and we are making no engagements. Then the other companies that are going out later will not open until after the election.

"The present plight of so many of the profession is the result of an election year following such a bad theatrical season as the last was. Then companies began to disband as early as November. That was caused in a measure by the unusual state of affairs prevailing in the one-night stands.

"They are always trying enough to the manager and the actors, but their hardships used to be tolerated on the ground that they were profitable. They were the very first to show the unfavorable conditions last year. Hitherto when business was poor in the large cities, a manager could send his company to the one-night stands and get his money back. This season the conditions are exactly reversed.

"Managers are sending out companies trusting that the situation will improve, and are booking them all in the week stands, where the best they can hope to do is to cover expenses. They do not want to shut down their companies, but they know that there is no money for them in the one-night stands, where they could formerly count on a profit as certain.

"The reason? Nobody knows. We have only the result, and that is positive enough to make the effect on the actors very bad.

"Where a manager would last season or before that have organized three or more companies to play a successful piece through the one-night stands, he is now sending out one company to keep in the cities. There have been various explanations for this phenomenon in the one-night stands. The most generally accepted is that they have perhaps been overplayed."

The actors who are awaiting the after election engagements feel that much depends on which candidate is elected. Managers have in several instances declared that they will take out this or that company or group of companies in case the republican candidate is elected. What they intend to do in case W. J. Bryan is elected none of them has been known to say.

The average wage-earner looks with horror upon the possibility of having to live for a term of months without employment or its resulting salary. Yet there are members of the Actors' society who have not had engagements for more than a year. The question as to how they managed to exist was put to Mr. Seyboldt.

"Oh, they live on their savings if they have any, with their families, or on their friends, or they find some sort of employment," explained Mr. Seyboldt, "and it taxes a man's ingenuity to the limit to get along in this way. I've done it in my time and know what it means.

"It gets to such a pass sometimes that a man must do whatever offers, however ignominious it may appear at the time. But that is not true of the actor's calling alone. You must know of many other professions in which men are not always able to find support and must turn their energies to something else to help out.

"Actors are likely to turn their efforts toward being hotel clerks or to some occupation their training has fitted them for. But that does not always follow. I heard of one actor who was on an ice wagon."

The present lack of employment for so many actors has not tended to diminish the number of persons seeking to follow a stage career, according to this authority. The supply grows greater every year. The schools of acting now located in every large city of the country continues to turn graduates out in large numbers. The agencies are fuller every year of the new arrivals who come here to try their fortune, often leaving comfortable employment at home or coming at all events from places where they are known and where they might find some kind of employment through their relations.

"If the aspirants for positions on the stage could only be deterred by hearing of the present plight of the actors," said Mr. Seyboldt, "then it might accomplish some good. But it has no effect on them to hear that the profession is already overcrowded.

"They feel that it is overcrowded only with incompetents and that they will never lack for work. They are sure that talent such as theirs is going to prove exceptional.

"The result is that they are half the time without employment, and after a certain number of years they drift into other work. For a while they may by consenting to take smaller salaries deprive better actors of employment. But even that does not continue long.

"The really competent actor even in such times as these is nearly always able to make a good living. The incompetents who rushed into the profession because they had to be actors and felt that the divine spark would not allow them to do anything else are the ones that suffer. The poor fellows usually have to pay the penalty of their ambitions, so possibly it is best not to be too hard on them.

"If all these hardships are dificult for a man to struggle through, think what they must be for a woman. Yet there are as many aspirants of that sex and they cannot be prevented from entering a profession that has already so many unemployed members."

The Professional Woman's league has during the last year done much to relieve the sufferings of the poor women in the profession, supplying them with means of livelihood and finding employment for them when there were no engagements.

"We are just standing pat," Mr. Seyboldt told the reporter, "to see what is going to happen after the elections. The prosperity of the people is immediately felt in the theater. When the times improve, as we hope they will after election, there will be plenty of work for the actors again.

"The cinematograph shows are not in my opinion going to have any permanent effect on the theater. They are of course a serious rival to the cheaper priced houses now, and the number of actors who find employment in posing for the tableaux and plays is not sufficient to compensate for the number thrown out of employment through the use of moving pictures in the theater. But we in the profession believe that the craze for these things is going to pass over, and then there will be actors required in the theaters now devoted to them.

"Only the fact that they are so cheap has kept them alive so long. They will disappear when the good times bring prosperity once more to the actors."

ANOTHER REINCARNATED CHRIST

American Reception of "The Servant in the House."

LONDON, Sept. 5.—(Special.)—When Rann Kennedy tried the daring experiment of introducing the character of Christ on the stage in New York in his play, "The Servant in the House," critics were frankly dubious of its favorable reception by the public. The English dramatist's courage was justified by the reception of the play not only in New York, but subsequently throughout the United States on tour, and this circumstance seems to have encouraged Jerome K. Jerome, the English humorist, to enter the lists with a dramatization of his story, "The Passing of the Third Floor Back," in which the central figure is a reincarnation of the Savior. This fact is not brought forward by any direct means, but by numerous little touches. The character will not be known by any name, but in the three parts in which the play is divided—a prologue, a play and an epilogue—he will be known respectively as "a Passer-by," "the Third Floor Back" and "a Friend." Jerome hopes, and indeed is very confident, that the English audience at the St. James theater, where Forbes Robertson and Gertrude Elliot are to produce the play on Tuesday next, will recognize that he has handled the subject in a spirit of reverence and sincerity and that they will accord his effort the same sort of respectful hearing that was secured for Kennedy's play in the United States.

Almost coincident with the production of his and Louis Parker's dramatized version of "The Manxman," which will be produced at the Lyceum theater on Saturday evening, Hall Caine appears in print with recollections of the production of his first play. It was in 1888 that, in conjunction with Wilson Barrett, the novelist dramatized his novel, "The Deemster" and he tells, with every evidence of keen delight in recollection, of entering into a contract with Barrett for royalties of 2 guines ($10) a performance until their total reached £300 ($1,600), when they were to cease altogether. In writing of his experience in connection with the rehearsals and the first night of his play, the author says:

"There were the rehearsals, and, though, in my ignorance of stage management, I took little or no part in them, I remember, as a unique experience, the first moment when, stumbling through the pall of darkness which lies over the front of the house in the daytime, I first heard my own lines spoken by an actor on the stage. It was almost as if something of myself had, in a dream, by a kind of hypnotic transfer, passed into the mouth of somebody else.

"By the time of the first public performance this elusive sensation had naturally passed away, but then came another emotion equally new to me, and yet more thrilling, the emotion created by tears, the laughter, the applause, and, above all, the silence of the audience. It is just once in a man's life that he produces his first play, and perhaps he may be pardoned if, after the lapse of years, he puts the experience out of proportion.

"I think it was a notable first night in some respects. The audience was great; for in all the years since I have never seen so many really distinguished people in one place. The acting was great, too, and the reception was generous and almost tumultuous. I remember as something seen in a sort of delirious trance, through a mist of blinding tears, that at the fall of the curtain the whole audience was on its feet, and that, when Barrett led me in front of the curtain there was a roar that dazed and stunned me."

In the United States the constant endeavor of the actor and the actress is to keep their private family and home affairs from the public. In England the very opposite expresses the state of affairs. Here the most popular of the postcards are those depicting the several stars of the footlights with their wives or husbands, as the case may be, and invariably with their various offspring. The "baby beautifuls" of such popular stars as Ruth Vincent and Isabel Jay are almost as well known by sight as their maters, while Baby Betty, the pride of Seymour Hicks and Ellaline Terriss, would be heir to the throne of England tomorrow if his many thousand worshippers had their way.

JOHN AVA CARPENTER.

Coming Events.

"Hans and Nix" will be the attraction at the Krug theater for four days, starting with a matinee today and usual Wednesday matinee. It is a musical comedy of the up-to-date style, full of clean fun, with nothing in it that will offend anyone. It has a variety of characters, many new to the comedy field. The company is a good one and as is an invariable rule with all of Dixon & Bernard's companies they are dressed superbly, while elaborate and massive sets of scenery are carried for each act of the comedy. There are a number of new specialties in the play and the music is of the bright and catchy kind that will readily appeal to the public ear. Dixon & Bernard have the leading role and will be assisted by a company of forty people.

"The Cowboy Girl," the new musical melodrama, which will be here for three days, starting next Thursday at the Krug, has a budget of real song hits to offer. "The Life of a Cowboy Girl" is sung by "Gyp" and the Frisky Broncos. Among the others are "No Fool Like an Old Fool," "All the World's in Love," "He Treated Me White," "Whittling," "Boston Tourist Girls" and the comedy male quartet introduce a thoroughly comical skit song, "Four Bad Men from Arizona." "The Cowboy Girl" is a very entertaining and interesting kind of a female.

The story of "The Idler," which is by C. Haddon Chambers, is written around the love affair, serious on the part of the man, but merely a flirtation on the part of the woman. The man, Mark Cross (Mr. Grew), has been to Italy to bury the woman he had married during his wild cats' season. On his return to London he finds the girl he had loved and whom he hoped loved him in return, married to another. When calling to pay his respects he finds her husband, Sir John Harding, to be a man he had known in the west as "Gentleman Jack." As "Gentleman Jack" Sir John was forced to make a hurried departure from the border country owing to the fatal result of a shot he had fired, although he maintained that it was an accident. "The Idler," Cross, was a witness to the affair. Upon the scene comes a brother of the dead man. He recognizes "Gentleman Jack" in Sir John and threatens to hand him over to the American authorities. Lady Harding (Miss Elliott) sees by her husband's troubled appearance that something is wrong and so demands explanation. She is informed by Cross and is also told how she can save her husband from being taken back to America to face conviction. An unusually strong scene occurs here between Cross and Lady Harding. The comedy interwoven in the play is bright and snappy and the gowns to be worn are handsome. Miss Elliott as Lady Harding will have a part that is replete with emotional possibilities and Mr. Grew has scored heavily with eastern stock companies in Henry Miller's part, that of Mark Cross, the idler.

The first performance of "The Idler" will be given this afternoon. There will be matinees Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

For the accommodation of the inveterate admirer of stock productions the Burwood management has placed on sale two styles of season tickets. The "ticket" is in the form of a book of fifty coupons, one or a dozen of which may be used at once at the option of the owner. As they are sold at a very attractive discount, there is no doubt but that they will become popular with those who visit the Burwood weekly, occupying the same seat each time.

Felice Moris, whose father enjoyed a reputation as a splendid character actor, comes to the Orpheum this week in a playlet by Francis Wilson of Kansas City. "The Old, Old Story," as the piece is called, will be presented by a caste of three, Charles C. Silk and Russell Bassett being the other two performers. A pantomine and contortion act is put on by Byers and Hermann, both of whom have attained remarkable renown for such work. The Italian Trio who will sing selections from "Il Trovators" and other well known operas. Wilbur Mack and Nella Walker have a musical called "The Girl and the Pearl." The four Orans, equilibrists, well known abroad, present their act in outing dress. Netta Vesta, a prominent musical figure in the east, has a number of songs which will display her merits. The bill is completed by Ethel MacDonough, "The Girl Behind the Drum." As before, the best of moving pictures will be a feature.

Today and Labor day will conclude the 1908 season at Lake Manawa. As the management realizes that it is with much regret that thousands of local pleasure seekers each year see the park season nearing a close and that their patrons always take advantage of the few final days they are preparing for an immense crowd today and tomorrow and have arranged for a big special program. While it is seasonable for fall weather, yet it is warm enough for bathing. All will be in readiness at the Kursaal for all those who desire to take a farewell swim in Lake Manawa this year. The Manawa concert band has prepared two fine musical programs, which the director, Charles M. Jones, says will leave a most favorable impression on all of today's visitors. Prof. Andrew will make a balloon jump Sunday and Monday afternoons at 5:15 in the afternoon. There will be dancing at the Kursaal afternoon and evening, both today and Labor day. A new and exceptionally good show will be on at the Casino and all those who admire motion photography comedy should not fail to visit the theater. An adequate car service has been promised by the street railway company.

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