

# Gossip About Plays, Players and Playhouses

**W**ILLIAMS AND WALKER furnished the headliner in Omaha's amusement program for the week. The experience of the local managers was unique in a way, for instead of its being the worst week in the season, as is generally the case, it proved to be one of the best. All of the theaters had good business and the crowds that swarmed to see Williams and Walker at the Boyd proved to be almost record-breakers. The coming week has such attractions as ought to again fill the theaters and send the bonanza of the ante-holiday period hustling to a more favorable locality than Omaha.

Mary Shaw was seen at the Boyd in a play that is unworthy the attention given it. The thought embodied is hackneyed, and its treatment was amateurish. Moreover, its denouement is theatric and illogical, and does not produce the result the reverend author evidently desired. The side of the son just at the time when his mother needed him most and when he was loudest in his protestations of his love for her, seems a bit trite if not really silly. It would have been much more impressive and natural to have had the young man struggle bravely on in an effort to provide for the mother who had wrought so patiently through all the years to prepare him to do a man's work in the world. He might at least have proven his love for her by undertaking to help her bear her sorrow and to repay her in a measure by his comfort and support. The lesson taught is not made any the more effective because of the terror of its conclusion, and for his own sake the hope may be expressed that when Rev. Mr. Knott gives us the second of his promised trilogy he will not only amend it as to literary style and dramatic construction, but will give it of some of its triteness of conclusion.

Bert Williams easily maintains himself at the top of the list of comedians. His comedy is of the low type, to be sure, and his foibles that of the undisciplined, darky, but his methods are those of the artist and his results are art in its truest sense. Williams does not caricature but produces his darkey type with photographic fidelity. It is not the ignorant, but rather the uneducated one that he has made us familiar with, for the Williams darkey has always been a man of natural shrewdness and hard common sense, as opposed to the preternatural "smartness" shown by Walker. It is this contrast of types that makes the combination so genuinely effective. And experience has been of service to both, for their work is smoother and more enjoyable in every way than on the occasion of their last visit. That they are popular was more than attested by the great pressure to hear them. It was really the most successful engagement that the season at the Boyd from a box office viewpoint.

The new Garden theater in Chicago is proving a tremendous hit with the people of that city, and is also becoming popular with strangers, fast as it is becoming known. It is the newest expression of thought in the way of theater comfort, with the very latest ideas embodied in its construction. One of the attractive features is the presence of an indoor garden whose arrangement suggests the veranda of a country club, this being carried out on three sides, while the fourth is arranged for the stage. Here the spectator sits at comfort with his coffee or his cordial, smokes if he cares to, and enjoys the performance on the stage to the limit. Just now a musical travesty, "A Young Man's Side," is being presented and has been enthusiastically praised by all. The Garden is the one thing to do in Chicago just now.

## ARBITERS OF THE ENGLISH STAGE

Children Rule from Now Until Next Easter in Many of the Theaters.

LONDON, Dec. 18.—(Special Correspondence.)—Whatever aspect London may present to others, to the children at Christmas time it is a place of pure delight. At first glance it would appear to the uninitiated that most of the English managers were possessed of hearts and had quite determined upon giving the little ones the time of their lives. Assuredly, however, some of them playing to record receipts, are to be ruthlessly torn from the boards of certain theaters and sent into temporary retirement to make way for shows that will tickle the ears of the children. Real serious-minded managers like Beerholm Tree and Charles Frohman become children for the moment and plead almost pathetically for the approval and applause of boys in short trousers and girls in shorter dresses.

But upon closer examination one will find that there is a sound business basis for these strange actions. The various pantomimes which make their appearance in England at this time of the year and extend to Easter are gold mines, and it is sound financial considerations that have induced Frohman and Beerholm Tree to enter the field with plays primarily designed for juvenile consumption.

This is it that we hear that "Peter Pan" is to make its reappearance for a season at the Duke of York's beginning December 27. Pauline Chase will, of course, be Peter and Hilda Trevelyan will play the part of Wendy, a part she has made an enduring possession of the heart of every child who has seen the play. This also Tree will produce "Pinks and the Fairies" at His Majesty's with Ellen Terry in the chief part and Stella Campbell, daughter of Mrs. "Pat" in the cast. And at the Court theater there will be a revival of "Little Lord Fauntleroy." These are but signs that the youth of England are insatiable in the matter of entertainment, and that they are no longer entirely satisfied with pantomime. They form, too, a good and promising sign of higher taste in the young, for, after all, the pantomimes, almost without exception, are very poor productions made up of a conglomerate of cheap humor and horse-play.

Yet that they are immensely popular with the children no one can deny. Take the great Drury Lane production. No less than 500 pantomimes have been produced in addition to the cast of principals, all of whom command enormous salaries. In the handling of the big stage and the theater back stage 300 people are needed, and in front of the house 150 more will be busy. The run of the pantomime extends from Boxing night to about Easter, and in these three months this house—and it is but an example of the hundreds throughout the country—manages to return a handsome profit on the enormous original outlay and the weekly salary list. As an index to the profits that are to be obtained it is only necessary to mention that a year ago the directors of Drury Lane were contemplating engaging Harry Lauder at a salary of \$4,000 a week, and the popular Scotch comedian would have been only one of the big company.

But while pantomime has its advantages it also has its disadvantages. In order to make up the casts of the hundreds of companies throughout the country it is necessary to draw upon the music halls and that class of houses is drained almost dry of talent at this time of the year. The natural consequence is that the management of the halls find it impossible to fill their seats and a serious period of steady loss is almost unavoidable. Many of them would like to close for the three months, but dare not do so. With the return of Easter the stars are released from their pantomime engagements and come flocking back to the halls in such numbers that the bills are often over weighted with talent.

The opening of the Waldorf theater under the management of Henry R. Smith has not proved as auspicious as it might have. Although "The Antelope" yields many laughs, as a whole it is extremely weak and uninteresting. What it needs, in my opinion, is a whole lot of the collaboration of other minds to which the author of it, Adrian Ross, took exception in the press some time ago, apropos of another play. There is enough plot in "The Antelope" to make an interesting half hour and out of it Ross has attempted to make an evening's entertainment. This would not have proved so disastrous. From the viewpoint of the average playgoer were the plot relegated to the background by the interpolation of some excellent "business" and songs. Instead, however, the obviously inadequate plot has been pushed to the foreground and results in a sense of dissatisfaction in the minds of the audience. Of the music, which is by Dr. Hugo Felix, there is not much to say. In spots it was pretty, ex-

ceptionally so in two numbers, but it was woefully lacking in variety.

Charles Frohman has decided to send Julia Sanderson back to the United States in "Kitty Grey," in which G. P. Huntley will make his bow early in January in New York. Julia will play the same part, in which Evie Greene made such a hit when the play was originally produced in London some years ago. The present intention is to open at the Broadway theater for a run, but it is possible that some other house may be substituted before the opening. Frohman for some time hoped to be able to provide a part for Julia on this side, but was unable to unearth a suitable one. Hence her return to the United States. It is certain, however, that she will be brought back to London at the first opportunity, as Frohman thinks she is bound to make a big hit eventually.

"Havana," which has been running at the Gaiety, will soon be withdrawn and a return made in January to the old traditions of the house. The famous company which became associated with the house will be brought together again by George Edwards in a new play, the music of which is being written by Ivan Caryll and Lionel Monckton, the latter of whom is, of course, the husband of Gertie Miller. Gertie

and George Grossmith, who have been with you, and Edmund Payne, who has been on tour, all of whom belong to the Gaiety old guard, will be in the cast of the new play. It is called, for the present at least, "Garrod's Stores," which is an obvious play on the name of one of London's largest department stores, in which the first act is laid.

At the Omaha Theaters.

W. L. Abington, who has won so marked a success in the role of the Devil, in Henry W. Savage's sole-authored production of the comedy of that name, first achieved footlight fame in the character of the Spider in the famous London production of "The Silver King." This was on the occasion of the remarkable run of the play when it was presented continuously in the British metropolis for two entire seasons.

Afterwards Mr. Abington played the polished villains in the productions made at the Adelphi theater, London, during the long incumbency of that house by the notable company headed by the unfortunate William Terris—perhaps the most popular actor the British stage has known. Mr. Abington frequently achieved that most complete triumph that a stage "villain" may have in being hissed from the stage. Olga Netherole was also a member of the Terris company at the time, as were a number of other players of particular note. In this country Mr. Abington has since won fine success in leading roles, coming here to be the leading man with Amelia Bingham, and remaining to perform like services for Mrs. Langtry and other actresses on the tour.

The Devil of Franz Molnar's sensational and witty comedy is the third Satan Mr. Abington has portrayed. In the spectacular presentation made in London a few seasons ago of "Pilgrim's Progress" he was cast as Apollyon, while later he appeared in that city as the Prince Lucius in the dramatization of the Marie Corelli romance, "The Sorrows of Satan." In Mr. Savage's notable production of "The Devil," Mr. Abington will be seen at the Boyd tonight and Monday.

For the first time in the history of the American stage, a first-class dramatic production is on tour with a number of celebrated circus acrobats and clowns playing leading parts. The play is Frederic Thompson's big production, "Folly of the Circus," by Margaret Mayo, with Edith Taliaferro the play being made in the same time. An octet number is one of the features of the act. The bill includes Edna Phillips in her new sketch, "Lost, a Kiss in Central Park." Miss Phillips is accompanied by a little company of competent entertainers. The sketch is farce, pure and simple. It is the first time that the German comedy sketch entitled "A Padded Cell," the Wilsons are comedians with a variety of ways for evoking a laugh. They have a bunch of new parodies and sing songs in German dialect. Tony Wilson and Mile. Heloise are experts with the horizontal bar and bounding mat. Mile. Heloise introduces her dancing. The Grassys have devised some strange instruments on which they play all sorts of tunes. Their act is an unique combination of mystery and melody. Blisset and Scott have the dancing number of the bill. They present several oddities in steps never seen here before. New kindroome views. Daily matinees.

A program of unusual merit and interest will be shown at the Camerophone theater, 143 Douglas street, beginning Sunday, Alice Lloyd, the Great English comedienne, will appear in camerophone talking pictures in her daintiest repertoire. "Over the Hills and Far Away" and "Spish Me" are among the songs she will sing. This will be followed by Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan, famous black-faced comedians, in their late success, "Who Do You Love?" from "Shoo Fly Regiment." These two actors introduce records for the Edison company. Besides the talking pictures there will be several very interesting silent pictures, depicting history, romance and comedy. Among the most interesting of these silent pictures is a story of a New York wharf rat. It illustrates conditions as they exist there today, only woven into a clever little romance. These silent pictures will be followed by an illustrated song by Mrs. Alma Huntly, late soloist at Kountze Memorial church. The Camerophone theater is an ideal place for entertainment while resting from fatigue of Christmas shopping. There is no pleasanter, cleaner place of refined amusement in the city.

Charles Frohman will present Miss Marie Doro in "The Richest Girl," a new and sparkling comedy in four acts, by the authors of "My Wife," at Boyd's theater for two nights, December 29 and 30. "The Richest Girl" was given its first presentation at the Park theater, Boston, on September 21, and it scored quite an emphatic success as did "The Morale of Marcus," in which Miss Doro made her stellar debut at the same theater a year ago. Miss Doro's role in "The Richest Girl" is a charming creation and characterization, and the part fits her brightly. For this engagement Mr. Orrin Johnson has been especially engaged for the part of "Paul Normand," the leading male role.

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# The BEE BILL of the PLAYS

THIS WEEK'S ATTRACTIONS  
Boyd's Theater....."The Devil"  
Krug Theater....."Polly of the Circus"  
Burwood Theater....."Camille"  
Opheim Theater....."Vaudeville"  
Palm Theater....."Moving Pictures"  
Camerophone....."Talking Pictures"

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