

MIMIC ART COINS MONEY

Stars of the Stage Draw and Control Streams of Gold.

BIG SUMS THE PLAYERS EARN

Art for the Dollars' Sake Makes Millions of Actresses—Popularity of Plays Measured by Returns.

Certain critics of the drama from time to time fulminate loudly against the "star" system that so generally dominates the American stage of today. This system, they declare, is in every way vicious. It exploits personality at the expense of art, reduces the drama to a set of monologues with vocal accompaniments, degrades the stage to the level of a glorified dime museum and encourages a cheap superficiality and surface smartness in place of real dramatic literature and genuine histrionic skill.

There is more than half the truth in what these critics say. The star system is open to savage attacks from more than one quarter. But perhaps the managers who have developed it are not wholly to blame. Perhaps it will be found that the state of public taste is the real culprit, and that the "star" system is merely a reaction of that taste. "The theatrical managers are so commercial" is the complaint of the few critics who have verberated their tongues to say anything but praise of what the managers offer the public. So they are. They are commercial, indeed. But this is a commercial age and most of us help more or less to make it so. If we didn't, it wouldn't be commercial. Why, you ask, all get up and are the public taste and, taken collectively, the stars are the stage exhibits that get most of our money. The star system, in short, is what it is today because, as the race track followers say, it "gets the coin." Why does it "get the coin?"

Keeping in the Spotlight.

Well, this is an age of advertising. There's no denying that as a people we like a lot of noise—we like a brass band. There are a lot of things that can't be done without a brass band and some of them are worth doing. Theatrical managers understand it, too. Their brass bands are the newspapers, which will toll the trombone and bang the front page drum for a personality a hundred times where they will do it once for an idea. Most of us are prone to take people at their own valuations. The star, through his manager, values himself highly and tells you so, through the newspaper, and through the busy press agent early and often, and again, and repeatedly, and on other occasions also. And the first thing you know you begin to think that maybe this fellow is right about himself. And when he comes to your town you pay \$1.50 or \$2 to find out. And half the time you don't know then.

It is not an easy thing to make a theatrical star of the first magnitude. It sometimes costs a good deal of money, but once made, a star is the most dependable and prolific money-maker in that precarious business, theatrical management. Stars cannot be made without the aid of popular plays, but, once made, they will often run profitably from their own momentum for some time, even though their plays be bad. Theatrical managers, some of our most famous producers, are sold by the label on the can quite as much as by the contents. It is just another case of the trade-mark.

Art for the Dollars' Sake.

But, you ask, is the drama then no longer to be included in the field of art? Perhaps, but it's largely art for the dollars' sake. And it is all in your hands. The kind of art that you will pay to see on the other side of the footlights is the kind of art that you will get there—that and no other. To an extent true of no other of the arts, dramatic art is in your hands.

While it is well known that the star system is profitable, comparatively few persons have any clear idea of how profitable it is when developed to its utmost. It is proposed to give here a few figures which will show with a clearness possible in no other way the quality of the commercialism to which our theatrical managers have been tempted by the complaisant public, have so generally succumbed. In a few cases it is possible to describe these figures as exact, but absolute precision is not claimed for the rest. But for all of the figures given here it can be said that, while no access has been had to managerial balance sheets, they represent in round numbers the careful estimates of men who have been for years closely associated with the business side of the American stage, some of them as business associates of the stars mentioned.

In the last few years of his life Richard Mansfield was the most profitable star in this country, as he was the greatest actor. He was his own manager and most of his profits he took himself. This particular feature of the star system exhibited great acting on the part of a single individual but in several of his most profitable plays Mr. Mansfield was not indifferently supported and the plays themselves were but backgrounds for his genius. "Beau Brummell" and "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" being in this class, the former being an especially finely finished sketch vitalized by the acting of the great virtuoso. But this is no place to analyze the sources of Mr. Mansfield's success. It is a conservative estimate to say that during the last years of his life Mr. Mansfield's profits were never less than \$100,000 a year and sometimes exceeded \$200,000. This estimate takes account of certain extraordinary expenses such as the private car in which he traveled all about the country. On one of his last visits to San Francisco, his receipts for two weeks exceeded \$1,000,000, of which \$500,000 or \$600,000 went to the actor himself. Along toward the last of his life it made little difference what he played. All that was necessary was to exhibit his name in front of a theater and the house was packed.

Big Money Makers.

Of the living stars it is perhaps inadvisable to single out some above others and it is not pretended that all of the big money-makers are mentioned here. But some of them are so luminously in the public eye that no discussion of this subject would be complete that excluded their names. Two such are Maude Adams and David Warfield.

In recent years Miss Adams has been particularly fortunate in her plays. Of the last four seasons she has occupied two exclusively with the adorable "Peter Pan," and one with "What Every Woman Knows," and the latter Barrie play will employ her at least all of the present season. "The Jezebels," in which she appeared two years ago, was far less popular, but a reasonable estimate of the profits from her performances for the last four years would place the average at \$125,000, she has been a star since 1897 (twelve years) and as a star of her caliber is estimated to receive not less than 50 per cent of the profits. Miss Adams is by this time more than a millionaire, as she has always lived unostentatiously.

David Warfield's career is unique. The present season will be his eleventh as a star. In these eleven years he has appeared in only three plays, "The Auctioneer," "The Music Master," and "A Grand Army Man." For the last five years he has been seen only in "The Music Master," with the exception of a comparatively few performances of "A Grand Army Man." He is the most profitable star in the world at the present time. The total amount paid by the American public to see him in "The Music Master" alone is known to only three persons, himself, David Belasco and Charles Klein, but it seems certain that in five years the total receipts must have exceeded \$1,000,000.

This is a record. The first year "The Music Master" went "on the road," after two years at the Bijou theater in New York, Mr. Warfield played two weeks in Boston to receipts of \$25,000 and \$20,000 respectively, while a week made up of three nights in Providence and three one-night stands in smaller New England cities netted a total of \$25,000. That the amazing thing was done when the play came for the first time to the academy of music in New York. Here Mr. Warfield played two weeks to only a few dollars less than an even \$100,000, an average of almost \$25,000 weekly. This is believed to constitute a record. At the same theater, in 1888, Booth and Barrett, then on a joint farewell tour as co-stars, played in repertoire to a total of about \$2,000 for two weeks.

In the present season Mr. Warfield, still using "The Music Master" will appear in many cities in the south and in the middle and northwest where he has never before been seen. Incredible as it may seem to the uninitiated, if his 50 per cent personal share of the profits of the season does not amount to a quarter of a million dollars he will be surprised, shocked, pained and grieved.

It may be Mr. Warfield's last year in "The Music Master." It ought to be. There is something melancholy in the spectacle of an artist of his ability putting in six of the best years of his life playing one part—no matter what part. He ought to be filling his gallery with fine portraits. Moreover, he can afford it. He has lived almost frugally and is by this time certainly a millionaire at least.

Costly Excursions Into Classics.

E. H. Sothern has made some very expensive excursions into the classics, but he probably doesn't regret it. That is the kind of a man he is. He made more money with romantic costume plays like "If I Were King" than he ever did with his beautiful "Hamlet" or his "Richelieu," and it is a matter of record that he temporarily sacrificed "Lord Dunsinane," which was costing money, in order to put on "Don Quixote," which he must have known would never prove anything more than a success of esteem. Mr. Sothern has known several seasons when his profits exceeded \$100,000 and his poorest season in fifteen years has not fallen below \$40,000.

Miss Marlowe's devotion to tragedy and the heroic drama has also been expensive. With plays like "Barbaric Fidelity" and "When Knighthood was in Flower," her profits have averaged from \$20,000 to \$50,000 yearly. In other years they sank as low as \$20,000 to \$40,000. From time to time she has joined forces with Mr. Sothern for a season in the classic drama and their combined receipts represented an average of not much less than \$100,000.

John Drew, who has been a star for seventeen years, has been one of the most consistent successes of them all. All the way from "The Masked Ball" of 1892 to "Innocent George" of 1909, he has had few poor plays with now and then a really big one and never-to-be-forgotten, tender "Rosemary" of Louis K. Parker, or that most brilliant of all modern light comedies, "When Knighthood was in Flower." Her profits have averaged from \$20,000 to \$50,000 yearly. In other years they sank as low as \$20,000 to \$40,000. From time to time she has joined forces with Mr. Sothern for a season in the classic drama and their combined receipts represented an average of not much less than \$100,000.

A most profitable combination of stars was in operation when Max Goodwin and Maxine Elliott appeared together. They had several seasons when they cleared a good deal more than \$100,000 in profit. Since their separation, what with poor plays and devotion to mining interests, Mr. Goodwin's theatrical fortunes have declined, but Miss Elliott has continued to make large sums in her best years and a very respectable income in her poorest seasons.

The Barrymore name is a pretty valuable trade mark and there isn't any doubt that it helps Miss Ethel Barrymore to roll the year's profits up to somewhere between \$50,000 and \$75,000. Indeed, even as her Uncle John is one of the most consistent of older stars, so is Miss Barrymore perhaps the most dependable of the younger set. She hasn't always had the best plays, either. What part of the profits does she retain? Well, 40 per cent, perhaps, and her salary. Billie Burke is one of the latest additions to the stellar ranks. "Love Watches" was her play last year and its profits were perhaps \$50,000.

Viola Allen, from the commercial point of view, has had a varied career. But for several seasons she appeared in "The Christian" to enormous profits, exceeding \$100,000 annually. Otis Skinner, among our very best actors, is one of the comers. He began to return good profits about the time he produced "The Harvester." The profits "The Honor of the Family," in which he appeared the last two seasons, were over \$50,000 annually.

It has been uphill work making some of our successful stars. Often the trouble has been with the plays. It took money, and a good deal of it, to make Eleanor Robson a profitable star, but the thing has been accomplished. It took a long fight to place Victor French in the successful list. For each of several years it cost \$20,000, but she worked hard and steadily and improved vastly. Last year she got a good play and the balance sheet showed a profit of \$25,000.

In the Millionaire Class. Another very wealthy theatrical star who has made all his money out of the theater is William Gillette. Acting and play-making have combined to place him surely in the millionaire class. In addition to his income as a successful star he has received many thousands of dollars in royalties on such plays as "Sherlock Holmes," "Secret Service," "The Private Secretary," "Held by the Enemy" and "Too Much Johnson," all of them most successful with the public. William H. Crane, now nearing the end of a long and honorable career as a star, is also a millionaire, for he has had a quiet and thrifty private life. Mr. Crane, like Miss Adams, John Drew and Mr. Gillette, has large investments in real estate in and out of New York City.

played "Toots" and "Becky Sharp." "Salvation Nell" made so much money throughout the west last season that Mrs. Pike will go on using it this year. In a single week in Los Angeles this actress and play attracted gross receipts of over \$25,000. Even the despised classics are not always unprofitable for a star. For Robert B. Mantell has for a number of years in the classic repertory cleared profits ranging from \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually. Lesser stars, of whom Broadway seldom hears, make sums that are not by any manner of means to be sneezed at. Thomas E. Shea, for example, trots about the country profiting himself not much less, if any, than Mr. Mantell. The big theaters never heard of such an actress as Minnie Victorson, yet she ambles over a circuit made up of towns of the third and fourth class and picks up from \$6,000 to \$8,000 annually, starting in plays like "The Straight Road" and "The Woman Pays"—and there are many more like her.

Profitable Acrobats.

In quite another field, Montgomery and Stone are among the most successful. These two players are little more than glorified acrobats, yet their first season in "The Red Mill," following "The Wizard of Oz," returned profits of \$120,000, many thanks to Victor Herbert's music. Of this sum, the acrobats divided \$20,000. They have been doing better than that every one of the four years since.

The very latest addition to the theatrical constellation is Miss Elsie Ferguson, who plays the title part in "Such a Little Queen," "Channing Pollock's whimsical romance of Herzegovina and Harlem. Miss Ferguson was not a star when the play was first produced in New York, but within a week her name was up one city and electric sign outside the theater in these days the final index of stardom. She has arrived at her destination over a far shorter route than that traveled by most stars and the permanency of her grip on the uncertain eminence that she now occupies remains to be determined.

But the point is that the success of the star system is found in a cash-in-cash paid by you and others like you. How much you and the others pay to make that success you have seen. If you don't like the system you have only to stop paying. If you do like it, which you probably do, you'll go on paying and the carping critics may carp all they please, for right or wrong the star system will continue.—American Magazine.

AT THE OMAHA THEATERS

(Continued from Page Eight.)

Two seasons was stage director at the Burwood. His most notable work was his interpretation of the name part in "The Devil." Maude Leone is to be in the cast, she having been especially engaged by Mr. Greer for that work. He remembers a program, who will be remembered as "Simplicity" in the Burwood production of "Lovers' Lane," is also with the company. Opening this afternoon with the comedy, "Facing the Music," the company will present it until Thursday matinee, when "The Man on the Moon" will be put on for the balance of the week.

Another well diversified bill is scheduled for this week at the Orpheum theater, with John Hyams and Lolita McIntyre, musical comedy stars featured as the headline attraction. In "The Quakers," a said to be a comedy of cleverness, The Curzon sisters, suspended in the air, perform evolutions, first as butterflies and later as flimsy-gowned fairies. Hanging by their teeth, they do a skirt dance in the air and offer other features equally amusing. "Wanted—a Sister," is the name of the one-act college play to be offered by James Young, assisted by Miss Lorraine Osborne and Robert Straus. Mr. Young has supported Viola Allen and other well known stars. Song, travesty and dancing will be presented by John World and Mirell Kingston. Mr. World is a singing and dancing comedian and Miss Kingston has earned her title, "the soubrette with a voice."

This will be the first appearance in Omaha of the famous flute virtuoso, Mme. Pantia of Cologne. She is said to be absolute mistress of the instrument she plays. The Arlington four is a quartet of singing and dancing messenger boys who provide a number of popular songs, clever comedy and dancing. Douglas and Douglas are comedy acrobats whose work, in addition to striking skill, produce many a hearty laugh. The kindrome, as usual, will project the newest of motion pictures and the Orpheum orchestra of fifteen musicians will offer several high class selections.

VALUABLES IN HOTEL SAFES. Guests Often Leave Personal Property with Clerks for Years at a Time. A woman walked up to the counter of a fashionable hotel and asked for a package of valuables which was in the safe. "If I had not wanted one particular thing I suppose I should have left the package where it was for another three years," she said to the clerk.

"Yes," said the clerk in answer to a question after the woman left, "that package had really been in our safe for three years. Why, we have all sorts of valuable papers, jewelry and even money that are entrusted to our keeping for years at a time. People seem to prefer a hotel safe to a safety deposit vault. One reason, perhaps, is that it costs nothing. Another is that the standard of hotel clerks has improved."

"But is anything the amount of jewelry that people keep in hotel safes. Of course the owners have originally stopped in the hotel, but they go away, leaving their valuables, and I have known such persons to be gone as much as two years and never make an inquiry about their property in that time."

"To show you how much confidence people have in hotels and their employees I might mention that the other day a man came in here and put four \$1.00 bills in an envelope, wrote his name on the latter and asked me to put it in the safe. Not long ago another man actually did the same thing with seven \$10.00 bills."

The clerks of several other hotels talked in a similar strain without any outside suggestion.

"I'll bet I have handled more than a million dollars worth of jewelry today," said one. "Look here," and he opened the safe and piled six or eight big jewelry cases on the counter, but hurriedly put them back. "In one of those I know there is over \$200,000 worth, and what I showed you was only a few of what the safe contains."

Up at a big hotel near the park the employees are greatly concerned about the freedom with which a wealthy foreign woman who is stopping there displays her jewels. Every evening she wears a row of pearls that goes once around her neck and then falls to her knees, to which is attached a large earring. Everybody who has seen the woman has exclaimed at their size and perfect matching and wealthy patrons of the house who have sold as well as bought jewelry say the necklace is not worth a cent less than \$200,000. The owner went the other day into one of the big jewelry houses and business was immediately suspended while everybody crowded about to admire and estimate the necklace.

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CLUB C This Club Includes \$375.00, \$350.00 and \$325.00 Pianos for \$298.00. Assortment in this Club embraces 18 distinct styles in any wood you might choose, from such lines as Harvard, Huntington, Kohler & Campbell, Brockmeyer, Marshall & Wendal, Hy. G. Lindeman. \$298. In this club you don't have to pay the first cash payment of \$15.—By our club plan it is rescinded.

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