

At the Theaters



George Behan - At the Orpheum



Clara Dalton At the Krug



Scene from 'The Third Degree' - At the Brandeis



Lizzie Freligh at the Gaiety



Show Girls in 'The Honeymoon Trail' - At the Krug



Adelaide Keim - AMERICAN MUSIC HALL



Carrie Clark Ward AT THE BOYD



Edwin Evans - At the Boyd

Henry Miller on Future of Stage

MR. HENRY MILLER'S presence at the Brandeis was one spot during the week on which the eye could rest with comfort. Mr. Miller is one of the American actors who can always be relied upon to put forth something worth while at the theater. His visit this time was none the less welcome because he came with laughter on his lips, rather than strenuously endeavoring to show us how to solve some feature of the great problem of life. Indeed, it may be questioned if he were not the more welcome for this reason, because it is not so very difficult to make us think, after all, while it re-

quires a real genius to afford us the delight of hearty laughter with no trace of sadness, and there is nothing in "Her Husband's Wife" that tends to anything but joy. Mr. Thomas has provided a comedy built along the broadest lines and not so delicate in its texture that it requires the most careful treatment of capable actors to show its beauties, and this is afforded by Mr. Miller and his company.

During one of his free moments, while in Omaha Mr. Miller was asked for his view on the outlook of the theater, especially with regard to the turmoil that now involves the business management and necessarily thus affects the artistic effect of the stage. He talked on this topic, as upon all others, hopefully and optimistically. The over-production of theaters and the subdivision of business is not, in his opinion, a necessarily fatal effect. It is an evidence more of mistaken zeal on the part of people who do not thoroughly understand the business in which they are embarked. But, he says, "So long as men have bank accounts and bridegrooms are

not on strike the building of theaters will proceed." This will necessarily entail, as I already has losses to those who are engaged in the business end of the theater.

Another point made by Mr. Miller is that at present, and he considers it generally unfortunate, the verdict of New York determines the taste of the American public in matters of the drama. It appears to him singular that the great cities of America, which are independent in other matters, should be so dominated by New York in the matter of what is good or bad at the theater. Instead of making our minds for ourselves as to the value of a play of the player's merits we wait until the piece has been produced in New York, has been discussed by newspapers and magazines, and we are thoroughly familiar with it in every way, before we accept it.

"This practice of calling for pre-arranged plays instead of taking them new, is very bad for the theater," he says, and then points out the remedy. "It must come through the establishment of theaters that are not to be conducted for profit alone, but with

a view to the proper representation of what is best." Illustrating the point, he referred to the stock company now playing at the Brandeis. "This company is doing good work," he said, "but it could do much better if it were not held down to the use of second-hand drama. Its loss for good would be far better were it devoted in part, at least in the production of new plays, and not given over entirely to the reproduction of pieces that have been tried elsewhere."

As a comparison he cited the days of not so very long ago when the great actors traveled over the country and were accepted because they were great actors, and not because they were presenting a particular play. And in those days, he said, the theater was doing its best work because not only were the high priced seats occupied, but the galleries were filled. Nowadays a first-class theater where high-grade drama is presented has little, if any, gallery attendance, because the folks who once patronized the gallery seek their amusement elsewhere and the price of seats downtown has been raised to such a figure in the effort to counteract the loss of the upstairs patronage. To remedy this he suggests the establishment of theaters under public control which shall not be run as charitable institutions, but which shall be directed for the good of the people, and not for private profit.

In a recent magazine article, Mr. Miller outlined his views on this point extensively and anticipated therein the action of Mr. Frohman and the New Theater referred to in this department last week. He expressed himself as much gratified that the New Theater had determined to open its doors to the low-price spectators in every part of the house, but said that it would be much better if they were permitted to go into a theater where they

felt they were not only equal sharers in the beauties of the house, but were also equal owners and sharers in its profits.

"The mission of the theater," says Mr. Miller, "is to the youth of the country. Its appeal is through its play on the emotions; the ideas established in youth are those which affect the life of the individual so the theater must look to its effect on young folk for whatever effect it is to have in shaping the destiny of the nation. To do this it must be devoted to good. To teach lessons of usefulness, and to make this teaching effective, it must be permitted to reach those who need it at the time when they need it most. Our theaters must be attractive. Our plays must be genuine, in sentiment and purpose, and must be presented so that the public will feel an interest in them. As to the spectators, however, the managers of the public cause nothing. It makes no difference to the people under whose direction the play is produced or the actor appears so long as it is a play of purpose or an actor of ability. The great thing in the theater, to me, is to reach the public."

Another point that is overlooked but frequently is what I call, the artistic principle—the author, the actor and the audience. The author conceives his plot, the actor interprets that plot and it is the function of the reviewer to show if the method has been made clear. The reviewer should on these three lines, if he cannot stand on two of them. The function of the reviewer is just as important to the theater as is that of the author or actor. To fail the three are so vitally connected that their mutual dependence at all times in order that the greatest good may result.

Mr. Miller may be right in proposing independence of New York as the larger cities of the country. In fact, Chicago has already practically achieved this condition, but for many reasons it is not likely that the remedy at large will be able to make the office of the reviewer in New York, and especially to the theater. This is only natural. New York is the great center of social, business and political life in America. A theater in the United States does not matter and from Wall Street radiates the influence that affects the business activities of the nation. Wall Street is the money center of the United States, and one of the money centers of the world, and without money little can be done. Therefore, the influence of New York on business is irresistible. The great firms of the country transfer their offices from New York, and thousands of thousands of visitors go there to attend to business matters, and find their pleasure in their few leisure moments mostly at the theaters. Assured of this patronage, the New York managers care to be by arriving to offer always the best. As a result New York has come to be the one great judgment bar, before which all who wish for fame on the stage must appear. No play is counted a success, no matter how often it may have been produced elsewhere, until it has re-



Lulu B. Papp with "101 RANCH"

MARIE MEERS WITH FOREPAUGH AND SELLS BROS. CIRCUS



JOSEPH C. MILLER - "101 RANCH"



Sidney Dale - At the Orpheum

ceived the stamp of New York's approval. This point has been demonstrated many times. Mr. Miller, himself, has shown it most emphatically. No author writes but with the hope that his play may be taken into New York, and there win plaudits from people and praise from the press. No actor dares himself with greater pains in the stuffy dressing room of a country theater, but looks forward to the time when his name shall flash in brilliance, adding to the glare on Broadway. No manager counts receipts while on the road who is not looking ahead to that day when his office will be somewhere around the sacred precincts of Forty-second and Broadway. And even the reviewer is tenderly remembered by Mr. Miller, occasionally indulges in a dream wherein he sees his name in black type in the New York newspapers. And just as New York has swallowed up the railroad along lives and spent its money in the second city in the world, just as it swallows up the ambitions of countless thousands of others who are yet held back from beating out their lives against the hard conditions of existence in that grinding metropolis. And so long as New York can swallow up these lives and find other lives ready to keep a constant stream pouring into the maw of the great city, just so long will New York dominate the theater of the country, and just so long will we be asked to take our place "predestined." If ever the time shall come when Mr. Miller's idea of a chain of state-controlled theaters exists the domination of New York may be broken.