

At the Theaters



JOHN HYAMS AT THE BRANDEIS

LEILA MCINTYRE IN 'THE GIRL OF MY DREAMS' AT THE BRANDEIS

FANNY-RICE AT THE ORPHEUM

GEORGE PRIMROSE AT THE AMERICAN

FRANK J. MCINTYRE IN 'THE TRAVELLING SALESMAN' AT THE BRANDEIS



GERTRUDE COGHLAN AT THE BRANDEIS



ALVA YORK AT THE AMERICAN

One Act Plays in Vaudeville

READEIS of The Bee were given recently an argument by George Behan in support of the serious short play on the vaudeville stage; this week they have the views of Will M. Cressy to the contrary. The arguments presented by these gentlemen are worthy of note, for each represents in himself the highest standard of the art he defends. While the question has two sides, and each has been ably presented, the experience of the vaudeville managers has been in favor of the Cressy end of the proposition. Everything that is said in behalf of the serious drama and its adaptability to the uses of the short play may be admitted, but the question turns out on this, but on the adaptability of the short play to the needs of the variety theater. To succeed, any play must be presented to the audience under proper conditions. Unless the audience be in the receptive mood, the message of the play is lost. It is possible to establish this mood in the short time that is allotted for the presentation of a play in a vaudeville theater, as they are today conducted? The answer to this one seems easy; the physical as well as the psychological difficulties are so great that it is almost impossible to accomplish the desired end.

Certain basic principles in play-building are fixed and immutable. They must be followed, and rigidly, if the play is to be coherent in its entirety, and of service as conveying either instruction or amusement. The play must begin, and it must end; it must proceed by regular gradation to its climax, and then it must descend naturally to its conclusion; and the perspective and proportion must be maintained at all times. This is possible even in a one-act play. Many of the short dramas are constructed on rigidly correct lines, and have been presented with powerful effect. But their presentation has always been under such conditions as made possible the results. The audience is hushed by its surroundings, by the music, lights and other influences of the theater, until it is ready for the message of the play. Then the drama, carefully prepared, is given; it builds up incident, situation, situation, until the structure is complete, and the spectator is given the full story, with nothing to distract his attention, and the effect is achieved. But for the most part, the one-act play is fragmentary and incomplete, and leaves untold so much that is essential to proper dramatic action that it is not popular, and is rarely resorted to, even by the most capable of actors. When it comes to adapting this form of dramatic expression to the needs of vaudeville, the comedy must of necessity be adhered to. The reasons for this are obvious.

Actors of ability often are lured by the temptation of high pay to try a short season in vaudeville, presenting some one or another of their popular successes in tabloid form. These excursions—'descents' is the word the critics use—are usually failures, for, after the novelty wears off, at the end of the second week as a rule, the star tires of the audience, and the audience of the star and art scurries back to the prouder and higher-priced theater, leaving the vaudevillians to enjoy their own sort of amusement in their own way. One of the saddest sights carried in memory is that of Lawrence Irving and his wife, presenting a really beautiful and artistically impressive sketch on the stage of the American Music Hall in Chicago. It was a story of Paris in the days of Louis XI, and Mr. Irving played the king, but it came between a 'song plugger' and a dog act, and the effect was

most pitiful. Mr. Irving showed great ability, and from a purely artistic standpoint, the act was a delight; but it was impatiently listened to, night after night, by the 'smoke if you like' crowd, who mostly liked to, and who were eager for the mummery to get off so that the dogs could come on and show how much more clever they were. Art has its uses, but they do not belong on the vaudeville stage.

Nothing could be farther wrong, however, than the conclusion that drama has no chance with the vaudeville audience; on the contrary, some really powerful dramas have been splendidly successful in the variety and music halls, while the comedies that are offered have always won favor. But it takes both skill and understanding to construct a play that will begin, develop and end in twenty minutes. Very few men have this skill. At present two stand out pre-eminent as possessing it. Will M. Cressy and Edmond Day. These men seem to have an inspiration for this sort of work. Their sense of perspective and proportion is so accurate that they are able to compress the action of a complete drama within the time limit set, and yet it lacks neither the elements required by the canon. Their plays have both beginning and ending, they move naturally, and with the essential directness, and present a sequential flow of incident, without the episodic quality that stamps most of them. This is because neither of these writers undertakes to pack too much into his play; each realises the value of the word, the situation, as related to the whole, and each works deftly to achieve the effect of a four-act comedy in the time that may be devoted to each separate part of a bill of eight numbers without keeping the folks at the theater till after the cars have stopped running on the suburban lines.

Many pretentious and some really good plays have had their genesis in the one-act vaudeville sketch. 'The Moth and the Flame' was once a one-act play, consisting of the first act of what Clyde Fitch sent out afterwards as a three-act comedy drama. In fact, that was a notable characteristic of the Fitch drama. Each act was sufficient unto itself, and the performance could be stopped on the going down of almost any curtain, and the play would be complete. One stage director once remarked that the Fitch plays had a distinct advantage, for it made little difference which act was first put on, or in what order the others followed. This peculiarity is not so noticeable in his later works, but it was strong in his earlier plays. Edward Milton Royle wrote 'The Squaw Man' as a skit for a Lamb's 'sambol,' and afterwards drew it out to the time of four acts, and later put on an addition of equal size in the shape of 'These Are My People,' showing that while the original sketch was complete, it carried in it the germ not only of a play of orthodox length, but of several. So Edmond Day prepared 'The Sheriff' for his own uses in vaudeville, and was generally acclaimed a success in it; it is doubtful if a more genuine bit of comedy is known than the appearance of Slim Hoover on the barrel at the station, smoking his cigarette in utter derision, and delivering himself of the oracular ejaculation, 'Oh, h—, nobody loves a fat man.' Nor did Macklyn Arbuckle ever get into it the union with which Day gave that single line. Yet 'The Sheriff' has been swallowed up in the dust of 'The Round-Up,' which grew out of the little bit of clever comedy. These incidents may be multiplied many times, but serve to illustrate the point. Cressy has not as yet expanded any of his little plays into the more pretentious comedies, but he easily might, for he has wrapped up many a three or four-act comedy in a small package and delivered it in twenty minutes, with plenty of time for laughs, and he never misses fire.

While in the city, Mr. Cressy delivered himself of a new theory of life, with some philosophy in it. It was apropos of what is known among the guild of actor folk as 'the death watch,' or those who witness the first performance.

'A man should start life at the age of 30, with plenty of money and a wife,' says Cressy, 'and then grow younger instead of older.' At 30 wife nor money matter little to him, at 70 he would be in about the same fix, but by the time he grew backwards to 30 he would begin to take notice. His money would look pretty good to him, and he would be able to get some pleasure out of life. By the time he reached 30 he would begin to take notice



DUFFIN REDDAY TROUPE AT THE ORPHEUM

also of the wife, and when he got to 40 he would have both wife and money, and be inclined to cry. The two would have one grand, glorious good time, and when he got back to 30 he would be broke, but he would love the wife with him. End in the strength of his manhood he would hustle like a good fellow and wouldn't miss the money he had such a splendid time spending. By the time he got back to 30 he wouldn't have the wife, but she would be a fair young girl again, and he would run after her, just as young men always do, and wouldn't worry because they were no longer wed. A little further back he would come to the time when he first met the girl, and then a little further along she would disappear from his life and he wouldn't know it. No wretch of parting here, nor grief because of the passing of a loved one. And as he would grow younger, day by day, till suddenly—poof! He is gone, and that's the end of it.

It is Cressy's idea that critics should see the performance on a Saturday night, when the bill has run for a week, and has gotten into smooth working order; then they can get a notion of what the act really is, and not be subjected to the little annoyances that so frequently mark the opening on a Sunday afternoon.

HARTIGAN TALKS OF GUARDS

Regrets the Finances of the Organization Kept Militia from Coming to Omaha.

Adjutant General Hartigan, who has been in St. Louis attending the national meeting of national guardsmen, reached Omaha Saturday morning on his way home and remained until after the army maneuvers in the afternoon.

General Hartigan was sincerely anxious that the national guard take part in the Ak-Sar-Ben festivities and regretted exceedingly that owing to the condition of the finances of the guard a declination of the invitation extended by Hanson was necessary.

'It would have been of great benefit to the guard to have been here and taken part in the military maneuvers and been associated with the regular troops,' said General Hartigan. 'It would also have been of great benefit to the guard to have been associated so intimately with the people of Omaha and their guests. If we are to have a real national guard it is necessary that the legislature appropriate more money for its maintenance and support. The only way we can impress the legislature is through public sentiment and that comes only with close relations with the public. The national guard is not a joke and every time the companies take part in such occasions it makes friends with the people. I hope, now that the ice is broken, that every year hereafter the guard will be able to come to Omaha and spend a few days and furnish part of the entertainment.'

Cressy On Serious One-Act Plays

WHAT is my opinion of the strictly serious one-act play in vaudeville? It is a peculiarity of mine, that when I am asked a question I can generally think of some answer that some other fellow gave to some other question, about the other matter, that seems to fit the occasion a great deal better than my own answer would.

Bill Fifield was working for my grandfather, at dinner grandmothers had a pudding—it was a sort of Payne-Aldrich pudding—it did not suit anybody. Bill got the last helping and to his hungry eyes his helping looked pretty small. Grandmother asked him how it was?

'Oh, it is all right,' replied Bill, 'what there is of it.' Then, as he got his first taste of it, added, 'and there is enough of it, such as it is.'

I don't think there is anyone who admires and respects these absolutely serious plays and their players any more than I do. I believe in them absolutely and thoroughly; I believe in their uplift and influence for good, and I am always delighted to see such artists as William H. Thompson, Robert Hilliard and George Behan, and the style of plays they present in our vaudeville houses.

But, with Bill Fifield, I believe, 'there is enough of it, such as it is.'

I don't believe that the serious play, no matter how well it is written or presented, really belongs in a vaudeville theater, nor do I think that its influence is for the ultimate benefit of the vaudeville business.

A vaudeville audience is one of the most peculiar exercises of humanity in the world; it is not an analytical reasoning body; it does not ask 'why do I feel glad, sorry, depressed or exhilarated?' It simply feels. It laughs at the trained monkeys one minute, applauds the wonderful feats of the acrobat the next minute, laughs at the funny acts in the following minutes and promptly forgets the whole business next minute.

It does not go to a vaudeville theater to be instructed, educated, reformed or improved. If a man wants to hear grand opera he goes to see grand opera at an opera house. If he wants to see serious plays and acting he goes to a dramatic house. When he goes to a vaudeville theater he does so to enjoy himself—to see variety—to forget his troubles.

A man who likes beefsteak does not order hash just because there is a piece of steak in that hash; and the man who does like hash, and buys hash, does not want



SCENE FROM 'THE PORT OF MISSING MEN' AT THE KRUG

to find a half-pound steak in it.

One who is familiar with vaudeville and vaudeville audiences knows how nearly impossible it is to get an audience back into a happy, joyful and enthusiastic frame of mind after they have once become depressed over a sad or pathetic little story such as is told in the serious playlet. And the result of this is that the artists following after such plays fall in their efforts to please, and at the end of the performance the audience goes out feeling that, somehow, their evening has been a failure. They do not reason it out as to the why or wherefore; they do not bother to consider the fact that they have seen the sweetest, tenderest and best acted playlet they have ever seen in their lives. All they know or care is that they are not coming out of the theater in their usual laughing, easy and carefree frame of mind; and in their unreasonable way they say: 'That's a rotten show.'

I don't know whether I have made myself clear or not, but I have made myself clear on a business point of view and I have given it.

Personally and professionally, I respect, admire and love the serious one-act play; but looking at it out through the box office window, I am like the Irishman with six children: 'I wouldn't take a million dollars apiece for the ones we have got, but I wouldn't give 10 cents for six more just like them.'

WILL M. CRESSY.

CARRIE CLARK WARD IS TO RE-ENTER VAUDEVILLE

Popular Character Actress Will Take On Comedy Sketch by Will M. Cressy.

Carrie Clark Ward is going to re-enter vaudeville. She had an experience with the two-day while on the Pacific coast and liked it so well that she intends to go back. So she closed her engagement with the Woodward players at the Boyd last night and will leave early in the week for the east. She has contracted with Will M. Cressy for an Irish comedy sketch, or rather for a sketch that will have in it an Irish comedy part for her uses. Mr. Cressy has outlined the scenario and has promised to deliver the sketch entire within two weeks. Sedley Brown will stage it, and it will be given a try-out in New York very soon.

Miss Ward is a most capable character actress and has shown more than common ability in her work at Omaha. She made many friends during the first stock season at the Burwood and her return this season was welcome news to the patrons of the Boyd, for they recalled the charm of her comedy and were eager to see her again.

Her long experience on the stage has made her a most exacting artist in her work, and her comedy is never dulled by coarseness. But she is weary of the strenuous life of the stock actor and will seek in vaudeville a respite from the effort that demands so much.

Sedley Brown leaves the Boyd company also, his last work as director having been the staging of 'Classmates,' which will be presented this week. Mr. Brown had offered from New York when he came here at the beginning of the season, which he declined and which has now been renewed in such form that he does not feel justified in refusing it a second time. After he gets Miss Ward's sketch launched he will be connected with the producing department of one of the largest firms in the metropolis.

Lloyd Ingraham will succeed Mr. Brown as stage director at the Boyd. Mr. Ingraham has both the taste and the ability to properly direct a big production, as he has abundantly proven in the past, some of the best of the big productions at the Burwood two seasons ago having been under his management.

TRIALS OF A WOMAN TRAPPER

How She Made a Living in the Pioneer Days of Southern Kansas.

Near the little town of Haven, fifteen miles south of Hutchinson, Kan., a few days ago there was a neighborhood gathering of pioneers which recalled the life and activities of a Kansas woman in the early days in which human interest, romance and adventure played important parts, relates the Topeka Capital.

Mrs. Warren Jewell, the wife of an early settler on the plains, was easily the center of interest in the little group of Reno county pioneers who gathered to talk over the old times of thirty-eight years ago. In 1872 Mrs. Jewell, then Miss Sarah

Bessie Clifford a Clever Dancer

THE ordinary human memory being much like a sieve, little will remain in it after a time with regard to most theatrical performances or productions save perhaps one or two particular features. One of such is the dancing of Bessie Clifford in 'The Three Twins.' For Miss Clifford's grace and suppleness, her little agility, coupled with so much physical charm and intelligence, make a totality which deserves the use of the abused and misused word unique.

It is likely that dancers far inferior to Miss Clifford or to Miss Bessie McCoy would get away pretty well with such opportunities as the Yama-Yama and hypnotic dances afford, and when really gifted girls have the chance their fame is assured.

Miss McCoy was the original Molly Sommers and danced it at the Whitney first in Chicago in the fall and winter of 1897. She gained considerable of a Chicago reputation, but did not become illustrious until 'The Three Twins' went to New York. Here her renown became considerable, it being unquestionably partly due to the fervor with which a famous novelist thrust himself publicly at her feet in an article published in a paper of national circulation. It is not the purpose of this department to detract one whit from the estimate of Miss McCoy's dancing. In one respect she eclipses any dancer one has seen. She suggests youthful abandon and girlish verve and elan in a greater degree than any dancer seen on the stage in the last decade. Such enthusiasm and such fat romping is mighty charming and goes across the footlights to make enthusiastic a whole audience.

Miss Clifford on the other hand has a more diverse appeal. Her stepping in the Yama-Yama dance is of infinite variety, and on the least analysis shows to be a complex proposition, evidently the result of thought and study. This brought to bear on natural grace in the highest degree, on wonderful suppleness and agility, is what makes Miss Clifford so entrancing a dancer. In the hypnotic dance Miss Clifford shines beyond all others, because here her grace is under the direction of ability to conceive and execute the supposed mental state. Her face and carriage as well as her movements suggest that she really is in a state of complete submission to the other dancer. Lolling on this aspect of her bending and swaying, and one almost feels that a human will has been submerged. In other words, here Miss Clifford is so good an actress as well as dancer that she completely convinces.

Beley, was known as the 'lady trapper of the Ninnescah.' The Ninnescah in those days was a treacherous stream ploughing through the great plains country to the south of Hutchinson. Sarah Beley came to this county with her parents in the early '70s. Both her father and mother died soon after they settled in Albion township.

Miss Beley, left alone in the world, took a government homestead claim and earned the money to make the necessary improvements by hunting and trapping along the Ninnescah river. She had a complete trapper's outfit of steel traps and deadfalls, and during the winter of 1873-3 she earned enough from the sale of skins and furs to pay for the improvements on her little homestead claim.

The money thus earned by trapping and hunting paid for breaking up fifteen acres of land on her claim the first year, enabled her to have built a sod house, in which she lived for several years, and to set out an orchard, one of the first to be planted in that part of the country.

Every day Miss Beley would drive five miles viewing the traps and deadfalls she had set the day previous. She was always armed with a hunting knife and a large revolver. She killed and skinned the game she caught, including wolves, coyotes, mice and such other small game as inhabited the great prairie region of the southwest.

When not engaged in trapping Miss Beley earned considerable by teaming, driving her own team and hauling freight a distance of forty miles between the little settlement near her sodhouse and Wichita, Kan. and wide along the Ninnescah. She had taken the homestead next to that of Miss Seley. He had constructed a little dug-out on his claim, 'just big enough for two,' but was doing his own housekeeping and living a bachelor's life.

It was not a pleasant way to live, he told the little company of old settlers who a few days ago met at his home to talk over old days again. 'I needed another Jewell' in that little dugout to make my happiness complete, and it was the same old story, whether enacted on the bleak prairies of Kansas in the early '70s or in 'fell in love with that plucky girl living alone on the adjoining quarter section. We were wed, joined our fortunes, consolidated our claims, and I am willing to confess that all the wealth I possess and all the happiness I enjoy are due to the help, assistance and love of that little woman, 'the lady trapper of the Ninnescah.'

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MARGUERITE CHABANTY AT THE GAYETY

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