

Week at the Omaha Theaters--Music and Drama

Effect of War on Theater Otis Skinner Sees Only Good to Come to Stage from World Upheaval

By OTIS SKINNER.
I HAVE been asked what effect the war is having on the theaters. Its effect is the same as on ourselves—on each community—on the nation. Many have asked why the useless sacrifice of it all—why all this horror? What good is to come out of it all? Wherein have our corns been trodden upon?

At first these questions seemed unanswerable to some of us, but slowly, surely, we have become certain of one thing, and that is the elevation of humanity. Unselfishness is coming out of the war, if nothing else does.

The effect of the war on the human mind—on the human character—has been wonderful. The human grouch has opened his heart, has opened his arms, has opened his pocketbook to the cause. The man who was supposed to be inhuman and without a heart, has developed one. There has been an awakening—and men who have been in a shell for years, have shown themselves really human.

That which is affecting our community, our American character today, is reflected in the attitude of the war upon the theater.

When the war first started, strict economy was preached, and it is rightly being preached today. There is a limit, however, to economy, and war or no war, the world's industries—the world's amusements and recreations must be kept moving.

The merchant must be patronized, or the mills will stop running. Closing the theaters and places of amusement would not help the war.

Amusement is always essential to right living, and now in times of war, it is more essential than ever. Discouragement and hopelessness are to be avoided, and how better can these be driven away than by amusement and recreation?

With the paper printing war news all over the front page—with the bands playing—the soldiers marching—and with the sad parting of loved ones, heartful amusement of the right sort is needed more than ever.

It is right here that the theaters play an important part in the world war. It is as important to spend wisely as to economize. The chasing away of despair, to be replaced by something beautiful, is well worth while.

The elevation of humanity brought about by the war is reflected in the elevation of the stage. Possibly the theatrical managers are becoming more human—the plays at least are. The badly constructed plays—the tawdry melodramas and cheap, indelicate musical shows, are not meeting with the success accorded the play of genuine heart interest.

What the people want today is idealism, beauty, sweetness, gentleness. This is wherein such plays as "Mister Antonio" has found such a welcome. This play has a sweet message and its beauty of character makes a strong appeal. To bring cheerfulness into the lives of others has been the mission of Booth Tarkington in writing "Mister Antonio," and it is my present mission on the stage, particularly in these times of war. Here is the philosophy of Tony the hardy-gurdy man in "Mister Antonio," and it is mine as well:

Says Tony: "When I was leetla boy in Sorrent I get in trouble sometime. I make to cry. Well, wat you tink dat ola prias 'e say to me? 'E say—'You Tonia, don't you know you can make jus' de same noise as loud if you make to laugh instead you make to cry, an' dat noise she's nicer noise, an' do you twice as good in your gizzard!'"

"Dat ole prias' 'e right. Dees worl', she can do wat she like to me—I am goin' to laugh. If a man 'e do some ugly trick, I am goin' to laugh in 'is face. I laugh when I wan' to laugh an' I laugh when I wan' to cry."

It is this philosophy of Tony's which I have come to believe in so thoroughly. It is the joy of life I like to see and portray in character. Closely as some of you are connected with the war, it is often better for you to shut the door in the face of war by seeking amusement of the right sort, and laugh when you want to cry.

allied to this world conflict. The art of the theater is like its sister arts—a part of the peace of our nation. A bankrupt, overwhelmed, defeated nation would exhibit no theatrical art, and little art of any kind. If we are to keep our theaters living, vital things, we of the stage must realize that in these times of sacrifice we are called upon to make ours.

The stage is prospering—the business of the player is prospering more than ever. To many actors has come prosperity quite unparalleled in their experience.

We, therefore, aside from our love of country, our patriotism, our love of humanity, must do our share. Many of our fellow actors are in the trenches, many are wearing the khaki and those of us who cannot actively participate in the war itself should give the boys what we can.

Our plays should be better, they should appeal to our better nature, they need gentleness, sympathy, heart interest, cheerfulness, and above all else, they must ring true.

When it comes that an atheist, H. G. Wells, writes about God, then surely something has happened in the lives of men. There has been an awakening and people are growing more and more human, more and more tender, and more and more unselfish.

Study Screen

(Continued From Page Eight.)

held together by a badly woven thread of coincidence.

If the free-lance writer of today will take his stories from the everyday life about him, not trying to make them wildly sensational, but merely a story of human people doing human things, I do not think he will have any trouble in disposing of his work, granted the writer has a certain gift for depicting the phases of life in an interesting manner. He must realize that the screen, above all other fields of literary endeavor, has a technique particularly exacting, and the only way this can be learned is by practice and by studying the screen itself.

By studying the screen, I do not mean copying the ideas set forth thereon, as some writers have a particular weakness for doing, but rather profiting by the finished work, which, in nine cases out of ten, represents the result of hard, careful study. The idea must not necessarily be new, but its treatment should be new, and it should above all seek to bring out some phase of life in which we are all interested, but which perhaps we may not have noticed until brought to our attention by a keener student of humanity.

Summing up, I would say that the trouble with the outside writer is that he does not take the screen seriously, and in many cases, I believe, having failed in other lines of literary endeavor, he turns to the motion picture not only as a last resort, but with a feeling of contemptuous superiority; that anything will do for pictures. Until he learns that the screen demands the highest that he is able to give—and will accept nothing else, no writer will attain even the slightest success in this field of work.

Oak Street M. E. Church
To Observe Boy Scout Day
Sunday will be observed at Oak Street Methodist Episcopal church as Boy Scout day. Every scout is pledged to invite a boy friend to the Sunday school and the morning service. Rev. Mr. Wait will preach on a subject of special interest to Boy Scouts, "The Man of Tomorrow." The junior choir will furnish appropriate music. Scoutmaster Paul T. Hill will have general supervision over the program of reception by Troop No. 21 to visiting scouts throughout the day.

Good Memory.
Another thing that will puzzle our soldiers is English money. One time an American who was the worse for drink was traveling in a railway carriage when the guard asked for his ticket.
"Got none! Lemme lone!" mumbled the Yank.
The guard took out his ticket schedule. "Five and six, please," he said tersely.
"Whazzat?" queried the tipsy one.
"Five and six, please," repeated the guard.
"Eleven," said the Yank. "Now move along to de next boy."—Boston Transcript.

Few Clothes in "Flo-Flo"

When John Cort presented "Mother Carey's Chickens" early in the season, Broadway conceded that he had produced "a sweet and wholesome play." When he did "Flo-Flo," the corset comedy act at the Cort, the great dark way hailed it as the big, bright spot on the black Thursday thoroughfare but affixed adjectives decidedly antithetical. "Flo-Flo," a chicken of quite another breed, cackles garrulously as becomes the hen capable of laying eggs in a season of stage sterility.

"Not that it isn't a good show," says Mr. Cort, "for I think it of the finest entertainment—one of the splendid things it has been my privilege to do—but, because of public preferences, there will be no more 'Mother Carey Chickens' for me, at least not this season. I am going to raise chickens on another complexion, this time the kind that Broadway fancies or thinks it fancies, which is the same thing. Certain it is they are entirely different from those preferred by Mother Carey, simple and kindly soul though she be. Seen through the spectroscopic they may appear of a tarnished tint and the feathers may look dyed and even double-dyed, but still Broadway broilers of the 'Flo-Flo' type look better to me than the country fry as a business proposition in these troublous times."

"Flo-Flo" is the first fruit of my new policy of co-ordinating with public preferences. She's very light and frothy; some of the critics have said she is really audacious, and others have expressed the fear—I might properly say hope—that she will contract pneumonia in the draughty stage and pass into a land where raiment is a matter of no consequence. One of them even tried to picture the catastrophe that would ensue if she were seized with a fit of sneezing, the inference being that such bodily exertion might sadly disarrange her attire. Still another suggested that the entire wardrobe of the company was kept in a knitting bag over night, but still the tired business man and his wife with their friends from both home and abroad hit the trail to the Cort with unflinching footsteps.

While they marvel at the figures of the footlights I manifest equally as much interest in those of the nightly statement. And all the time I can't help thinking how scrawny were the curves of the box office figures when "Mother Carey's Chickens," one of the finest shows I have ever produced, were holding forth at the same theater.

I know all this sounds sordid and commercial, but, honestly, there is something much more gratifying about a financial success than an artistic failure. The trouble about the latter is that you feel selfish in your enjoyment of it—you miss the companionship of the audience ever present at a commercial success—and really get so lonesome that you become moody and depressed. You positively detest the sight of the inactive ushers and theater attaches and long for the someless stranger who never reaches your door because there's a burlesque theater on the corner.

"It may be that public taste has degenerated as a reaction of the war, and peace will restore it to a more intellectual plane, in which case I personally shall be most happy, but in the interim I am going to discharge my obligation to the public as an amusement purveyor by giving it what its heart desires. Since it's 'Flo-Flo' they want, I am going to look around and see if there are any more at home like her and trot 'em out. One good thing about girls like 'Flo-Flo' in these days of baggage car shortage and congested railroads is that her wardrobe can be routed by parcel post or carried in the property-man's vest pocket, which you must admit is a war-time desideratum."

Brightening Clocks in the Dark.
Small flat disks treated with a radium compound are now being glued on the dials of clocks at the five-minute points and also to the hands so that the clock can be read in the dark. A complete set of eleven disks and a pair of hands can be affixed to a clock in a few minutes. The glow is practically everlasting and the disks, according to the manufacturer, will outlast the mechanism of the clock itself. The disk is omitted from the 6 of the clock so that the dial may be read instantly.

For automobilists, campers, hunters, doctors, nurses and soldiers, this clock is a great convenience.—Popular Science.

MUSIC

By HENRIETTA M. REES.

THOMAS W. SURETTE, who recently appeared under the auspices of the Fine Arts society, in his enjoyable lecture, "How to Listen to Music," is one of the principals in a controversy which has been racking the public school system of Boston. The trouble is between the supervising force of the Boston schools, comprising accredited salaried officials, and the advisory committee, made up for the most part of university educators, working voluntarily, with Archibald T. Davidson and Thomas W. Surette as their leading representatives.

The Christian Science Monitor, in discussing the situation, says that the advisory committee is fighting for an idea, while the other side is fighting for a system, and for an ancient and discredited one at that. The question is formulated by this paper as "whether the music in the public schools of Boston shall be based on the authority of the scale or on the appeal of great melody? Or, in other words, shall music teaching rest upon technique chiefly or shall it stand fundamentally upon appreciation. Or, to look at it from another angle, shall the musical attainments of the school boys and school girls be measured by their ability to solve problems in the scale and the tonic sol-fa system into the masterworks of tone?" Two and a half years ago the advisory committee introduced rote singing into the public schools of Boston in the first four grades with gratifying results. Now they wish to introduce other reforms in the higher grades and they find themselves cutting off a source of income to several influential school book companies, also.

"It will mean a loss of prestige to all those music supervisors who have put their pedagogic variations on the scale and the tonic sol-fa system into print." But the advisory committee contends that this loss to book-sellers and editors is compensated for, according to the advisory committee's arguments, by incalculable gain to the boys and girls of the schools.

After all, for whose benefit is the music put in the public schools anyway? For whose benefit is all music teaching supposed to be done? We had always supposed that it was that others might have the opportunity of learning something about it, and that all energies should be bent to that end regardless of personal interests in the matter. But how often, even in private teaching, we hear of the teacher adapting the pupil to his knowledge and musical ideas rather than adapting these to the different pupils. There are some teachers who do not seem to take into consideration the fact that it is for the pupil's benefit at all, but merely for their own. It is often this losing sight of the main issue that not only causes trouble like that in Boston, but which makes the individual pupil who has shown a musical aptitude in the beginning lose his interest and claim to "hate" music. Mr. Surette says: "The ideal of attainment with school music supervisors for the most part is proficiency in sight singing. But this should be only the means to an end. The chief aim should be to make children like music." This could be applied as well to all music teaching. The ideal should be not to make proficient performers, so much as to make the students like music and anxious to learn what they can about it for that reason.

That Galli-Curci's operatic debut in New York was a sensational triumph will be welcome news to her many Omaha admirers. She appeared in Meyerbeer's "Dinorah," and after the "Shadow Song" awoke an enthusiasm which lasted for at least 20 minutes. It was more than handclapping. Yelling, stamping, handkerchief waving and a veritable pandemonium of cheering made up the babel of sound. Finally she signaled the conductor and before the curtain repeated the closing portion of the song, and even then the audience was reluctant to let her go. One paper announces that some of the most seasoned musicians were prominent among those who lost their heads. The audience was made up in large part of professional musicians, and was as discriminating and exacting as could be found, which

makes her success even more of a triumph for that reason.

The Chicago Opera company has been winning wide notice and many coveted laurels for itself in its metropolitan engagement. Muratore triumphed the first night, receiving such an ovation as has not been accorded since the days of Jean de Reszke. Mary Garden, Rosa Raisa, Anna Fittiu, Rimini and several other of its stars have made for themselves distinct places in the affections of the New York public. With two opera companies New York is reminded of the days when the Manhattan and Metropolitan were in full force, especially as some few of the stars, including Mary Garden and Lucien Muratore, were in the cast of the Manhattan company and Campanini the conductor.

This really happened to the musical editor shortly after taking up the work on The Bee, and now that the friend has moved away, and time has probably effaced it from her memory, it will stand being printed:

The musical editor had been one about six weeks when we met a friend on the street, a friend of high school days who had married and settled down to as much domestic tranquility as a husband and two children would permit. She greeted us effusively and remarked about the musical work, "I think you are the smartest thing I ever knew," she said. "To play the piano and the pipe organ, and then to be able to write, too. And you know, just to talk to you, nobody could ever tell that you knew anything."

Certain of the musical fraternity are taking malevolent delight from the announcement that the two-piano recital planned by the Tuesday Musical club has been changed and that Harold Bauer will instead come in recital alone at the Boyd theater on the evening of Wednesday, February 27. Not that they did not want to hear Mr. Gabrielowitch, but because they would rather hear one piano than two, even when the two are played by such celebrities. They seem to have an arithmetical conviction that two-piano music doubles the responsibilities, halves the freedom of interpretation, is twice as stiff to listen to and divides the pleasure for all concerned unless not only one but two are thoroughly mindful of each other as well as the music. And even then a perfect ensemble is so difficult to maintain the musically inclined folks would rather hear a soloist. So the announcement of Mr. Bauer alone is especially pleasing to them, and they are rejoiced that they do not have to listen to two pianists at once. There is much two-piano music which is lovely, however, and for those taking part it is a stimulation and delight to play it, and no satisfaction more genuine than that which is theirs when they feel that they have done it well. But even those who may be disappointed will enjoy Mr. Bauer, for he is a pianist of deserved distinction.

The poor abused ukulele! When Sousa planned to send as many as he could to the trenches, somebody in the east wrote two columns about it, telling how it would conquer the Germans without the use of guns, and how Hawaii through the ukulele had been revenged upon the United States for dissolving its monarchy. Other aesthetic souls say they would just as soon listen to a tin pan pounded, and others just say, "The ukulele! Horrors!" and with a wave of the hand consign the instrument to the nethermost depths, and far beneath any serious discussion. And yet the ukulele has its place. What other instrument is there of convenient size which can be carried around by an amateur singer, for instance, which can be used for a simple accompaniment, anywhere one might be inspired to sing? Its use in the trenches might help to brighten many a dreary moment, and to its soft twang voices could often be raised in snatches of song. It is not an instrument which has a great intellectual appeal, upon which a highly trained talent can pour forth its very soul, but just as there is a place for the simple song there is also a place for a simple instrument, and when well played it steadies the voices and adds a dash and verve to the rhythm in the accompaniment which makes the singing of parlor crowd or a picnic crowd who are singing for the fun of it all the more enjoyable. Besides, think of the other instruments which are very much worse.

Musical Notes.
Miss Belle Robinson will entertain the "Belle Robinson Music Study club" on Monday evening, February 11, at 8 o'clock. Those taking part in the program will be: Misses Martha Morphy, Nina Garret and Edith M. Miller, assisted by Mrs. Leidy-Berger, violinist.

The weekly program of Christmas's orchestra for this evening will include the overture, "Phedra," by Massenet, operatic selections by Mascagni, Tchaikowsky, ballet music, and many shorter numbers, including a request song, "Deep River," by Burleigh, and "I Hear You Calling Me," Marshall.

A recital will be given by Herbert M. Ahan of St. Joseph, Mo., pupil of Miss Belle Robinson, Thursday morning at 10 o'clock at 1907 Farnam street.

Mrs. Mary Rogers Eggleston presented her pupils in a piano recital Thursday evening at the home of Mrs. Harry M. Binder, Forty-eighth and Farnam street. Those taking part were: Joseph Lawrence, Viola McEathern, Jesse Farley, Kathryn Kimball, Harriet Binder, Dorothy Cobley, Wylie Thompson, Janet Weare, Margaret Price and Irene Vandahl.

On account of bad weather the piano recital by pupils of Cecil Berryman had to be postponed. The program as announced will be given Thursday evening, February 14, at the Schmoller & Mueller piano rooms. The public is cordially invited.

Eat Egyptian Chocolates On Your War Bread
A well known Omaha woman, connoisseur of fine candies, told me that she had spread an Egyptian Chocolate on a slice of bread.

"Could you believe," said she, "it was so good that I made a meal of chocolate-spread bread?"

Indeed I could believe it. I myself often have Egyptian Chocolate sandwiches for my lunch.

Egyptian Chocolates are so rich and pure, so delicious, so nourishing, that with bread they make a most sustaining and satisfying meal.

Try them on your war bread. It will delight you. It will help you "Hooverize."

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Note **HIPPODROME VAUDEVILLE LAYS OFF ON ABOVE DATES, RESUMES SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15.**