

THEATRICAL NOTES

All but a few seats in the parquet were filled on Thursday night at the Lansing. "A Bachelor's Romance," by Dorothy Morton is one of the best plays yet written for Mr. Russell. The character of David Holmes, closely corresponds with Mr. Russell's own. Few actors have the literary gift—Mr. Russell is a master of direct, simple, English. His before-the-curtain speeches are literature of Joe Jefferson and Richard Mansfield and Sol Smith Russell would have succeeded as writers if their fortune had not led them to the stage. The selection and arrangement of words in their curtain speeches is so artless, melodious and witty that one is led to think it easy until some other man, equally great perhaps, as an actor, makes a speech and then one knows that last night it was Hyperion and tonight a satyr.

Mr. Russell then has the delicacy, poetry, mildness and ruminating habits of a writer. Some girl in the audience said as she was going out, "I don't wonder Sylvia married that sweet old thing instead of the young man." Youth to youth! The soul of David Holmes is a flower, unwilted, never handled, and brought to rare perfection by gentle deeds and forty years' converse with the classics. Sylvia has more of worldly wisdom than he. She is a sweet girl but not more innocent, not a year younger than David Holmes who has kept himself unspotted from the world. I have never before seen Mr. Russell in a play which exhibited his transparent purity, his charity, and above all, his literary quality so well as this one. The audience was in full sympathy with the play and the players. A member of the company, after the play was over, expressed her pleasure in playing to an appreciative audience. And, in fact, for undemonstrative Lincoln, the house was wildly enthusiastic. What makes the people love Russell so? For the same reason that they love Jefferson. A sweet spirit sits enthroned with his genius. Every one in the audience wants to hear him speak and to see more of him. When the curtain goes down after a climax, separation from their idol is insupportable, and he must stand before it.

The company is excellent. Mr. Denham, Mr. Hudson and Fannie Addison Pitt have been here before and their work is familiar to Lincoln audiences. Mr. Denham, as Martin Briggs, the old servant, was a real old man. His legs were stiff with age, and he kept them so without making the audience feel the effort he was making to keep the position, like so many false old men on the stage, whose painfully crooked attitudes make the audience ache from strain. His fine work in act III, where by a few movements, broken words and sobs he shows the stored bitterness of disappointed love and ambition, come near to making the sensation of the evening, and lifts him above the rank of support. Fannie Addison Pitt does arascible, exasperated old lady parts as well as Mrs. Drew.

Bertha Creighton is fresh and dewy as a rose. I love her for what she is not as much as for her grace and beauty. She is not stagey, not a sou-brette, not self-conscious, and she keeps away from the centre of the stage except when she belongs there. If she goes on making withered old hearts beat with a renewed consciousness of the beauty of young womanhood, she will earn her salary. She played the

part of Sylvia as it was written and Sylvia is an exquisite character.

The scenery was good in tone and composition. David's rooms, six flights up from bores, made every newspaper man in the house turn green with envy.

The play is constructed by a master-builder, who had perfect knowledge of the use her structure was intended for the people who were to live in it, as well as the limitations of the drama. The only suggestion to be made is that Martin and Clementina be given a minute or two of reminiscent lovemaking at the end. However at the end the different threads are all drawn together and tied and the hero and heroine are the knot. Clementina's lovemaking might set the gallery to laughing. Two lonesome, aged lovers are fun for the gallery, and their jeers would ruin the delicate work of the denouement.

"Rob Roy" played to a moderate house at the Funks on Monday night. DeKoven has been accused of plagiarism so often that it has come to pass that a western critic dare not say "I have heard that before" when listening to one of his operas for fear of being called another himself. It is so easy to say what all the rest say. Yet when he wrote "Rob Roy" DeKoven's faculty of assimilating other men's operas and the national airs of all countries was in perfect working order. On Monday night, The Chimes of Normandy, Faust and Scotch ballads appeared and reappeared like ghosts or resemblances to friends on strange faces.

If Gilbert and Sullivan or the man who wrote Faust want their tunes from "Rob Roy" they can apply for a *habeas corpus* for the DeKoven has taken the Dungeon song and the Daisy song almost bodily. The Scotch ballads were harder to place. Some of the choruses began with "Coming thro' the Rye" and ended with "The Campbells Are Coming" and so on. But at least it is pleasant to be reminded of old friends and "Rob Roy" is full of reminders.

The costumes were gay and graceful, the voices were not of the best, and the acting was amateurish to an objectionable degree.

"The Girl I Left Behind Me" played to poor business at the Lansing on Wednesday night. The play is a fine piece of construction, the climaxes in every scene are strong, and the situations are interesting if not new. The company was poor, and the play was left to conquer by its own merits. The stockade scene, where the beleaguered whites wait for death at the hands of fanatical Indians, would be thrilling if played by stuffed men and women. So much is indicated by the noise of the chant the approaching Indians sing and the drum they beat. All the stories of Indian torture and outrage we have ever heard are recalled by the drum and the actors need only to read their lines to be apprehended, and that is all they did do. The sign mark of inferiority is unintelligible enunciation, and only two of "The Girl I Left Behind Me" company could be understood, and they were the Indian and Irishman. The Indian, William Lee, was well made up and produced an Indian effect, technically, so called. His was a character sketch showing conscientious study of his model, in voice, action, face and feeling. If it had not been for Scar Brow and the play the company would have left an unsatisfied audience. As it was they went home discussing the Indian question.

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