

# THE COURIER

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## OBSERVATIONS.

### Theatrical.

One of the best companies that ever played in Lincoln, appeared at the Oliver last Friday night. Yet the play was so worthless, so unworthy of the attention of a people who have undertaken to civilize tribes in the orient, that the small audience was not altogether undeserved.

George Boniface, Bertha Waltzinger, Kathryn Osterman, Stephen Maley and the other first class actors who form the "Dear Old Charley" company, would make more money with a better play. Families and fathers of families, young men with sweathearts whom they revere and high-minded people in general with a love for the drama are the main support of the theatre. Any manager of experience will confess that it is the respectable people that support his theatre. The crowd of men and boys who come in and go out in bunches, who nudge each other or laugh when the dialogue or situation is risqué contribute only incidentally to the income of the theatres. The respectable people who patronized the "Dear Old Charley" company were attracted by the names of the actors who formed the caste. And in the conscientious finish of the performance they were not disappointed. But "Dear Old Charley" will never draw them again. Neither they nor their wives nor their son's wives will recommend it to their friends. And as everybody is an oracle to somebody it follows that the play outside of New York which has cultivated a morbid dramatic taste will not play to exceptionally good business, such as the

quality of the inspiration and culture of the company fully warrants.

The Dreyfus trial and conviction is only a judicial evidence of the degeneration of the French people. French literature and drama have testified to the decayed fibre of the race for many years. The birth rate which only balances the death rate might have been as accurately predicted from an examination of the literature as from the books of the supervisor of the census. Whatever charge of *gaucherie* may be made against American and English writers, the good red blood of a healthy race is apparent in the typical writings of either of these countries. Of course there are narrow faced writers in America who can pick out a color by its odor and who criticise a sonata for its bad drawing and bad perspective and in England there are Oscar Wilde and Richard Le Gallienne whose poses are French and whose preciousity will forever preserve them from the promiscuity they dread. These precious people either in England or America do not affect the conclusion. Hardy, Kipling, Doyle, Hope in England and Joel Chandler Harris, Mark Twain, Mary E. Wilkins and Aldrich in America, do not smell colors see music nor hear pictures. The people of England and of America read their books and accept the types they find in the books as genuine. Well they may for the authors take them directly from models and the models recognizing what is characteristic, strive to make the type more perfect.

Mr. Howells and Mr. James are purposely omitted from this short list, because although the former is unquestionably the first living American novelist, it is his reputation rather than his contemporary performance that is notable. Mr. Howells and Mr. James have become too cosmopolitan to serve as examples of either English or American authors. Their tragedies and evolutions are tragedies and evolutions of the soul and newspaper comment is too material to deal with their volatile and impalpable butterfly agonies.

The moral of all this is that English and American readers and playgoers are not precious. They have not much taste, literary or dramatic. They laugh at what an artist knows is pathos, and they applaud bombastic and sophomoric periods. Nevertheless they know right from wrong, white from black and decay from life. Their ideals are keeping the birth rate far ahead of the death rate; it is the difference in ideals which makes the difference between American seamen and the Spanish, between the American courts and the French.

New York has transplanted the French drama. But New York is not an American city. Unfortunately the good companies start from New York and play whatever the manager selects. When a play has been tried upon the French, "Portugee," Spanish, Italian, English and American au-

diences of New York and has pleased them, the second season it is started out on the road with its last year's costumes slightly soiled, to play the country people. It is a pity that the metropolitan audience is not a better indication of the taste of the country people who like to go to the theatre. It is a pity because of the talented companies which play to small business and on account of the country people. The former are discouraged by the small business and the latter by the bad play.

### The Carter Case.

Upon the advice of Attorney General Griggs, President McKinley has formally approved the sentence of the Court-Martial which tried Captain Oberlin M. Carter, corps of engineers U. S. A. The five thousand dollar fine is the lightest part of the sentence. Five years imprisonment in a penitentiary and the degradation which is involved in the publication of the sentence in the papers of the locality in which Carter lived as well as his loss of rank in the army, are the severe parts of the sentence. Lawyers for the defense claim Carter's innocence with apparent conviction. If he is innocent the malignancy of fate towards him is incredible. He was tried by a jury composed of his brother officers. The jealousy with which army officers protect a brother officer's fame and the solid front they exhibit towards civilians and civilian criticism is familiar to everyone who has had any experience of military life. But the officers of the jury convicted Carter of misappropriating funds, as charged in the indictment. It is estimated that, at least forty men—all officers of the army reviewed the verdict and their judgement like that of Attorney General Griggs was, "Carter is guilty and deserves the punishment recommended by the court."

Then the friends of Carter are among the most influential men surrounding President McKinley and doing business in New York City. They have done what they could for Carter from the first. Some of these friends are Senators Hanna, Platt, Depew, Quay and Sewell, and former Secretary of State, John Sherman. Yet in spite of these influences the President confirmed the sentence of court-martial.

Carter is not a Jew, he is not poor, he has not been persecuted. He has had the use of plenty of money and numerous rich and powerful friends, who have interceded for him constantly. That their prayers, and money and influence failed to induce the President to set aside the verdict indicates that the testimony against him was convincing, if not infallible.

The newspaper ruse of attempting to confound the case with that of Dreyfus was palpably an attempt to divert the universal American sympathy for Dreyfus into sympathy for Carter. Only the most slavish re-

publican organs attempted to fuse the popular feeling into pity for Carter, but the attempt has failed. President McKinley might have been sure that the enfranchised press of this country was willing to take the word of the officers who tried Carter and of the forty other officers to whom the President submitted the papers in his case. A pardon or refusal to confirm the court-martial's verdict would have placed the president in an awkward position before the people of the country, whose verdict he, himself will be listening for before long. And the President has been president long enough to find out that even Senator Hanna's displeasure has only a limited influence. He has begun to realize the area of the United States, and the millions of people which are plowing it, driving engines across it, digging holes in it and building cities on it. Nothing is more interesting to watch than the gradual diminution of a great man in the eyes of a man whom the great man thinks he has created. The President has found himself and realized the comparative insignificance of Senator Hanna and his lack of popularity in the United States. For this reason and because the President is teachable, he is likely to make better appointments and rule with more confidence in his second term. His action in the Carter case and his disregard of the gentlemen who have faithfully tried to cultivate gratitude in the President to their own aggrandizement, are indications of his awakening to the largeness of the country and the comparative insignificance of Senator Hanna and even of Wall Street.

### The Honorable Minervy Ann.

In full she styles herself the Honorable Minervy Ann Perdue. She has been brought to life by Joel Chandler Harris and I know of nobody in magazine or book so interesting, so vivacious, so capable of making her recitals transpire as she talks. The vitascope with its sound of wheels and its glittering, constant vibration is still a machine and the features of the men and women who pose for it or fight before it are undistinguishable. Mr. Harris' Minervy Ann is a loyal, clever, old negro woman, whose deductions are faultless, from premises as indisputable as Aristotle's. And since Aristotle, or at least since Shakspeare no more learned or correct observations of human nature have been made than those recorded of Minervy Ann Perdue by Mr. Harris. The construction is so skillfully hidden it is as though we were listening to her ourselves, so well does the author understand "that he who would be first shall be last." In these chronicles Mr. Harris himself is entirely obscured. It is only when we reflect on the naturalness and actualness of the character that we are aware of the extent of our debt to the author. Then we know it is only because he holds the glass to our eyes