

Evening Ledger

AMUSEMENT SECTION

Address all communications to Dramatic Editor Evening Ledger, Independence Square, Philadelphia.

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Theatrical Stagnation

PHILADELPHIA ought to be getting desperate. At any rate, one dramatic editor is. Here are two months of the season almost gone, and what have the theatres shown? The Broad, one comedy, "Daddy Long Legs"; the Forrest, one photoplay, "The Birth of a Nation"; the Garrick, one melodrama, "Under Cover"; the Adelphi, two failures, "What Happened" and "Brother Mason"; and one William Hodge drama; the Lyric, three musical pieces, "Princess Pat," "The Lilac Domino" and "Hands Up."

Outdistanced by the Fourth City

Boston is the fourth city in the country, Philadelphia the third. Yet Boston has developed a theatrical life, as well as baseball teams, in the last few years that puts us out of the running. Already this season the city of World Champions has seen "Twin Beds," "On Trial," "Experience," "A Pair of Silk Stockings," "The White Feather," "The Birth of a Nation," "The Song of Songs," Irvin Cobb's "Back Home," not to mention "The Follies" and "Nobody Home," while "Trilby," "Outcast," Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion" and Elsie Ferguson in "Outcast" are in immediate prospect. Who can blame the Philadelphia critic if he turns to the movies for something to write about?

Is Musical Comedy Dead?

To ease the jump from drama to movies, let us recall the day when musical comedy took the place of the films as that scapegoat on which the theatre could blame its shortcomings. And let us bury in solemn peace the goat, which may no longer be "got." The dearth of musical comedy this year is absolutely astounding. The Shuberts have mounted a very few new musical pieces; the syndicate hasn't put on a single "show" outside two great special revues at two great special entertainment palaces in New York, "Town Topics," at the Century Music Hall, and "Hip, Hip, Hooray!" at the Hippodrome. As for the road, there is "Nobody Home," "Hands Up," "Chin Chin," "Watch Your Step," "The Follies" and the Winter Garden shows, all last year's products and all, except the first, mastodons of amusement. What is the world coming to? Financial disaster if the Tired Business Man is thus left to his fate.

Movie Doings

Meanwhile the movies go cheerfully on expanding. The newest move is the invasion of the "one-reel" field by the feature program companies. Paramount is getting out special news reels, covering events like the Vincent Astor Cup race, to fill in with the regular five-part releases. The Metro has taken over the National News Weekly from the World for presumably the same purpose. The Vitagraph is making a point of advertising one-reelers for the V. L. S. E. programs.

The Films Laugh at Themselves

Another novel departure of the last few weeks is the movie burlesque. The movies are trying to "Weberfeld" themselves. They are putting out short photoplays burlesquing particular feature films on the market. One, "The Mirth of a Nation," now in process of manufacture, is to be almost as long as the piece it travesties. The Gaumont Company announces a series called the Casino Star Comedies, which will be amusing and overdrawn take-offs on the serious photoplays which they have already released. On October 14 the MinA brand released a "reel melodrammer" called "Alone in the City of Sighs and Tears," which spoofed the old-fashioned 16-20-30 sort of thing. It's a big field this, with room for mighty amusing experiment. Some day some one will give us burlesque history.

Corraling the Best Producers

One of the best things that is happening to the photoplay today is the advent of trained producers from the legitimate. Such men have no royal road. They must learn a great deal that the photoplay pioneers have worked out by hard experience. But they bring a training in "business," direction, coaching, that is immensely valuable. Right now the movies are employing three of the best producers that Broadway has developed—George Foster Platt, chief stage director for the New Theatre and later with Winthrop Ames at his New York Little Theatre, who is now with Thanhouse; Wilfred North, Platt's able assistant at both those playhouses, who is producing for the Vitagraph; and Frank Reicher, son of Emanuel Reicher, and a remarkably fine actor as well as a producer. Watch these men and their films. Not to mention Arnold Daly.

Are the Movies Going to Endow the Theatre?

What, by the way, is Daly, disciple of Shaw and the most original talent in America, doing with the Pathe melodramas? It's just possible that he is making the nickel audiences of the much-despised movies endow an "advanced" theatre for him on Broadway. Or if he hasn't adopted the fleshpots of film-dom for such a purpose perhaps it is William Faversham, the man who played "The Squaw Man" piteously through three years of one-night stands to make the money on which he has based his brilliant career as actor-manager and producer of Shakespeare. At any rate, here is a door open at last to the ambitious actor who wants funds for a desperate venture. A star who has been seen here this fall was offered \$60,000 for 15 weeks of photoplay acting. Suppose he had taken it. What a time he might have had losing it fearlessly, gloriously in good drama the rest of the year!

Saved!

Having gazed on the remains of "Carmen" after the censors got through, Philadelphia rejoices in her salubrious morality and turns the back of scorn upon the spectacle of Boston going to the demeriton bow-wows as a result of seeing that eight seconds of the cigarette girl's fight, that five seconds of the duel, that three seconds of Carmen's death, which our guardians are said to have succeeded in extracting.

Right now the State Board of Censors is making a success of just one side of its undertakings. It is the most efficient advertising bureau in the city. What a pity honest film manufacturers and exhibitors don't appreciate its services!

On the other hand, how fortunate that the board makes itself ridiculous by overactivity, instead of doing quietly and successfully the one thing that might excuse the vicious institution of censorship—holding the club of possible action over the heads of the producers.

"ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE"



CUT-BACKS

What a barren week! Not a new play in town; not an old line to shake by the hand again after a year's absence. It makes one meditate upon the past. It makes one meditate upon the days when Rose Stahl thrilled the audiences at "The Chorus Lady" with that rare trifle, "The woman pays, pays, PAYS!" What a pity George Hassel missed that when he compiled his mock melodrama in "Hands Up." But, anyway, he preserved for us: "Poor little woman. How blind I have been. I see it all now. How she must have suffered."

Quick Work

Or "VARIETY" LIVES UP ITS NAME

Mae Marsh has an attack of pleurisy; she is now under the care of a doctor. Douglas Fairbanks is preparing to depart for New York to start rehearsals in his new play for the Fine A. F. Studio Company.

Mae Marsh, fully recovered from her sudden attack of pleurisy, has gone to the mountains for a brief vacation.

Douglas Fairbanks has left for New York to work at the New York studio after signing a long-term contract with Griffith.

—Coast Picture News in "Variety."

But Not in Pennsylvania

"At a movie the other day a picture was shown, entitled:

"As God Made It." Immediately following the projection of the title on the screen came the flash: "Approved by the Ohio Board of Censors."—Everybody's Magazine.

Movie Goose

I saw an old woman tucked up in a basket Nineteen times as high as the moon. How did they do it? You couldn't but ask it, by stopping the camera, double exposure and using a dummy.

Two Men With But a Single Thought

From a Chicago paper of October 8.

Perhaps you heard him—a Chicagoan of national importance—say as he left the —: "I got more real thrill and enjoyment from those — plays in one evening than I ever had in a theatre before. Those plays live! They're real!"

From a Philadelphia paper of October 8.

Perhaps you heard him—a Philadelphian of national importance—say as he left the —: "I got more real thrill and enjoyment from those — plays in one evening than I ever had in a theatre before. Those plays live! They're real!"

LETTERS

To the Dramatic Editor:

I read with interest the editorials on "Drama and Movies" in October 15th's issue. It seemed to me that the point of view was rather passe. The editorial would have been quite in vogue last spring when the situation in the "spoken stage" was indeed critical, but today it is very much out of date. The "worm has turned."

Why is it, may I ask, that last summer in Atlantic City people were turned away from such shows as "Common Clay," "Princess Pat" and "Cousin Lucy"? Why is it that "Daddy Long Legs" gave four

matinees last week? Why is it that Frances Starr is packing houses on the road in Wilmington, Wilkes-Barre, etc.? Why is it that "Chin Chin" (second year in New York) is selling tickets for Washington's Birthday? Why is it that the New York Hippodrome failed as a movie house and has returned to the presentation of big revues? Why is it that Charles Dillingham is managing five of the greatest musical shows in the world, when a few years ago (when the "spoken stage" was supposed to be in its prime) he only managed the "Lady of the Slippers"? Why is it that the Knickerbocker, Globe, Cross Keys, Liberty, etc., have returned to their old policy of presenting stock, vaudeville, etc.?

Simply because the public wants to see and "hear." They are tired of the movies.

Again, why is it that while the "spoken stage" houses are crowded the high-class motion-picture houses are putting immense advertisements in the newspapers and on the billboards? When some of them are reducing their admission price 50 per cent, we can conclude that they are not advertising because of great prosperity, but because—

It is all very simple; the fad is over. But just think of the younger generation of movie fans who will want to see the actors and actresses in real flesh and blood! Very truly yours,

FREDERICK C. RUSSELL.

Philadelphia, October 21.

(The answer to Mr. Russell is another string of questions: What are the size of the houses drawn to other Philadelphia theatres besides the Broad and the Forrest? How long did "Cousin Lucy" last on Broadway? Why are there just as many failures in New York this season as last? How does the reduction of inflated movie prices disprove the belief that the photoplay is and should be immensely popular as the average wage-earner's amusement? etc., etc., etc.—Dramatic Editor.)

To the Photoplay Editor:

Accept our congratulations on the success of your new supplement to the Saturday Evening Ledger. In your editorial relating to the success of the "movies" you have struck the truth of the matter when you say, "the nickel and dime admission has accounted for its tremendous success"; for it has been the great middle class that has made the moving picture the financial success it is—the class who could not spend one or two dollars an evening on a play even if it would. IGNORANCE.

Philadelphia, October 20.

Questions and Answers

Ignorance—"Vanity Fair" is taken from Thackeray's novel. "Still Jim" has not yet been filmed, nor has "Freckles." Yes, the "Iron Strain" was the feature referred to. Duplicate pictures are printed from a "master negative," and they are not taken by the camera at the time of performance. A first release is the initial showing of a film in this city. Earl Williams and William Farnum are both successful stock actors; with certain people, Mr. Farnum is the more popular. We do not know whether Mr. Farnum wears a wig when playing, but from his adventures in the film, we suspect not.

Ethel—Miss Barrymore will be seen on the speaking stage this winter in a comedy founded on Edna Ferber's short stories about Emma MacCheesney.