

Evening Ledger

AMUSEMENT SECTION

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

THE AVERAGE NET PAID DAILY CIRCULATION OF THE EVENING LEDGER FOR OCTOBER WAS 102,185.

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1915

Drama From a Comedy Writer

IN SPITE of the Drama League and its notion that Hubert Henry Davies wrote "The New Sin"—so its current bulletin says—the best play that the author of "Outcast" has written is "The Mollusc." And let people who find the play at the Broad just a bit uneven in merit remember that "The Mollusc" was a comedy.

Mr. Davies has a very real sense of character. He exercises it most of the time in "Outcast" just as well as he did in "The Mollusc." The men friends of the first act are real and admirably differentiated, and Miriam-of-the-streets has her own sharp individuality. It is only a pity that this characterization can hardly stand the strain of the dramatic events of the third and fourth acts. People may do such things and remain people, but one is apt to forget their reality in trying to figure out just why this emotional turmoil is genuine modern drama. "The Mollusc," being comedy, had no violent action thrust into it to disturb the author's grasp of character.

Good, Just the Same

But, as the reviewer tried to indicate Tuesday, all this hypercriticism doesn't alter the fact that "Outcast" is good, doubly good because it is so long since Philadelphia saw a serious drama and because the acting is so excellent.

A New Strain of Hero

Lack of space Tuesday prevented the reviewer from paying his respects to three deserving players, outside Miss Ferguson, who made the acting what it was—David Powell, Warburton Gamble and J. Woodall Birde. The last two play their full-character parts with just the right pungency. Mr. Powell is deserving a very hearty word of commendation for taking Charles Cherry's old part in a decidedly un-Cherrian manner. He plays with imagination and inner fire. He doesn't insist for a moment on looking a handsome hero or striking beautiful, gracious attitudes. Indeed, he plays the part so earnestly in a vein of naturalism tempered by the spiritual excitement of the character that at times he isn't able to reach quite the finer effects he seeks. But in general Mr. Powell succeeds in playing in a fresh vein and creating an impression that he will some day count for a good deal on the stage.

America's Own Art Product

The Broad showed an English play and, except for Miss Ferguson, English acting, both in the best strains of the successful London stage. The Forrest, on the other hand, showed in "Stop! Look!! Listen!!!" an American art form, the art form at its best.

Whatever may be said about musical comedy in these years of its decline in number and increase in individual quantity, it is the one thing that the American theatre does superlatively well on its physical side. The "book" may or may not be mirthful; "Hullo, Broadway!" decidedly was, the words of "Stop! Look!! Listen!!!" are only mildly diverting. The music is apt to cling pretty close to ragtime and soar not at all. But the acting and production!

People

In the case of "Stop! Look!! Listen!!!" one is seriously embarrassed whether to classify the chorus under acting or production. As usual, they are the piece de persistence, the moving pictures of the occasion. But eight of them insist on having real lines and carry them off well. As for the rest of the people, consider the list: Gaby Deslys, peacocking all over the stage—which is about the only thing she can do, except advertise the show; Frank Labor, always quaint and mild even when he has so little material to work with as at present; Doyle and Dixon, dancing; Harry Fox, smiling; Joseph Santley, America's best dancing man and politest player of musical comedy; Tempest and Sunshine with their usual turn; Marion Harris in the direct Fanny Brice-Charlotte Greenwood line; Harry Pileer, who can fall downstairs and give every one the impression that he takes himself seriously; Justine Johnstone, looking, oh, so refined, and a little body named Helen Barnes, who is quite the prettiest bit since Julia Sanderson's early days and who ought to take Miss Johnstone's part away from her. Upon individuality, good looks, native humor, physical ingenuity or whatever distinguishes each person, is grafted musical comedy team play. That's the answer.

"Stop! Look!! Listen!!!" Is All the "Vogue"

But the chief thing American musical comedy is distinguishing itself for these days is ingenuity and beauty of production. It is in these derivatives from the first Ziegfeld "Follies of 1907" that the "new stagecraft" is reaching our theatre. Joseph Urban has got his real opening in that way; and now comes Robert McQuinn. With his aid "Stop! Look!! Listen!!!" has been turned into a Vogue cover. Interiors and exteriors are in the pale sand hues, the clay greens, blues and cerises of that magazine. Everything is treated in a pale, flat poster effect, even down to palm trees and Hawaiian beaches. The costumes, barring Gaby's confections, are carried out in the same shades and treatment. The whole effect is astonishing and altogether delightful—the most satisfying production yet seen here.

The Better Half

The excruciating legs of Harland Dixon prompt the reflection, Why is the second part of a theatrical "team" always the better half? Perhaps it's a deliberate plot to utilize both contrast and climax; but, anyway, it's always so. Think them up, they all come out the same: Doyle and Dixon, Tempest and Sunshine, Montgomery and Stone, Weber and Fields, Primrose and Dock-stader, Bickel and Watson, Conroy and Lemaire. It's a safe bet that Damon was only a runner-up.

Two Good Ones

"Ruggles of Red Gap" contains two of America's most skillful comedians. They are Ralph Herz and George Hassell, and they're so different that their mutual excellence is a positive surprise. Mr. Herz is the more familiar of the two. In the last two seasons Philadelphia has seen him struggling valiantly with many hopeless plays in his own delicious way. It has seen Mr. Hassell almost as many times through "The High Cost of Loving," "Hands Up" and "Ruggles." But it has no more than sampled his quality, for, where Mr. Herz is always the same amusing person, Mr. Hassell can play a hundred different parts. People who saw him in his stock days in Boston or Pittsfield, Mass., can testify to a Mercutio one week, a Cohan "heavy" the next and a light comedian of the drawing room the week after, all exceptional. It is good news to hear that the Shuberts are to star him.

GUESS WHO CAME TO TOWN



CUT-BACKS

This Week's Cream

The costumer is the man who puts the "chic" in "chicken."

—"Stop! Look!! Listen!!!"

Three of a Kind

Susie (At telephone)—Give me police headquarters. I don't know the number. I thought it was a secret.

Aunt—There was a big robbery in Boston last night.

Susie—How many killed?

Aunt—there was no one killed.

Susie—Then there wasn't any robbery. They don't give it up in Boston unless you kill them.

Ottile (to departing stranger)—Will you leave your name, sir?

King—No, thanks, I may want to use it again.

—"A Full House."

The Press Agent

The man who makes the stars shine and the "shine" stars.

—"Stop! Look!! Listen!!!"

The Serial

When the villain's in the picture

And grins evilly at the girl,

And the necessary papers

Have been stolen by the churl!

And when grandad gets the Bible,

Reading slowly through the text,

Then we understand the old stuff

Is continued in our next!

—"Pot, Paste and Shears."

Film Formulas

Military stuff—The country farmhouse, West Point, self-sacrificing parents, exams, stolen papers, innocent victim, disgrace and discharge, private in the ranks, war, hero unearths spy-plot of officer and saves nation, President thanks self-sacrificing parents.

LETTERS

Objects to Last Act of "Outcast"

To the Dramatic Editor:

The other night I attended a performance of "Outcast," by Henry Hubert Davies and was struck by what seemed to me a most inexcusable piece of extremely bad construction in the play. For the first three acts I was deeply engrossed by the reality of the people on the stage. They rang true both in words and action. Of course the latter is due to the ability of the cast, especially Miss Ferguson and Mr. Powell, who is indeed a finished actor, but the credit for the lines is Mr. Davies'. For three acts the situations practically never grated on my nerves.

The fourth act opened and seemed to promise equally well, the part where Geoffrey waits for Valentine being very well done; but from the instant of her entrance right up to the end of the play, the whole structure weakened and plausibility ceased. The lines are poor and the resolution trite and unsatisfactory. Were it not for flashes of really sincere acting by Powell and Miss Ferguson the play would be ruined.

I believe the reason is that Davies wrote

a better play for three acts than he is inherently capable of, and when it became necessary to evolve a solution his grasp on the situation weakened and he failed to get the true significance of his own fine work.

WILLIAM H. BROWN,
Philadelphia, December 2.

Farnum Now Defended

To the Dramatic Editor:

If Disappointed will see Mr. Farnum in the "Broken Law" I think he will find that "Richard is himself again." But think "Curious" will have to revise her opinion somewhat as "The Broken Law" is like the majority of the Fox plays.

You speak of two of the screen actors, Messrs. Farnum and Williams, as being successful stock actors. Will you kindly explain just what is a "stock actor"?

"INTERESTED,"
Philadelphia, December 2, 1915.

Questions and Answers

Interested—(1) Early in 1915; (2) photographed; (3) No. 4; (4) yes, watch the photoplay advertisements in the EVENING LEADER.

Ignorance—(1) Yes, with Orrin Johnson; (2) does movie work; (3) written for Mr. Farnum; (4) no; (5) Tom Terris in "The Mystery of Edwin Drood."

L. M. D.—No, Mary Pickford is not ill; at least we have not heard of it. John Barrymore was in the "Man from Mexico."

P. L. Y.—Faversham in "The Right of Way;" (2) yes; (3) no, Orrin Johnson was not killed in a fall while rehearsing.

Florence—The question of costuming depends greatly on personal wishes and originality.

THE ACTOR'S LITANY

By Berton Braley, in October Green Book

From agencies galore,
Where we must wait and wait
For days and weeks and more,
Before we learn our fate;
From office boys whose gaze
Doth quake and quiver us,
From roughnecks and their ways,
Good Lord, deliver us!

From dramas that rehearse
For seven weeks or so,
Then meet a quick reverse
Run half a week—and blow;
From Death Watch Jeers and jibes
That shake and shiver us,
From all the knocking tribes,
Good Lord, deliver us!

From playing burlesque,
From tank-town shows and such;
From all the horrors, too,
Of small-time vaudeville's clutch;
From shows that go to smash
And neatly fliver us,
Afar from home and—cash,
Good Lord, deliver us!

From dressing rooms that smell,
From stages old and damp,
From managers who yell
And grips who pound and stamp,
From critics who invoke
Our rage carnivorous,
But most—from going broke,
Good Lord, deliver us!