THE THEATERS

MR. HARE and his company completed their two weeks' engagement at Hooley's last night and sail for England on Wednesday, where they will shortly appear in "The Hobby Horse" at the Court Theater in London. Considering that Mr. Hare was only here two weeks and during that short space of time presented three plays of undeniable merit, it is rather strange that he did not succeed in drawing larger houses. His tour has been a most prosperous one everywhere except in Chicago, so that it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that here again we have a proof of the indifference which has been shown during the past season to theatrical matters in this city. Of course, this apathy is attributed to the existing financial depression and perhaps with reason. The curious part of it is, however, that when managers assign this cause for small receipts and remark forcibly, if somewhat rudely, that Chicago is "broke," there is at once an indignant denial of impecuniosity upon the part of our loyal citizens.

Now it is a good thing to be loyal, but loyalty ought to consist in something more than crying out like a spoilt child at hard words, especially when they are more or less warranted. We should either admit the imputation of poverty—and there is nothing to be ashamed of in that—or we ought to do something to remove the idea which is growing stronger every day that Chicago is the worst city of any size in the country for theatrical enterprise with the possible exception of St. Louis.

I know that this reputation is growing up to such an extent that Mr. Hare would readily have got out of his Chicago engagement if he could have conveniently done so, and, although his houses have not been positively bad, they have not been of such a character as to recompense him for a long journey from the sea coast, or encourage him to repeat the visit in the near future.

This is by no means a solitary instance. We have at present the greatest of German actresses in the country, who has been excellently received in New York. Under ordinary circumstances she would appear also in this city as a matter of course. Yet so strong is the feeling that her visit would be a financial failure that those who manage Agnes Sorma's engagements have readily taken the lateness of the season as an excuse and have resolved not to run any risks. There are always those, of course, who decry foreign artists and talk grandiloquently about supporting local talent, but when the only local talent that is reasonably well patronized is to be found in the vaudeville houses, it would seem that the public taste needs a little energetic stimulating. Moreover, nothing can be more killing to artistic growth than local prejudice, for it is only by seeing and hearing the great artists from all countries that we are enabled to develop a taste for what is best and form a standard for comparison.

We should have lost a great deal of instruction as well as enjoyment if Mr. Hare had not come to Chicago, for, although he is by no means the greatest of English actors, he is one, at best, of the finest artists on the stage today. He is, in fact, one of the few English or American actors who show in their work the restraint and perfect finish which is more generally associated in our minds with the genius of the French comedian. He is, moreover, one of the few men on the stage today who are able to project themselves into a character so that for the time being they lose their own personality. Mr. Mansfield is in many ways a fine artist and a man of versatility, but whether he is playing Beau Brummel or Capt. Bluntschli he is always Mr. Mansfield. It is his own personality that wins us. So with Mr. Willard's acting—to take another instance from the number of stars who have recently visited us—we find it very difficult to forget who it is that is playing the part.

If you were to meet Mr. Willard in the street or in his own house you would find a good many traces in his manner and habit of speech of Cyrus Blenkarn, just as Cyrus Blenkarn on the stage reminds you forcibly of Mr. Willard in the Auditorium. With Mr. John Hare it is different. To see him one moment as the drunken, befuddled Eccles before the footlights and immediately afterward in his dressing-room as John Hare is in itself a lesson in the art of acting. In spite of the towzled hair and the bleary countenance which belong to the part, it is difficult to realize that the dignified man of the world to whom you are talking is the same who lately appeared in so despicable a light as Esther's father. To have acquired this power of characterization may not make a man a great actor in the eyes of the world, for that depends far more upon a certain magnetic influence which is inherent in his nature, but it does denote histrionic art of the highest order; and, what is more important, it teaches a lesson to many would-be performers on the stage that to be an actor it is not necessary merely to go in front of the footlights and be natural.

The support given Mr. Hare by his company, and especially by Mr. Groves and Mr. Kerr, added a great deal to the value of the performances at Hooley's during the last two weeks. The Gregory of Mr. Charles Groves was an admirable foil to Mr. Hare's Benjamin Goldfinch, while the Capt. Hawtree of Mr. Frederick Kerr would in itself have lent distinction to any rendering of "Caste." Altogether, we have not had better acting or a better ensemble during the whole season. If we have any play this year which ought to find greater favor than "A Pair of Spectacles," it will probably be Mr. Louis Parker's "Rosemary," which Mr. John Drew and his company present at Hooley's tomorrow night.

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Considerable stir has been created in London recently by the prospectus issued by "The New Century Theater." Here is an organization which asks for the suffrages and incidentally the pecuniary assistance of the public in order to give some permanence to the endeavor to produce works of great dramatic art which are at the same time caviar to the general. The success which attended the matinée performances of "Little Eyolf" and "Mariana" has encouraged Miss Elizabeth Robins and Mr. William Archer and a few other kindred spirits to start a society for the regular production of such works in spite of the fact that there is already the Independent Theater devoted to the same kind of business. Making all allowances for the inherent greatness of Ibsen, it is hard to see how even one such enterprise could be genuinely successful, and the competition seems to make the issue all the more doubtful.

Theatrical management is after all just as much a business as storekeeping. It is useless to try and sell what the public has no desire to buy, and if Ibsen's plays cannot be produced at a profit in the ordinary way there seems to be no reason why the general public should subscribe in order to see them played, which is after all only another way of buying seats. It is true that the best plays are rarely the most popular, and it might appear that it would be beneficial to the community at large to have these masterpieces produced in spite of the lack of general support. That is perfectly true, but the only reasonable way to accomplish such an end is to take a small theater and charge high enough prices to cover expenses. If the box office receipts fall short, then the attempt had better be given up; at least it is no use asking the public to subscribe in any other way.

It is easy, of course, to argue from the analogy of the grand opera which nearly always requires a guarantee fund of some sort. But it must be remembered that the expenses of a grand opera company are enormous, while the expenses of the production of Ibsen's plays are, comparatively speaking, small. Besides even the grand opera in America and London alike is managed on business principles, while this "New Century Theater" prospectus is simply an appeal to charity.

What strikes one most about these apostles of dramatic culture is their sublime faith in Providence and their singular want of good judgment, combined with a decided lack of humor. Mr. D'Oyly Carte, who made a fortune out of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, once built a beautiful new theater, which was to be the home of real English opera. The idea sounded fine and patriotic, and every one went to see "Ivanhoe," composed by an Englishman and sung chiefly by English and American vocalists. When "Ivanhoe" had run its course Mr. D'Oyly Carte suddenly awoke to the fact that there was no other English opera fit to produce; so, after attempting a French opera with English words, he "threw up the sponge" and his beautiful English opera-house is now a flourishing music hall.

Miss Robins and Mr. Archer appear to be acting with precisely the same want of foresight. They wish to found a theater for true dramatic art, but when it comes to examine their program we find nothing in it besides the regular Ibsen plays, save a poetic drama by Stevenson and Henley, and "Peer Gynt," with Grieg's incidental music.

Now, most of Ibsen's plays have been produced already, and those which are most presentable will always command an audience. So it was hardly necessary to form a new corporation with a high-sounding title simply to give "John Gabriel Borkman" a performance. As for "Admiral Guinea," by Henley & Stevenson, it is an excellent play to read, but it need never be acted. Finally we are left with "Peer Gynt," with incidental music; and there we have the fad followers in their most insane mood.

First of all "Peer Gynt" was attempted in the same way not long ago in Paris with scant success. In the second place Ibsen's great work is surely spoilt by being put upon the stage. Thirdly, even if it were well adapted for presentation, the music would overweight the spoken dialogue. This may sound strange to those who advocate the raising of the standard of dramatic works; but if they have ever heard Schumann's "Manfred" they will recognize the truth of the assertion that "Peer Gynt" could never be a success under the circumstances. In theory the musical accompaniment is a pleasant adjunct. In practice we feel terribly bored by the spoken part of the performance and are inclined to wish that it would not interfere with the music.

I know this is the case with Manfred, and I feel convinced that it would be so with "Peer Gynt."

Lovers of Ibsen may think it rank heresy to hint for a moment that Grieg could so overshadow the dramatist. The reason, however, is simple. It is not that Grieg is necessarily a better musician than Ibsen is a dramatist—that is a matter of taste. It is rather because music itself is a far more perfect vehicle for the expression of artistic beauty than the drama. We might hear "Peer Gynt" performed without music and enjoy it; but with the music we should inevitably let our thoughts wander from Ibsen to Grieg. The drama in its highest form can only appeal directly to our intellects; music appeals to the intellect, but also to the senses and to the soul; wherefore as an art music is infinitely superior to the drama, if we admit that beauty is the aim of art. We all know that we would greatly prefer to listen to "Carmen" as an opera than as a play, irrespective of the comparative merits of Calvé and Olga Nethersole as actresses; nor can the perfect art of Eleonora Duse persuade us to prefer her version of "Cavaleria Rusticana" to Mascagni's.

In the same way it is no disparagement to Ibsen to say that Grieg's suite is worth fifty written "Peer Gynts." Consequently, if Miss Robins and Mr. Archer had much judgment between them they would know that at a performance of "Peer Gynt" such as they contemplate the audience—if there was one—would probably go to sleep during the spoken dialogue and wake up just in time to hear "Anitra's" dance on the orchestra.

And yet "Peer Gynt," "John Gabriel Borkman," and "Admiral Guinea" constitute the main capital, so to speak, of this high-sounding company, which shows that people who go to extremes in matters musical or dramatic rarely keep a sound judgment and invariably lack a sense of humor which might save them from many egregious mistakes.

* * *

Mr. Charles Frohman is making so determined an effort to storm London in the interests of American playwrights and actors that a good deal of interest will be taken in the production next month of William Gillette's "Secret Service" at the Adelphi under his auspices. Mr. Gillette's play has undoubtedly been the success of the season in New York, and yet I heard it confidently predicted the other day by an English actor, who has a long experience in such matters, that "Secret Service" would not go in London. What he objected to most was the bringing of all the paraphernalia of the telegraph office upon the stage—in other words he criticised the extreme naturalism, which, as I have endeavored to point out, is the chief characteristic of American drama today.

This particular form of realism is not at all likely to appeal to an English audience; not because it is local in character, for local color is often a pass to success, but because it is purely photographic in nature, and, therefore, falls short of genuine art, which is always suggestive. If we want to see a telegraph operator at work it much better to go to a Western Union station than to the theater. Equally if we desire to see a little life upon the Board of Trade, we naturally would go to the pit rather than to see Mr. Seabrooke in the "Speculator." We cannot of course see a great fight between the bulls and bears every day, but in these days of wars and rumors of war there is generally enough fluctuation to make it interesting, and then the ticker in any broker's office works a good deal better than Mr. Seabrooke's, which has a way of stopping work whenever the actor turns his back.

But to return to "Secret Service," there is a good deal more in Mr. Gillette's play than the telegraph office. The action is exceedingly quick, the plot though thin is cleverly put together, and the main situation, which gives us the Federal spy in love with a Southern girl, is effective if it is not particularly original. On the whole, therefore, I should prophesy a prosperous run for the play in London.

Hooley's.

The best exponent of polished light comedy known to the American stage, Mr. John Drew, will be at Hooley's Theater for the two weeks beginning tomorrow evening, including matinées Wednesdays and Saturdays. Mr. Drew comes under the management of Mr. Charles Frohman, whose star he has been for the last five years, and he will be seen in what has been considered his greatest triumph, "Rosemary," with a subtitle in the words of Ophelia, "That's for Remembrance." This play is from the joint pens of Louis N. Parker and Murray Carson. It has been running for a long time at the Criterion Theater, London, with Charles Wyndham in the leading part, and for five months at the beginning of the present season Mr. Drew kept it on the boards of the Empire Theater, New York. Mr. Drew plays the part of Sir Jasper Thorndyke, an English country squire of middle age, who falls in love with a simpering maiden and never tells that love. She marries a younger rival and they go to India and are killed in the Indian mutiny. That was in 1837. Fifty years are supposed to elapse before the curtain rises on the last act, and then John Drew is disclosed as a man of 90, mumbling over the romance of Sir Jasper's middle life. Miss Maud Adams will, as heretofore, be Mr. Drew's leading lady, the others in the company being Harry Harwood, Daniel Harkins, Arthur Byron, Grahame Henderson, Frank E. Lamb, Fulton Russel Jr., Mrs. Deloss King, Mrs. Annie Adams, and Ethel Barrymore.

Grand Opera.

Those who wish to witness Mr. Thomas Q. Seabrooke's performance of "The Speculator" must avail themselves of the opportunity during the coming week, as it is the last of this successful production. During the month of May Mr. Seabrooke will again present for the Chicago public at the Grand Opera-House another comedy by the same author as "The Speculator," and it is his intention in the future to make this city the opening of his productions in preference to other towns.

McVicker's.

The Lilliputians have been doing a remarkably big business at McVicker's with their new spectacle, "Merry Tramps." Tonight they will begin their third and last week. Commencing with tonight's performance there will be several new songs introduced and some novel and somewhat startling changes in the spectacular features.

Schiller.

The program for next week, commencing at the matinée today, is evenly balanced. First and foremost is the ever popular comedian, Billy Emerson, who, though now verging on 50 years of age, sings as sweetly as he did a quarter of a century ago. This is Emerson's final vaudeville engagement in Chicago. There will be a special bargain matinée on Wednesday, when any seat in the house can be had for 25 cents.

Gaiety.

Clifford's Gaiety is now under the direction of the Schiller Specialty company. The music hall privileges under this management have been extended to all parts of the balcony and family circle, but are not permitted down-stairs. The three Hawthorne sisters are retained another week. Their dainty specialty and pleasing songs make a great hit. The newcomers at the matinée today will be Bobby Gaylor and Jennie Yeamans.

Hopkins'.

One of the most ambitious efforts of the stock company at Hopkins' is offered in the revival this week of the successful and bright comedy, "7-20-8," which is presented for the first time at popular prices. The piece will be put on with complete scenic and costume detail. The principal feature in the big vaudeville bill is the reappearance of the Pantzer brothers, European head balancers and equilibrists, whose feats excel in skill and daring anything of the sort ever seen in Chicago.

Sam Jack's.

Karina remains at Sam T. Jack's, beginning her fifth week this afternoon with new songs and new sunbursts of fancy costuming and jewelry. The burlesque of "An Ocean Voyage" will be presented by the full company.

Alhambra.

Sensational drama will hold the stage at the Alhambra Theater this week, when Joseph J. Dowling and Myra L. Davis bring their well-known Western play, "Nobody's Claim," for the current week, opening with the matinée today.

Haymarket.

Chiquita, the Cuban prima donna and lilliputian artist, whose success at the Olympic has been phenomenal, moves over to the Haymarket tomorrow. Although only 27 inches tall Chiquita is gifted with remarkable vocal powers, is an accomplished musician, and is besides beautiful and graceful.

Chicago Opera-House.

Isabel Urquhart, the favorite comic opera prima donna, heads the list of people included in the coming week's bill at the Chicago Opera-House. Milton and Dolly Nobles are another feature. They will be seen in a farce entitled "Bilgeville Junction," which is said to be clever and amusing.

Olympic.

Maurice Barrymore, supported by an excellent company of well known players, comes to the Olympic tomorrow. He will appear in "A Man of the World," a clever one-act comedy, written expressly for him by Augustus Thomas. It is said to have been one of the hits of the season in New York, where Mr. Barrymore recently presented the piece on the occasion of his début in vaudeville.

Kohl & Middleton's.

A swimming school for young women, none of whom weigh less than 300 pounds, will be the leading curio-hall attraction of the week at the Clark Street Museum. The Globe, on State street, will retain Little Egypt, the sensational dancer.

Henderson to Manage Curtis.

The plans for the coming summer at McVicker's Theater have been arranged. Manager David Henderson has signed a contract with L. L. Sharpe for the occupation of the stage of that house from May 23 for a period covering from four to six months. Mr. Henderson has also signed a three years' contract to direct the affairs of M. B. Curtis. Mr. Curtis began in McVicker's Theater in the old stock days and has made many successes in other characters besides that of Hebrew. Mr. Henderson will open the season with Mr. M. B. Curtis in "Gentleman Joe," which ran in London at the Prince of Wales Theater for two years.

Notes.

A four-act comedy by Sardou will be given by the pupils of Hart Conway's Chicago School of Acting on Tuesday afternoon at the Grand Opera-House.

The character actor, James A. Herne, begins a short engagement at McVicker's Theater on Monday evening, May 3, when he will appear in his ideal interpretation of Nathaniel Berry in his own play of New England farm life, "Shore Acres."

Preparations for the production of "What Happened to Jones," the new farce by George H. Broadhurst, which Thomas Q. Seabrooke will present at the Grand Opera-House on Sunday, May 30, are progressing favorably and the complete cast will be announced in a few days. The play will be produced for the first time at the Detroit Opera-House May 24, and rehearsals will commence immediately after the close of Mr. Seabrooke's engagement in "The Speculator."

This will be the advertising agents' night at the Columbia Theater. Frank Haight and William Russell, who have the performance in hand, say it will be one of the best variety programs ever arranged in Chicago. The list is headed by the Hawthorne sisters and Sigfried. The others who will appear are the Eldridges, Gertie Gilson, Johnny Williams, the Randalls, Panlo and Dika, Henry Gunson, Field and Lewis, Raymond and Stephens, Bartell and Morris, and Jennie Yeamans.

"Cymbeline" is to be performed at the Columbia Theater by Margaret Mather and a company which Mr. Whitney has formed for the purpose. The actors who are to accompany Miss Mather include Edward J. Henley, William Redmund, Albert Bruning, H. A. Weaver, William Courtleigh, and Mrs. Thomas Barry. A grandson and granddaughter of Lester Wallack will make their stage débuts in minor rôles. Miss Mather's own abilities would seem to insure an interesting Imogen.

FACE A HORRID DEFICIT.

MEMBERS OF THE WILDWOOD CLUB DECIDE ON RETRENCHMENT.

Seven Dollars and One Cent Shortage Over 1895 Figures, Although There Is an Ample Cash Balance in the Strong Box, Send the Women into Paroxysms of Anxiety—By Moving to Cheaper Quarters Luncheon Organization Expects to Stand on Its Feet.

DAY after day for months past the financiers of the Wildwood club, ninth floor of the Lees Building, have been discussing the monetary problems which beset them. Interested members have called upon other interested members, where they have produced tabs of paper and stubby teeth-marked pencils, and after placing long lines of figures on their tabs they have made highly interesting deductions showing when they thought the club would be plunged into irredeemable bankruptcy. They have talked of deficits, cash balances, dividends, cash on hand, deposit slips, and other weighty financial topics till their heads have ached and their eyes have been heavy with deep thinking.

Retrenchment has been talked of instead of the vogue in fashions until the members of the club declare they are way behind the times.

The deductions of the financiers of the Wildwood club have been based largely upon the report of the treasurer, submitted at the last annual meeting, and a single item has caused all of the trouble. It was as follows:

Deficit over 1895 ..... $7.01

A fair cash balance remained in the treasury, more than enough to meet every obligation, but a deficit alarmed some of the conservative members. Many of the women who manage the club had read about deficits in the annual city reports, but they never had seen any of them. They had an idea they were something like snakes or mice or spiders, and that they mostly originated with boodle Aldermen. They proposed retrenchment, but the club supports only two house employés, depending largely upon its members who donate their work.

The landlord opposed retrenchment when it was proposed that his rent should be reduced.

At a meeting held this week the troubles culminated with the resignation of two of the officers—Miss Ida Thomas, Vice-President; Miss Dorothy Moulton, Treasurer.

The resignations were caused by the defeat of a proposition to disband the club, proposed, it is said, by Miss Clara Dixon, a member of the Executive committee. Miss Moulton, the Treasurer, also gave as a reason for her resignation that she would be away from Chicago most of the summer. The resignations are still under consideration by the Executive committee, but it is said efforts will be made to pacify the officers who wish to withdraw and that they will remain in the club.

One of the results of the recent meeting will be the reorganization of the Wildwood club. Of the 130 members of the club over a hundred have indorsed this proposition. The club will move from the ninth floor to the eighth floor of the Lees Building, which will save $40 a month in the rent. By doing this it is believed there will be no possibility of another deficit.

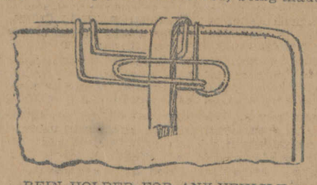
The Wildwood is a luncheon club for working girls. It was organized in 1891 by Mrs. W. Franklin Coleman. Mrs. Charles C. Arnold is the present President.

On Monday from 11:30 till 2 a reception will be given to the working girls, and following this reception reorganization will be effected and the resignations of the Vice-President and Treasurer will be acted upon.

TO HOLD THE REINS WHEN NOT USED

Clever Little Device to Make Safe While the Driver Is Out of the Vehicle.

The neat little carriage accessory here shown has just been patented. This rein-holder claims merit on the grounds that it may be cheaply manufactured, being made



REIN HOLDER FOR ANY VEHICLE.

from a single piece of wire, bent as shown; and, further, that it is readily adjustable to any vehicle, besides which it places the reins out of the way of the driver, so that they do not interfere with getting into or out of the driver's seat.