

Mantle Regrets the Passing of Thomas Meighan

Reviews Life of Stage and Screen Star

Recalls Quiet Manner and Engaging Personality of Popular Irish Actor.

By Burns Mantle.

NEW YORK.—[Special.]—In that book that I shall write one day, which is to be devoted exclusively to my unknown friends, the late Thomas Meighan will have a place. He died last week, and had not been active these many months, even as a screen actor, nor active for years as a stage actor. But he belonged to the theater in which I grew up as a professional playgoer, and I counted him among my friends, even though our meetings were rare and most casual. "How're you, Burns?" "Hi, Tommy!" That was all.

I don't know that that particular brand of friendship is common with playgoers. I suppose it stems more directly than I imagine from the same sort of idolatry that makes fans of one sort or another, including matinee idols. It always has seemed a little more serious than that to me. There is nothing resembling fanatical worship attached to it. It has all the attributes of a bona fide friendship, a friendship subject to as many disappointments as enthusiasms. I, for example, never thought of Tommy Meighan as a great actor. I am sure if I were to go back through the scrapbooks I should find many reviews of plays in which he appeared about which I said just that. There may have been occasions when I, smarting under disappointment in his work, wrote things that he accepted as being meanly written and unkindly thought.

Liked Actor and Most of the Things He Did.

Of course there were many other notices of praise because, in general, I liked him and most of the things he did. It never occurred to me that he would not understand. When I said he gave a poor performance, he must have known it was only in the line of duty.

That is one of the nice things about this kind of friendship. It never needs any explaining. Knowing your friend as well as you do, or think you do, or convince yourself that you do, you know he understands, because you have a childish faith that he feels the same understanding friendship for you. If he doesn't, you never know it.

I recall one Christmas eve, some years ago, being called to the telephone and told by a secretary that a then prominent actress would like to talk with me. Coming to the phone the lady, whom I had never met in person but had known for years in the theater, wished me the usual compliments of the season, and then added, apologetically, that she hoped I would understand her calling. She had been grateful for many pleasant things that I had said about her, etc.

Met Tom Meighan During an All Star Revival in 1904.

It wasn't the suggestion that she hoped I would understand, but that she did not realize I would understand, knowing me as well as she did, that came as a shock. A second later I found myself saying as much to her, telling her quite boldly that she did not have to call me to assure me of her understanding, even though I had never met her. And she hung up, thinking, I suspect, that I was reading her a bit of a lecture, while the only thought in my mind was, what a pity we two, who had been understanding friends for so many years, should have to explain that friendship.

Well, Tommy Meighan was my friend. I think I met him in one of those all star revivals that George Tyler staged for the Liebbers about 1904. It was "The Two Orphans," and Tommy was the Marquis De Presles in that cast. He had broken away from shoveling coal in his father's Pittsburgh factory, and found a job with a stock company of which Henrietta Crosman was leading woman, and with which she was trying out her first big success as a star, a George Hazleton comedy called "Miss Nell." He came to New York, and



APPEARS IN LATEST "SCANDALS"

Estelle Jayne is prominent in the large company which has come to the Grand Opera house for a summer run of George White's "Scandals." This is Chicago's first summer Broadway revue (Bruno of Hollywood Photo.)

Brady gave him a job in Grace George's company when she was playing "Her Majesty the Queen."

Happy Marriage Was One of Those Hollywood Miracles.

He had two seasons in stock in Pittsburgh after that, and then came back for the all-star "Two Orphans." And what a cast that was: Clara Morris, James O'Neill, J. E. Dodson, Jameson Lee Finney, Elita Proctor Otis, Grace George, Sarah Cowell Lemoyne, Bijou Fernandez, Sarah Truax, and a dozen youngsters with high hopes, like Helen Ormsbee, Thomas Meighan, and Pauline Gullford. Tommy did a bit of road work the next few years and then, in 1907, was put in the New York cast of Ade's "The College Widow," a part Frederick

Truesdell originally had played in Chicago.

Frances Ring, Blanche's sister, and the girl Tommy was to marry and live happily with for twenty-seven years, had been sent west to take Dorothy Tennant's place as the heroine of "The Widow," and was with the company when it came to New York and picked up Meighan as the new Billy Bolton. They were married some months later, before the troupe sailed for London. There has been one of the marriages of which the profession has been most proud. They were Irish and quick tempered, and Tommy developed a bit of artistic temperament. But they married for keeps and went through Hollywood and came out clean.

Tommy, as I say, was never a

great actor, and he knew it. A good, competent workman, and handsome as all get out, he had his pick of leading roles when he was on Broadway. Belasco had discovered him by the time I got to New York, which was in 1911. He played that year in "The Return of Peter Grimm," though not conspicuously. He went over to London for a part in Cohan's "Broadway Jones," and came back to play the defendant in "On Trial." Then it was he courageously cast his fortunes with the pictures.

Dance Team Opening at the Stevens

Crawford and Caskey to Join Continental Room Show Friday Evening.

The dance team of Crawford and Caskey will open an engagement in the Continental room of the Stevens hotel next Friday evening, replacing Countess Emily von Losen, the ballerina who is now featured in the South Michigan avenue rendezvous. . . Crawford and Caskey will use masks to simulate other dancing personalities, and will add still further to the interest of their act by including a magic and talking number together with versions of the rumba and carioca. . . Ben Pollack's orchestra continues at the Stevens. So does Lols Still and George Tapps, singer and dancer, respectively.

The Empire room of the Palmer house has decided to retain Milton Douglas as a feature of its floor show when the change of bill takes place this coming Saturday night. Douglas succeeded in winning quite a following during his stay at the downtown night spot.

Heading the new show is the dance team of Rosita and Fontana. Rosita was formerly the partner of Ramon, and danced in the Empire room in 1934 under the name of Ramon and Rosita. Fontana is the former male member of the team of Moss and Fontana. Other items scheduled for appearances next Saturday are the Lathrop Brothers and Virginia Lee, a trio of tap dancers; Wences, the juggler and ventriloquist; and Bentley Stone, a ballet dancer formerly with the Chicago Opera company. . . Ozzie Nelson's orchestra will be the backbone of the new Palmer house revue, and the Abbott Dancers and the De Soyos Argentine Tango band will remain.

The Four Top Hatters, a quartet of musicians and entertainers, opened at the Morrison hotel last Tuesday evening to make nightly appearances in the Boston Oyster house and the Morrison cocktail lounge. The Top Hatters feature concert, comedy, novelty, and rhythm music.

In addition to the items listed last Sunday in the column for the new show at Chez Paree, the famous near north side theater restaurant is presenting the dance team of Ramon and Renita, and the ventriloquist, Edgar Bergen. The change of bill took place last Friday night. Henry Busse's orchestra continues.

Saturday is amateur star night in the Hotel Sherman's Old Town room. Any one who wants an audition for a possible appearance is welcome to come to the Old Town room on Thursday night and introduce himself to Marty Bloom. No advance applications are necessary.

The Club Alabam carries four bands, which, among them, provide continuous entertainment from dusk to dawn. Lil Bernard and Flo Henrie head the floor show with Art Williams acting as master of ceremonies.

The Yacht club, rejoicing in a brand new air conditioning system, is featuring Nan Blackstone, Jackie Green, and the Robinson



IT'S JUNE AT THE RIALTO

June St. Clair, to be exact. This dancing and singing bit of cuteness is heading the current show at the Rialto on State street near Van Buren.

Star's Platform

JANE COWL, who will make a coast to coast tour next season in "First Lady," has her own ideas about the alleged death of "the road." She expressed herself to an interviewer recently in this manner:

"The road isn't dead; it is simply sleeping. It has been swindled and disappointed so often by shoddy road companies presenting good New York plays that the provincial theatergoers are justifiably inclined to steer clear of most traveling attractions. When I go on tour with 'First Lady' we will take the entire New York production as we did with 'Romeo and Juliet.' I would not have agreed to make this tour if Sam Harris hadn't agreed to give the road exactly what New York audiences have been seeing for thirty weeks."

Miss Cowl will spend the months of July and August in Dorsetshire, England.

Twins—singer, impersonator, and tap dancer, respectively.

L'Aiglon, an old gathering place for gourmets, offers both dance and concert music by Emil DeSalvi's orchestra. In addition, there is entertainment by the Three Jacks and Dolores Marcell.

Operetta School

DONALD BRIAN, remembered by a generation now middle aged as Prince Danilo in the original American production of "The Merry Widow," has joined the faculty of the New England Conservatory of Music, in Boston. He will conduct a course of training in all phases of the art of acting in operetta and musical comedy. He plans frequent public performances of the classics of operetta by students.

Playhouse Festival.

The Midsummer Drama festival, now in progress at the Pasadena Festival playhouse, Pasadena, Cal., programs four Shakespearean dramas with Greco-Roman settings, "Coriolanus," "Julius Caesar," "Antony and Cleopatra," and "Cymbeline." Because of a deep-seated desire for consistency, the westerners are even serving Ben-Hur coffee during the intermissions.

To Write Play About Prison.

Brock Pemberton has commissioned Lewis E. Lawes, warden of Sing Sing prison, to write an original play based on life within the prison walls. Warden Lawes is now at work, with Jonathan Finn collaborating, and the play should be ready for early fall production. "Chalked Out" is its title.

Milton Berle Held Over on Chicago Bill

Famous Gagster Has New Show and Acts for Second Week of Run.

Milton Berle is enjoying a second week at the Chicago theater, and Berle fans of the neighborhood have an opportunity to see and hear the famous gagsters in a new show with new acts. In contrast to his first week's engagement, when his activities ran mostly to monologing, this second stand consists largely of what he calls a "sight" show, with several blackouts. Edna Sedgwick, Hal Mencken, James Alvin, Bert Granoff, and the Dorothy Hill dancing girls assist the comedian.

Bernice Bucana, premiere danseuse of "Blossom Time" for two seasons, is a member of the stage forces presenting the current bill at the State-Lake theater. "Ooh La La Parée," the title given to the show as a whole, is an hour long extravaganza featuring Roy Sedley, Paulette La Pierre, Jacques Alexandre, and a variety of singing and dancing ensembles.

The Marx brothers, with a show of their own using some forty-five people, move into the Palace theater next Friday. Heading the present bill at the West Randolph street show house are Dickie Moore, child movie actor, Herman Timberh, comedian, and the dance team of Ramon and Renita. Others on the Palace program include the Donatella brothers and Carmen, and the two Daveys. Also four Chicago amateurs of promise, the Novelty Trio, and Anne Buttlinger.

Play Settings Simple.

An austere economy of setting will rule next season's Katharine Cornell production of "Wingless Victory." The first two acts are laid in a home in Salem, Mass., and the last on board the ship whose name is the name of the play.

Hamlet's Mother.

Guthrie McClintic has engaged Judith Anderson to star with the English actor, John Gielgud, in "Hamlet," which will be staged in October. Miss Anderson will appear as the queen.

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