## THEATRICAL TRUST BREAKS SILENCE

Marc Klaw Writes in Defense of Famous Syndicate That Has Put the Theatrical Art on a Business Basis

SIGNED ARTICLE BY THEATRICAL MAGNATE.

For the first time since the begin ning of the attack on the so-called theatrical trust, Marc Klaw has broken the silence he has maintained regarding the charges made against the workings of the organization in different periodicals and by several

The Oregonian prints herowith an authorized article submitted for publication by Mr. Klaw himself, in which the noted manager discusses in detail the charges made and contends that the effect of the organization has been to promote the welfare of the theater in the United States and also to elevate dramatic art. ........

By Marc Klaw. NE bright Winter's day in February, 1896, at an accidental luncheon in the Holland House, New York, the gentlemen composing what is known as the "Theatrical Syndicate" were discuss ing the business conditions of the theaters in New York and throughout the country, following three years of depression, occasioned by the silver panic of 72, at that time Klaw & Erlanger, two of the men present, had carried on successfully what is known in theatricals as a "book-ing agency," at 25 West Thirlieth street. up on Broadway, was representing a chain of theaters extending Westward, with headquarters in the Empire Theater building. Mesers, Nixon & Zimmerman were the leading managers of Philadelphia, operating nearly all the first-class uses in that city. Mr. Al Hayman was the owner of the Empire Theater building. A business alliance was proposed between the six men here mentioned by which the booking of attractions could be centered in one establishment; and before I go any further I should like to explain "booking agency" is, and to do so I will have to go back some years to ow the condition of the theater in the United States before these comprehensive

booking agencies were established.

Less than 20 years ago a formidable percentage of the business of the theater was conducted on the sidewalk, in hotel offices, cafes, and I regret to say, in barreoms. In those days managers of theaters far and near would some to New York after their seasons were over awai-York after their seasons were over, usual-ly in June, July and August—and inau-gurate a catch—as-catch-can meeting with the mangers of what are called troupes or combinations. It is difficult within the imits of a newspaper article to get the technicalities of the theatrical business intelligently before the reader, but the local or theater manager is the man who leases or operates a theater, which, it must be kept in mind, is an entirely separate and distinct individual from the

conducted on the sidewalk, in hotel case, cafe, and, I regret to say, in particular the hands of Karfer and Daniel Probests. If these days managers of them hands of Karfer and Daniel Probests and the hands of Karfer and Daniel Probests and Da manager of a traveling company, o The theater manager in those days had an expensive establishment on his hands. When his season was over he usually found his following season's time unfilled, with the exception of a few weeks booked to advance by some astute traveling advance by some astute traveling manager, who probably was holding the same time in several theaters until he could see-saw these local managers into giving him terms upon which the local managers could not live. This was the necessity which created the booking agencies. The booking agent acts as the representative of these theater managers for a payment agreed upon between them, under which agreement the agent keeps their vacant time on his books in New York and deals with the managers of the

traveling companies to fill that time, and netwithstanding all assertions to the con-trary, he takes nothing from the control of the local manager so far as bookings are concerned, because after all is said and done he is merely the agent of the

Benefits of Syndicate.

Now, this arrangement immediately pro-

the business of the theater:

First—It made the management of the atrical business generally a dignified calling instead of the haphazard plan conducted upon the streets and in cafes. Second—It prevented the counting travel-ing manager on the one hand from booking the same date in two cities, while on other hand the local manager could

the other hand the local manager could not arbitrarily throw out a date after it had been booked, as was too often the case, because once the booking agent established the date and contracts were signed there was no such thing as destroying the evidence of an agreement. Third—It made it possible, in the event of disaster by conflagration, epidemic or any other cause, to rearrange the routes of companies so that they would not have of companies so that they would not have of companies so that they would not have to be tille, thus preventing thousands of employes, including artists, mechanics, transfer men and others from being thrown out of temporary employment and has demonstrated its efficacy in this regard maily times since, notably during the yellow fever period in the South, when rigid quarantines were suddenly established, entailing the rearrangement

of many tours. Fourth-It compelled the carrying out by managers of their tours as booked, thus giving the artists and artisans em-ployed in theatrical companies continuous employment, which was almost impossi-

bie under the old regime.

Fifth—it prevented useless and rulnous railroading by companies of the same callber, or of the same kind, in an endeavor to avoid each other, or to unnecessarily pit themselves against each other in some given point that was not able to support two attractions of the same kind or of equal strength. Sixth-It was a distinct betterment of

the profession as well as the business of the theater, and I want to make myself clear that there is a profession as well as a business in theatricals.

These two elements are as distinct, yet These two elements are as distinct, yet as necessary to each other, as the business department and the editorial department of a newscaper. The profession was bettered in this way, that irresponsible managers, either local or traveling, could not spread false reports about their receipts or about the business they were doing, as the booking agents kept in close touch with them. As a consequence, artists were surer of their engagements, surer of the payment of salaries and surer of an avoidance of the many difficulties. of an avoidance of the many difficulties and annoyances which ordinarily inter-fered with their stage work. A manager who showed himself irresponsible and un-reliable in his contracts and agreements could not carry his schemes very far

TWO MEN AT THE HEAD OF THE GREAT THEATRICAL SYNDICATE





MARC KLAW.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN ERLANGER.

tures. The conduct of the Empire Theater, the Hudson Theater and the Loveum
Theater are distinctly and independently
in the hands of Charles and Daniel Frohman, as the Liberty Theater. New Amsterdam and New York theaters are in
the hands of Klaw & Erianger. The latter firm knows as little about Mr. Prohmans' plans and intentions until they are
practically complete each season as he
knows about theirs. Time for Mr. Frohman and Klaw & Erianger is booked exactly as enybody clas's is.
Klaw & Erianger as producers and
Charles Prohman as a producer are different entities absolutely from the syndicate of which they are members.

that the syndicate persecuted Henrietta Crosman because she produced a play upon the same theme as one which Miss Ada Behan was then playing in New York City under the management of Klaw York thy under the management of king & Erlanger. The fact is that Miss Crosman was booked by Klaw & Erlanger in that very play in the City of New York, and her contract bears the stamp of Klaw & Erlanger's office. Perhaps Mr. Camp-

bell, Miss Crosman's manager, from whose eyes the independent cataract has now been removed, may testify to this. This same man, on the opening night of Miss Crosman in New York, a few years later, teld some newspaper men of the metropolis with ill-concealed bint and inmetropolis with ill-concealed hint and in-nuendoes that some one had cut the ropes of his scenery, thus delaying the enter-tainment that evening, and in an abnor-mal bid for martyrdom, endeavored to leave the impression that some enemies had done this. When the Mechanica' Union took the matter up and investi-gated it, and it was found that no ropes of any kind had been cut, he quickly re-ceived from the nosition and worst them. coded from the position and wrote them a letter—copy of which I possess—in which he admitted that nothing of the kind happened and denied that he had ever made such an accusation. Yet he never denied the accusation when it appeared in print in a half dozen newspapers.

Dramatic Criticism.

As for the syndicate's attitude toward dramatic criticism, it has none—can have none, because, as I have stated before, it produces no plays. But to ac cuse managers of an attempt to "stiffe and mussle" dramatic criticism is man-ifestly absurd. Any man of experience knows that the most laudatory criti-clem cannot save a bad play from fall-ure. His one desire, therefore, both as a business man and as one who wishes to deal fairly with the public, is to keep the standard of dramatic criticism on the highest level. It is to his best interests to have it absolutely impartial, absolutely just and always on the most dignified plane. Only those newspaper writers who have repeatedly and flagrantly departed from this standard have been requested to absent them-selves by the managers in question from their theaters. Assuredly there is, justification in protesting against news-paper writers who bitterly and scan-dalously attack productions, not in the interests of their readers, but in that of other managers; or men who so ridiof other managers; or men who so ridi-cule the women in a performance as to render them so hysterical and help-less from nervousness that they are either entirely unable to appear or appear only at a great disadvantage; or men who judge a performance, not by its merits or demerits, but by the religious faith or nationality of a man-ager. The men who are now harred from

demerits of their productions, but they should not be held as a syndicate, because the combination, never in the whole history of the syndicate, produced but a single play. And it may surprise my readers to know that in the City of New York has in the City of New York and Messer. Mr. Charles Frohman is the lessee of certain theaters in New York, and Messer. Klaw & Erlanger manage some theaters in New York, and Messer. In New York, and Frohman and Klaw & Erlanger manage some theaters in New York and Frohman and Klaw & Erlanger together are interested in some theaters, but these are not syndicate ventures. The conduct of the Empire Theater, the Hudson Theater and the Lycoum ers were trying to abolish the medical

combined. So far as the actors and act-resses are concerned, the syndicate has not disturbed their relations to the profersion in the slightest except to endeavor

CHARGES AGAINST THEATRICAL

TRUST. That it has raised prices

That it has cornered actors and

That it has gained a monopoly of playhouses, attempting to shut inde-pendent managers out of cities. That it has ruined several inde-

That it compels actors and actresses act for it alone and on its own That it compels playwrights to write

for it alone, accepts what it pleases, and on its own terms. That when an independent manager places a popular play on the stage the trust "parallels" It with a similar pro-

That no attraction will be booked unless it guarantees not to play in an

That houses are secured in smaller cities, causing independents to loss money by jumping great distances. That an attempt has been made by the trust to subdue criticism and that adverse critics are not allowed in trust

That noteworthy attractions are not allowed to play in cities that attempt to patronize independent houses and

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to give them an opportunity to earn better salaries and have more legitimate mancement. The theater in the United States is still a private enterprise, lacking subsidies and endowments of any kind which would make it a public institution, and so long as this condition exists its business conduct must be as carefully guarded and guided as any other commer-cial enterprise; and I want no better nuthority from the art side than Sir Henry Irving and Mr. Richard Mansfield to sus-tain this point. Sir Charles Wyndham was moved to say recently that "the theater was never in better hands."

Clashing of Dates Eliminated. The clashing of dates which was so ruinous to managers, both local and trav-eling, has been practically eliminated uncould not carry his schemes very far without detection.

Large Booking Agency.

The formation of the syndicate meant mothing more nor less than the combining of two booking agencies into one, and the syndicate bas never been anything more nor less than a large booking agency. Its influence upon the profession of the theaters in some nor less than a large booking agency. Its influence upon the profession of the theater are determined to the theater) has been neutral because they have been and the artistic side of the theater) has been neutral because they have been and always will be. That the individual nembers of the syndicate continue to be the producers of phys as they are before its organization angure mothing except that they should be held individually responsible for the merits or

In an article in the Cosmopolitan of De-cember I used the following language: "An attempt is made now and then to

ling to break up the ticket speculators than all the other theaters in New York tion of the syndicate was undertaken to rescue the promoters of theatrical en-terprise from the hazards of so perilous a business. The syndicate cannot ever business. The syndicate ope to shape public sentiment, and no ope to shape public sentiment the class can. Nor do I believe the one cise can. Nor do I believe the stage can. I believe public sentiment shapes the course of the stage. The stage, at least in America, has grown cleaner and better constantly.

In closing this article, which I have

written in great haste, under a promise wrung from me at an inopportune moment, I cannot do better than to quote again from an article on the same subject written by me in the Cosmopol-"The theatrical syndicate has brought

"The theatrical syndicate has brought order out of choos, legitimate profit out of rulnous rivalry. Under its operations the actor has received a higher salary than was ever his, the producing manager has been assured a better percentage on his investment, the local manager has won the success which comes from the booking of accepted metropolitan favorites. I know of no one, generally speaking, who has been workeds an injury by the commercialization of the stage in America. Practically every first-class theatrical manager is now a member of it, and never in the history of theatricals have they all been so prosperous."

STAGELAND.

Anna Held its in London. Joseph Jafferson is rapidly sealth at Palm Beach, Fia.

The Booth Tarkington play, "The Gentle-nan From Indiana," seems to have fallen

Ben Greet and his company will open a three weeks' engagement at the Studebaker; chicago, on April 3. The house employes of the Marquam have organized a baseball team and are prepared

"To what do you attribute your present popularity!" Bernard Shaw was asked. "To my merita," was the brief answer.

Last week's Dramatic Mirror printed a handsome Ukeness of Rose Eytings and an appreciative notice of her ability as a dra-matic teacher.

James Keane, the well-known roung ro-mantic actor, will appear at the Grand this week in a tabloid version of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

A large double-column portrait of George Alison, now leading man at the Bush Tem-ple in Chicago, appears in the last number of the Billboard.

Maxins Elliott has been prohibited by the Common Council of Boston from using the American flag carelessly in one of the access of "Her Own Way."

During the Summer "Trilby" will be revived in Chicago with the original cast, including Virginia Harned, Wilton Luckaye and Burr McIntosh.

Virginia Harned is to have a new play next sealon by Henry Arthur Jones. The actress will offer 'The Lady Shore' at the Hudson Theater, New York, next week.

This department is in receipt of a letter from Mr. Cordina announcing that he will soon return to Portland will re-enter, the theatrical field atronger than ever. He is enthushastic in his praise of some of the attractions which he has seen during his

visit to New York, particularly Mrs. Fishe's "Leah Kleschna." He is renewing many old acquaitstances and altogether having the time of his life.

At the conclusion of Miss Luiu Glaser's tour in "A Madcay Princess," in May she will sail for Europe for an extended vacation. Most of it will be spent near Aosta, the remantic little city in the northern part of Italy, situated at the foot of the Alps.

Alps.

Channing Pollock, a press agent who often unearthy interesting statistics of the stage-contributes the information that between 1874 and 1898 Miss Ada Rehan played 103 roles. They ranged from hilarious farce and sensational weiodrama to the loctiest types of womanhood in the classics.

Charles Frohman, who is in London, de-clares his instantion to take Seymour Hicks and Ellaline Terries to America for a sus-son, where they will be supported by the best musical comedy company that can be secured. The manager will introduce "Leah Kleschna" to London about Haster. He has another comedy from the pen of J. M. Harris. . . . . .

In his last letter from Paris, Augustus Thomas advises Kirke La Shelle that he has completed the detailed scenario of the new play he is writing for Lawrance D'Ornay's use next season, and that the first act is finished, dialogue and all. The locale of the play will be Washington and D'Orsay will appear as a member of the British legation. This is the last season for "The Earl of Pawtucket."

Every year the drawing-room of the stage approaches hearer to the drawing-room of society," said Miss Ellis Jeffreys a few days ago. The manners and the citiquette now seen in stage drawing-rooms are nearly as correct as those you will find in the drawing-rooms of the best people. Surely that is a good sign. It means the passing of the rowdy and vulgar stage lady and gentleman." . . .

Ada Rehan will conclude her sesson at the end of March and in April will sail for England, where she is to have an interview with George Bernard Shaw in reference to her production of Captain Brassbound's "Conversion," and will return to this country late in September to resume her tour under direction of the Shuberta. When abroad during the hot months Miss Rehan generally resides at Stratford-on-Avon, where she has a cottage. there she has a cottage.

John F. Cordray, long prominent in amusement enterprises on the Pacific Cosst, with headquarters for several years past at Portland, Or. arrived in New York last week for a islaurely visit. Mr. Cordray has at least temporarily disposed of his Portat remorarily disposed of his Port-land theatrical interests because of the un-certainty of theater matters in that local-ity. "There is a vertiable crase on the Coast for vandsville and kindred amuse-ments," said he to the Mirror, "and I am going to keep out of the excitement for the present;"

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