NETHERSOLE'S PRESENTATION OF "THE ENIGMA" STARTLES EVEN BLASE NEW YORKERS

Men Pass Scurrilous Comment in the Smoking Rooms and Women Are Mum After Seeing the English Woman's Conception of the Frenchman's Character.

By J. F. S.

MISS OLGA NETHERSOLE, who was seen here last fall in her usual repertoire of questionable plays, has opened her New York engagement at Daly's theatre in New York and is reaping the whirlwind sown by her exaggerated mannerisms, her affected and decidedly impressionistic attitudes and her choice of plays.

All of which is too bad and is bringing considerable ill repute upon the unsuspecting head of M. Paul Hervieu, whose play, "The Awakening," as the American adapter named it, was shown in Portland and was decidedly the most interesting thing in the repertoire shown patrons of the Heilig in this city.

M. Hervieu is a moralist and a clever writer. His plays as adapted for Miss Nethersole have undoubtedly lost much that was fine and considerable that was important to their success. And unfortunately Miss Nethersole did not always help to draw the sharp line of difference between the false and the real.

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Here is what one reviewer said of the lady with the bulging eyes as she appeared in the Hervieu play, "The Enigma":

"Miss Nethersole must wake up to a sense of the appropriate. There is still time. We are worth while cultivating, as she surely knows. We do not want anything more from the pen of M. Hervieu. We can stand a problem or two, but we like variety. The seventh commandment was not precisely instituted so that 'star 5' actresses could fracture it.

"Such a play as 'The Enigma' is utterly impossible for any American audience—at least as a serious play—and to listen to its distressing psychology and realize that it is laughed at and made the object of smoking-room obscenity is deplorable. At the end of 'The Enigma' the men went out and discussed it in a manner that would have curled Paul Hervieu's hair; the women remained in their seats, and what they thought we shall never know.

"Any play that miscarries so completely should be instantly rejected, and it is to be hoped that even Miss Nethersole's obstinacy will be routed by the reception accorded to 'The Enigma,' the ingenuity of which is no excuse for its presentation."

And more to that effect. Perhaps it is just as well that Miss Nethersole didn't try "The Enigma" on Portland audiences. She told me that she considered it the finest play she had, but thought it too deep, too psychological to try on the road. It seems even too deep for the pearl divers of New York to tackle successfully.

* * *

Decidedly the most interesting thing about Miss Nethersole is the effect she has upon other women. She seems to unbalance the best of them. Persons for whose judgment we have the utmost respect and admiration seem to lose their grip when they see Olga step forth and start in to ogling the audience.

I've tried to reason it all out and failed utterly at it. They admit she is affected, that her mannerisms are unpleasant and even grating. Some have even gone so far as to acknowledge that they doubt her art. But when it comes to doubting Olga herself and denying themselves the privilege of seeing what she will do next, there is nothing doing. They insist that she has charm, that her dreary monotonous voice is captivating. They watch her as though she radiated some uncanny, volatile potion.

Undoubtedly Miss Nethersole has her moments of greatness. Every now and then she thralls you and you realize that she is a woman of more than ordinary intelligence. The rest of the time she is a strange and very sexual creature, curious and unhealthy.

* * *

Every now and then the attempt is made to introduce a modernized version of a Greek drama. Of course the failures are legion. The latest effort in this line is the playing of Von Hofmannstahl's version of Sophocles "Electra" by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, which Walter P. Eaton says is fascinating but not Greek. The effort has been received with favor by most of the critics, which is far from saying that it is a popular success.

The man who cares for the Greek drama is the exception and yet now and then he is found. Most of the larger universities attempt to give a Greek play once or twice during a year and occasionally they succeed to a creditable extent. But it is hard to bring the audience in a modern theatre into sympathetic accord with a Greek play. With the Greeks the drama, at least the tragedy, took on many of the aspects of a religious performance. With the early Greeks it was solely a religious right, a lyric performance composed of song, dance and ritual. This aspect so idealized the drama that much which would border on the absurd with us was to them the most sacred of ceremonies.

"It is as foolish to talk of loveliness or dignity in this performance, as some have done, as it is to find fault with it for lacking these qualities," writes Mr. Eaton. "It does not possess in any ordinary sense of those words loveliness or dignity or nobility, and probably it does not aim to. It does exactly what it sets out to do definitely, hence eloquently, and that is to portray the Electra of Von Hofmannstahl. Because it succeeds it is a fine performance and needs no further defense or justification."

The Times says that "the performance of 'Electra' was the most interesting event of the week and that it is a long time since an enterprise of more importance has been brought to a successful issue. For despite the uncertainties of public appreciation of a work so far removed in spirit from what the average theatre-goer enjoys, the production may be looked upon as a success."

KREISLER AND BAUER CAN CHANGE INSTRUMENTS AND HOLD AUDIENCE

Fritz Kreisler.

Increased interest in the Kreisler-Bauer recital has been steadily manifested, and the local music lovers, as well as those from out of town, are appreciating to the fullest extent the almost sensational quality of the musical event to take place at the Heilig theatre Tuesday evening, March 17. The tours of the artists, Fritz Kreisler and Harold Bauer, are under the direction of Lois Steers-Wynn Coman, and Portland is one of the three cities in the whole United States to enjoy hearing these two great artists play together.

Bauer is an Englishman, though of German descent, and he came right by his musical instincts, both of his parents and several brothers and sisters being skilled musicians. He first took up the study of the violin, but upon the advice of Paderewski, whom he chanced to meet in London, was urged to concentrate his attention upon the piano. At the age of 18 he accompanied Paderewski to Paris, where he fitted himself for his career.

Kreisler is not only a virtuoso, but a musician as well, and many of the violin classics which he plays have been "retouched" by his skillful hand into more interesting shape. It is said of Kreisler if he were to give himself up for one year to piano practice he would be quite as great a pianist as he is a violinist. This recalls an incident which occurred in England on an occasion when Kreisler and Harold Bauer were concertizing there. They were to play the "Kreutzer Sonata" in one of the provincial towns and they conceived the idea of changing off—Kreisler playing the piano and Bauer the violin. This they did with great success, a feat which sounds incredible, but the authenticity of which is vouched for by a musical friend of both.

SUBSCRIBE, PLEASE.

College Paper's Picture of the Fate of Those Who Don't.

One of the college papers—it isn't necessary to say just which one—was struck the other day with the need of getting up a snappy appeal to subscribers. The result was the following:

"Once upon a time a man who was too economical to take a college paper sent his little boy to borrow the copy taken by his neighbor. In his haste the boy ran over a $4 stand of bees and in ten minutes looked like a watery summer squash.

"His cries reached his father, who ran to his assistance, and failing to see a barb wire fence, ran into it, breaking it down, cutting a handful of flesh from his anatomy and ruining a $4 pair of pants.

"The old cow took advantage of the gap in the fence, got into the cornfield and killed herself eating green corn. Hearing the racket, his wife ran, unsetting a four-gallon churn full of rich cream into a basket of kittens, drowning the whole flock. In her hurry she dropped a $7 set of teeth.

"The baby left alone, crawled through the spilled milk into the parlor and ruined a $30 carpet. During the excitement the oldest daughter ran away with the hired man, the calves got out and the dog broke up eleven setting hens.

"Moral: Subscribe for your college paper."

India Beggar's Luck.

From the Allahabad Pioneer.

A beggar appealed to a mariwari, Arundo Mul, for alms and received 9 pice wrapped in a piece of paper.

The mariwari subsequently discovered that the piece of paper was a currnecy note for 500 rupees. The beggar has disappeared.

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