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SOCIAL SYMPATHY IN THE DRAMA

THE AMERICAN THEATRE OF TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW.

Looking back through the ages, at the development of the drama, we find that this form of literature has always held its place in the history of a nation. Imitated action has been of interest to mankind from the earliest times to the present day - developed through the Greeks, the Romans, the Romantic nations, Shakespere, changing always as times and manners have changed, it has yet remained the legitimate and natural expression of the thoughts and feelings of the people and therefore of prime interest to them. So it is to-day and more than ever before, a great factor in the intellectual life of civilized man, exerting over him an influence which he himself hardly understands yet demands from sheer force of nature.

And this influence, this fascination which dramatic art as expressed by the theatre exercises over us is not artificially produced, "not an exotic influence, but rather the natural concomitant of mental evolution." It is pure instinct, not (as our virtuous Puritan ancestors aver) innate wickedness, that makes us exclaim "The play's the thing." It is the thing, for it satisfies our demands, in it we expect, to-day, to find a serious attempt to illustrate life - and that is what we want. The great attraction lies in our ignorance of the rules of the game of life,

and our eagerness to see into them. We realize that the prime factor in this all-absorbing game of ours is fitting action to emotion; we realize too that there are numberless possibilities of combinations and results, and that in one short life-time the opportunities of constructing these countless combinations and experiencing the results are very limited; hence, we naturally avail ourselves of the power of the stage to amplify our personal knowledge in a way that is second only to life's lessons.

The text of the drama is taken from the moods, sentiments, passions and morals, and the effects produced by their being forced into lines of action; - the theatre is the "market-place in which the wares of the world and the price we must pay for them are displayed before us."

So, to the play-house we hasten to be shown the great things of life, the broader experiences, the meaning of the over-man and his ways which we personally may not be given a chance to know intimately, but which, one and all, we are eager to be taught. And, how much, then, of what we, the public, expect, do we really get from the American stage? Let us look carefully into the drama as it exists to-day and see how adequately it satisfies social demands.

We know that the old order of things has changed. Strong and sincere acting which would have carried almost any play in Shakespeare's time is no longer noticed; we want something eccentric, unusual, quaint. "Novelty is the keynote of the new century - new

woman, new humor, new drama." The Greeks ^{invented} ~~existed~~ on "Harmonies and Unities" - their drama was statuesque, heroic. Shakespeare demanded more freedom and put true life into a combination of comedy and tragedy. Sheridan required a light style to bring out his wit and picture the foibles of middle-class society. But the new drama is quite different from any of these; - it demands psychology, because it is real life which it portrays, deep, throbbing, pulsing life of our own time, and dealing with our own tremendous social problems; hence, it needs deep, throbbing, pulsing emotions to express it.

This, then, is the first thing which we find in the new drama - psychology, psychology of thought, psychology of action - we want it, we want it; - and our modern drama gives it to us. But in addition to psychology (And a play of pure psychologizing is well-nigh worthless), the public says: "This life, these psychological problems which the stage portrays, shall be natural."

Natural - and what does the public mean? "On the stage anything is natural which throws a character into relief. That Othello should kiss Desdemona before he kills her is natural. But Abstract Problems cannot make a play; when they are solved they no longer remain problems - they become theorems. For a play some natural solution is essential." So, in Ibsen's "A Doll's House," it is not only natural for sweet, childish little Nora to borrow money but it is a natural act with the whys and wherefores leading up to it, which creates complicating circumstances, involves all the characters - in short, makes the play.

Then, looking further, besides psychology and nature, the modern theatre-going public demands passion, for to be true human life it must have that great emotional force behind it. It is the exhibition of the passionate mind which makes us think - and we want to be made to think. "Shakespeare did not have great passions always; his "Taming of the Shrew", "Comedy of Errors", "Henry VIII," have none of them great emotional moments - and we find that they do not make us think; they are wonderful works of art, but they do not shock the emotions of the audience into motion: and we know that Shakespeare is not so much reproduced to-day as he is read. . . Intensity is the undercurrent of every good play, whether its theme is high or low, great or small."

Agreed, then, that the tense, psychological problem, originally but naturally portrayed, is what we, modern American society, demand, let us consider the problem-play on the stage of to-day.

It must be quite twenty years since the admirers of an elderly Norwegian gentleman brought over the "problem play" to this country, and, ever since then, "the play-goer has been invited at intervals of every two or three months to consider "The case" of some fresh conjugal couple or pair of lovers, some new brace of unmarried affinities or married antipathies, or to deduce a more or less gloom future for them from a more or less shady past. The sweet, simple heroine of older plays is no more, the latest dramatic heroine must have a history, a past; it is the most important thing about the play.' Passion has brought the psychology of the feminine into glaring relief, so that the modern play is a woman's

play and social sympathy is aroused by the intricate problems of the woman-mind.

Then it has been said that everybody in real life has a skeleton in his closet; but in the stage life of the last few years, no one has. The skeleton has already gotten out before the play begins or in a very few minutes after the curtain rises; and once out, the whole plot of the play begins and continues to revolve about him. The husband and wife sit down and discuss him in all his repulsive bearings:-

"What is to be done with him?"

Is it possible to live with him at all?

If yes, then on what terms?

Shall we lock him up again, or shall we leave him at large and try to explain him away?

Or, shall we simply brazen him out - have him in to afternoon tea? - Introduce him to our friends?"

These questions are what the social mind demands; it likes to revolve itself over the conditions and reason them out (or have some clever dramatist reason them out for it).

"A skeleton, very well. Had I one when I married? Might I have had one? Did I say I had one? Ought I to have said I had one? If I told him, (or her,) that I had one, what would he, (or she,) have said? Was the skeleton worth concealing? Was there any use in it? Is a man's skeleton as compromising as a woman's? If not, why not? Ought it not to be? Shall it continue not to be? Should we not insist that it shall be?"

What a muddle of questions! And yet, for a series of years, this is what we have gone on revolving about - and think we like it. If, perchance, we may grow a little weary and wonder the why and wherefore of it all, immediately the answer comes, that in real life everyone has a skeleton; therefore, it is the business of Unflinching Realism to "trot him out". And if by any queer crook of mind, we avow no taste for this sort of drama, our realists point out to us, with kindly contempt, that we are wanting in "high seriousness and in the courage to look facts in the face."

Yet we who may not wholly approve, must confess that the problem play certainly and surely does draw our attention, does interest us, stimulate us; and in the end, when we are thoroughly used to it, we, with the rest of society, raise a hue and cry if some simple, old-fashioned play is given us; we immediately recognize the difference in strength of structure and intensity of thought, and it wearies us immeasurably. It seems silly and flimsy-flimsy, and if we ask ourselves the question, our minds answer instantly that it is because we do prefer the problem play with its skeletons and its psychologizing to the simple plot with its surface characters and stilted conversation. Beside, problem plays may contain much that is sweet and beautiful in combination with the deeper problem; for a dear little play which is good for the soul, look at Pinero's "Sweet Lavender", and be appeased.

Real life we say we want - and it is real life which we are getting, deny it who will! Impossible crimes, incredible misfortunes, improbable accidents have all been resigned to melo-

drama. Realism confines itself to the evolution of those catastrophes, which, if somewhat ignoble and unheroic, are, at any rate, actual occurrences in the world around us. And as for "studies of character", human nature was never so enamored of its own ~~self~~^{image} as at present, nor so richly rewarded for self-instruction (whether we like the reflection when we see it, or not). So, we repeat, the old fairy-story dramas have gone beyond recall." A new generation which will never tolerate them has sprung up, a generation more serious, more sincere in their dramatic tastes than their forefathers, a generation in love with truth, athirst for actuality, craving for the representation of things as they are, eager "to see life steadily and wholly". This sort of play is what arouses social sympathy to-day.

Having decided now what it is that the sober, thinking American public wants, let us proceed to a discussion of some of our modern plays, and then give a little attention to the deficiencies of the American stage.

Of the new movement which has stirred America as well as most of Europe, Henrik Ibsen is master. In the middle of the nineteenth century there was a change from romanticism to scientific thought. "England had Darwin and Huxley and they ruled the minds of the times. This scientific movement naturally created realism and it was with this cycle of thought that Ibsen began his work; he created a new dramatic form and the followers of this line of thought and architectonics started what may be called the "realistic school".

In this so-called school, with Ibsen as master, we may place the German dramatists Sudermann, Hauptmann, Halbe, Hartleben and Ernest von Wildenbruch; the Englishmen, Bernard Shaw and Pinero, and the Swede, Augustus Strandberg - "all looking toward the camp of the naturalists."

It is in the "pitch of the conversation and the key of the action that the chief innovations are to be observed. The dialogue has acquired the note and timbre of the actual voice; it has been tuned down from the unnatural heroics of humor and pathos of former drama and given the true ring of modern life, while the action has been simplified and every motive which is a strain upon one's credulity has been ruthlessly rejected. And what is left? Can there be amusement in watching commonplace episode represented by commonplace people? The question is satisfactorily answered by seeing a performance of any of the naturalistic plays. After Ibsen, Sudermann, Hauptmann, the old mechanical drama becomes utterly flimsy and artificial; we seem to hear the creaking of rusty machinery, and feel imposed upon by threadbare stage devices. Old plays which present intellectual problems are still interesting, but, lacking that, they seem without meat and are cast aside by the modern mind as a dry bone. Just look at the plays of Halbe and Hartleben; in their naive and simple truthfulness they make the stage and footlights vanish and bring us face to face with nature in all her uncompromising nakedness. Never was youthful love treated with more touching veracity. The literary medium disappears and nature herself rises out of the book. Therefore, such books, whether they be read or played, become real, living experiences. They necessi-

tate a new adjustment of our attitude toward life. The great earth-scented facts which they uncover have somehow to be disposed of and assimilated" - they refuse to be dismissed, for they are no mere tea-table psychology, they are real life!

Because the American stage is not yet fully developed and so does not adequately fulfil its mission of giving the American public what it asks for, because American dramatists as yet are immature and so have not fully satisfied modern society in its demands for life-drama, we to-day borrow plays from the school of Ibsen and have them presented here in our own country that we may feast our eyes and our souls on them to our hearts' content. "Norwegian psychology is neurotic and pessimistic - if the new drama is to succeed, it can be neither;" so we may assume that in the case of Ibsen, his influence, rather than his plays, will last. But they are very popular now because they satisfy the public mind in dealing with exactly the problems which we have ourselves at present. Yet they offend because the drift of audiences is to be, in the main, healthful and hopeful. "The plant of Ibsenism refuses to be acclimated." But Ibsen is awakening, stimulating; he stirs the stage to reach the soul and the contemporary movements that agitate it, unhampered by the "lived-happy-ever-afterwards" mode of reconciliation. He has given us the soul en dishabille, eminently the spasmodic feminine soul. He has brought the "sex problem" into prominence." And the variety of social problems with which he deals is amazing. To illustrate with a few of his plays: -

"The League of Youth" discusses society and politics in Norway:

"Emperor and Galilean", successive civilizations which have ruled the world; in "A Doll's House" he points a finger of warning at marriage as it is to-day; he shows the type of house founded on sham, and the type of house founded on reconstructed ideals; "Hedda Gabler" typifies self-assertion, self-development and the harmonizing of brotherhood and freedom; "Rosmersholm" brings in America as the place where freedom abounds; but the theme of the play is self-deception of man and woman who disregard the natural law and worldly wisdom, which in the end ruins their lives. Probably the "strength and weakness", Dr. Wichstud concludes, "of Ibsen's much discussed treatment of marriage lies in the fact that he does not deal with it as marriage at all, but as the most striking instance of the ever recurrent problem of social life, the problem that we may hide in other cases, but must face here, the problem of combining freedom with permanence and loyalty, of combining self-surrender with self-realization." "Little Eyolf" depicts the tyranny of passion; in it ~~he~~^{it} shows the selfishness of a parents' love, and it is of profound character. "He has girded at the conventionalities of marriage relation in other plays; "This is his Kreutzer Sonata." " Then, turn to "Ghosts" - like much that is great in art, it is a very painful play; as is "Macbeth", so is "King Lear". But Shakespeare softened his tragic situations by great art, Ibsen not at all; he "banishes all opiates, all comic relief;" there are no concessions made, and the sense of reality is tremendous, nerve-shocking. The play is not immoral; if anything, it is within the

most restricted domains of morals, a dramatic setting of the Biblical wisdom that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. This may be pure pathology - in Ibsen's hands it is a drama of terrible intensity. If the knife digs down too deep and jars some hidden nerves, what shall we say? Ibsen may turn on us and cry, "I but hold the mirror up to nature, behold yourselves in all your nakedness, in all your corruption!" And we can only ask ourselves, - "What if all this is true?" And we shiver!

A man of whom Ibsen said, "Here is one who will be greater than I!" is August Strinberg; he has been called the "Shakespeare of Sweden" because of his "many-sided genius", and in particular because he is a prime creator of character. Perhaps Ibsen's prophecy might have come true had not the mind of this genius given way so that most of the time he is quite mad. His plays give evidence of the diseased brain; ~~his plays~~ ^{they} show an almost abnormal knowledge of human nature, passion and a horrible atmosphere of reality; everything is brought about naturally and inevitably, but the absolute terror of the climax shows insanity of the whole being. "The finale makes "Ghosts" an entertainment for urchins, a mild exercise in emotional arpeggios." Yet even from his hell, he has brought us the history of experiences not to be forgotten.

Hermann Sudermann stands for a "protest of individualism against arbitrary moral standards." Does the greatest morality lie in conforming to social rules and doing right because we must, or in formulating our own laws and living up to them because we wish to?-

a question which a great mass of society must be asking to-day. In "Honor", Sudermann confronts the notions of honor of the poor and miserable with those of the prosperous minority and finds that they are of about equal value, that is to say, both are equally worthless, because in one case, want, in the other, luxury, reduces them to mere air-bubbles; this is a melancholy result but we must confess that there is much truth in it. "The End of Sodom" tells of the artistic and physical collapse of a young painter of genius, in the pestiferous atmosphere of society where luxury destroys all nobility of soul and eats the marrow from his bones." Such phenomena are by no means rare - society must acknowledge it. "Magda" ("Home") strikes a new note - there is no lesson in it; the ending is not a sermon; it is merely a picture of a type which we all know; "Magda" is a selfish individualist - this trait she shares with the mass of mankind; the problem of the play lies in the question - has she a right to live her life as she pleases or must she submit to modern conventions? (a very fundamental question to-day.) The theme is based on the clash of will and affection; "if all human families were loving, if father never opposed daughter or son flouted mother, then such a play never would have been written. But, alas! the newspapers prove that family life is not celestial, indeed that it is often bestial - hence "Magda" strikes home! Magda asserts, "We must sin if we wish to grow." Must we? Sudermann is too great an artist to preach a moral yet he challenges the moral law - and we may draw our own conclusions.

Of the same school as Sudermann, but evincing rather contrary thought, stands Hauptmann; Sudermann deals with the classes, not the masses; while Hauptmann champions the cause of the masses, the poor, the downtrodden; Sudermann shows us the "struggle of the will, or lack of will, of the individual; Hauptmann tells, not of the struggle, but of the endured sufferings of the class of unfortunates who throng our cities en masse. Hauptmann is far more moral than Sudermann; yet his "Before Sunrise" is as horrible as Strindberg's, even; it is a picture before which even hell would pale; and Zola and Tolstoi would have had to confess, "He can do better than we." Yet it is a true picture of life, not as a philanthropic enthusiast sees it, but as he who has the courage to gaze into its depths where beasts dwell and devour each other, sees it." It is a depressing crowd that Hauptmann sets before us - drunkenness being the least of its defects - but it serves to teach its horrible lesson. Perhaps less gruesome, but not less terrible is "The Weavers"; it is a "quivering transcript from life" - and such life! In every act you have that ominous, sickening word "hunger". The butchery of unresisting victims of Capital! "We love blithe art, art imbued with deep serenity. Hunger! what a horrible theme for an art work!" But again, as with Ibsen's problems, we ask ourselves, "What if it be true?" "Hannell" is the history of a child's soul - the psychological study of the brain of a wretched little outcast, full of horrible mysticism and haunting beauty. It may be a plea against cruelty to children; it may be a chant to the glory of death; but whatever it is, it is a tremendous expression of art which almost sickens us and makes us turn away for a moment

of relief.

Enough of Hauptmann ; he is strong; he is moving, but he terrorizes us.

Shall we turn for relief to Maurice Maeterlink? This dramatist is the poet, the mystic, somber, yet fascinating. His plays are quite different from those of the Ibsen school, in fact, cannot at all be classed with them; they present the problem, yet set it before such a weird background that we hardly recognize the problem at all. It is concerned chiefly with the spirit yet the soul struggle is very real. The theme of "Moussa Vanna" is quite typical of his line of thought; - "a noble soul will sacrifice itself as long as it can do any good, beyond that the sacrifice is not right; self-sacrifice is no duty, but rather a mistake where a tyrant feels he owns a person; no soul has any claim on another soul when it ceases to try to be worthy of it; the unworthy should do a little struggling on its own part. He tries to show that Honor is not a mechanical or external thing, but rather a spiritual thing; he thinks that what befalls the body is not worth anything so long as the soul is doing right; if a thing is beautiful, spiritually, it is moral, if ugly, immoral - "the soul is the sole judge." This same theme is expressed in "Joyzelle" and in other of his plays as well. The idea gives food for thought.

Maeterlink created a dream-theatre, a drama full of beautiful mystic poetry, wonderful sympathetic treatment - all wrapped in a hazy gloom which awes us.

Back to light then, and a return to the Ibsen school. England

has several disciples of the great Norwegian master; of these the truest son of Ibsen is Bernard Shaw. "The wily Celt has mounted the rostrum and cried aloud to his ready audience: Come, all ye who are tired of the property fallacy; from here will I teach, preach and curse the conventions of society. Shakespeare must go - Ibsen is the rule - - - Come all ye who are heavy laden with the moralities. - - - I will teach children to renounce the love of parents; parents to despise their offspring; husbands to hate their wives; wives to loathe their husbands, and brothers and sisters will raise warring hands after my words have entered their souls. Whatever is, is wrong - to alter Pope. The prostitute classes, - I do not balk at the ugly word, - clergymen, doctors, lawyers, statesmen, journalists, are deceiving you. I will set you right." And then he proceeds to do it:, and we are given the "Plays, Peasant and Unpleasant" and "Three plays for Puritans," and others with problems enough to last us a life-time and then leave us guessing. Whether we take Shaw seriously or not, he is a delightful, an entertaining writer; he is horribly shocking, for he tells the truth at all hazards, but for that very reason he is wonderfully stimulating. "And the plays! They all prove something, and prove it so hard that presently the play is swallowed up by its thesis - the horse impatiently follows the cart. You can skip the plays, not the prefaces." The problems are questions of society, bad society, immoral society, with its seamy side outside, yet told in such a non-challant, humorous, straight-forward way, that you almost wonder why "Mrs Warren's Profession" was taken from

the boards - just what there is wicked about it. "Candida" is a large exposition of the doctrine that love should be free, - which is by no means the same thing as free-love; - is the play immoral then? Let him who can, answer! Anyway, moral or immoral, or unmoral, Shaw has found favor on the stage. Some one has said, "There is no alternative now for Mr. Shaw - he must visit America, lecture, and become rich. And Mr. Shaw may re-discover America for the Americans!"

Another dramatist, popular with the American theatre-going public, is Pinero; he is among the foremost living English playwrights; he has rendered a great service to English farce, by introducing into it most excellent character portrayal. But he has written serious problem plays too, or he would not deserve a place here. "The Second Mrs Tanqueray", "The Profligate" and "The Notorious Mrs Ebb-smith" are the products of the stress-period of his dramatic efforts; "of these 'The Second Mrs Tanqueray' is the finest English play given for many years; in height, balance, reality, true intensity of style, and rhythm, it towers above Victorian drama and even measures with Elizabethan art." The theme expresses the question; - Can the dead past bury its dead? And this theme it develops with wonderful force and strength. The heroine Paula, like Cleopatra, falls into the mire, not because she is weak and erring but because her fitful being is rebellious and undisciplined; she is a living, lovable woman -

and ruined, she wins sympathy at once; the play is psychologically epigrammatic" - and is intensely interesting. Pinero's "Sweet Lavender", "Princess and the Butterfly", "Trelawney of the Wells" and "The Gay Lord Quex" are most charming and delightful little plays and well worth reading aside from problematic interest.

Henry Arthur Jones, another English dramatist, is superior to Pinero, but not so brilliant, he is rather too preachy, but he serves to show that the old problem plays have never been really superceded by romance - the influence of Ibsen, like pauperism, is always with us. ~~The~~

"Mrs Dane's Defense" and "Mr. and Mrs. Daventry" resurrect again the sexual problems; the first submits the audience to a great strain, with the players, in a cross-examination scene, in which the judge is forced to pass sentence on the woman his son loves because she is found guilty; but the treatment is delicate and there is gentle sympathy expressed in it. It is a Dr. Hyde Jones who wrote "Mrs Dane's Defense", a Dr. Jekyll Jones, who gave the coarse handling of love in "The Lackey's Carnival" and "The Liars".

Oscar Wilde dealt with much the same problems; "Lady Windesmere's Fan" avers that there is good in every one; "A Woman of no Importance" asserts that love only can keep anything alive. The over-man rules.

France, too, has her problem plays; Dumas, fils, so settled the woman question on the French audience, that that is about all

it is interested in to-day. Brieux's "Maternity" gives the relation between a poor family and the state; "the "Red Robe" shows the dangerous power of a closed court; "Substitutes" tells of the lax care of babies by wealthy mothers, which results in physical disaster; "Tainted", the bad effects of laws which allow social evils to spread contamination through the race; "The Shackles", inequality of divorce laws, which are too lenient to men, etc. Every sort of problem is dealt with - church, state, society, private and public - the tendency of the century reflected again.

Problems, problems, problems! What a list of them! Not one-hundredth part of them have been named; and the plays which deal with them are well-nigh countless. Wouldn't you think the public would get surfeited with them and refuse to go ^{at} to any more? But no; society, that insatiable monster, cries all the time "More, more! We want more experience, wider experience, deeper experience! Give us the problem play!"

But now, let us make a reservation. We have been talking unreservedly of the thinking American theatre-goer, the theatre-goer who knows what he wants, demands it, and is not satisfied until he gets it. This sort of man certainly does exist and very strongly is his influence felt in the drama (for a playwright must work for his audience and give it what it wants), but is he in the ~~minority~~ ^{majority?}? Assuredly, we think not; especially in America is this true, the mass of the people is not sufficiently grown up,

sufficiently developed, sufficiently educated to require the problematic, psychological drama. It is said that Claude Fitch walked up and down Broadway peddling "The Climbers", and it was everywhere refused because it "Began with a funeral and ended with a suicide". The funeral is really excruciatingly funny and the suicide is only the timely exit of a worthless husband; but it all sounded like a problem play; therefore, "Away with it!" Fitch's "Truth" and "The Girl with the Green Eyes" and Jones's "Michael and His Lost Angel" all failed because they are problem plays; and Augustus Thompson's "Ranger" and Klein's "Daughters of Men" go in the same category - even fine character portrayal and light play could not save them. It is a whimsical public apparently, which cares more about actors than it does about plays; it will make a special effort to see a good actor in a very poor play when it won't lift a finger to support a poor actor though he be playing in the best drama ever produced (we speak now of "The Other Half" of the theatre-going public, mind you.) It is this part of the audience, we must be sure, which kills or perpetuates the play. Where, then, does the fault lie? Is the audience to blame because it is not yet grown up? Is the dramatist to blame because he apparently is not yet strong enough to force his way and educate the audience? Is the manager to blame because he caters too much to the audience and does not do his part in progression towards a higher standard? We think the manager is most at fault; he insists that there is a tendency toward the unintellectual and so, instead of attempting to turn public

opinion again into intellectual channels, he rather pampers it and urges it on in its downward course. This is because the manager is ignorant of the public. Is society really as brainless and vapid as the managers seem to suppose? Has it no high ideals? Does it never strive after the intellectual?

• The American public is as much a thinking public as that of any other nation. How true it is, and yet how slow managers are to learn, that a truly artistic production - a great play well cast, intellectually rehearsed and aptly staged - is the best paying kind of theatrical enterprise." Instead of learning this lesson, they attempt to cater to a taste which is wholly different; "one manager has for several years been bringing out a string of salacious French farces, always turning somehow or other upon a disregard of the seventh commandment." Of the long list of plays of this kind, only one made a hit - and the manager wondered why. Why? Because his attempt to pamper a supposedly depraved public taste was a wholly mistaken policy. The American theatre public is neither vicious or low; this country is altogether too optimistic, too well aware of its own greatness, and consequently too overflowing with vitality for any exhibition of decadent taste. An old and experienced manager once said, in the midst of a season of dreary silliness, "Give me an actor like Edwin Booth and I will put on 'Hamlet' and guarantee to keep it going to overflowing houses all through the season." And yet, nowadays, the very name of Shakespeare is one which spells bankruptcy to the ordinary manager - and why? Because, in the first place (and this shows

another form of degeneracy on ^{the} modern stage) he cannot get an actor like Booth; the present "star" system has thwarted any such good fortune - the "Star", to-day, is made, manages his own company and plays pieces written especially for him at the very moment when he ought to be gaining good sound experience in "stock". Is it any wonder Shakespeare fails to-day? But this again, is the fault of the manager, not of the "depraved" public; the manager finds that the audience likes a name, so he creates a whole constellation in order to satisfy this demand - and the public is not satisfied; and again the manager wonders why.

It seemed from a superficial point of view, a glorious thing to have, awhile ago, at least three Shakesperian revivals, Mansfield in "Henry V"; Southern in "Hamlet" and Goodwin and Elliot's "Merchant of Venice". "It was indeed a sign of good promise, but it had its drawback - that the productions were all made with too close attention to spectacular effect. It seemed as if the actors themselves were doubtful of their ability to carry through the enterprise as a purely dramatic one, and therefore appealed to the audience on the visual side." Think of Shakespeare's company simply hanging out the sign "This is a forest!" "This is a palace!" "But suppose", says Mr. Manager, "that Southern had put out a sign "This is a garden", how many people would there have been in the theatre?" Again we answer, "Don't pamper your audience! Educate them and you will have no trouble."

Beside creating stars out of a very minor degree of brightness, the manager has done society another injury by hindering a real star from shining in her true glory - all to cater, again,

to the "depraved" public taste.

Julia Marlowe was eager not long ago, to play Shakespeare; she has succeeded wonderfully in "Twelfth Night", "Romeo and Juliet", "As you Like It", etc., and she was anxious to revive them. But her manager objects - "Shakespeare spells ruin!" he insisted; he was obdurate, and Miss Marlowe had to give up her Shakespearean dramas and expend her great talents on a flimsy bit of novel-dramatization, "When Knighthood Was in Flower."

And speaking of novel-dramatization, suggests another reason why social sympathy is not more strongly with the drama to-day. In modern life the drama holds a very prominent place - and some one contends that no two distinct forms of literature can exist at the same time on an equal footing. If the novel is to hold sway, the play must suffer (hence, dramatization of novels instead of great, strong, noble plays is dealt out to the public to-day). In former times plays were read by the public as well as acted before them. This is no longer the rule. Perhaps to-day the grand scramble for money takes up so much time that society has no spare moments left both to read and see a play - so it reads novels and goes to plays. In the Elizabethan period plays were brought out in handsome quartos and folios as soon as they were acted; "~~H~~amlet" was published several times within a short period after its appearance on the stage. These conditions still persist in France and Germany, and French play-books circulate at this day all over the civilized world. But not so in England and America. The French are gay and pleasure-loving and take time for all sorts

of diversions; the Germans are plodding and earnest, and read from a sense of love and duty; the Americans and English are too commercial for anything but business - hence, indifferent to the publication of plays. To read dramas requires imagination; and our imaginations are not sufficiently developed to enjoy them. Novels require no imagination; all the pictures are drawn for the reader. To have a flourishing drama of the future, we must make play-reading popular - and this will be hard to do.

So we see that it is hardly the fault of the American audience if it gets the reputation of being frivolous, depraved, low, and of not caring for things that are really worth while. It is hardly the fault of a child if it learns to love candy, because it is fed upon it all the time; given fresh, crisp celery as a brain stimulant, it will learn to like that, too.

Mark Twain says to the American "child", "I conclude that you are neglecting a valuable side of your life; presently it will be atrophied. You are eating too much mental sugar. - - It is right and wholesome to have a few of these light comedies. - - But none of us is always in the comedy spirit. We have our grave moments --- and there ought to be some way to satisfy them" --by the tragic stage, for instance.

And this is what the dramatist of to-day is beginning to realize - that American society (and other society, too) needs good, substantial food in place of unwholesome sweets which it has been getting lately, and note the results:- Problem Plays again. Augustus Thomas's "Witching Hour", - every thought is in itself

an act, is the problem here: "every thought which we hold intently has, even though it may not be externalized, the virtue and to some extent, the power of action - so the strong man may control the thought and action of the weaker ones." This play is based on sound and mature consideration; it has innate mystery, yet the action is immediate and vivid; it is a masterly thing of literary merit and deserves to be published.

Again, look at Henri Bernstein's "Thief" - not so great as the "Witching Hour", yet superb in suspense and wonderful in its dramatic ~~entirety~~ entirety.

For a third example take Zangwill's "The Melting Pot"; here we have people and problems to suit an ~~Israeli~~^{Ibsenite} ~~Israeli~~; thoughts and impulses which the average play-goer seldom meets, different from the usual, which gives the play a sense of strangeness and aloofness, yet very appealing, - strongly so, from the Jewish standpoint. It depicts the universal brotherhood of man and the aspirations for higher ideals - a faith to which Jews as well as Gentiles hold and which here is common ground on which they meet. "Let that disciple of the Galilean whose cloak of charity is not broad enough to accept this doctrine throw the first stone."

In "The Family", mother-love is an all enveloping garment of charity which covers every transgression (a sentiment which meets with hearty and universal endorsement, one that appeals to the very best in every nature; yet one that is older than humanity itself.) And ^{but} another example, "The Servant in the House," with its great symbolic appeal of the brotherhood of man.

Problem plays in nineteen-hundred-nine? Yes, plenty of them. Can we say, then, that the dramatic art is on the wane? Indeed not. It is only just developing here. The masses now are being educated. The few, before this, have demanded Ibsen; the many, from this time on, will not only enjoy Ibsen, but more, will demand a newer drama - and this is evinced in the fact that a reaction has recently made its appearance, embodied in the person of Yeats, Stephen Phillips and others; "they may not be the coming masters of the theatre; but they do exist, and they show that the drift of the newer, younger tendency is away from the ugly toward the beautiful, away from sordid realism, toward the poetical, away from the discussion of problems, and toward the expression of the human heart. But this new movement will not be a return to Scribe, Sardou, Robertson; it will be followed by something new and different. As Kant overthrew the skepticism of Hume by pushing Hume's own methods farther until they destroyed themselves, so the new drama that is to lead us out of the horrors of "Ghosts" and away from the dull vulgarity of "The Gay Lord Quex" must not attempt to infuse new life into the dry bones of an outworn dramatic school; but press on the most modern methods themselves until we re-create a beauty out of the truth as we see it to-day."

William Yeats is a visionary and a mystic, and withal a true fact; he holds that the subjects for the theatre should be chosen from old myths and tales that stir the imagination, from old folklore in which the loves and hates of people throb and beat, in which "dreams are truth and truth is dream." He thinks, too, that the form

in which these subjects are clothed should fix the mind on beauty, should be full of symbols, yet delicate and sincere and simple. And all these things he gives us in "The Land of Heart's Desire", in "Shadowy Waters", in "The Hour-Glass". "The age of criticism is about to pass," says Yeats; "the age of imagination is coming; in time we will learn how much greater it is to embody in art the great Passions than to comment upon the tendencies of our time, or to express the social and humanistic forces of the present century."

So, in conclusion, let us make a plea for this new movement. 'Give the poet a chance to realize some of his dreams; they may be strange, these dreams, and weird and odd and not successful; but they will be something quaint, something unusual.' And we want poetry on the stage. Poetry! The stage is for poetry; "it is not for merchants or mechanics and penny-a-liners; the stage is not for rot nor for drivel, nor for filth, nor for ancient dames in tights, nor for cheap sentiment; but for true, pure, sweet, strong poetry. It is in us somewhere, no matter how hardened and money grasping we may be, and where we should always see it, where it should forever awaken all that was born good and beautiful in us, is upon the stage. The stage should never be for temptation, never for the idiotic laugh and imbecile applause; it should be for the gracious, the thoughtful, the gentle; it should send us home with better ideals and saner feelings, with a lesson learned by example and with food for pleasant reflection; it should be for wholesome mirth, for such stirring tragedy as will fire us to nobler deeds, or for such potent examples as will sicken us of evil doing.

It may be hoped that the American people is by now weary of what has been termed "Farce Comedy", a conglomeration of various variety entertainments, and will instead desire the poetic drama, the wholesome comedy, the ideal opera. It may be hoped, too, that America will hospitably receive and welcome all that is good and great from abroad, and that those across the sea will equally recognize and accept what comes to them from America - a ready, hearty, open-armed recognition, spontaneous as is ours, with no sneering at American tongue and American manners - since we sneer not at the foreign. Then will the American drama stand foremost in the drama of the nations."

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