

Theatres

James Forbes on the 'Equity Shop'

Dramatist Explains Why He Is Opposed to Unionized Theatre.

James Forbes, a member of the Dramatists' Guild, and who has to his credit a number of popular and successful plays, has taken an active part in the Dramatists' Guild opposition to the "Equity shop." In a talk last week with a New York Herald reporter he discussed the proposed plan and the effect of its operation in the American theatre.

"I am opposed unalterably to the Equity Shop," he said, "because I consider it the greatest menace to freedom in the theatre that has arisen in my recollection. That may seem to be an extreme statement, yet had the Equity shop been in force when my play, 'The Famous Mrs. Fair,' was being produced, I could have had the services of the actors who were members of the Equity Association, but I could not have had those of Henry Miller and Blanche Bates because they belonged to a rival organization—the Fidelity.

"Now, I am not denying the talents of any of my Equity actors, but no matter what individual triumphs were made by them, they could not have materially affected the success of my play; but I hesitate to predict how much of a success 'The Famous Mrs. Fair' would have had without Mr. Miller and Miss Bates.

"I brought this fact to the attention of Mr. Frank Gillmore when, as secretary of the Equity, he was addressing the executive council of the Dramatists' Guild on the proposed 'Equity shop.' Mr. Gillmore replied that it had been suggested that an exception might be made in the case of Mr. Miller and several other of our best known stars who are non-Equity. Is this an equitable policy for an Equity Association? And how would this assist the playwright who might require infinitely more so for the correct presentation of his plays, the special abilities of a member of the Fidelity who was not a star? For instance, in the Equity organization are Janet Beecher and those who have been highly successful in other plays of mine, and whose services I am always eager to obtain.

"When I asked Mr. Gillmore what I should do in the event of my wishing to employ them in a future play he told me that I must ask them to become members of the Equity. In other words, in order that I might have the benefit of their talent I must urge them to ally themselves with federated labor, a proceeding against which I myself revolt.

"No manager has ever dictated to me in the selection of my stars. In fact, in a contract recently drawn up by the Dramatists' Guild, and adopted by the Producing Managers Association, there is a clause giving every author, even before the start of a play, the right of his cast. The 'Equity Shop' would deny this right to the author. He could not select any actor not a member of the Equity, for if he attempted to place a non-Equity member in the cast every Equity actor would leave it.

"The claim that the Equity Council has no objection to the organization of a non-Equity shop is an absurdity, because they know, in fact, admit, that were such a company to attempt a performance in our unionized theatre to-day, the hands and the muscles would refuse to perform their duties. Once the council is permitted to dictate as to what actors may appear in plays and what managers may select them, it is but a step to arrogate as to what authors shall write them.

"The moment the 'Equity Shop' is put into practice the association would have this right. Members of the council may declare heatedly that they have no intention of exercising any such authority, but how, as a writer, can I be sure of this, especially when I look back upon the events of the actors' strike of 1919? At that time the dramatists feared the possibility of a closed shop. We were given the assurance that the Equity Council, in writing, that they would never seek to bring about this condition in the theatre. But in sixteen months they are attempting to bring it about.

"The Equity Council seems to forget, if it ever considered it, that the most important thing for the present and future welfare of the theatre is that the writer should have the right to select his own cast, and equally free to choose his interpreters of that expression. When all is said and done the writer is the theatre. For without him the theatre is mere bricks and mortar and the actor has no part in being. It is all very well for the actor to declare that should the present day writer refuse to continue in the theatre unless he is given a share in the profits, they will make revivals of Shakespeare and other classics. With their usual lack of logic, they seem to forget that if they are to have a share in their own theatre, they must first of all have the training, the performance of these classics. Neither do they consider the proven indifference of the public to these plays when they are revived.

"No one in the theatre has a greater regard—I might even say affection—for actors than I have. In all the years that I have written, I have never had any differences with either actors or stage hands. I believe that the actors are entitled to their association, but when that association tries to deprive me of a liberty that I have always granted to them I must emphatically protest."



Miss CLARA JOEL in "NEAR SANTA BARBARA" Greenwich Village Theatre

ACTORS OF THIS YEAR AND EARLIER MODELS STILL SHOW THE SAME TEST OF SKILL

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

It is, in a way, a justification of the ancients that the two best acted scenes in the theatre of this city to-day are studies in intoxication. Yet stage "drunks" have long since been accounted out of date. What has been as much abused as the so-called "trial scene" in a play, unless it be the stage alcoholic? It has always seemed to the writer that their acceptability altogether depended on the degree of efficiency with which they were done.

The older playwrights used to put in a scene of intoxication for the actors just as a mad or a death scene was written for the actress. Both were tests of virtuosity. The actor who could play a scene of intoxication well had shown his skill in a classic test; so had the woman who could come through a mad scene with credit.

The composers followed the same example in setting up the hurdles for the distaff side of the house, even if the practice was, so far as the men were concerned, allowed to lapse. The most difficult of the cadenzas and roudades, moreover, were put to the responsibility of the sopranos.

Technic in the Background.

Analogous to the practice of the playwrights was the old rule of the Renaissance painters, who always put a few nudes in the background to prove whatever the subject of the picture might be that they were not ignorant of the classic rudiments of their art. Technic in those days had its value for its own sake. Even if one was not in painting or acting or singing inevitably called upon to use it there was no harm in allowing its existence to be established. Hence the naked folk under the trees in the background.

The two scenes of intoxication now to be witnessed with certain deference for the skill of the trained player are widely different in kind. Bruce McKee in "The Gold Diggers" is a man of the world, who gets quite decidedly under the influence of champagne when he sets out to have a serious discussion with the young actress that his nephew may marry. He did not in the least intend to lose his powder. But it is inevitable. It comes with the uncertainty of fate. So he accepts the condition, but makes a valiant effort to be no more intoxicated than is absolutely necessary. He wants to be as much of a gentleman under these circumstances as he is when he is sober. And Mr. McKee furnishes one of the most delightful bits of acting to be seen on the stage just at present.

Craven Way of Doing It.

Mr. Craven in "The First Year" gives his exhibition of alcoholic virtuosity in quite another way. He has been left behind by his young wife after their first quarrel, and he has only the consolation of the cocktails that the colored maid—in for the evening—is able to mix. From the first indication of uncontrolled desperation with which he drinks the first one down to the abandonment with which he surrenders himself to the full pitcher there is a constant suggestion of the mental stress which has led him into such excess. Mr. Craven makes his technical skill servant to the emotion of the play at this point. He does it most amusingly. There could be no more complete contrast than the complete loss of all self-control shown by this small town brawler and Mr. McKee's effort to preserve some shred of dignity in the circumstances. Both exhibitions are, moreover, the work of highly skilled comedians.

The Time for Realism.

Macaulay said the British public used to seem to be for an attack of Puritanism every seven years. Longer intervals seem to fall between the attacks of realism that animate the reviewers of the American stage. How long ago was it that W. D. Howells discovered the abundance of James A. Herne and wrote about it with such appreciation? Mr. Herne should be alive to-day. In "Miss Lulu Bett" and in "The First Year" there is all the realism that the author actor gave to "Margaret Fleming," to "Nag Harbor" and to "Shore Acres," which for popular purposes he added a scene of melodrama.

There is nothing in "The First Year" in the way of truth to life that Mr. Herne did not years ago impart to his plays. There is always an improvement in method and in finish after twenty years. Yet if there is any other difference between what Mr. Herne did for his later plays and what is so much



MISS DOROTHY JARDON, SOPRANO, AT The Palace.

MISS ADA FORMAN in "The MIDNIGHT ROUNDERS" of 1921 Century Roof

MISS GRACE LA RUE and HALE HAMILTON in "DEAR ME" at The Republic.

MISS MARY PLUMMER in "The BROKEN WING" at 48th St. Theatre

GRACE GEORGE in "The NEW MORALITY" Playhouse

MISS MARY BLAIR in "DIFFERENT" Selwyn Theatre Matinee

MISS CHARLOTTE GREENWOOD in Oliver Morosco's musical comedy, "Linger Longer, Letty," will be the attraction at the Shubert-Riviera this week. Robert Higgins and a large cast will assist Miss Greenwood.

James Crans will be seen in the leading role of "Opportunity." Owen Davis's melodrama, which William A. Brady will present at the Bronx Opera House, is supported by the casts which had a long engagement at the Forty-eighth Street Theatre this season.

NEW CHESTERTON LECTURE.

Gilbert K. Chesterton, noted English writer, will deliver another lecture, under the title of "Fads," at the Times Square Theatre this evening. He will have a few short, sharp remarks to make about those who spend their time on nonsense while there are big problems before the world.

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Did You Hear—?

That the Season for Novelties Will End Soon, That Actors Find It Cheaper to Live at Home Than Travel and About Ben-Ami?

THERE are now twenty-one New York theatres with "attractions" which promise to carry them through until the middle of May at least, and this is taken by one of the important managers to indicate that this will be one of the shortest seasons that the local stage has ever known.

"I don't mean by that," the manager said to the reporter of THE NEW YORK HERALD, "that the playhouses are going to cease doing business any earlier than usual. Indeed, there will again be several to keep their doors open all summer. But the production of new plays will end earlier than it has in years. At least, twenty-one theatres will not have to change their programmes at all. The others will not be likely to attempt anything new of importance when their present attractions have ceased to draw.

"So until the production of the summer shows begins New York will know a period of what might seem extreme theatrical lethargy were it not that there never was a time before in which there were so many great popular successes that are always in demand. It has been characteristic of the season that the plays are either at any price or, on the other hand, are in such eager demand that tickets bring any price. And there is an unprecedented lot of the second kind."

You'll Have to Show Us.

The degree to which the audiences of the hinterland share their independence of New York impresses the metropolitan managers more and more every day. It was only a short time ago that a review which succeeded in pleasing New Yorkers shut up shop in Newark after a few weeks of chilling disapproval, and even "The Night Boat," which New York revelled in for a year, failed to interest capricious Boston, which also was cold to "His Honor Ah-Potnah," although it enabled Barney Bernard to remain a season in New York. "Honey Girl" was played for a theatre year here and before its arrival in New York was given for a long time to receipts averaging \$20,000 a week in Boston. This is the musical version of "Checkers," which was expected to "go big" on the travels of the company, since this old play was immensely popular outside New York. But you never can tell, and after a certain amount of snubbing by provincial audiences the play prematurely ended its season.

Cost That Made the Manager.

So many of the most liberal producers among the new apprentices in the managerial field is the product of the wardrobe room, so he is always willing to mount a play generously however it may be treated in other ways. It was dress indeed rather than art which, which concerned himself at the outset of his career. He rented full dress suits, to use the trade term, to society men on Goerck street. His clientele grew and before many seasons had passed his evening clothes for gentlemen were known as the smartest on the segment of Manhattan Island that lies east of the Bowery.

So famous did he become that the renown of his styles reached even to the stage door of one of the large Yiddish theatres. It was inevitable that he should soon be dressing the supernumeraries in the plays of East Side society given there. Perhaps it was not so inevitable, but it happened that he married the daughter of the manager. By degrees he advanced from the unimportant customer to the manager of a Yiddish theatre of his own. It was, of course, a long step to Broadway, but after some delay it was made. And one of the characteristics of the production, he has so far made in the good dressing of the actors— evening clothes and all.

Your Money and Your Choice.

Numerous members of New York clubs have received during the past

month a letter in which the writer promises with the aid of one of the best known of the firms of speculators to settle all their troubles for the future. They may arrange to get what tickets they want and where. Not only will the theatre be at their convenience, but just the exact location where they may happen to desire will be available to them. Now such promises in the present difficulty of getting desirable places in theatres seemed like hints of the millennium. So the recipients of these letters were anxious to discover just how all the advantages were to be obtained.

Those who took the trouble to answer their communications have learned that by joining a club which will cost not less than \$500 for a period of one year the members will be able at all times to get tickets for the seats they may want for themselves by notifying the agency back of the enterprise two days in advance. The seats will never be further from the stage than the sixth row. Of course, one is still expected to pay the legal advance on theatre tickets since the subscription is by way of being a bonus for the privilege of having choice seats.

The Famous Players.

There is official denial of any intention on the part of Ben-Ami to alter his policy of not making the Equity Yiddish stage. The rumor is said to have started from the suggestion that in view of the varied estimate of his talents the confused player was thinking of making such a slight change as to have his title read, "Ben-What Am-I?"

You have heard of decreasing the size of a house, perhaps, or any other building. But did you ever hear of decreasing the scale of a play? It is going to happen soon whether you ever heard of it or not. A star with a handsome name has been asked to manage and to have him in the leading role of a popular play. In order that the other actors may not, at least, tower over him physically they are all to be shorter than he. Such changes of course are more frequently designed to adjust the cruel years rather than the inches.

She Impersonates Stars.

Miss Gay MacLaren, who will give her first New York recital at the Belmont Theatre this afternoon, is said to be the only dramatic artist before the public who depends entirely on memory for material. Miss MacLaren is a reporter of thirty plays and has never seen the text of one of them. She attends the production of a play from three to five times, and then is ready to present it. Her impersonations include the work of John Barrymore, David Warfield, Miss Laurence Taylor, Miss Jane Cowell, Sam Bernard and Louis Mann. She uses no special costumes or scenery, depending entirely on her powers of pantomime and impersonation to create the illusion.

Playlets at People's House.

At the People's House, 7 East 72nd street, next Sunday evening, Dorcia, classical dancer, will appear in character of the Orient, an interesting, pleasing, ancient Irish music. On the same programme Paul Hayes, Bina Flynn, Henry J. O'Neill and Alan McAteer of the Celtic Players will appear in "The Celtic Players' 'After a Rising.'" "The Workhouse Ward" and "The Rising of the Moon."

New Amsterdam Roof.

In the New Amsterdam Theatre Roof, beginning next Tuesday, Itham Jones's Chicago Orchestra will play for dancing from 7:30, with no admission charge or covert charge for dinner, until the regular performance of the Ziegfeld Musical Revue begins. Mr. Jones's special engagement is limited to three nights. The two new entertainments now in rehearsal, the Ziegfeld Garden Frolic at 9 and Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic will have their premieres on Tuesday, February 3, when the New Amsterdam Theatre Roof will be open nightly for dinner and dancing at 7.

Mixed Marriage Moves.

To-morrow evening "Mixed Marriage," having terminated its special matinee at the Times Square Theatre, will open an indefinite engagement of regular performances at John Cort's Sixty-third Street Theatre. Miss Margaret Wycherly has left the cast, but most of the company are the original players who appeared in St. John Ervine's drama.

Feminine Stars in Vaudeville

Misses Dorothy Jardon, Trixie Friganza and Sarah Pad-den at Palace.

Several acts of stellar calibre are offered at the Palace for this week, with a decidedly feminine bill. Miss Dorothy Jardon, recently of the Chicago Grand Opera Company, will come to vaudeville for a brief engagement, giving a song recital which will include "Elli Elli" and "Jahrzeit," to be alternated during the week. Miss Trixie Friganza also will be a headliner with her comedy in "A Bag o' Tricks." Van Hoven, "Mad Magician," just returned from five years of performing abroad, will make his first return appearance here. Miss Sarah Padden, dramatic actress, will appear in "The Cheap Woman," a one act play. Others will be Ernest Evans and girls in "Wedding Bells," a revue; Marmet Sisters, dancers; Miss Juliet; Russell and Devitt and the Bird Cabaret.

The chief acts at other vaudeville houses follow: RIVERSIDE—Miss Gertrude Hoffmann; Laddie Cliff. COLONIAL—Karyl Norman; James J. Morton. EIGHTY-FIRST STREET— Ralph Riggs and Miss Katherine Witche; Charles Ray in the photoplay, "Nineteen and Phyllis." ALLIANCE—Karyl Norman; Gus Edwards's song revue. ROYAL—Leo Carillo; Joe Cook. BROADWAY—Miss Annie Abbott, the "Georgia Magnet," in a control of musical comedy; Miss Margaret Young. COLISEUM—Miss Sylvia Clark; Yvette. REGENT—Miss Sybil Vane; Middleton and Spellmayer. AMERICAN—Brown's Musical Revue; Babe La Tour. FIFTY-EIGHTH STREET—Irving and Jack Kaufman; Richard Keane.

The usual Sunday concerts will be given at the Manhattan Opera House and the New Amsterdam Theatre.

BROOKLYN THEATRES.

The Shubert's will present "The Passing Show of 1919" at the Majestic Theatre this week. The entertainment is the eighth annual revue known as the "Passing Show" that was produced at the Winter Garden. The more important members of the cast are James Barton, the Avon Comedy Four, Frankie Heath, Hazel Cox, Rath Brothers and the Four Haley Sisters. The book and lyrics are by Harold Arteridge, the music by Jean Schwartz.

At the Shubert Crescent Arthur Hamerstein will present "Francis White" in "Jimmie" the musical comedy that recently was produced at the Apollo Theatre. The New York cast, including Ben Welch, remains.

Tony Montauk Fieks O'Hara will appear in his latest Irish romance, "Springtime in Mayo."

Miss Ellie Shleida, English comedienne, in male impersonations, will head the bill at the Orpheum. Others will be John B. Hymes and company, Harry Masters and Jack Kraft and company, and Mr. and Mrs. Jimmie Barry.

Miss Kitty Doner will be the chief performer at the Bushwick.

Miss Constance Talmadge will be on the screen at the Strand in "Mama's Affair."

Sarg's Marionettes will be brought to Brooklyn on next Saturday evening, when they will be used to portray "Rip Van Winkle" at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Miss Lena Daler and "The Kandy Kids" will be the burlesque offering at the Star.

TUESDAY.

GREENWICH VILLAGE THEATRE (Afternoon)—Messrs. Conroy and Meltzer will present Miss Margaret Wycherly in "Evyd of the Hills," an Ibsen drama by Sigur Johnson, at a series of special matinees. The cast includes Arthur Hohl, E. G. Robinson, Byron Beasley and Miss Beatrice Moreland. Livingston Platt has designed the settings and costumes. The performances are scheduled for Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday afternoons.

FRIDAY.

LITTLE THEATRE (Afternoon)—"A Winter's Tale" will be presented at special performances, beginning with this matinee at 3:15, with subsequent performances Saturday morning, February 5, at 10:45; Friday, February 11, at 3:15, and Saturday, February 12, at 10:45. They will be under the auspices of the New York Kindergarten Association. The play is under the direction of Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Armfield. The company includes John Burr, Grace Celeste, Dorothy Johnston, Henry Stillman and Marjorie Vonnegut. The costumes were designed by Mr. Armfield from ancient Bohemian and Sicilian motifs, and the music is derived from early English and Italian sources.

SATURDAY.

CENTURY PROMENADE—Lee and J. J. Shubert will make the second late hour production on the Century Roof when they present "Midnight Rounders of 1921," beginning at 11:30. The music is by Jean Schwartz and the lyrics by Alfred Bryan. Jack Mason staged the dances and musical numbers, with the exception of a special ballet by Cleveland Bronner. The cast includes Ada Forman, Tot Quaters, Olga Cook, Jessica Brown, Dooley and Sales, John Lowe and Joe Browning. Dining and dancing will continue as an attraction.

admired to-day in "The First Year," it is not so discernible to spectators of long standing. But it happened that the time was up. Realism was entitled to its periodic discovery. Lucky Mr. Craven! Lucky Miss Gale!

Theatre Guild's Escape.

It was fortunate for the organization that the esoteric rites of the Theatre Guild were practically held on last Sunday behind closed doors. The members alone were able to enjoy the first performance of "John Hawthorne" and thus a deadly blow to the popularity of the society was averted. It is not agreed, it happens that for such theatre societies there is positively necessary a stated intervals a certain amount of gloom. It is as indispensable to their existence as vitamins to the mechanics. The language of the drama paints well enough the emotions through which the protagonist is living. Yet the genius of an artistic scene painter and designer might make the whole piece profoundly more impressive. Under such treatment, moreover, the theatre of Mr. O'Neill might be made available for professional use. He seems to have lingered long enough among the amateurs of Washington Square and other points south.

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