

# TOPICS OF THE STAGE AS VIEWED IN WASHINGTON

## Errors of the Bard.

What Shakespeare Commentators Say About the Seacoast of Bohemia.

IT has been the delight of certain pin-head annotators to seek out the blunders of Shakespeare; but what profit there could be in such an inquest it would be difficult to imagine. That Shakespeare, with the limited geographical information at hand during his time, should have made errors is in accord with reason. Considering the jumble of misinformation, for example, that burdens us at this time regarding the present seat of war in the Orient, it is little wonder that Shakespeare, over 300 years ago, should have tripped when he comes to refer to remote regions of the globe.

One of the chief blunder beacons to be found in his works, and the one most often referred to by the error hunters, is found in "The Winter's Tale," which Viola Allen is to produce next season. In the third act, third scene, the following line is put in the mouth of Antigonus, a mariner: "Our ship hath touched upon the deserts of Bohemia," when in point of fact, Bohemia is an inland country. Dr. Furness made an exhaustive study of this matter, and says that Hammer refused to accept "Bohemia" at all. He pronounced it a "blunder and an absurdity of which Shakespeare in justice ought not to be thought capable," and that as Shakespeare had changed throughout the names of the characters in Greene's novel, it is probable that he had changed "Bohemia" into Bithynia, which the printers had "corrected and brought back again to Bohemia by a less variation in the letters than they have been guilty of in numberless other places of this work."

The blame cannot, however, be thrown on the printers. Ben Jonson at one time visited Scotland, and while there spent three weeks with William Drummond, of Howthornden, who has left a record of his guest's conversation. This record was quoted by the Shakespeare Society, and we find the following remark by Ben Jonson:

"Shakespeare, in a play brought in a number of men saying they had suffered shipwreck in Bohemia, where there is no sea near by some 100 miles." This conversation took place in 1615, and as far as we know "The Winter's Tale" was not printed before 1623. It was not, therefore, from a printed page that Jonson spoke; he must have heard the "seacoast of Bohemia" mentioned on the stage, or what is possible but not probable, read it in manuscript.

But Hammer knew nothing of the conversation with Drummond, although it had been printed in 1711, thirty years before Hammer's edition of Shakespeare appeared. The editors who have discussed the "seacoast of Bohemia" have been chiefly concerned with shielding Shakespeare's reputation by offering reasons why he should have followed Greene. Capell (p. 109) supposed that Shakespeare retained the name Bohemia because while it "had harmony and was pleasing, it stood connected so with Sicilia in the minds of his whole audience, that removing it had been removing foundations; the fault had been overlooked in the stage, and the error popular and then a great favorite, and he was in no fear but it would be so in the play; his changing all the other names generally throughout the fable, arose partly from judgment, and partly from his ear's goodness which could not but up with Garinier, Fenton, and Eudesto, and such like, which have nothing in themselves nor relation to the places the scene is laid in."

Farmer says that "Cervantes ridicules these geographical mistakes, when he makes the Princess Micomicona land at Basuna. But is this correctly expressed? Cervantes really makes us laugh openly as much as the prince, and laughed secretly, over her slip in making Ossuna a seaport town. Is this ridiculing the mistake? "Corporal Trim's King of Bohemia," Farmer continues, "is a play in which the author has never a report in his title, and my Lord Herbert tells us that De Lorraine, the prime minister of France, when he was ambassador there, demanded whether Bohemia was an inland country or lay 'upon the sea.'"

Collier quotes from "a popular author of the time, who ridicules the error of the kind"—Taylor, the water poet, "who," Collier goes on to say, "made a journey to Prague in 1620, nine years after 'The Winter's Tale' was acted, and on his return published an account of his expedition; the address to the reader is, 'The Gentle Reader, I am a seaport town, and my Lord Herbert, laughing at the ignorance of the aldermen of London on matters of geography—I am no seaport town of him, but Gregory Gaudere, an alderman of Gotham, catches me by the collar, demanding if Bohemia be a great town, whether there be any meat in it, and whether the last fleet of ships be arrived there?' Sir Gregory Gaudere has derived his knowledge from such sources as Greene's 'Dorastus and Fawnia' and 'The Winter's Tale.'"

Thus far we have listened to those only who have acknowledged that a seacoast of Bohemia is a blunder, or have attempted to frame excuses or palliations for it. But in a little obscure corner of "The Monthly Magazine," for the first of January, 1811, there is here "no breach of geography." The is a short note, which says that there note is as follows:

"In the year 1270 the provinces of Sicily and Carthage were dependent on the crown of Bohemia. Rudolf, who became King of the Romans in 1273, took these provinces from Ottocar, the King of Bohemia, and attached them to the possessions of the house of Austria. The dependencies of a large empire are often denominated from the seat of government; so that a vessel sailing to Aquileia or Trieste, might, in the middle of the thirteenth century, be correctly described as bound for Bohemia. 'The shipwreck in 'The Winter's Tale,' is no breach of geography.'"

In later times George Sand exculpates Shakespeare's memory from a "gross geographical blunder." But it is to be feared that her knowledge of the blunder was obtained from hearsay. She says in a foot note that it is well known that in one of his dramas Shakespeare represents "one of his characters as embarking on a ship in Bohemia. This might have been the harbour of Naom which King Ottocar purchased, and which placed a splendid limit to his empire on the coast of the Adriatic." Dr. von Lippman records another al-



Howard Kyle as the Scout in "On the Yellowstone" at the Lafayette.

lusion to a "sea coast of Bohemia" which is to be found in Tachsmann's "Annals of the Barefooted Friars of Thana," where it is stated that "in 1481 fourteen pilgrims returned home from their pilgrimage to the Holy Land, after having been attacked on the way by Corsairs, but finally luckily escaped; they had landed at Bohemia." Where it is to be inferred that there was a land and not far removed either from the days of Greene and Shakespeare, when the southeastern coast of Italy was called 'Bohemia.'"

How it acquired this name is a matter of conjecture. Indeed, it is not easy to decide, in reviewing the whole question, which to admit the more, the ingenuity which supplies excuses where none is really needed.

## At the Theaters.

### Lafayette—"On the Yellowstone."

"Stage realism," said Howard Kyle, who will be seen in his new play "On the Yellowstone," at the Lafayette Opera House tomorrow afternoon, "has developed so far in the last few years that except in certain isolated cases the old time 'props' have no place in modern production. I believe that the public has come to look on the stage as an educational influence of no mean value, and so to demand that it be given real things, instead of false as in the past. Take, for example, this production of 'On the Yellowstone.' One would hardly believe the lengths we have gone to make everything not only seem real, but real."

"As you know, the play is founded on the fascinating tales of the West written by Frederick Remington, the famous artist. When we began to make ready production, Mr. Remington was emphatic in his desire to have everything as nearly perfect as it is possible in these days. Take, for instance, the alkali dust to be seen on the uniforms of the soldiers. As a rule stage dust is made from what we call 'Fuller's earth.' This did not suit Mr. Remington at all. He declared that alkali dust was actual alkali dust from Wyoming. We made no further effort to imitate but sent all the way to Red Butte, Wyo., and had them ship us three barrels of dust. This will last us all season."

"Another item was the log hut in the woods. Our stage carpenter made what he thought was a very good log hut, but it wasn't at all like the real thing. This time we sent still farther, to a spot high in the mountains near the Tongue River, which, by the way, is the actual scene of the play, where Mr. Remington knew there was a log hut. This was carefully taken down, placed on wagons, and dragged nearly 100 miles across the hills to the nearest railway station. It was then loaded on flat cars and shipped to New York. Mr. Remington wanted us to make that log hut, the stage, but allowed us to make a perfect copy of it when he found that it would take four men a full day to set it up, and as long again to take it down."

"Another item was that of weapons. We have secured rifles actually in use during the Indian wars, two of them, in fact, having been found on the field of the Custer massacre, the battle of the Little Big Horn. As far as possible we use uniforms which were actually in use in the year of 1875, in which the events from which our play is made transpired. John Ermine really lived, and so did nearly all the other characters in the play, which, to my mind, gives it a tremendous interest. I know I take more pleasure in portraying that wonderful brave young scout, Ermine, than in any character I have ever before impersonated. He was a wonderful man."

"As for the scenes," continued Mr. Kyle, "Mr. Remington has himself furnished the scene painters with models for every scene and in the play, and each is an exact duplication of the actual country in which these events, which form the basis for our play, transpired."

### Chase—"Hermann the Great."

Chase will present this week a holiday polite vaudeville program exceptionally expensive, as its eight separate novelties, especially gathered together for this occasion, will include, as their foremost feature, Hermann the Great, assisted by Marie Hermann and a large company of magicians. It will be the first time that the world-famous prestidigitator has been seen in this city at the extremely low scale of prices charged at Chase's, and while holiday occasions are always availed of by extraordinary numbers of the Chase patrons doubtless the Hermann the Great week will prove financially worthy of a place among the "banner weeks" at the popular Avenue playhouse.

It is promised that the great wizard will condense into the time set aside for his performance quite as many illusions, transformations, etc., as in the past have been spread out over a longer period of performance. The list of special features includes "The Water of Enchantment," "The Isle of Can-



Howard Kyle as Ermine in "On the Yellowstone," at the Lafayette.

aries," "The Japanese Pagoda," "La Fete des Fleurs," "The Bride Elect," "The Egyptian Crystal Clock," "Propaganda Extravaganza," "A Miser's Dream," "The Rings of Saturn," "Le Canon du Diable," etc. A noteworthy feature of Hermann the Great's presentation will be the magnificent costumes and scenery especially designed to heighten the mysterious effect and enhance the atmosphere of magic. The illusionistic masterpiece "Cloak and Dagger," which Hermann the Great has been employed this summer, has been completed, and the wizard has concluded to present it as the chief extraordinary feature of his performance this week, when it will be seen for the first time upon the stage of any country. One of his creations, "The Bride Elect," has never before been shown here.

The supporting numbers of the program are not permitted to suffer in excellence and attractiveness because of the unusual expense attached to the scene of the Great appearance. The program is from the first announcement, which is that of Kathryn Osterman and her own company. Miss Osterman is well known as a beautiful woman, an artistic actress, and as careful a producer of her own plays as any actress of her larger ventures. Miss Osterman's laugh is infectious, her smile bewitching, and she carries her comic points with irresistible personal charm. Jack Norworth is down for third place, and there is no monologist who finds the Chase audience more susceptible to his humorous provocation. Charles Barry and Hulda Halvers, who were a much-applauded interpolation in "Babes in Toyland," have been secured for this week. The celebrated Athos family of foreign acrobats will present a surprising and startling head balancing spectacle. John Ermine really lived, and so did nearly all the other characters in the play, which, to my mind, gives it a tremendous interest. I know I take more pleasure in portraying that wonderful brave young scout, Ermine, than in any character I have ever before impersonated. He was a wonderful man."

### Academy—"Hearts Adrift."

"Hearts Adrift," a scenic melodrama which met with well deserved approval last season, will be the offering at the Academy this week, opening with Labor Day matinee. The story of the play is of strenuous New York and New Yorkers of today. For its center it has two heroic figures—one a bright young man who has risen from the lowly position of newsboy to the head of a bank, only to fall under the suspicion of the law for a crime of which he is innocent—the other a reformed drunkard, formerly a noted detective, who, partially atoned for the wrongs of his early manhood and partially through gratitude, shoulders the crime himself, and then proceeds to bring to justice the real criminals. Enlisted in the efforts to clear the youth's name is the young girl of his choice, a vendor of flowers—while in the conspiracy against him is his employer's daughter, a beautiful but unprincipled helress, who is maddened by his affection for the simple flower girl in preference to herself. One scene represents an East Side restaurant, then to the laboratory of the scientist, to which place the flower girl and her crippled brother are brought

and imprisoned. Through the rear window can be seen the big airship which figures so strongly in the story. The detective and the young banker come in disguise, secure the stolen booty of the robbers, liberate the boy and girl, when they are surrounded by the conspirators. The only means of escape is the airship, into which they climb hastily, unfasten it and soar rapidly upward, but not before one of the pursuers has climbed aboard with them. A desperate fight ensues, while the aeroplane is flying at full speed, ending with victory for the escaping quartet. The villain being thrown headlong into the sea. The leading role of Captain Teddy, the old detective, is still in the clever hands of E. L. Snader, who is ably supported by Harry J. Handworth, George C. Pearce, Master Phil McCarthy, J. H. K. Fowler, Bert Walter, Louis Bishop, Philip McCarthy, Lew Walter, C. J. Singleton, J. E. Mikel, Walter Moye, Frances Whitehouse, E. Hayden Curran, May Ethel Courtney, and Anna Belle Gordon.

### Lyceum—Al Reeves' Company.

Al Reeves' famous big company of entertainers, which comes to the Lyceum Theater this week, commencing tomorrow night, so far has been reported to be the best burlesque company traveling this season. Al Reeves is sole manager and is directing the tour of this organization. He is well known by the theater loving public and has always given the best vaudeville talent obtainable. Among the many strong features of his company this season are Andy Lewis and Company, America's clever song writer and great burlesque producer; first appearance in burlesque houses of Devine and Wolley, formerly Fields and Wolley and Devine and Williams, two trustworthy comedians, who will make you laugh with their new and original talking act. Special engagement of the Lillian Russell of burlesque, the beautiful Louise Aaber, assisted by twelve pretty girls, introducing beautiful pictures and singing numbers; first appearance in burlesque houses of Devine and Wolley, formerly Fields and Wolley and Devine and Williams, two trustworthy comedians, who will make you laugh with their new and original talking act. Special engagement of the Lillian Russell of burlesque, the beautiful Louise Aaber, assisted by twelve pretty girls, introducing beautiful pictures and singing numbers; first appearance in burlesque houses of Devine and Wolley, formerly Fields and Wolley and Devine and Williams, two trustworthy comedians, who will make you laugh with their new and original talking act. 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