

by the side of the names of Isaiah and Ezekiel to see that there is here a false note struck. Blake's visions could never come to be recognised as based on the same order of spiritual insight as theirs, but if they cannot, while yet to Blake himself it is a matter of triumphant conviction that they can, and if this false conviction is a ruling conviction of his life, I do not see that his admirers have any serious right to complain if the charge of madness is brought against him. . . .

Turning to the prophetic books themselves we find the integrity of inspiration which Blake claims for them threatened everywhere by the same incontinence of emotional expression. Questioned as to the source of his spiritual second sight, Blake answered: "You have only to work up imagination to the state of vision and the thing is done." He accurately describes his own achievement, but the description has its unhappy aspects. We get the picture of the lion lashing his sides with his tail and provoking himself to an artificial fervour. . . .

These meltings, groanings, burnings, howlings and all this violence of hate, jealousy and love are a mere fantasy. . . .

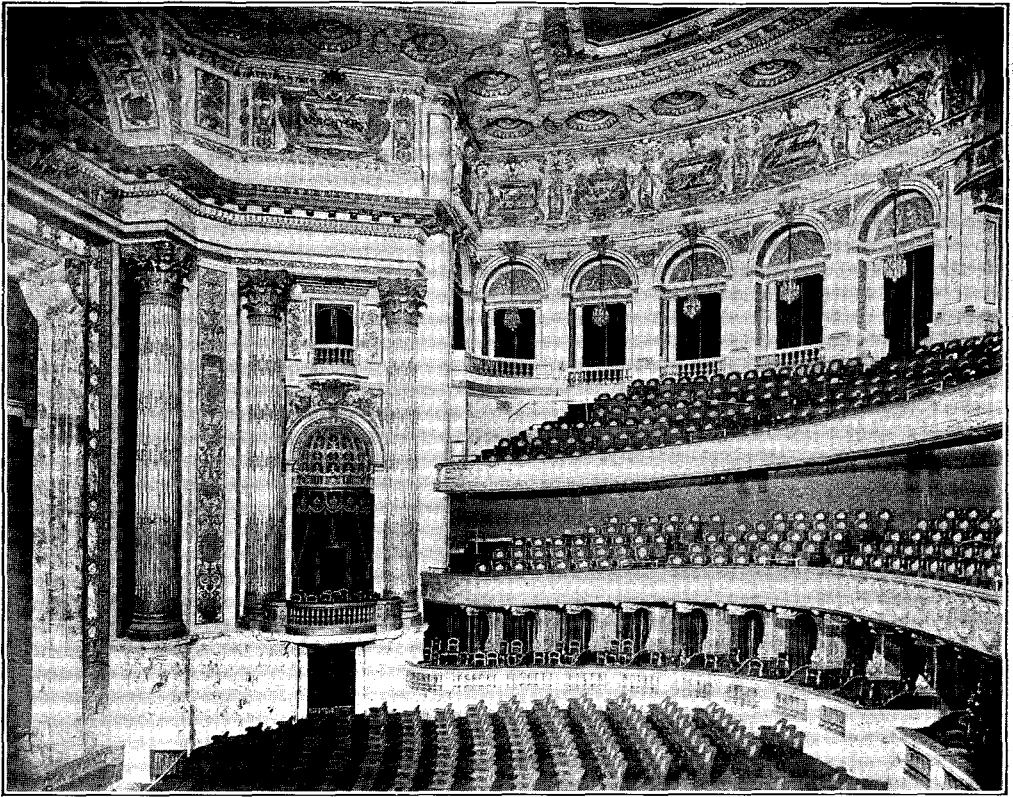
Again there is little doubt that Blake's belief in himself as called to prophesy led him to take the Hebrew writers as models of prophetic expression; and many of the eccentricities of his nomenclature are due to the fact that it is derivative and unintelligently derived. . . .

Following the Swedenborgian system of Biblical interpretation, Blake was led to believe that there was a mystic significance in these names as names used for their own sakes; with this opinion in view he writes: "Till Canaan rolled apart from Albion across the Rhine along the Danube, and from the land of Canaan suspended over the valley of Cheviot from Bashan to Tyre and from Troy to Gaza of the Amalekites." It must be borne in mind that the writings of the prophets were far more unintelligible in Blake's day than they are now, and there seems little doubt that Blake accepted this unintelligibility as part of the evidence of their supernatural origin: "Allegory addressed to the intellectual powers while it is altogether hid from the corporeal understanding is my definition of the sublimest poetry," he writes in a letter to Butts; and it is clear from this that he had got to regard unintelligibility as essential to the poetical and the sublime. That the Hebrew prophets are obscure to us in our time because they wrote at another time for other men and spoke of details which were

then familiar but are lost now in complete oblivion, this seems not to have occurred to Blake. Of course, the original value of the prophecy lay in its living grasp of the contemporary issue; it is great because the contemporary issue is strictly related by the prophet to eternal truth; and thus he leaves to after generations a statement in which truth endures even when the circumstances which gave him his vision of it have been forgotten. But Blake writing in emulation of him weaves mystic symbolism into every reference to Moab, Israel or Philistia. . . .

Blake, looking at the ultimate manifestation of beauty and of life, believed and passionately proclaimed that he saw not life only but system also. In believing that private quarrels could be a proper medium for convincing of eternal truth, he committed a parallel mistake. In the first he denied poetry, in the second prophecy, and thus he was guilty of self-deception touching the very things that were dearest to his heart; self-deception so convincing that it still transmits itself to many of his readers. It was a mental obsession by which his whole life—that wonderful intensely glowing life of his—was coloured. It was a kind of madness.

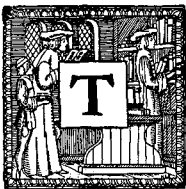
Criticism in America is not so flourishing a plant that a product like Mr. W. C. Brownell's *American Prose Masters* can be ignored. Mr. Brownell's style proves that he is fond of antithesis, and the six subjects of his latest book are nicely balanced against the six *Victorian Prose Masters* of an earlier volume. It is not to be rashly inferred that the six constitute his American pantheon, for this book is not a mere collection of eulogies of favourites. If he accords Cooper a higher place amongst romancers than many critics have given him, he affronts the literary patriot by setting Hawthorne on a distinctly lower plane than he has hitherto occupied. Emerson he admires as wholeheartedly as does Professor Woodberry; to Poe's perplexing talent he does full justice, and he is luminous if a trifle condescending in his treatment of Lowell. His most difficult achievement is to write understandingly and understandably, with penetration and yet with admiration, of Mr. Henry James.



THE AUDITORIUM OF THE NEW THEATRE

"The immensity of the auditorium has been a great handicap to both actors and producers," because "the spectator is left conscious always that he *is* a spectator, and is not brought into any feeling of intimacy with the people on the stage."

## THE NEW THEATRE AND CONTEMPORARY PLAYS



### The Size of the New Theatre

THE researches of recent years into the history of the drama have demonstrated that a fundamental and necessary relation has always existed between theatre-building and theatric art. The best plays of any period have been made to fit the best theatres of that period, and *vice versa*; so that any considerable alteration in either factor of the equation is likely to be detrimental to the artistic result. In order fully to appreciate such a play as *Edipus King* it is necessary to imagine the theatre of Dionysus; and in order to understand

thoroughly the dramaturgy of Shakespeare and Molière, it is necessary to reconstruct in retrospect the altered inn-yard and the converted tennis-court for which they wrote their plays. It may seriously be doubted that the works of these earlier masters gain more than they lose from being produced with the elaborate scenic accessories of the modern stage; and, on the other hand, a modern play by Ibsen or Pinero would lose three-fourths of its effect if it were acted in the Elizabethan manner, or produced (let us say) in the Roman theatre at Orange.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century the art of theatre-building underwent a revolution, and the art of