

## AMERICA'S PRIZE AT STRATFORD

THREE hundred competitors sought for a prize in drama at Stratford-on-Avon and the winner is an American, Miss Josephine Preston Peabody. Her play is a poetic drama called "The Piper," based upon the legend of Hamelin town that Browning has made so familiar. "To be hailed the winner in a poetic contest in the birthplace of Shakespeare himself," says the New York *Evening Post*, "is a distinction of which she, and with her all American womanhood, may well be proud." But the satisfaction must be seasoned with a little chagrin, this journal thinks, that "so striking a work should have to go abroad to find managerial appreciation and the certainty of speedy production." The work will be put on the stage by Mr. F. R. Benson, the English manager, and will have a place in the program of the annual Shakespeare festival, beginning at Stratford on April 22. *The Evening Post* observes:

"The piece has a spiritual and poetical bloom which in stage representation could be preserved only by the most skilful and delicate treatment, and it is satisfactory, therefore, to know that it is to be played by the company of Mr. Benson, who has done more for the poetic drama than any other living man. Of course, we shall soon have 'The Piper' here, now that its merits have been acknowledged elsewhere."

The case for the play in this country is not so bad apparently as it had seemed, tho the interest it had aroused was not a matter of public knowledge until this statement appeared in *The Evening Post*. Immediately Mr. Walter Hampden, who appeared so long and successfully as *Manson* in "The Servant in the House," wrote to the paper these words:

"Without knowing anything of the literary encomiums which had been bestowed upon the play, I read the copy Miss Peabody sent me on January 20, instantly recognized its poetical and dramatic qualities as of a high order, and at once secured an option upon it for production. On the first reading I was so impressed with the spiritual splendor of its subject, so captivated by the charm of its treatment, and convinced of its practical worth on the stage, that I decided to do everything in my power to secure its production. I shall be surprised and disappointed beyond measure if my efforts come to naught."

"The writer of your editorial, tho without so intending, seems to discredit the intelligence and judgment of our stage-folk. Your writer remarked that 'Of course we shall soon have "The Piper" here, now that its merits have been acknowledged elsewhere.' This thought is only too current, and its concealed sarcasm seems to me to create and foster the very conditions your writer deplures. . . . Such thoughts are certainly ill-founded and hasty, but nevertheless constantly reiterated by writers upon the stage. They tend to discourage all earnest effort by creating an unnecessary obstacle to progress."

The Boston *Evening Transcript* gives a synopsis of the play, which begins thus:

"A party of strolling players are just concluding their show—'a Noah's Ark miracle-play of the rudest.' It is the market-place of Hameln late in a golden summer afternoon of 1284 A.D. *Cheat-the-Devil*, one of the players, has been prodding 'lost souls' into the jaw-like opening of that piece of medieval stage-property known as Hell-Mouth, to the mingled joy and horror of the multitude, while *Anselm*, the young priest, opens the speech of the play with an admonition to profit by the sober lesson of the spectacle. Three days have passed since the ridding of the town of its pest, and *Jacobus*, the smug old Burgomaster, is alternately felicitating his

fellow citizens on their deliverance, and himself, in oily circumlocutions, on the utter disappearance of their benefactor. It were well, after the manner of grateful governments, to consider ourselves delivered by the hand of heaven—without charge. His stately language is punctuated from the player's tent by sarcastic caterwauls from him who played *Reynard-the-Fox*. Still, it were well to go through the form of offering to pay the promised fee; it were well to have the vanished stranger called by the Herald: 'Oyez!

Oyez! Oyez!' *Reynard* steps forth from the tent. Life has played us its detestable trick of taking us at our word. It is the man.

"The burghers haggle; the strange one is firm, yet dignified. There is a mysterious air of power about the man. He summons forth two of his companions: *Cheat-the-Devil*, revealed as a pale and timorous youth, gentle and half-witted; the one who had worn the bear's head, *Michael*, a sword-swallower by profession, a dreamer by vocation. They three are to share the fee. Some bargain must be made. The burghers withdraw into the Rathaus to confer. Out in the square about the figure of the piper goes the life of the place. *Barbara*, the Burgomaster's daughter, keeps eying the youth *Michael* with a fascination; *Jan*, the lame little son of the woman *Veronika*, who was 'not born in Hameln,' cries out suddenly on the stranger, 'Oh, I love the Man!'"

The Burgomaster, after long haggling among the burghers, comes out of the Rathaus and offers the piper 15 guilders instead of the 1,000 promised. Then

"A swell of organ music sounds from the minster across the square. The eye of *The Piper* darkens. He refuses, and the burghers threaten. Lights glow at the minster windows in thickening dusk. The sonorous chant of the organ rolls through aisle and nave and reaches them where they stand, the people, half-cowed,

half-doubting. Then, led by the Burgomaster, they go in to worship. *The Piper* stands alone in the square.

"Not quite alone. The children are about him, begging him to pipe again. Horror and pity that they should be destined to lives like these come over him. He looks on them and begins softly to pipe the Kinderspell.

The children stop first, and look at him, fascinated; then they laugh, drowsily, and creep closer—*Jan* always near. They crowd around him. He pipes louder, moving backward, slowly, with magical gestures toward the little by-streets and the closed doors. The doors open everywhere.

Out come the children: little ones in night-gowns; bigger ones, with playthings, toy-animals, dolls. He pipes, gayer and louder. They pour in, right and left. Motion and music fill the air. *The Piper* lifts *Jan* to his shoulder (dropping the little crutch) and marches off, up the street at the rear, piping, in the midst of them all.

Last, out of the minster come tumbling two little acolytes in red, and after them, *Peter the Sacristan*. He trips over them in his amazement and terror; and they are gone after the vanishing children before the church-people come out.

"At a shriek from *Old Ursula*, 'The bell! the bell!' *Peter* rushes and tugs at the bell-rope to break the witchcraft. The iron tongue begins to speak thickly. The people pour out of doors learning the horror from one another as they come; lights multiply; parents scream for their children; they accuse each other of the false bargain; lamentations fill the air. Above the clamor sound the knelling strokes of the bell."

Citations are given from a scene in the land whither the children had been taken. "Humanity invades this airy pleasure-dome of the soul."

"It is *Veronika*, braving the terrors of the haunted cross-roads, calling in a wail for the little lame boy, her *Jan*. *The Piper* fronts her; she is haggard, but resolute. She asks first to be told that the children live. *The Piper* swears it. And he says, 'like a wounded animal,' even while refusing to return them to their bondage:



JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY,

Who put the pied piper of Hamelin into a drama and won the prize over 300 competitors at Shakespeare's home town.

You hurt me  
Somewhere—you hurt me.

"Again, he cries passionately:

But for only you,  
What do they know of children?—Pfui, their own  
Who knows a treasure, when it is his own?  
Do they not whine: 'Five mouths around the table,  
And a poor harvest; and now comes one more'?  
God chasten us!—Pfui!—

VERONIKA (dully)—

... But I must be patient.

PIPER—

You know, you know, that not one dared, save you,  
Dared all alone, to search this devil's haunt.

VERONIKA—

They would have died—

PIPER—

But never risked their souls!  
That knew I also. . . . .  
... 'Young faces,' sooth,  
The old ones prate of!—Bah, what is 't they want?  
'Some one to work for me, when I am old;  
Some one to follow me unto my grave;  
Some one—for me'? Yes, yes. There is not one  
Old huddler-by-the-fire would shift his seat  
To a cold corner, if it might bring back  
All of the children in one shower of light!  
... The younger men?  
Aha! Their pride to keep the name alive;  
The name, the name, the little Hameln name,  
Tied to the trade; carved plain upon his gravestone.

"My longing will bring back my own," cries the woman desperately, as she reels blindly away. The wild heart of the gipsy has



"OLD MILL NEAR ST. CLOUD."

One of the pictures that caused litigation between an art-dealer, William Clausen, and W. T. Evans, who withdrew the work after presenting it to the National Gallery in Washington.

encountered something in Nature more imperious than Nature's wildness. He has encountered her passionate gentleness in the mother. Vainly he struggles against it, and the symbolism of the conflict is splendidly imaged in the splendor of the verse. He turns to the shrine of the Christ, the Lonely Man, in impassioned appeal, his arm uplifted, his hand outspread as to ward off some unseen accuser.

I will not, no I will not, Lonely Man!  
I have them in my hand. I have them all—  
All—all! And I have lived unto this day.

(He waits as if for some reply)

(He pleads, defends, excuses passionately; before his will gives way, as the arrow flies from the bowstring.)

—I will not give them back!

\* \* \* \* \*  
Look, Lonely Man! You shall have all of us  
To wander the world over, where You stand  
At all the crossways and on lonely hills—  
Outside the churches, where the lost ones go!  
And the wayfaring men, and thieves and wolves  
And lonely creatures, and the ones that sing!

We will show all men what we hear and see;  
And we will make Thee lift Thy head and smile.

\* \* \* \* \*

No, no, I can not give them all! No, no,  
Why wilt Thou ask it? Let me keep but one.

No, no, I will not. . . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

... Have thy way. I will!"

## THE PICTURE "BUNCO-GAME"

A PICTURE-DEALER who has lately been on trial in New York for selling bogus paintings was alleged by one of the witnesses to have once said that the whole picture business was "a bunco-game." Whether the man so charged ever said the thing or not, it seems certain that the trial will implant the suspicion in the average lay mind. In commenting upon the trial the New York *Press* points out that "few Anglo-Saxons have much sure understanding of painting and sculpture, and this fact renders them liable to be grossly imposed upon." The writer, however, thinks that "crass thieves and confidence men in this line are not as frequent as they appear to be to the cynical judgment." One thing the trial developed seems to be that the layman who goes afield for expert opinion will fall into confusion over the disagreement of the doctors. The main purpose of the trial was to settle the question of the authenticity of two pictures attributed to Homer Martin. They are called "Near Newport" and "The Old Mill Near St. Cloud," Mr. W. C. Brownell, an acknowledged authority and writer on art matters, and a friend of the late Mr. Martin, is reported to have said:

"I first saw 'Near Newport' when it was hanging beside Martin's 'Newport Neck,' in the Lotos Club. The contrast was great. I saw nothing in it that recalled the work of Martin except that it looked to be a caricature. Martin's work was marked by intellectual power and beauty, neither of which was in the canvas before me. I did not see Martin's characteristic treatment."

Asked as to what there was about the "Old Mill" to show that it was an imitation, Mr. Brownell said:

"Negatively I should say there was nothing. Positively there are several things. The arms of the mill try to catch Mr. Martin's manner of vagueness, but he never employed vagueness in the chief characteristics of a picture. The shape is one that would have been disagreeable to Mr. Martin, having an excess of length over height. It was in plan very like another picture he had painted, and I don't think he would have considered it honorable to paint two so similar pictures."

Later in the trial Mr. F. Hopkinson Smith, owning that he was by profession "a painter, also a writer and an engineer," said he had known Homer Martin and knew the picture in question. He believed it to be genuine, backing up the judgment with these words:

"A picture is very like a check which is torn from a check-book. When you present the check at the bank, the moment the man looks at it he knows what house it came from, but he doesn't pay until he has examined the signature. An artist doesn't write with a pen, but with a brush, and every artist has an individual touch. Martin took his brush, and he used a great deal of medium, varnish, or whatever it was. He took the color on his brush pure and dragged it across the canvas, and in between the marks of the brush he got the different tones of the original pigment. That is what some artists call vibration."

"Another peculiarity of Martin was his grave points. He was not a great artist, he was not a great draftsman; he was a very sad man. He had had a great deal of trouble and during a portion of his life was very poor. It went into his work. The most striking characteristic of every painter is how he puts the pigment on the canvas; how he moves his brush. You can tell it as you can his signature. You can't forge an artist's brush-work."

Mr. Smith said that this statement applied particularly to "The