

ter, more especially J. Jusko's of S. C. Judge Ch. L. Guy and Toma Lewis's of A. J. Conant, a trifle affected, perhaps, but a sympathetic study of the old, bearded face.

The crafts are not forgotten, even if as yet textiles and pottery do little more than explain what the scope of the art section of the Exposition may eventually be. It is high time that New York, home of the American National Academy, should have an annual exhibition of importance. It may be that the opportunity neglected by the Academy will be seized by the management of the Bronx Exposition, and the chief interest of their first year's art collection is the promise it holds out of exhibitions, representative of the art of this and other countries, in the days to come when the world will be at peace again.

N. N.

Drama

The Theatre To-day and To-morrow

ANOTHER theatrical season has begun and is very nearly in full blast. Several dozens of plays, new or old, are performed every evening, and most of them to full houses. On the whole, notwithstanding an occasional speedy withdrawal, the era might seem, on the surface, to be one of very general dramatic prosperity. There is, indeed, no apparent reason for doubting that the bigger managers are making a good deal of money, in spite of war taxes and other existing conditions. But from any point of view whence the theatre may be regarded as an artistic institution—with all its infinite potentialities for good and harm—the outlook has seldom been more unsatisfactory and depressing. Of the old, silly, sensational, or crassly sentimental shows, which most readily provoke the guffaws or plaudits of the indiscriminating masses there is, it may be readily admitted, a superabundance. Managerial profiteers are wise in their generation and according to their limited light. For the intelligent playgoer, seeking diversion of which he need not be ashamed, or some genuine emotional or intellectual stimulus, nothing, or very little, is provided.

Of the thirty or forty pieces so far produced in New York—some, of course, much better of their kind and in method than others—few have any permanent value or require specification here. The best of them do not rise much above the level of respectable mediocrity. The war-plays have the interest of timeliness and the merit of fervent patriotism, but, almost without exception, are moulded on the lines of conventional melodrama. Wilde's "An Ideal Husband" was worth reviving, if only for the sake of its literary sparkle and as an example of artificial comedy. There is some distinctive literary quality, also, together with considerable ingenuity and freshness in "Tea for Three," but this trifle is wholly foreign in spirit and atmosphere and tiresome in its juvenile and shallow cynicism. "Humpty Dumpty" is a pleasant little comedy, with many good points, but is vague in intent and unconvincing in its outcome, the author failing to redeem the promise of a good first act. Such plays of

youth as "Penrod" and "Jonathan Makes a Wish" command attention as efforts in a comparatively new field. The latter, although unsuccessful here, is a notable little work which deserved a better fate. It is to be hoped that Mr. Stuart Walker, one of the most enterprising and original of our managers, will not be discouraged by this temporary failure, which was due partly to his lack of experience in dramatic construction and partly to inadequate performance.

Across the Atlantic, in England, the condition of the stage is not much more encouraging. There, too, the theatres are doing remarkably good business, but the fare offered is, for the most part, very light, trivial, or commonplace. The prevalence of the war-play, and of so-called musical comedy, is largely accounted for by the fact that London and other large cities are full of soldiers lately returned from or going to the front. They undoubtedly create a demand for stirring war melodrama or careless frolic. The relation between cause and effect is here plainly discernible. But it must be remembered that the general degeneracy and poverty of theatrical art were topics of constant lament long before the war began. The actual situation is not, could not indeed be, much worse now than it was five years ago. The change has been in character rather than in quality. There would not be much cause for complaint if the plays manifestly suited to the moment were good of their kind. It would be unreasonable to look now for new masterpieces of wit, satire, or emotion. The dispiriting fact is that in the most recent output there is the old rigid adherence to ancient artifices, tricks, and conventions, the same lack of originality or invention, the old substitution of sheer theatricalism for genuine imagination or the realities of life. Of all this the cause lies much deeper than the temporary disturbances and convulsions of war. It is to be sought in the progressive subjection of the whole English-speaking stage—the process is not yet complete, but threatens to be—to the blighting control of money-grubbing commercial syndicates. The fatal circuit system of dependent theatres, prescribed plays, long runs, limited companies, and ordained stars, originated here in the far past, has been extended to England, and is slowly, but surely, fastening its grip there. Before very long—unless a sudden financial collapse should prevent the consummation—there is likely to be an Anglo-American stage virtually under one commercial governance.

J. R. T.

ONE of the latest plays to attain the somewhat doubtful honor of print is the "General Post" of J. E. Harold Terry (E. P. Dutton & Co.). The great popularity achieved by it on both sides of the Atlantic will doubtless attract many readers, but the chief virtues of it are essentially theatrical and far more effective in the theatre than in the study. Beyond question it shines brightly in comparison with the majority of current war pieces. Wholly independent of the cheap thrills of melodrama, it is a genuine comedy, dealing with general conditions—instead of specific instances—animated by a fine, liberal, and intensely patriotic spirit, and full of shrewd and humorous insight. Moreover, it is written with liveliness if not with any remarkable brilliancy. On the other hand, the plot, whose progress and issue are obvious from the first, and the personages are all modelled upon old and conventional types. Characters and incidents are so plainly devised to secure a predestined end that there is no opportunity for doubt or suspense.

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