WHAT THE SEASON PROMISES FOR PATRONS OF VAUDEVILLE

WITH vaudeville managers vieing with each other to produce, or at least, to exploit, the greatest novelty or the greatest sensation, this form of amusement in New York and throughout the country in general has developed rapidly in the last year. The field itself has grown, so that nowadays anything that is calculated to entertain an audience has a place on the vaudeville stage, from monologues by popular authors and drawings by popular cartoonists, to pretentious musical plays with high-priced stars and large choruses. At the same time the old stand-bys of the variety theatre, the song and dance team, the knockabout comedians, the acrobats and gymnasts have lost none of their popularity.

The increased demand for this sort of entertainment has developed the "vaudeville producing manager," who is the miniature of the regular producing manager. He buys sketches or musical people, engages and rehearses companies, and then books his attractions just as a full-sized play or operetta is booked. In many cases the vaudeville theatre manager becomes a producer himself, developing features for his house or chain of houses. He imports foreign performers and keeps them on tour, and sometimes he maintains a foreign office with an agent to discover and contract for novelties that have succeeded abroad.

PERCY G. WILLIAMS.

PERCY G. WILLIAMS, who manages the largest number of vaudeville theatres in New York City—two in Manhattan, one in the Bronx, and one each in Brooklyn and Queens—was asked to say something about this season's prospects for the vaudeville field.

"I have become thoroughly convinced, after repeated journeys to the Old World in search of novelties and acts that would have sufficient drawing capacity to keep up the vogue that we have set during the last three or four years," he said, "that to America and Americans we must look for our future in the vaudeville field. After scouring Europe, very much like the man who went from Little Rock, Ark., some twenty-five miles from Hot Springs, to Carlsbad, Germany, in search of waters in hope of curing an aggravated case of rheumatism. After a thorough examination by the German physicians he was informed that the only place for him to go on the globe where he would likely secure a cure was to Hot Springs, Ark. My case is somewhat similar in the search for acts. After going thoroughly over the European field I find that the fields are green far off, and that what I traveled the Continent to secure was right here under my hand in Times Square. You take men like Joe Hart, V. F. Rolfe, Jesse L. Lasky, and other vaudeville producers who are putting on bigger and better acts than it is possible to secure in any other country. A casual glance around will convince the most skeptic that the face of the map has been materially changed.

"A very short time ago the advent of a popular legitimate actor or actress into the vaudeville field was a subject of newspaper comment and a common topic for conversation, but now a complete reversal of form has transpired, and instead of vaudeville recruiting from the legitimate field, the legitimate recruits from vaudeville. You can't find an attraction in Broadway that is not influenced by the vaudevillian, and most of them in star positions, various members whom I have had the pleasure of launching, or if not launching, playing in my various theatres. Take the present day: we find Bayes and Norworth, now back in vaudeville, but who have just returned from legitimate engagements; Gould and Surratt, Eva Tanguay, Carrie De Mar, Irene Franklin, and Bickel and Watson are among a host of others that I recall.

"When twice a day they are required to concentrate their entire being and physical force into twenty minutes, where they are looking into distinctly friendly faces, but faces which show them plainly that they must appeal to their intelligence would you win success. To the general public this may seem easy, but I assure you that after playing two performances a day you are very apt to feel that you have accomplished a full day's work. The great thing about vaudeville is that each and every one must depend on his or her own ability. You are not a trained puppet, giving voice to the ideas of a stage manager whose conception may or may not be correct. You do your own staging, the theatre gladly furnishing you with anything in the way of props or mechanical effects that will in any way enhance the value of your act, but nowhere in the world can the expression "make good" be more aptly used than in the world of vaudeville."

WILLIAM MORRIS.

THAT the product of the legitimate and vaudeville stages is approaching a closer plane and will have a marked effect in vaudeville in the coming year is a statement made by William Morris, president of William Morris, Inc., the vaudeville corporation controlling a string of music halls extending to the Pacific coast.

"We are making a particular effort this season," declared Mr. Morris, "to make such productions in our music halls as would be welcomed from the stage of any legitimate theatre in the country. In my opinion vaudeville audiences have struck an angle of thought that demands amusement of this nature.

"It is in accordance with this idea that we have booked for presentation early next month John Lawson, an eminent English actor in a strong dramatic playlet by W. W. Jacobs and Louis N. Parker, the English playwrights. The sketch will be called 'The Monkey's Paw,' and, I believe, will be a sensation in vaudeville. For a similar reason we have booked Tom Terriss, the English actor in 'Scrooge,' the Dickens Christmas Carol.

"Our first serious effort in this direction took place last season when we presented Lawrence Irving in 'Gringoire,' 'By-Products,' and 'Dope,' by Joseph Medill Patterson, Frank Sheridan in 'The Derelict,' 'The Operator,' 'After the Opera,' and other dramatic offerings.

"Our dramatic efforts will extend much further than the playlets I have specifically mentioned. I feel positive that our production of 'Danses Classiques Russes' is a step away from the vaudeville tone in the past, just as I believe that 'The Barnyard Romeo,' 'Ma Gosse,' and other similar performances had their effect on the standard of vaudeville which New York audiences had accepted.

"Artists such as Harry Lauder, George Lashwood, Wish Wynne, and La Freya, who will visit this country this Fall under my management, will be looked at solely from the viewpoint of entertainment without the usual classification of vaudeville more than at any other time in theatrical history.

"Every year will bring vaudeville nearer the music hall standard lived up to abroad. By the same standard by which vaudeville abroad is set on the same plane with the more expensive places of amusement the music halls of this country will thrive."

KEITH AND PROCTOR.

THE coming season at the Fifth Avenue Theatre promises much for the future of vaudeville," remarked E. F. Albee, executive head of the management of that playhouse. "The best traditions of this overwhelmingly popular form of amusement will be retained, while no opportunity to secure new talent will be overlooked. The Fifth Avenue Theatre is intended to be the vaudeville producing centre of the United States, and nearly two years' consecutive booking await the act which 'makes good' at the Keith and Procor temple of the varieties. Each week we will present four or five new acts and continue to develop original talent in any line of amusement endeavor. All the big stars will return to vaudeville via the Fifth Avenue. Eva Tanguay being booked here for two weeks beginning Sept. 19, while Gertrude Hoffman in her sensational new revue will follow the cyclonic comedienne for a run of twenty-eight performances. A fortnight later Nora Bayes and Jack Norworth will grace our boards, and in rapid succession all the big headliners will follow. In fact, the new slogan will be, 'The Fifth Avenue gets them first.' In keeping with the long-established custom, everything possible will be done to enhance the comfort and safety of the audiences.

HAMMERSTEIN'S.

The plans for Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre this season call for the continuation of the policy of past years, with the promise of frequent novelties such as William Hammerstein, the manager of this house, has been in the custom of supplying to his patrons.

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