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M. V. Moore Co.

ELEVEN PATTON AVENUE--ASHEVILLE

HAIL AND FAREWELL BIDDEN TO PLAYMAKERS ON EVE OF TWO WEEKS WESTERN TRIP

(Continued from Page One)

They were the usual irritating complexes present Saturday evening, who well nigh ruined the effect of Mrs. Lane on your critic by their chortles, cachinations, and enraptured delight at the cleverness of the Lane Katzenjammers in pillaging their mother's jam jars, while she (poor Batts) was having such a time of it getting Prudence to go—er, batty. Now if there is any moment when our esteem and brotherly affection for mortals is sorely tried, it is when throaty giggles burst upon one from behind, while the only "heavy" bit of the evening is struggling towards its difficult climax. For those dear souls that must find the silver lining, those that seem unable to celebrate or take the tragedies of the Playmakers seriously, that allow their noise and laughter to spoil the illusion for others, we hope that the Playmakers will furnish, down in the old Law building, when it becomes their home, a nursery with pretty and appropriate haubles.

Another thing I remarked was the uniformity with which the young ladies excelled in their parts all the efforts on the part of the young men. It was certainly "Ladies' Night," so far as histrionic honors go. Denny and Charlie Gold gave the only intelligent work among the male roles that I recall. George is getting to be the old war-horse, but I am happy to state that his drunk was, by all Hayshaking and critical standards, the work of a rank neophyte. He became more and more sober as he drank. But then, home and cops have that effect. There were flashes of finished excellence in his work. He has more of that nebulous thing denominated technique than any of the brethren.

But from the time Miss Taylor came querulously in as Mrs. Zimmer, until "Mama" had her lights put out, the male parts were but feeders to the work of Misses Frazier, Taylor, Batts and Thompson. Quite a galaxy.

On the whole, the three plays, to me at least, seemed to have much in common with Mrs. Ledbetter's grits. Substantial, but there was something lacking. There were no wide expanses of the light that never was on land or sea,—only the glare of footlights, except for once when Miss Batts stood transfixed by the side of her tub. Not having witnessed a Playmaker performance in over a year, Miss Batts was new to me. She brought something in the stark apathy of her pinched face and listless droop of shoulder and blackness of eye, washed out, that I have not seen on the Playmaker stage during the six or seven years of the Playmakers' life. I think I can understand the neighbor, however, who said, "Yes, she's good. But I've seen her so much in that sort of thing that it's grown monotonous." She gives the sense of a one-stringed instrument, to be sure, but it was a pleasant revelation to me.

Mac's Play

And yet, in spite of her undeniably excellent treatment, the piece I was most interested in, having met Mrs. Lane in three-act form, while she was still very much alive and worth-while to the author, the "piece de resistance" of the evening, fell through. Grits. There seem to be several reasons, none wholly adequate. First, it should never have been put in one-act form. I understand now the author's qualms. But the staff did excellent work in doing what was almost impossible. Prudence began on too trained and high a note at the opening. The transition of madness had to take place too quickly, and was not altogether to be expected. Her shrieks at the boys were good, they were a relief. But why did they not let her exit an Ophelia? The song was not pathetic, as meant to be. She was not crushed. She might have turned around and entered to do the whole thing over again. Why didn't they let her grab a shirt from the tub and wildly wave it about her head, or do something of the sort?

And please take the clock down from the wall. I thought it commonly accepted that a clock destroys to some extent the illusion. And please to make George Denny stop gnashing his eyebrows.

Miss Taylor again was good. In fact, it was an all-star cast, come to think of it. But the very excellence of her characterization detracted from the central theme. The psychology, if I may dare use such a word, is all wrong anyway. No mother would be so unsympathetic to her daughter as Miss Taylor was, or so ignorant of the fact that work was driving her crazy. But there's no use to go into that sort of thing.

I do hope Josiah Bailey sees "Mrs. Lane." Which suggests why there are not more negro plays written here? They say there's a problem—why not a play? Yes, I remember "White Dresses," but there are many other angles. Using the prerogative of every critic I submit that the difficulty of the Playmakers this year has been one of finding good script. They have been enter-

taining this year, and it is not the absence of witches, blood-curdling anathema and historical incident that I bemoan so much as the lack of driving power that Green, more than any other, brought to the organization.

Continuing on my lightning-bug way, I record a presentiment that as the company tramps along, there are going to be many women that will patronizingly heave a sigh over the lot of "John Lane's Wife" and "those poor farm women," only to get a severe jolt the next moment in hearing so much of their own jargon from "Mama's" lips.

With aid of program I recall that Lloyd Williams came on as Steve Harun in "John Lane's Wife." He and his cuttings might better be cut out. There was no life in his performance.

"Mama"

Which also recalls the acting of the John Barrymore of the outfit—Spencer Murphy. Personally, I side with "Mama." No daughter of mine would ever espouse him. Murphy was too stiffly, self-consciously at ease. He didn't know of any use for his hands, except to shoot his cuffs, and hold them before him like a clothing ad. But this duffer, now, that played Albert. Why, he was the whang! I didn't know—as much as I pride myself on familiarity with all types—that one with his facial expression could be found here. Live and learn. His name was Duff, and he really looked like he might belong to "Tom's" famous family. Young Duff is an excellent farce man, though suffering from that bane that ever afflicts all amateurs, and many professionals, lack of restraint.

Well, I must get along to Miss Thompson. Superlatives are in order, but not in my line. I had observed that evening dresses don't go far because they haven't much backing. The young lady in point gave proof of it. Her acting? Who gives a whoop whether she can act or not? Incidentally, she can, and naturally—they all can in those parts, and these parts, but if there was nothing especially spirituelle about her acting, certainly there was little of the material about her. I enjoyed asking the phlegmatic editor of this sheet his position on the co-ed question again. Her voice was relief after Mama's screechings. Easily the most radiant picture that ever graced the local boards. Which is indeed faint mood of praise.

The play itself is jejune, but the characterization is much better than any of Ernest's other attempts. It got chuckles out of Horace Williams and myself. But "Spoon" needs to get the lightness of touch in these things that Clare Kummer and A. A. Milne possess. He lacks subtlety. He spoons broad jokes of vaudevillian nature down your throat, but then they howl for that kind of thing like they once did for Castoria. The only thing he overlooked, that I recall, was a pun on King Tut, but some of his lines were nearly as old as that gentleman, so things are square. Mama's misuse of words, cliches, and misinformation somehow was not refreshing, but flat as grits. Then if I were Charlie Gold, playing a mill owner, I would not wear a college boy's attached soft collar. He has possibilities, decidedly. As a North Carolina textile-mill owner he showed himself typical by referring all conduct to that "sine qua non," the book of etiquette.

Miss Frazier did better work as "Mama" than in the part she had in the first play. For instance, while Mrs. Zimmer was reading the description of Jim Patterson from the poster, her attempts to make the audience see that she recognized the description as being that of her nephew were ludicrous.

To be perfectly frank there is not much to "The Berry Pickers." The curtain seemed to fall of its own accord. The only thing to it was the really excellent work of Miss Taylor, in pantomime. It was the best acting of the evening. She kept the spotlight and made it worthwhile. Klingenschmitt, who played the part of the outlaw, was more gentle than "Mary Towl." He may be a wizard as an electrician, but he failed to produce a spark that would establish contact over the footlights. Miss Frazier had too much of a nasal twang for Colorado dialect, I was told. Dickson did his small part well.

The settings were better than usual, and on the whole it was a more polished performance than is usually given. Miss Batts' haunting face and poignant acting will be remembered. But Miss Taylor should realize by now that her forte is comedy. She should always be cast in that kind of part. And Denny was nearly brutal enough as John Lane. The Playmakers should be complimented on "John Lane's Wife." That is their proper direction.

And so, with commendation, we bid the Playmakers "Hail and Farewell."

J. F. Dashiell was elected vice-president of the Southern Society of Philosophy and Psychology at a recent meeting held March 30 and 31 in Nashville, Tenn.

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