

PLAYS AND PLAYERS WHO ARE IN THE PUBLIC EYE



Otis Skinner
 in "The Honor of
 the Family"
 Hudson



Scene from "Roddie's
 Garrick"



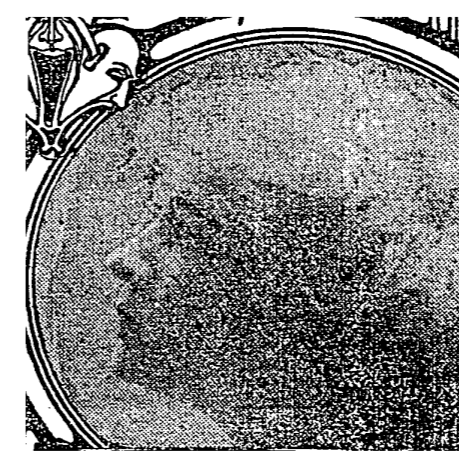
Wm. Taversham
 in "The Square"
 Man. Academy
 Music



Bonita
 in "The Woman"
 and "Song West"
 Eng.



Miss Adeline Genee
 in "The Soul Kiss"
 New York



Beulah Boynton
 in "Lena Rivers"
 14th St.



Clara Morton
 of "The Four Doctors"
 Metropolitan



Edna May Spooner
 Blaney's Lincoln Sq.

The Actor and His Ego.

ONE actor taking himself too seriously; another not taking himself seriously enough. It is a curious contrast to any one able to see beneath the surface. The too serious actor, ready at every opportunity to talk of his personal ambitions, to expatiate placidly upon the dignity of his calling, and to argue voluminously about the mission of his art; the other, quick and snappy in retort, aggressive, absolutely sure of his facts—he deals in facts, not fables of imagination—gives you a truism in every other sentence of a thirty-minute interview. But each, when all is said and done, thinking only of himself. The serious-minded actor, slowly but surely losing ground with the public that once regarded him with general affection. The other, easy-going, flippancy, a waster of his talents, already numbered among the "has-beens," and ready to blame everything and anything but his own weakness of character. The one a lesson of talents misapplied; the other of talents gone to waste; the one a failure of the overweening ego that refuses to recognize its own limitations or to regard the best-intentioned and disinterested advice; the other, with equal egotism, minus the self-respect which acts as a balance wheel on inclination. Both alike in this: that accomplishment in neither case has filled the measure of their talent. There the resemblance ceases. The one still somewhat regardless of his duty to the public, and maintaining a decorum of behavior that becomes the dignity of his profession and his artistic claims, striving earnestly to give the best that is in him, though obviously striving along lines that do not give that best. The other, with wonderful mechanical adroitness, still able to maintain an illusion with the least possible sincerity of personal effort, but repeatedly destroying all sense of that illusion by departures from character into the by-play and action of a momentary mood, having no relation with his role or with the play, talking his curtain calls with a mock assumption of gravity and gratitude that would be an offense to those who came to see him were they not so ready to forgive an actor anything so long as he amused them.

It is the actor's misfortune that what he does must always be done in public; he cannot disengage himself from himself; he cannot separate his effort and his individuality. Praise and blame alike reflect themselves upon him. He can never, so to speak, retire into the sanctuary to judge his work. He may rehearse and study in private, but rehearsal and study, no matter how judicious, have never the value or the quality of the work as it develops before the public eye. They bear more nearly the relation to actual performance than the painter's sketches bear to his completed canvas. But the painter may see his canvases in the privacy of his studio, may determine, if he is not intoxicated with his own greatness, the relative values of this or that phase of his endeavor. The actor's picture, however, comes before the public always warm from his imagination. There is little chance for him to hold the balance nicely upon his own achievement. If the painter's work is not approved it is after all largely a matter of canvases and colors. If the actor's work does not win indorsement, the criticism at once acts upon him personally, for in a large measure he is himself his work, or at any rate an important factor in it. It is all so personal, so closely woven into the fibre of his own being that no matter how he tries he cannot quite disengage himself from the

result. If failure, the insistent ego is there at once to make excuses. But complete failure is rare. There is almost always somebody to praise him; his art is personal, and his appeal, to some extent, is always personal, too. Therefore, the balm still remains in form of praise from those who lose sight of whatever else is lacking in the wholly personal side. Thus the actor will have sympathizers to give him solace even in his worst artistic moments. And in such solace he sees only sincerity of judgment.

And, indeed, it is sincere enough. You may be fond of painter or poet without caring for their output. If you are fond of an actor, you must be fond of what he does, for he is always a part of it. No wonder, then, that his ego grows. He ceases to think of himself as the artist, to regard his work impersonally. He cannot disengage himself from himself any more than his friends can totally disregard him in their judgments of his effort. When you attack his art, the attack must always leave a wound upon his person.

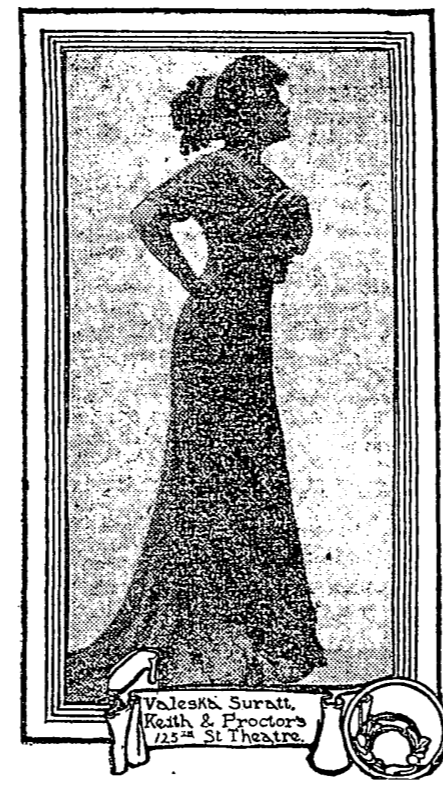
Self-preservation is the first law of nature. And the actor is always fighting for self-preservation. If you destroy the rôle which he has elaborately created, you are destroying in part the actor, for he is part of every rôle he plays. If praise is forthcoming for the artist, a part of it is necessarily reflected to the person.

The ordinary commonplaces of appreciation mean little to him. With other men in other walks of life approval, if expressed at all, comes only at rare intervals. It is expected and understood that work is to be well done. If it is not well done by this man, there stands that one ready to take his place. But the actor expects to be informed at once of the excellence of his achievement. He has come to await it as his due. And with increased experience and repeated appearances the stock phrases of approbation are regarded as just payment of his worth and nothing more. Take the average actor of prominence, and he will not give you a "Thank you" for the ordinary compliment. He is surfeited with that sort of praise. Tell him that he plays a fine Hamlet; he will regard you with tolerant friendly interest. Tell him that his Hamlet is the best since Booth; he will scarcely feel any great elation at the information, for he knows that there have been few, if any, great Hamlets since Booth's time; his ego has already satisfied him on that point. Tell him that he is as great as Booth, greater than Irving, and he will be keenly interested. That is the extreme case, to be sure, but it illustrates the point. The actor wants to be the superlative in comparison.

Few human beings are without some latent spark of vanity or self-appreciation. Without it little enough would be accomplished in the world. Every one likes to be praised once in a while for the work that he has done well. It is the actor's misfortune that the praise, too often direct and personal in its effect, leaves only an inordinate and insatiable desire for more. It takes remarkable steadiness of head for any man or woman to steer a clear course in the midst of showering compliments. And the actor, necessarily sensitive to all emotions, and always obliged to yield to them for the purpose of his calling, seldom retains the steady head needed to overcome the effects of general adulation.

MUSICAL ATTRACTIONS.

Musical attractions that continue in leading playhouses with undiminished popularity are Korb and Dill in "Lonesome Town," at the New Circle; Williams and Walker in "Bandanna Land," at the Majestic; Adeline Genee in "The Soul Kiss," at the New York; "Miss Hoek of Holland," at the Criterion; "The Merry Widow," at the New Amsterdam; "A Waltz Dream," at the Broadway; Sam Bernard in "Nearly a Hero," at the Casino; Victor Moore in "The Talk of New York," at the Knickerbocker; Lew Fields in "The Girl Behind the Counter," at the Herald Square; "A Knight for a Day," at Wallack's, and the burlesque of "The Merry Widow," at Joe Weber's Music Hall.



Volensk Suratt
 Keith & Proctor's
 125th St Theatre



Maude Fulton
 Colonial



Mrs. Snyder
 Keith & Proctor's
 125th St Theatre