

THE THEATRE

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who do know what they are talking about; give him all, and grant that he has a bit of inherent ability in dramatization, and then let him add a pill or two of bitter experience. There is still no reason why he should then be a doctor of drama, unless it be by the general acclaim of a fair representation of competent judges. It is a common occurrence in academic circles for a professor to be so interested and fascinated in his particular little sphere that he loses all connection with the outside world and becomes so ultra pedagogic as to be a mist instead of a light in the minds of those whom he is supposed to be guiding; a total misfit in his calling, despite the fact that he may command respect for his sincerity and potential powers. Equally common in everyday life is the would-be big business man impressing his system on his less successful luncheon associates, or the would-be social lion chatting condescendingly with his neighbors on a night off. But, for complacent naivete, provincialism, condescension, or what you will, there are few who compare with the general run of dramatic directors and leading men and women. In this light, the Mummers run true to form and offer nothing new and fresh.

My criticism is not that the Mummers would be better if not at all; nor is it even that they do not do as well as they can with what they have at hand. But it is that they invariably fall down when they attempt to do better than they can. Out of the countless number of plays in print which are ideally suited to the facilities and purposes of the organization and which might afford a greater number of members the chance to take part in the production, and which would be assured of student support and interest, why must they reach sky high to put on a drama like *Death Takes a Holiday*? That play was a total flop when first produced professionally in this country. Rewritten, it lost much of its farcical flavor, but Philip Merivale was still able to take it across the country with a remarkable degree of success. Many people saw it, many even of the group which regularly frequents Wilson Hall. When Director Rose chose it for production did he presume to think that it was enough of a one-man play for Mr. Levy to carry off in a comparatively perfect manner? The production was destined to disappoint, for it had too high a

standard to uphold. To assure success, not only Mr. Levy but the whole cast would have had to perform excellently, even superbly. Mr. Levy did his creditable best, but that is beside the point. The purpose of the Mummers, be it avowed or implied, should be to provide training and experience for those interested in dramatics by an endeavor to win the applause of the remainder of the student body. A producer must consider his public if he is to be a success, as his first concern. At the university, furthermore, he must blend this consideration with that for his cast who are, after all, gaining experience, and are not there to display the fruition of years of training. Wilson Hall should not be a distorted mirror of successful Broadway productions, but it should offer the best in amateur dramatic art. Plays which have received less notoriety, plays more in keeping with the locale, flawlessly presented, would be in much better taste. It is not for me to pick and chose; there are countless plays more suited to the Mummers at large. But, of course, Mr. Rose and Mr. Levy (and everyone else has indeed been impressed with the fact) recognize Mummers as a collective term for Mr. Rose and Mr. Levy, so that I may be wrong in stating that some broader and more inclusive drama would be more suited to the purpose of the Mummers. Then too, there have been cases where too much has been attempted from too insignificant a drama. The Mummers should be cautious of that, but I do not think the danger threatening, and a great broad cultural institution like ours should be able to attain the happy medium. Then glory be to the Levy, the Rose, and to no other one.

Perhaps it is due to the publicity and praise of local collegiate papers and critics that this ridiculous situation exists. Criticism in those papers have been quoted as embellishing all the rhetorical wiles and craft of advertisements for "Sky-Blue Oil" or "Homespun Mining." Out of all the plays that are offered, however, it is evident that about fifty per cent are better than the remainder. It is, moreover, the endeavor of this criticism, or any criticism, to point out the weak spots of even the more commendable productions.

■ **ROYALTY**—The *Royal Family* as well as *Death Takes a Holiday* bear out this

idea of a Mummers' dynasty. Both were quite taken over by Mr. Levy, so that as he went, so went the whole show. At present, however, the Mummers need Mr. Levy far more than Mr. Levy needs the Mummers. Again, Mr. Levy's best support was given by Miss Dorothy Gillespie, who, if my files are correct, acted in Mummery plays in 1927, and who, if my memory is correct, was affiliated with the organization a year or so before that. Are these in keeping with the ideals of the organization? In every production of the present year, there was much ability evident in minor members of the cast who are able and more representative Mummerys. Stanley Waxman and John Sinn, indeed, deserve mention in this connection. The injection of a few new and fresh ideas, or at least an open consideration of other than local traditions, would go far toward making the organization more purposeful. The *Beggar on Horseback* was a very pleasing change, and no doubt seemed better than it really was by reason of its novelty, but at least it encourages the hope for ensuing years.

■ **MUMMBLERS**—Throughout the year, despite the fact that it has been indicated elsewhere time and again, the Mummerys continue to mumble, much to the further glory of Mr. Levy, who does not. In each play, despite the excellent acoustics of Wilson Hall, there was no telling what the action was all about except when some clear voiced member of the cast would occasionally make his appearance and reveal the secret. No matter how fine the acting and characterizations, much is to be lost from a play, if all speeches are not clear and audible. The few who do increase their voices so successfully should convince the royal director that it is not only possible to do so without injury to quality, but to the advantage of the general effect. Besides, it would ease some of the glory from Mr. Levy's shoulders. What does deserve high commendation, and what has been too much slighted in reviews are the fine stage sets, very tastefully and effectively appointed under the able direction of Mr. Norman Bussman. They have been even so fine as to distract attention from many a flaw in characterization.