

More About "Dorothy"

OUR CRITIC VINDICATED

To the Editor of THE CITIZEN

Sir,-- As there seems to be quite a good-natured wordy warfare in progress in your columns concerning critics, I wonder if I may join in from another angle.

We are becoming quite accustomed to criticism, both public and private, of Our honoured dramatic critic (or perhaps I should say, complaints of unfairness and severity), and it reminds me of the saying "Every country gets the government it deserves." But if anyone went further, and said that every town gets the critic it deserves, I should beg to point out quite gently and politely that in my very humble opinion Letchworth must be the exception to this comfortable rule, for verily she has a much better dramatic critic than she deserves, or at any rate than towns of her size and standing are accustomed to get. I am not talking without experience, having for years toured the English provinces in a company playing Ibsen repertory chiefly, so I am able to make quite a few comparisons. And here, you have a critic who not only gives you the benefit of his erudition, but takes infinite pains to give a detailed criticism of each performer, and attends the performances twice, zonetimes three times. That he treats us too seriously (whether we deserve it or not) to flatter with stale and meaningless compliments, doled out all round equally, is a matter for great rejoicing, not grumbling. If you don't agree with him, no matter. It does not necessarily say he is too severe or unfair, if his opinion does not coincide with one's own. No one can accuse him of being wanting in spiritual sincerity, mental integrity, or infinite patience. It seems to me a charmingly naive theory that official criticism influences the box office; it is proverbially untrue of all

my experience of the professional stage. The Manchester Guardian" may rage, and put even brilliant stars in their places: but still the stars are worshipped by the great B.P., and their visits fill the theatres of Manchester and elsewhere. On the other hand, Manchester could not keep up her repertory theatre in spite of all the efforts of Miss Horniman and the intelligentsia,

But apart from the size of Letchworth, I personally have not been impressed by her dramatic wisdom. There is a self-conscious, earnest-minded, "First Garden City citizen and don't you forget it" attitude about many; but, probe a little, and you will be surprised. The public utterances on the drama have not been particularly stimulating, at least not since my four years' residence here. It is not a place that loves the theatre, except as a place of riotously indiscriminating amusement, or a thinly disguised pulpit, or for what it rather pompously calls "educational purposes."

A lover does not think of his mistress primarily from an educational, or social service point of view, or even as a light after-dinner entertainer, although of course she will probably minister to his Deeds in all these directions.

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November 12, 1925