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The Letter-Box

ANNIHILATED.

To the Editor of The Planet:
Sir,—The present time would not find me entering the arena of a controversy upon the subject of the attitude of the dramatic critic of The Chatham Daily Planet towards the opera, "Little Tycoon," were it not for a certain insinuation made in that column of Wednesday's Planet, known as the "Satchel of a Satellite," which insinuation is on a par with the majority of sapient paragraphs inserted in this column by the gentleman who professes to edit this department of The Planet, in addition to taking upon his apparently already over-taxed shoulders the onerous duties of "dramatic critic." There may, however, be some little comfort for him in the reflection that his duties in the last mentioned capacity are discharged to his own satisfaction, at least, even though they are responsible for serious attacks of what Teddy terms "spinal magnitis" among the general public.

The first thing to settle is the identity of the aforesaid dramatic critic. The unparalleled burlesque upon the important and useful work of the newspaper dramatic critic has been perpetrated, as I am informed by responsible persons, by one who may yet win undying fame—but not as a "dramatic critic." It may be asked, why I thus intrude his personality into the question. I do so for the reason that he has already sufficiently abused his privilege of taking refuge behind his paper and because the time has come to enquire into the musical fitness and qualifications of the gentleman, whose soul is so imbued with the spirit of the true musical artist that he is able to pick flaws in production which scores of those most competent to judge declare have never before been equalled in the Maple City by amateur talent.

I am not ashamed nor afraid to declare my identity—even though I have no newspaper of which to make a woodpile—for the reason that the "dramatic critic" himself has, by his spasmodic efforts to be funny, broadly hinted that I am the author of the letter which appeared in Wednesday's Planet, signed "New York," and he has since exhibited that discretion, peculiar to himself alone, by making statements to the same effect in public. Truly the mantle of humor sits with as great a degree of grace upon the shoulders of this critic as would the coronation robe of a British peer upon the back of a Tampa mule.

In Wednesday's Planet appears the following: "It's real mean of this celebrity to disguise himself under such a non-de-plume as New York. Were it not for our knowledge of his excessive modesty we might make a guess. No it surely wasn't R—, &c."

Stabs in the dark, such as the foregoing may be, and undoubtedly are, the very essence of this dramatic critic's literary work, but they will not be tolerated, nevertheless. There was but one role in the "Little Tycoon" which fits the suggestion, that of "Rufus." Very well, Mr. Critic, you have thrown down the gauntlet, I take it up and you will find me "ready."

I was not the author of the letter signed "New York," nor was I connected with the writing of it in any shape or form, and there is no necessity for this "dramatic critic" to make himself ridiculous by a silly attempt to gratify his childish curiosity through the reprehensible method of throwing out covert suggestions of



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a character which no respectable newspaper writer would adopt. The identity of "New York" was undoubtedly known to both the proprietor and editor of the paper, the influence of which is extended by the educational and elevating methods employed by our friend the critic.

Years of Torture

A Kingsville Man has had a Trying Experience—After Many Failures, He at Last Finds Relief and a Cure.

Heartburn is one of the most painful and dangerous forms of indigestion and is usually followed by Chronic Dyspepsia. But if nothing worse ever came after, Heartburn is bad enough in itself.

Mr. John B. Tuckwell, of Kingsville, Ont., was for five years a victim of this most distressing form. He tried every remedy he could hear of, but got no relief whatever till at last he got so bad that he could hardly stand it. He used soda, although he knew that in doing so he was seriously and permanently injuring his stomach, but the pain was so great that he could not even sleep. The soda relieved him for the time, and relief was welcome even if purchased at so high a price.

The alkali of the soda acts on the fermenting mass of undigested food and stops the fermentation for the time, but it is extremely injurious to the delicate tissues of the lining of the stomach and bowels, and should never be taken even as a last resort. Some months ago Mr. Tuckwell heard of Dodd's Dyspepsia Tablets and began a treatment of this medicine. From the very beginning he found relief and so he was encouraged to keep on for a cure. He was not disappointed, for after a short treatment the symptoms began to disappear altogether and now he is free.

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principals. "Why don't you pass artistic judgment upon the actors?" Here the writer, with refreshing simplicity, implies that of course he could give us a New York criticism and an artistic judgment if he could only be induced to part with them. But he has reasons why he should not enlighten us. "Let us turn for a moment," he says, "to the question of how to criticize the production." Imagining a New York critic writing that sentence and discussing the "question of how." In that one sentence he has written himself down and told us volumes of his competency to pass artistic judgment. He might profitable commune with himself and ponder on the "question of how" to write correctly before he assumes to pose as a New York critic.

The demand for this principle on which dramatic criticism should proceed. Here it is in his own words. "The moment we began to point out what appealed to us as possible weaknesses of the actors or flaws in a production we would meet censure, and justly, too, for it would be manifestly unfair to judge the work of amateurs, who had devoted their spare time and energy to the harsh standard a cause one might elevate for himself." In this awkward and inelegant sentence, which does not come well from a man trying to say that a professional standard should not be applied to an amateur performance. But it is evident that he lays down the principle only to abandon it, and that he intends to give us a New York criticism with artistic judgment as suggested by the lady principal, for he says, "It blame results it must fall on the one who requested it, not the writer." Although he is himself an amateur production on the New York plan, he is going to do it because a lady requested it, and then—how gallant—he seeks to shoulder on her all the blame which attaches to her for the criticism avowedly based on a false principle.

Here are a few examples of artistic judgment taken almost at random. "Her voice was at its best and blended with surprising flexibility with the robust tenor of W. H. Brackin." "His contributions lay all in his actions and he did splendidly." "She played the sad woman separated from her lover by a cruel parent, with perfect understanding."

Between the acts Col. Rankin made some remarks about the opera and announced that it would be produced again the following evening. Mark me, this honest impartial, and competent critic reports it. "Lieut.-Col. J. B. Rankin, K. C., introduced a speciality between acts."

Enough has been said to show that the writer who would be a New York critic, is as yet exceedingly amateurish and it would be manifestly unfair to judge him by a professional standard. He has yet to learn the meaning of musical terms and how to put words together with grammatical correctness, to say nothing of elegance, before he can pose as an artistic critic. There is one thing for which he deserves the greatest credit. In the course of his report he says: "It would be impossible for us to write an exact criticism of an opera." How once he has devoted into the truth and, when he wrote that sentence he undoubtedly enjoyed a lucid interval.

The wonder of it all is that a man of his calibre was ever allowed to pen a line, either of condemnation or praise, with reference to a production so distinctly musical in character, but emergencies arise in newspaper offices, just as in every other business, and I presume the assignment was turned over to the "dramatic critic" by the editor with a prayer that Providence would guide his hand aright. Providence, however, in this particular instance, seems to have been attending to a case of emergency elsewhere.

He is responsible for the following in Wednesday evening's Planet. "The dramatic reporter of this G. H. J. seems to have stirred up a hornet's nest among some city musicians. Has he told too much truth? Here again we see the honesty of purpose, unbiased attitude and impartial spirit of his "dramatic critic" clearly portrayed. Will he be good enough to enlighten us as to his reasons for resorting to such small and silly insinuations? He desires to

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know whether or not he has told the truth. I can well understand his anxiety upon this score when we take into consideration the fact that he is so ignorant of things musical as not to know it even if he should be lucky enough to hit upon the truth. Why, may I ask, did not the "dramatic critic" himself reply to the criticisms made by "New York"? Why was he told to "go way back and sit down" and "go way back and sit down" while the editor threw himself into the breach? Surely, if the critic is competent to criticize with such an assumption of learning, he is able to defend himself. This does not, however, ever appear to be the case. His personal defence consists in hiding behind the "Satchel of a Satellite," and jabbing out at anyone whom he imagines his imbecile victims may reach, in order that he may "stir up a hornet's nest."

I have no quarrel with The Planet, itself, for, after the second night of the opera the editor did his best to undo the mischief caused by the unloading of the "dramatic critic" on the previous evening. The Planet may be the medium which enables him to masquerade in the guise of a critic, nevertheless we, who were connected with the Little Tycoon, intend to hold this gentleman responsible for his own acts. Then will we be according him exactly the treatment received by the dramatic critics of New York, whose methods he endeavors to imitate, with such ghastly results.

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If he has anything to say as to his musical understanding and dramatic qualifications, or if I have rated him too low in these respects, we shall be pleased to hear from him—not from the editor, for what the cast and chorus of the "Little Tycoon," and the music-loving people of this city, would like to know, is upon what basis of musical understanding and musical training did this "dramatic critic" conceive himself to be capable of justly criticizing the opera referred to. We do not fear his wrath or anything that he may do or say, for after (all is said and done, you know, as the general says, "we still live.")

RUFUS READY.
(G. L. Brackin.)

At last, having forced R. L. Brackin to come out and publicly father the calumnies, he has been privately circulating. I am happy. He has done exactly what I wanted him to do. To those who have taken the trouble to read The Planet's reviews of the opera, the Little Tycoon, and the silly attacks on myself arising therefrom, it may be pointed out that the only musical criticism in the article complained of was the following: "Rufus Ready (R. L. Brackin) too, has praise coming his way. His voice lacked a little in power. This occurred chiefly in the second act, in the rehearsal of the previous night. He spoke just a little too rapidly."

In reference to Rufus Ready's last letter I have nothing to say, it is his own boomerang and, therefore, what I wanted. That Mr. Brackin didn't father the letter New York, I publicly acknowledged. That he was interested in it, I leave to the judgment of all who have read the three letters and know Rufus Ready. I am sorry to occupy so much space over such a trivial matter.

Yours,
J. W. YOUNG,
City Editor.

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