

At the very close of its second season,
the New Theatre offered a series of four
Historical historical matinées, il-
Matinées at the lustrative of four suc-
New Theatre cessive periods in the de-
velopment of the English
drama. Each matinée began with a thirty
or forty minute lecture by Professor

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Brander Matthews of Columbia University—the foremost living student and critic of the drama in America—setting forth the conditions of theatrical production in the chosen period; and the lecture was in every case supplemented by a presentation of all or part of a play of that particular period in approximately the manner of its time. At the first matinée the miracle play of *Noah's Flood* and the morality of *Nice Wanton* were presented; the second matinée set forth some scenes from *The Winter's Tale* on an Elizabethan stage; the third disclosed several passages from *The School for Scandal* on an apron stage with eighteenth century scenery and appointments; and the fourth exhibited an act and a half of *The Thunderbolt* under contemporaneous conditions. The lectures were both entertaining and instructive, and the illustrative performances were admirable. But the most significant point about the whole experiment for the critic of the theatre was the fact that the enormous auditorium of the New Theatre was completely sold out for this series of matinées several days before the first performance, and that this academic exercise was, in the business sense, the most successful of all the New Theatre's undertakings. Earlier in the

season, when the management was attempting to cater to the taste that is vaguely called "popular," by renting the house to Miss Nethersole, reviving *Old Heidelberg*, and importing Miss Tempest to appear in an utterly inconsiderable dramatisation of *Vanity Fair*, the judicious public staid away; but when at last the institution showed an inclination to fulfil the purposes for which ostensibly it was founded, the public walked and motored to the box-office in droves. Studious people who refused to waste an evening over *Vanity Fair* came eagerly to witness the only performance of *Nice Wanton* that had been given in over three hundred years. This is only the latest of many evidences that the heads of the public are higher than our managers imagine. There are in New York, and in fact throughout the country, thousands of people who wish to learn about the history of the drama. A whole host of theatre-goers are eager to pay their money for instruction regarding the past and present of the stage. And an institution like the New Theatre can attain the fullest measure of success only after its conductors have learned to look up to the theatre-going public instead of down upon them.

