

# RUSSIA AND THE DRAMA

By Kenneth Macgowan

**I**N the summer of 1914 the dramatic critic of an Indianapolis newspaper went abroad to call on the three great

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

men of the modern theatre. He found Gordon Craig in Florence and Bernard Shaw in London. But before he could get to Moscow to see Constantin Sergeievitch Stanislavsky, the première of an international tragedy staged in Liège called his attention elsewhere.

When in March, 1917, the curtain rose on the fifth act of that tragedy, and disclosed in the opening scene the debacle of the Tsar before the sailors of Kerensky, this same dramatic critic made up his mind that, if he were ever to present his card at the stage door of the Moscow Art Theatre, this was the moment and the very last moment. Accordingly, Oliver M. Sayler — for, as the good books used to say, it was indeed he — started for Moscow. Across America to the Pacific, across the Pacific to Japan, across Japan and China to Siberia, and then down the slow, interminable trans-Siberian railway to the end of his 17,000 mile call, treked Oliver M. Sayler. The day that he stood before the doors of the Moscow Art Theatre the guns of Trotzky announced the fourth day of the Bolshevik revolution.

It was no futile quest, however. Stanislavsky was not among the dead, and machine guns could not silence the Russian theatre for more than a fortnight. Accordingly Sayler was able to see the whole panorama of an extraordinary art, and to record it fully and picturesquely in "The Russian Theatre under the Revolution".

Since then, two interesting things have happened. Despite Bolshevism and intervention, starvation and communist propaganda, the Russian theatre has plowed pretty steadily ahead, a theatre of the completest realism and the most advanced expressionism in the world. And a large part of the art that Sayler had to travel 17,000 miles to see has come the rest of the

way round the world to call on us.

The result is a reissue of Sayler's book under the less temporal title of "The Russian Theatre" and enlarged to cover the record of the past four years in Moscow and of the Russian invasion of America. Four colored illustrations and many in half tone have been added to the lavish outlay of the first edition, making more than fifty pictures in all. Thus completed, "The Russian Theatre" is the one indispensable book in any modern theatrical library. Playgoing without this Baedeker of Moscow is as venturesome these days as was Sayler's call on Stanislavsky.

---

The Russian Theatre. By Oliver M. Sayler.  
Brentano's.