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ANNUAL TOUR

The Coburn Players

DIRECTION OF

Charles Douville Coburn

1402 Broadway

New York City

E. E. COBURN, BUSINESS MANAGER

REPERTOIRE INCLUDES

Hamlet
Taming of the Shrew
Merchant of Venice
Merry Wives of Windsor
As You Like It

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Electra
Iphigenia in Tauris
of Euripides

TRANSLATIONS BY GILBERT MURRAY

The Canterbury Pilgrims

BY PERCY MACKAYE

Joan of Arc

IN PREPARATION

October
Second
1913

Professor David A. Robertson,
University of Chicago,
Chicago, Illinois.

My dear Mr. Robertson:

Recalling the conversation that we had at luncheon at the University Club last summer, I remember your making mention of a book containing announcements of "The Barkers" of the old Elizabethan and pre-Elizabethan playhouses. You kindly offered to supply me with suitable information regarding these announcements so that I might substitute parts of them to suit the performances of The Coburn Players. We are working on the idea of "The Morris Dances" and I think that they will win great favor next summer.

Mrs. Coburn joins me in kind regards and best wishes to both you and Mrs. Robertson.

Very sincerely yours,

Charles D. Coburn

CDC/LK

THE WHITE HOUSE

BENEFIT OF THE

CHILDREN'S PLAY GROUND ASSOCIATION

WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE GLOUCESTER PAGEANT

IN HONOR OF THE
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

THE WALPOLE PAGEANT

IN HONOR OF THE
GOVERNOR OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

Chicago, October 27, 1913

Dear Mr Coburn:

Just four hundred and ninety years ago the Corporation of Beverley employed Master Thomas Bynham, a Friar Preacher, to write banns for the plays of the Corporation. Whether the Coburn Players can get just the right sort of banns I am still in doubt. Perhaps a statement of the problem will show just what may be done.

To cry the banns of the play something very much like our modern circus parade went from town to town, or about the town, in advance of the performance. In one case, at least, the town-crier on horseback was accompanied by two banner bearers (vexillatoris). I gather from other references that minstrels very often accompanied the crier of the banns. At performances in the towns we have record of payment to a Vice who entertained the crowd before and after the play. My suggestion to you would be, for use in such a place as Chautauqua or on a college campus, to have the town crier and the two banner bearers on horseback, the quartet of minstrels on

foot. These I
of Cobb Hall
performance

foot. These persons pausing, for instance, in front of Cobb Hall at the chapel hour on the day of the performance at the University of Chicagi would then present such a programme as this: (1) In a few lines the town crier proclaims the intention to produce a play, naming the play and its character. (2) In alternate stanzas the banner bearers recite the story of the play briefly. (3) The town crier finishes the banns by announcing the time and place of the production, the fame of the players who are to take part, etc. (4) At the cue "Strike up, minstrels" the quartet should give some of the Elizabethan songs like those used by your Company between the acts.

The costumes of the crier of the banns of course you could easily arrange for because of the possession of 15th century and 17th century costumes. The banns for the Canterbury Pilgrims might easily be vried by actors in Chaucerian costume. The banns for the Shakesperian plays should be cried by those in Elizabethan garments. In Chester we have records of the crying of banns as late as 1600. I know of no case where banns were cried in the city of London for performances in the theatres. I shall look for the use of them in travelling

companies. In
produced by Gu
we should not

companies. In the Chester and other Mystery Plays produced by Guilds, banns were certainly used. I think we should not be wandering too far from the truth in using costumes as I have indicated.

The banners probably bore the Coat of Arms of the Corporation managing the plays. I suppose if travelling companies ever had banners one, at least, would bear the Arms of the patron of the players. Lord Strange's company doubtless bore on its banner the shield of Lord Strange. I should suggest for one of the banners, therefore, some device representing the Coburn Players. In these days when the audience to be addressed by the town crier can read, doubtless the words "Coburn Players" should appear somewhere in the design. If not too expensive it might win approval to have the other banner bear the Coat of Arms of the Institution under whose auspices the plays were to be given. For instance here, the Coat of Arms of the University would make a stunning banner and would warm the hearts of the auditors.

In Manly's "Specimens of the Pre-Shakesperian Drama", volume one, you will find on page 239 an illustration

of banes. I su
unable to find

of banes. I summarize it lest you be travelling and
unable to find the book:

The First Banner Bearer:

Now the Father and the Sune and the Holy Goste,
That all this wyde worlde hath wrowght,
Save all thes semely, bothe leste and moste,
And brynge yow to the blysse he hath yow to bowght!
We be ful purposed with hart and with thought
Off oure mater to tell the entent, --
Off the marvellis that wer wondurfely wrowght
Off the holi and bleysed Sacrament.

The Second Banner Bearer:

Sidseyns, and yt lyke yow to here the purposes of
this play,
That ys re-presentyd now in yower syght
Whych in Aragon was doon, the sothe to saye,
In Eraclea, that famous cyte, aryght, --
Ther-in wonneth a merchante off mekyll myght,
Syr Arystorye was called hys name,
Kend full fere with mani a wyght,
Full fer in the worlde sprong hys fame.

Thereafter

bearers tell the

concludes the be

Thereafter in alternate stanzas the banner bearers tell the story. The second banner bearer concludes the banns in this way:

"And yt place yow, thys gaderyng that here ys,
At Croxston on Monday yt shall be sen;
To see the conclusyon of this lytell processe
Heretly welcum shall yow bene.

Now Jhesu yow sawe from trey and tene,
To send vs hys hyhe loyes of hevyn,
There myght ys withouton mynd to mene;
Now, symstrell, blow vp with a mery stevyn!"

The banns which were read before the beginning of the Chester Plays, June 4, 1600, were longer. They open with an account of how the plays happened to be written, the number of the plays, their general subject, the assignment of plays to several companies, and finally this stanza:

"The some of this Storie, Lordes and Ladies all,
I haue breiflie repeated and how they must be played;
of one thing warne you now I shall:
that not possible it is those matters to be contruyed
in such sort and conyng and by such players of price,

as at these dayes good preserve and ffyne wittes
could devise."

You will be interested in some of the earlier
parts of this particular passage:

"ffor three dayes together, begynninge one mondaye,
see these pagentes played to the beste of theire skill,
wher to supply all wantes, shalbe noe wantes of good will.

As all that shall see them, shall most welcome be,
see all that here them, wee most humble praye
not to compare this matter or Storie
with the age or tyme wherin we presentlye staye,
but in the tyme of Ignorance wherin we did straye;
Then doe I compare that this land throughout
non had the like nor the like dose sett out.

If the same be likeinge to the comons all,
then our desier is to satisfie -- for that is all our
game --

yf noe matter or shewe therof speciall
doe not please, but mislike the most of the trayne,
goe backe I saye to the first tyme againe,

-7-

then shall you finde: the fyne witt, at this day
aboundinge,
at that day and that age had verye small beinge."

Sincerely yours,

D.A.R.-D.

M^r Charles D. Coburn
1402 Broadway
New York, N.Y.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
JANUARY 1, 1913

RECEIVED

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JANUARY 1, 1913