

## EVEN A BARRYMORE SELLECTS POOR PLAY

But Two Members of Famous Stage Family Are Making History by Appearing in Blackface for First Time.

BY WALTER D. HICKMAN

IT SEEMS to me that even Ethel Barrymore can select a poor play for her rich talents.

That was my thought last night after journeying to the Shubert theater in Cincinnati to see Miss Barrymore in "Scarlet Sister Mary."

Probably this woman has never chosen a play that is causing so much talk, for and against, as "Scarlet Sister Mary." For the first time in her life, Miss Barrymore is appearing in blackface as Sister Mary, called Si May-e, the Gullah Negress who does lot of birthin' in Julia Peterkin's prize winning novel.

In addition to the strange make-up used by Miss Barrymore, her other white associates, this play is making stage history, because Miss Barrymore's daughter, Ethel Barrymore Colt, is making her stage debut.

I wish that it could have been happier or more pleasant history for the debut of Miss Colt. Regardless of the vehicle, I would walk miles to see the Barrymores, any of them, making stage history.

As to the play I do not consider "Scarlet Sister Mary" as now being played, a good play or even a play. It is too sketchy. It seems to me that both Miss Barrymore and Daniel Reed, who made the novel into a "play," were afraid to create Si May-e in her many birthin' moods as Julia Peterkin created her in book form as published by Bobbs-Merrill of this city.

I would like to be kind to Miss Barrymore, but I know that I can not honestly do it. I sincerely believe that this cast of white players can not capture the charm, tragedy and the superstition of these Negroes. Maybe no white cast in the world can do it.

If the answer is in the negative on the part of the majority, then all "Sister Mary" has to draw is the Barrymore name and the fact that she is appearing in blackface.

I am afraid that Miss Barrymore and the director decided to make Sister Mary too white both in dress and soul. Sister Mary in the book was miles away from being a lily.

Maybe they were afraid of too much realistic dirt, but the fact remains in my judgment that Sister Mary of the book is miles away from the type of character which Miss Barrymore has given the stage.

It is my personal opinion that Ethel Barrymore is playing Sister Mary in her regular drawing room style. It is only in the last act, meaning the last scene when Unex dies in the arms of his mother, Sister Mary, that I felt the great power of Miss Barrymore.

Here is a most difficult play to produce, create and put over. It does not mount and fails to get started until the last scene in the last act. We do not have a well rounded characterization as yet on the part of Miss Barrymore.

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