

Barrett H. Clark, editor-in-chief of the Samuel French Publishing house, was a campus visitor recently. He appeared before dramatic groups and delivered several addresses. An account of one of his talks is carried on this page.

Barrett Clark, Visitor

LYNN RIGGS, I consider, one of the 'big four' of American dramatists today.

"He and Paul Green, Eugene O'Neill and John Bines are the most creative of all American playwrights.

"Lynn Riggs knows the southwest about which he writes. He has lived—but then you here at the University of Oklahoma know Lynn Riggs better than I do. He attended your school and was on your faculty.

"The American theatre scene needs more men like Riggs, O'Neill, Green and Bines."

This was the statement of Barrett Clark, editor-in-chief of the Samuel French Publishing company, the oldest publisher of plays on the continent, recently when he

visited the University campus and made several public appearances.

Describing the history of American drama and interpreting the present day scene, Clark found much to be thankful for, dramatically. From the days when playwrights were hired to grind out scripts that would "show off" the particular charms of a certain actress down through the present day when playwriting has become an art, he traced the history of the American theatre.

"Back before the turn of the century, the script writer for a playhouse was much as one of the stage hands," he said. "He was given an assignment to grind out a manuscript that would meet the requirements of the particular actors who made up that particular stock company.

"He would be told, perhaps, to write a show that had a heroine, a hero, one funny old lady, a villain, an eccentric old man. At the last minute, he might be told to add a part for a pretty young lady since one had just joined the acting company.

"His manuscript was changed whenever the producer thought it necessary. No attention was paid to the creation of true-life characters. Often, little attention was paid to historical fact or realism. It was meant to be entertainment and everything was sacrificed to make the show accomplish this.

"Then, there happened to be a number of writers who attempted to seek perfection in their dramas.

"Later, came O'Neill with the first of his fine plays. The playwright became an important part of the theatre.

"Then, Paul Green, Lynn Riggs and the others who have changed the whole complexion of dramatic production."

Clark urged the producers of today to present plays of living writers. To present plays for their own worth rather than as a result of any popularity enjoyed on Broadway.

"There are hundreds of high school, college and university play production



John Alley

groups throughout the country. There are hundreds of Little Theatres. They are the backbone of the American drama.

"True enough, Broadway is the center of the legitimate stage, but the theatre groups throughout the country should not follow Broadway dramatic ideas because Broadway groups are out to make financial successes.

"The theatre groups must, of course, enjoy some financial return but the production of a good play should be the goal rather than the production of a play that will make money on a large scale.

"Lynn Riggs has written a number of plays that should be produced throughout the country. Many of them will never be financial successes on Broadway, but they will be successes for smaller groups."