



Sarah Bernhardt's music hall predicament

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Madame Bernhardt.

PROPOSED ENGAGEMENT IN LONDON

At £1,000 a Week

The Paris correspondent of *The Telegraph* says: – Madame Sarah Bernhardt has not yet made up her mind whether she will appear at the London Coliseum or not. That was her answer to me this evening. She had a tempting offer, but did not realise that the house in which she was to appear was a music hall. There lies the whole question. It is, of course, superfluous to say that Madame Bernhardt has never been seen in a music hall except as a spectator. To appear there as an actress would be a new, perhaps a dangerously new departure. Madame Bernhardt is still considering whether she will make the innovation. She is naturally well acquainted with the theatres of London, in so many of which she has so often acted. But she may be pardoned for not remembering exactly what the Coliseum is, though she has played in London since it was opened. She may have imagined from the Greek termination of the name that it was something like what the old Lyceum was in Sir Henry Irving's day.

At all events, when the offer was made to her she agreed to consider it. The terms were tempting, even for Madame Sarah Bernhardt: £4,000 for twenty-four performances in a month, each performance in a sketch to last ten minutes. This works out at a good deal over a guinea and a half a minute. The actress agreed to consider the proposal and the terms, and is still considering them. She would accept them, but the truth of the matter is that the term music-hall rather frightens her. She did not at first, when negotiations began, understand that the Coliseum was not a theatre for the legitimate drama, and she was told that, besides herself, such actresses as Miss Ellen Terry and Miss Marie Tempest would appear.

Madame Bernhardt is, of course, entirely ignorant of the curious rules by which dramatic sketches may be enacted in London music halls, and with which she is not personally in any way concerned. Her standpoint is this: She will appear in legitimate drama at the Coliseum or elsewhere in London. She will not do a turn in a music-hall after or before acrobats, fancy dances, or learned animals, as she put it herself.

She added, though unnecessarily, that her career as an artiste is a sufficient guarantee that she would never consent to any exhibition of that kind. In short, I gathered from what Madame Sarah Bernhardt said herself, that the whole thing is a question of tact. Once before she refused to appear in a theatre because the curtain, when it came down after each act, was plastered with advertisements for cocoa, champagne, and motor-cars. Having such scruples, it is not likely that she will, for example act the death scene of Phèdre between two turns of the limit in eccentricity and Herr So and-So with his performing dogs. It is not only unlikely, but unthinkable.