

OWEN NUGENT AND HIS PLAY.

A Temperance Drama Written by an Imprisoned Illicit Whisky Seller.

Kansas is a great state for anomalies. Mr. Ingalls, himself a paradox who has the nicest use of words and the lowest use of language in America, has called it "The hottest, the coldest, the wettest, the driest state in the union." But when that was written Kansas had yet to add her Columbian contribution to her collection of curios. She did that the other day when Mr. Owen Nugent of Wyandotte county, familiarly known as "the king of the jointists," wrote a temperance play while in jail under sentence for selling liquor. "The Broken Pledge" is the title of Mr. Nugent's contribution to the American drama, and one who has seen "Ten Nights in a Bar Room" or any of the thousand Irish melodramas that are now on the boards will find nothing especially preposterous in the recent rum-seller's drama. The scene of the play is Ireland, and the cast includes a McGuire, a Finnerty, a Muldoon and a Muleahay. The plot concerns Mr. McGuire, who gets full at his baby's christening and stays full, prompted and encouraged by Mr. Finnerty, the rejected suitor for Mrs. McGuire's hand, until he pawns the furniture and beats the children. Then there is a blue ribbon, a happy home, a relentless villain; a brok-



OWEN NUGENT, JOINTIST AND DRAMATIST.

en pledge, a murder, a suicide and the curtain falls with the cast short one villain and one hero.

But it is Mr. Nugent and not "The Broken Pledge" that is interesting. He is a full-blooded Irishman, the father of fifteen other thoroughbreds, the last of which weighed fifteen pounds on his arrival. In 1874 Nugent came over to this country, and was a frequenter of Bowery music halls, where it was the custom for the audience to call spectators out of the pit to entertain the crowd. Nugent was so popular with the crowd that he was finally given a steady job. He had aspirations, apparently, for to-day he is one of the men of whom you so often hear who can "quote page after page of Shakespeare." From the music halls to Kansas City is a long journey, but Nugent made it in ten years, and in 1884 he was palavering the Irishmen in the "West bottoms" in the interests of the Republican state central committee. After Mr. Blaine's defeat Nugent opened a drinking "joint" in Wyandotte county. He had a "pull" as the saying goes and did well for a number of years. His place was disturbed, of course, by the Prohibitionists, but the police returned from their repeated raids empty handed. They said the blacksmith shop in which the joint was kept was full of unsuspected doors through which the jointist and his patrons were wont to fly. The county attorney himself conducted a raid one day and found the shop empty, save for a primitive slate. On this he found the names of all the other county and city officers with the number of drinks they owed for checked off in blocks of five. Then the county attorney knew about the doors of the blacksmithy, and how they worked.

At last Nugent lost his pull. He was convicted on one count of violating the prohibitory law, and sentenced to thirty days in jail. That was three years ago. He lawed as long as he could; but it was a single handed struggle with fate, and the supreme court finally sustained the sentence of the lower court. Last June Nugent went to jail. While in durance vlie he followed the example of John Bunyan and wrote a piece. "The Broken Pledge" is now ready for a star and an angel.

IF THE OCEANS WERE DRY