# THE THEATRE

## THE STAGE IN GOTHAM.

### News and Gossip of the Midwinter Season.

### MISS MARLOWE'S GRIEVANCE

**Nat Goodwin's Big Receipts—High Ambitions of Mrs. Leslie Carter—The Outlook For Grand Opera.**

New York, Jan. 12.—Private advices received in this city from London convey the pleasing intelligence that Henry Irving's production of "Peter the Great" is a huge success. The author of the play is Laurence, the eldest son of the actor. The secret of the great interest which was taken in the fate of this drama by the actors of New York may be found in the fact that three of the important roles were played by Americans. Robert Taber, the husband of our charming Julia Marlowe, was the vacillating and generally contemptible Alexis, the son of Peter, while Ethel Barrymore, the daughter of Maurice Barrymore and the late Georgia Drew, was the mistress of the melancholy young prince. Both scored personal successes, and Taber's position as a competent leading man of the London stage is said to have been established firmly by his work as Alexis. The third American of the cast was a Miss Backman, to whom was intrusted the role of Eudoxia, the divorced wife of Peter. She was praised for her acting, but was criticised somewhat for her rather crude reading.

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There is more in the production of "Peter the Great" by Henry Irving than appears on the surface. It means that he has now reached the point where he realizes the force of Shakespeare's statement that "The play's the thing." Up to a comparatively short time ago, in London as well as in this country, Irving was "the thing," but the English appear to have become tired of Irving's mannerisms, framed in settings which are tediously familiar. New plays are demanded from him now just as they are from most of the other actors. Some time ago he gave "Mme. Sans Gene," and now he provides "Peter the Great," the subject of which, at least, is more in keeping with his ability and tastes. If Mr. Irving could revive a play dealing with a comparatively new and dramatic topic and one in which the central character should be a weird being, with an atmosphere of mysticism about him, there would be as much public interest in his work as ever. As things have been going, however, for the last year or so, it cannot be doubted that Irving is no longer the marvelously potent box office magnet he once was.

I have heard that upon the success of "Peter the Great" depended our chance of seeing Irving in this country next season, as many persons here were of the opinion that he would do but little with his old vehicles. Therefore, if this be true, as "Peter the Great" is said to have made a big hit, there seems to be no reason why we should not see it and "Sir Arry" within the year.

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The Knickerbocker theater under the present management is certainly getting magnificent attractions. Nat Goodwin, whose engagement at that house ended recently, probably played there the most prosperous engagement of his entire stellar career in "An American Citizen." His receipts were enormous, and the occasions when "money was turned away" were numerous. Now the house is occupied by that well known actress, Julia Marlowe, who is playing Rosalind in "As You Like It." A new play is to come along a little later during the New York run, but so far the secret of the title and theme has been well guarded.

By the way, Miss Marlowe, like most other mortals, has a grievance, or she thinks she has, which is pretty much the same thing. The subject of her plaint is Augustin Daly, the man who has done more for the advancement of dramatic art in America than all the other managers put together. Miss Marlowe alleges that Mr. Daly is in a measure persecuting her, and in proof of this points to the fact that as soon as it was announced that she would be to open in this city in "As You Like It," Mr. Daly gave out the statement that he would also present that piece, with Miss Behan as Rosalind. Then, according to Miss Marlowe, when she produced "Beaucie Prince Charlie" at Wallack's last year, Mr. Daly gave "Alice Meerilles" as a counter attraction, and, still according to the same charming authority, Mr. Daly attempted to mislead the importance of her presentation of "Romeo and Juliet" by getting Kyrle Bellew and Mrs. Potter to appear in the same piece at his theater.

This looks like a strong indictment, but will mislead no one who is familiar with theatricals in this city. Miss Marlowe has evidently been misinformed by some busybody, or she would not have allowed herself to be given as authority for such ridiculous statements. "Meg Merrilies" has been announced months before Miss Marlowe was known to be coming in this city; the Bellew-Potter engagement had been arranged long before Miss Marlowe announced that she would make a feature of "Romeo and Juliet," and as for the present case of "As You Like It," that is scarcely worthy of notice, for it was almost a certainty that Mr. Daly would give that piece an early production this season. And why not, since he has the best Rosalind in the world? Miss Marlowe is conscientious, and she is a very fine artiste, but she is shortsighted if she is really responsible for the remarks which have been attributed to her concerning Mr. Daly.

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Ada Rehan must look to her laurels; Julia Marlowe should watch her art with a jealous eye. Mrs. Leslie Carter, it is said, will attempt Shakespearean drama, not that she will at once attempt Portia and Desdemona and Juliet and Lady Macbeth, but there is no telling what the future may develop. The announcement of her manager is to the effect that she contemplates trying the Shakespearean heroines of comedy. Meanwhile she will go to England to wrestle with the role of Maryland Calvert in "The Heart of Maryland," in which her work was really of a high order of merit. Afterward she may be seen in a new play as yet unannounced to the public and then—Shakespeare. It does seem a bit odd for Mrs. Carter to make a change at a time when she is doing so well in a more popular branch of the dramatic art, but there is really no reason why she should not succeed in the new field which she will enter. She is a woman of undoubted histrionic ability, and excepting a certain tendency toward theatrical affectation her methods are nearly perfect and are certainly exact and painstaking.

There is humor in the statement that she will not play Rosalind because "she is too womanly to adopt male garb." As Louis Mann used to say in "The Girl From Paris" and as Miss Helen and Miss Marlowe might possibly remark, "It is to laugh." Thoughtless persons have declared that Rosalind is a stupid, impossible sort of character, but this is the first time I have ever heard her accused of being unwomanly.

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Ever since Marcella Sembrich came over here for her concert tour and set the music loving section of New York's theater goers wild by her magnificent work it has been a common joke along the Rialto that Maurice Grau would have to engage her for his opera season next year if he hoped to do any business. This was perhaps not strictly correct. The great fund of having Sembrich in the Metropolitan opera company is to do away with the possibility of her setting up as a rival attraction. That she would prove a potent one if such a thing should occur there can be no doubt, for since Calve's first season here there has been no such enthusiasm over a lyric artist as has been manifested at Sembrich's concerts, while on the occasions when she has appeared in condensed versions of the well known operas her audiences have almost gone daft.

It is reported that Mr. Grau has already discovered the direction from which the wind is blowing and that he has arranged for Mme. Sembrich to become a member of his big company next season. At any rate, those who pretend to know declare that whether or not this has been done, it will be an accomplished fact long before the metropolitan leaves on her Russian tour. With a quartet of prima donnas like Melba, Eames, Sembrich and Calve, and such male voices as the De Reszkes, Lassalle, Campanari and the newcomers, some of whom almost always develop into favorites, the outlook for grand opera next year at the Metropolitan is exceedingly bright.

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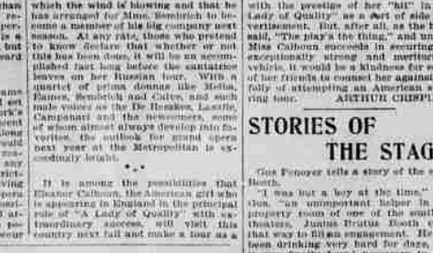
It is among the possibilities that Eleanor Calhoun, the American girl who is appearing in England in the principal role of "A Lady of Quality," with extraordinary success, will visit this country next fall and make a tour as a star in a new play by one of the most prominent of the British dramatic authors. I saw Miss Calhoun years ago when she was but a beginner. She had unmistakable ability even then, but it was in great measure obscured by the crudity of her methods. If the English papers are to be believed, however, her experience as an actress in France has given her repose and finish. As she was always a magnificent reader and is possessed of great humor, she might stand a very fair chance of success here with the prestige of her "hit" in "A Lady of Quality" as a sort of side advertisement. But, after all, as the bard said, "The play's the thing," and unless Miss Calhoun succeeds in securing an exceptionally strong and meritorious vehicle, it would be a kindness for some of her friends to counsel her against the folly of attempting an American starring tour.

ARTHUR CHIPPIN.




## STORIES OF THE STAGE.

Gus Pompor tells a story of the elder Booth.

"I was but a boy at the time," said Gus, "an unimportant helper in the property room of one of the southern theaters. Junius Brutus Booth came that way to fill an engagement. He had been drinking very hard for days, and it was finally found necessary to lock him in his room at the hotel for his own safety, and, further, that he might be sober enough to go upon the stage at night. I was sent to him with a message by the manager of the house, which I found it most difficult to make him understand, as it had to be delivered through the hard wood of the door by an extraordinary exertion of the voice.

"'Boy,' said Mr. Booth as I was about to go away, 'boy, can you do an errand for me?'

"'Yes, Mr. Booth,' I replied.

"'Well, then, go down to the bar and tell the fellow there to let you have a pint of whisky and bring it to me under your coat.'

"'And the money,' said I.

"'It is here under the door,' he replied.

"I returned in a moment or two with the much coveted beverage, but then the question came how to deliver it.

"'Here,' said he, 'get a straw (which of course I did) and put it through the keyhole. There, now, that will do; so just place the other end of the bottle.' And thus I held it for him until every drop of the liquor was gone.

"That night when they came to fetch him to the theater he was as drunk as a lord, and the mystery about that house for weeks was as to how he ever got that whisky."

This is good, even if it has a fishy flavor. Miss Marie Dressler, told it on herself. As is quite well known, Miss Dressler created the role of Mary Dandle in the opera, "Madeline; or, The Magic Kiss," and she played it so long in New York that she became identified with the name, especially in the minds of the gallery gods. One evening Miss Dressler and a party were seated at a table near an open window on the Thirty-second street side of the hotel. During a lull in the conversation a little squeaky voice floated in from the street which said, "Hello, Mary Dandle!" The Dressler looked around in astonishment and beheld a chubby hand which bore no signs of having lately come in contact with soap and water and claimed to the dirty fingers she neatly held a slip of paper. "What is it, sonny?" queried Marie. "It's for you, Mary Dandle," piped the small voice from the outside. "I want you to read it."

Miss Dressler took the paper, which proved to be a clipping from a New York journal of that date, and the story it told was of a little newsboy from whom a gentleman had purchased a paper, and in paying for it had given the urchin a \$5 goldpiece, evidently under the impression that it was a nickel. The man, so the story ran, immediately boarded a cable car which was passing. He got off at Forty-second street, where he met a friend who engaged him in a conversation, which was interrupted a few moments later by the arrival, on the run and porcelly breathless, of the little paper vender with the gentleman's change. The boy had managed to keep the car in sight all the way from Twenty-third street.

Marie read the article through carefully, and, handing the paper back to the grimy fingers held out for it, said, "Well, little boy, what about it?" "I'm de kid what did de lamb to catch dat blokey what was doin himself out of five bones, Mary Dandle." "Oh, are you?" said Miss Dressler. "Well, now, that was very nice." And grasping the hat of one of her party the comedienne made a tour of the table soliciting loose change for her little street Arab friend. The party came up smiling, and the handful of silver Marie passed through the window made the eyes of the kid, whose eager fingers clutched it, shine as he piped, "Thank you, Mary Dandle."

The incident was forgotten five minutes afterward, but was forcibly recalled to the Dressler on her way to the theater next evening by reason of the fact that no less than five newsboys in the same number of blocks accosted her with the same identical story clipped from the paper of the day before, and all claimed to be the hero of the incident.

The scenes in Paul Potter's new play, "The Conquerors," are laid in and around a French chateau during the concluding days of the recent Franco-Prussian war. The chateau has been occupied by a party of German officers, who call themselves "the conquerors," hence the title of the play. One of these officers, a dashing, devil may care young fellow—impersonated by Mr. Pershambers—meets a French girl (Miss Viola Allen), and their love story forms the basis of the plot. One of the sensational scenes of the piece is a jollification at the chateau, in which the German officers are assisted by a lot of cafe chantant singers from Paris.

A theatrical man tells a new Irving story direct from London, or, at least, he says it's new. Sir Henry happened to meet William Barrett one day.

"Ah, Barrett," said he, with the Irving manner, "what have you been playing?"

"Hamlet," answered Barrett, with the Barrett manner.

"Hamlet!" grunted Sir Henry. You gave the tone I mean that grunt delivered as if it were a snort.

"Yes," said Barrett (the Irving sound from Sir Henry).

"I say, Irving," said Barrett, a bit nettled, "do you think that you are the only actor who can play Hamlet?"

"No," replied Irving quickly, "no, Barrett, my lad, but I know that you are the only actor who can't."

Here is the latest version of a little verse which cannot but impress one as being particularly forceful in its query and for which the Matinee Girl of The Mirror is responsible:

Now I lay me down to sleep
Within my little bed,
If I should die before I wake,
How would I know I'm dead?

Belle and Her New Mate, the Naughty Lolus, Who Toys Cynically With the Possibility of Their "Keeping House."

SCENE FROM A CURRENT LONDON SUCCESS.

## "The Tree of Knowledge."

## An Interview With an Old "Stock" Actor.

"I suppose Jack Barnes and myself are almost the last of the old stock actors still in active service," said Harry Saint-Maur the other day.

"Fred Sidney is another old timer, but he is writing plays and, he is remarried, getting them produced and rarely acts. Wyndham and Irving were of course in stock, but they are big men.

"Eh? No; Tree and Alexander raised all their experience in metropolitan productions. Neither of them, I believe, was in the country towns supporting new stars every week. There are quite a number of admirable native stock actors still living."

"Are stock companies easy to select?"

"Quite the reverse. The selecting of a dramatic company demands almost an ultimate of experience and care. For a stock company—i. e., a company of players all of whom must impromptu have enacted contrasted characters—the actors must have enough affection for art to strip emotion from their footlight labors and enough respect for the authors whose plays they seek to realize to make the authors' success and the plays' perfection the immediate human aim of their exertions. Such players are rare, for the advent of mediocre stars and the overpuffed perambulating play with its parroted cast of players has destroyed the school that nurtures actors. The leading woman must have youth, magnetism, some grace of figure and charm of feature. In dress she must be suggestive of ideas to the ladies of the audience—at times even a positive women model. The other ladies in the cast must have enough individuality to claim followers. One of them should charm by her innocent air, another by sprightly but refined humor. Even the 'old woman' must be quotable by grandmamma and grandpapa. When it comes to the gentlemen of the company, even greater difficulties have to be overcome. Where is the leading man, elegant of figure and manner, with winning voice, who can create a dozen heroes and 20 fine lovers in a season? Where the villain who will be as much vituperated in stage life as he will be venerated in private? The funny comedian who always amuses and never offends? The junior players who will perform their duties through the season with respect for their seniors in the cast and a due appreciation of the minute but valuable aid they can render? Such artists have to be diligently searched for and when found must be directed by stage officials, one of whom must be a literary man, a trained actor, a living storehouse of stage knowledge, and sure, because of his individual character and merit, of the respectful obedience of all the cast—the art director, in fact; the other, with all the mechanical possibilities of the stage and stage settings at his finger end, whose satellite is the stage carpenter and whose glorification the scenic artist."

### "The Sporting Duchess."

The story of "The Sporting Duchess" is a bit more interesting than the usual run of Irish plays. It deals with life in the smart set in England. The principal character around which the play was written was taken from life. The original was the eccentric Duchess of Montrose, who for many years was one of the most conspicuous figures on the English race track, where she was invariably attired in western hat, male clothes and placing her own bets. She owned one of the best racing stables in all England. The authors of the piece are Sir Augustus Harris, Cecil Raleigh and Henry Hamilton. Much comment has been made upon the scenes with which "The Sporting Duchess" is surrounded. There are 14 of them in all, and each one is as sumptuous as could be pictured. One of the principal scenes is the great Derby race, giving the most reproduction of the historic race track at Epsom downs and introducing a number of horses ridden by professional jockeys who compete in the most realistic and thrilling horse race that has ever been given on a stage.

### Hoyt on Farce Comedy Writing.

"I do not wish to appear in anything but a modest light," said Charles H. Hoyt, "but it seems to me that the man who starts out to be a writer of farce comedy has a much more difficult task before him than the author of a serious dramatic output. I will tell you why. The theater goer that attends a performance of a legitimate drama expects to find a structure to the piece and gets it, and when he goes to see a farcical comedy he does not expect anything of the kind, yet it must be given him or he will be dissatisfied.

"In writing a piece like 'A Stranger In New York,' for instance, I must, as it were, submerge the dramatic action without drowning it. Those in the audience expect specialties and divertisements, but are not supposed to be sitting out a variety performance. Therefore I must be a dramatist without letting any one find it out. I have been told by my enemies that no one has yet found that out. But as a gentleman much more famous than I am once remarked, 'That is another story.'"

### Louis Parker's New Play.

Louis N. Parker's play, "The Happy Life," which was written nearly a year ago for Daniel Frohman, will shortly be acted in London. Mr. Parker has said that the theme of the play was suggested to him by a casual conversation which he once had with a friend. The hero of the drama is the son of an American millionaire who thinks that he may attain the happy life by complete isolation from the world. To gain this he buries himself in his lodgings in the Temple in London and has the necessary quiet until the course of his life is interrupted by the influence of a woman. The piece is described as a comedy.

### New Compositions by Rudolph Aronson.

Manager Rudolph Aronson has been devoting some time to composition lately, and has just completed for piano and orchestra a characteristic galop entitled "Winter Frolics," a "Military Bizarrka" and a "Ballet Intermezzo," scores and orchestra parts of which have been forwarded to Louis Ganne, at the Palais de Glace, Paris, and to Eduard Strauss, the waltz king, at Vienna.

## BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS.

One night recently a ragged old gentleman about 70 years of age went to the box office of the Fourteenth Street theater in New York after the third act of "Cumberland '61" and asked to see the manager. Manager Rosenquest came down from his office to see what was wanted. The old gentleman confronted him and said: "Say, who wrote this 'see play?' I'd just like to see him. That fight on the burning bridge is exactly like a fight I had when I was a youngster down in Kentucky, but I didn't know as any feller saw it. It was a fight, mind you, on a chap who was tryin to hope with my sweetheart, so you just bet I licked him, an, what's more, I throw him into the river as sure as the sun rises in the morning. Where did you get that fight from, young feller? Why, it's just like that was no good. You've got the fight down fine, an I can see it as plain as though it happened only yesterday. Say, where can I get into see a couple of pieces so I can bring my wife to see the old fight? She'll like it mighty well." So did the tickets.

Miss Inez Young in "The Clever Girl" has become a great favorite. She has shown that she possesses all the qualifications of a gifted comedienne as well as grace enough to stock a dozen or more dames with that most agreeable quality.

Miss Katherine Bober is playing a very successful piece on the New England circuit. Miss Bober has recently added to her company Mr. Raymon Moore, the noted vocalist.

Otis Harlan will be featured in a third "Stranger In New York" company, which will play the large cities in the middle states. Anna Boyd, Charles W. Dungan and John E. Dodey will be prominent in the support.

The dresses worn by the English girls in "In Town" during the first act form a most enjoyable color scheme, which all are grouped together, showing that some artistic mind must have selected them.

Edward J. Healey has been secured as leading man for Mme. Viarda's company.

Henrietta Crosman contemplates a starring venture next season.

David M. Pryner has secured "The Great Diamond Robbery."