THEATRICALS IN NEW YORK.

Arthur Crispin's Dramatic Letter From Greater Gotham.

Financial Success of Mrs. James Brown Potter and Kyrle Bellew. "Way Down East" and Other New Productions. Promising Future of James Young.

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New York, Feb. 16.—"Way Down East," which, as its name implies, is a study of New England life, is the initial offering to Broadway audiences at the Manhattan theater under the new management of Messrs. William A. Brady and Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr. The story of the play is a simple one, which is told directly and with very few side plots.

Anna Moore is a young woman who has been duped into a mock marriage by a scoundrelly villain, who promptly abandons her. The child, the result of the union, dies, and with its death all hope of earthly happiness passes away from the unfortunate Anna. She subsequently finds a home with Squire Bartlett, who expects to marry his son and heir to his favorite niece. Unfortunately for his plans the young people care nothing for each other, and his son proceeds to fall in love with Miss Moore, who returns his affection. The villain is meanwhile working overtime paying attention to the aforesaid favorite niece. At this point it begins to look as though Miss Moore might soon find a husband, which would naturally bring the play to an unduly rapid close. But right about here the trouble begins.

Some one else has been good enough to inform the squire of the somewhat variegated past of the heroine, and he turns her out. His son, being made of the right stuff, puts on his mufflier and starts out to find her. Later on nearly the entire cast hooks itself with the same laudable undertaking. There can be but one result, and it is arrived at in "Way Down East" in pretty much the same manner as in a number of other plays. Virtue is triumphant, and vice gets badly left.

It will require some time to tell whether or not Messrs. Brady and Ziegfeld's first Broadway venture will prove a success. But, although they have landed on a meritorious, I understand that they have several other novelties in hand and that they will not attempt to secure a run for any one of their productions which does not achieve that result by reason of its inherent strength. This is not only a sensible determination, but also an unusual one for managers of a Broadway theater.

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Harry A. Du Souchet, the talented author of "My Friend From India" and "The Man From Brazil," is a very busy man just now. His "Mr Wife's First Husband," one of the funniest farces I have ever seen, was not quite satisfactory when it was tried in some of the smaller towns by reason of the fact that it contained too many dialect parts. Besides, the production was an exceptionally bad one, and the piece was in most respects woefully amateur. Mr. Du Souchet has completed a revision of this play, and it has been secured by Messrs. Smyth & Rice, who have been exceptionally successful in the exploiting of the same author's two former efforts. All of the dialect characters have been eliminated, and a strong cast will be engaged for the New York production, which will be made either during the latter portion of the present season or early next fall. Besides "Mr Wife's Stepchildren," Mr. Du Souchet is adapting a farce from the French for Charles Frohman, and he is hard at work on an original comedy for Walter Perkins (the man through whose efforts Du Souchet was suddenly transported from the desk of a telegraph operator on the New York Tribune to a prominent position among the playwrights of America.

It was Perkins, it will be remembered, who succeeded in finding a customer for "My Friend From India" after that excruciatingly funny farce had lain in the author's trunk for five or six years. Incidentally that same play was the means of putting Smyth & Rice into the position they now occupy among our successful managers. To Du Souchet's credit be it said that he has never forgotten the service rendered him by Perkins, and the play which he is now writing for him will represent his very best work, as it is practically a labor of love. And, by the way, if any one should ask you to designate the successor of Charles H. Hoyt, just mention the name of Harry A. Du Souchet, and you will not be far from the truth.

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Mrs. James Brown Potter is a peculiar sort of individual, as also is her business and artistic associate, Kyrle Bellew, but no one will claim that they are not both artists of the highest type. That the dual alliance has never been accepted with any enthusiasm in this country is a reproach to us rather than a reflection on their ability. They have won recognition everywhere else, although in many cases it has been produced by a hard fight. Their recent appearance in Zangwill serve to illustrate the determination and indomitable pluck of this pair.

When they concluded to invade London, there was scarcely a manager who did not predict disaster for them. At the start it looked as though the managers were right, too, for while several of the newspapers praised their work as artistic in the extreme their plays were not liked, and the dear public immediately said a way from the theater. This was so even after they had produced "Charlotte Corday," their piece de resistance. But Mrs. Potter and Mr. Bellew stuck it out, with the result that they are now doing almost the largest business in London, although they are booked at the Adelphi, one of the worst houses in the British metropolis, it would seem, for their entertainments.

It recently came out in a semiofficial way that Mrs. Potter is a rich woman and that she has determined, as soon as she shall feel that her powers have begun to wane, to retire from the stage and live upon her income. It is therefore safe fair to assume that Mr. Bellew is equally well equipped with this world's goods. Their artistic pathway has not been strewn with roses maybe, but they have achieved more than a majority of those whose destiny has been cast in pleasanter lines, and that is, after all, the supreme test.

* * *

Speaking of London, it is amusing to read the stuff that is called over here for our consumption. A short time ago the following appeared in one of our local papers, apparently from its special correspondent, whose name was earned in vain:

"There is nothing very remarkable about the cast of Mr. Beerbohm Tree's forthcoming new version of Julius Cæsar. Mr. Tree will play Antony and Mr. Louis Waller Brutus. Cassius is a notable one, and the same author's two former efforts. All of the dialect characters have been eliminated, and a strong cast will be engaged for the New York production, which will be made either during the latter portion of the present season or early next fall. Besides "Mr Wife's Stepchildren," Mr. Du Souchet is adapting a farce from the French for Charles Frohman, and he is hard at work on an original comedy for Walter Perkins (the man through whose efforts Du Souchet was suddenly transported from the desk of a telegraph operator on the New York Tribune to a prominent position among the playwrights of America.

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It is said that at the end of the present season Elma Wallace Hopper, wife of De Wolf Hopper, will leave her husband's company to form the forces of Charles Frohman. If the marital differences of the couple have been as serious as has been reported, it is to be regretted, of course, but the return of Elma Wallace to legitimate comedy is a pleasant thing to contemplate. The niche left by her retirement from the Empire stock company has never been exactly filled, and the warmest admirer of the delightful little Scotsman will never claim that she is a great lyric artist. In other words, despite her excellent acting, she was out of her element in opera, while she was decidedly in it at the Empire. One thing is certain, and that is that she will be welcomed back with open arms by the better classes of theater goers of this city. It is whispered, too, that she is another possible next season's star.

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Regularly every season the report that Charles Frohman is dangerously ill goes out for its annual airing on Broadway. The one most recently disposed of had a scintilla of fact behind it, for the "Napoleon of managers" was really indisposed. He has been burning the candle at both ends for a long time, and he is compelled occasionally to pay the penalty. His malady was really overwork, no matter what the scientific designation may be. Some quantity of detail which sense directly under Charles Frohman's notice would appall the ordinary individual. He has are seeing his conception of the author's idea and "confirm."

When, in addition to all this, it is considered that Frohman has probably a score of companies on the road presenting his older successes, it may be understood that he has not a great deal of leisure on his hands. It is his purpose, after "The Master" shall have got into good working order, to "tie himself away to some secluded nook," where he will not hear the word "theater" for a month or so. By this means he thinks he may be able to recuperate and put himself into shape for what is really the most trying experience of the year for him—his annual play hunting expedition to London and Paris.

* * *

It is impossible for any one who reads the newspapers of the larger American cities to fail to be impressed with the marvelous growth in public favor of James Young, the youthful trouadour of Baltimore, who, according to Mr. Jarrett, the veteran theatrical manager, is the only American in sight at the present time who is warranted by his ability to aspire to the mantle of the late Edwin Booth. Of course this same thing has been said many times by more persons of many actors, but Mr. Young is certainly going ahead at a pace which must inspire respect, everything since that has been accomplished without the aid of money or influence.

At any rate a strong effort is now being made to secure for the young man an opening in this city in the version of "David Garrick" which he uses, and of which, it is whispered, he is the author. If this can be done, and he can succeed in convincing the critics of this city as he has those of other large places, he future will be assured. I saw a highly commendatory notice of his Garrick a short time ago, which was written by a scholarly critic and which occupied nearly a column of space. He is a young man, and that is a not unimportant factor of advancement in the present of the drama which he has selected for his life work. He is also possessed of a strong and good look, two other considerations the value of which cannot be overestimated. He has had the misfortune of being in business the leading man of meritorious organizations, but we believe that it will be better to continue on his present course, which, after all, may not be so profitable temporarily, but will pay him better in the end.

After all, he may not be the coming man. Then again he may. Who knows?

Arthur Crispin.

THE STAGE IN OTHER LANDS.

The Hofburg theater of Vienna, one of the most famous in Europe, has recently received little patronage from the Vienna public, and it is said that the cost of maintaining the institution, which is paid out of the emperor's private purse, grows greater every year. He has threatened to rent the theater to a private manager unless its affairs improve. Adele Sandrock, engaged provisionally as the successor of Charlotte Wolter, will remain at the theater for two years longer.

Berlin is shortly to hear the nine hundredth performance of Sumas' "La Dame aux Camelias."

Bretteman, the tenor, who sang here in Italian opera with Lilian Russell, has become a member of the Imperial Opera House company in Vienna.

Bulthaupt's "Antony and Cleopatra" was acted at Madrid recently as "Cleopatra" and was a success in spite of the fact that it was played by one of the best known Spanish actresses and received with great splendor. "For our national honor," wrote a Madrid newspaper, "this is in a way more than to have a listing to Paris."

The theater in Marseilles to which a subvention of 80,000 francs the Socialists thought the town should give has been refused was opened a few weeks ago, but the public refused to allow the performance to proceed. After several efforts the curtain was lowered.

"Elka," a comic opera said to be written for a young American named Lee Grand Hoskins, will soon be given in Paris at the Theatre Nouveau.

Edmond Rostand, author of the successful "Cyrano de Bergerac," is studying under Le Bargy of the Theatre Francais to become an actor. He has already appeared in a small part in Sarah Bernhardt's production of "The Bad Shepherds."

Yvette Guilbert is to appear in Berlin and Vienna at a salary nearly as large as that paid to her on her first visit here.

William Schmidt, who had been the stage manager of the Court theater in Weimar for many years, died the other day. He was the father of Max Tarrasch.

George Alexander is to produce "Much Ado About Nothing" at the St. James theater when "The Tree of Knowledge" is withdrawn.

A notebook of Mozart has just been discovered in Berlin. The inscription shows that it was written in London in 1764.

Stories of The Stage.

Otis Skinner tells a good story of a stage wait. The trouble occurred in the course of a street scene. In the character of a rector Mr. Skinner had just broken a friend gently and should have been immediately joined upon the exit of the latter by a physician. When the friend made his exit by the left side, Mr. Skinner turned to the right and exclaimed:

"Here comes the doctor now. How fortunate!"

But no doctor came, and he prepared to hold the scene.

"Well, well, well! How slow he is walking," said Skinner, the rector. "Did you ever see such a man? There he comes to put a little pill on the head. How kind hearted! Ha, ha! Here he comes at last! No, no! He stops to look into shop windows. I wonder!"

But he did not further ad lib, for he was looking to the right the physician rushed on from the left and slapped him on the back. A roseate expression came over the rector's face, but he saved himself and exclaimed wonderingly:

"Well, doctor, you got around that corner mighty spry."

The following letter was lately mailed to Charles H. Hoyt from Bloomsburg, Pa.:

"My Dear Mr. Hoyt—I saw your Strategy in New York last month and laughed at it. Still, it can't last forever. I've written a play here at home, and my wife and partner, who is a college graduate, tells me it is just as good as 'A Rag Baby,' which is the only play of yours they have seen. I am sending you the manuscript by express. I am willing to let you buy it outright and play it as yours for $500. Of course I know your name is worth more than mine in the theatrical world, and I wouldn't object to your changing the dialect now and then to suit yourself."

Mr. Frank McKee, Mr. Hoyt's partner, who, in the latter absence, opens all business communications, says, "I simply replied for Mr. Hoyt that the manuscript was too good to leave the family."

He was an intellectual looking individual with a wild mop of his's hair and a pair of gold eyeglasses. He surveyed the car with a fat, pudgy woman, and enough to be his mother. The place was crowded, but she managed to squeeze into a seat, with the young man hanging to a strap, with a solicitous air over her. She gave a preparatory stare round the car, and then stared up sweetly at the young man. He looked uncomfortable and appealed to his wedding for a break of some kind. It came.

"Don't you think the play was lovely?" she said, with a smile intended for a heart twinge.

"Perfectly," he replied, "especially the music."

"Oh, yes, that charming music. It was so much like Florodora. I do so like Florodora," with the accent on the "Flo." "Don't you?"

"Eh—eh, yes, oh, yes," said the young man, with a startled look. His face reddened painfully, and beads of perspiration started on his brow. "Chopin? Oh, yes. But—er—he does not—about—comes with our late composers," he ventured.

"Well, I should say not," was the lady's reply. "Why, those lovely 'Ma-as' waltzes are just delirious!"

"Delirious!" repeated the young man, aghast and with a jaundiced look. "Delirious!"

"By the way," she said, with an inquiring glance at him, "which is the proper—'Ma-as' or 'Mow-as?'"

A humorous incident happened during Otis Skinner's recent engagement in New Orleans. He had been presenting plays in which the incidental music, composed of old German songs, was a feature. The leader of the orchestra was a Frenchman, who had no love for anything German. He went through the week rendering such German songs as "Wacht am Rhein" and others pointedly, but evidently with considerable violence to his feelings. In fact, he and Mr. Skinner had several cuts, but the actor was obdurate.

On Saturday night the Frenchman saw the chance for revenge. It was the last thing in the play, when the prince and princess were reunited, and everything was ending happily. The time had come for the grand triumphal march of the German army to Vienna. The air should have been "The Watch on the Rhine," but after the company had marched upon the stage the music stopped a moment, and then the stirring strains of "The Marseillaise" rolled out from the orchestra, and the German army marched to victory keeping time to the Frenchman's national hymn.

Frederick Bond was leaving St. Louis not long ago for New York. He had just settled himself comfortably in the buffet car for a quiet smoke and had opened his newspaper to read when a nonpareil traveler of the inquisitive kind entered. The drummer took a seat near the quiet traveler and made several attempts by his movements to attract his attention. Finally, unable to stand the silence, he inquired:

"Traveling east?"

Slightly elevating his eyebrows as he looked at his questioner, Mr. Bond replied thoughtfully:

"Yes."

"New York?"

"Yes."

"Pleasure?"

"Yes and no."

"Live there, New York. Ever been there before?"

"No."

"I'm going home this trip. New York, you know."

Others in the car had by this time become interested in the situation, owing to the humorous persistency of the drummer and the amused annoyance of Mr. Bond. The conversation was nearing the end, although the drummer did not know it, as he continued firing his questions. Finally he asked:

"Excuse me, but might I ask what you are going to New York for?"

Laying his newspaper to one side and looking his inquisitor steadily in the face, Mr. Bond replied with much deliberation:

"I am going to New York, first, because the train is taking me there; second, because I have plenty of money and can afford it, and, last, because if I like the place I intend to buy it."

That ended the séance.

Mr. W. J. Lemoyne, who is in the cast supporting Herbert Kelcey and Effie Shannon in "A Coat of Many Colors," had a harrowing experience in Chicago recently. According to the current story Chicago is entertaining a varied assortment of what are known in police parlance as "stick up guys."

Mr. Lemoyne was having held ups. Mr. Lemoyne grew wary of his chances and as selected rooms at the Great Northern hotel, which was the nearest hotel to the theater in which the actor was appearing. His fear of footpads leaked out, and Harry Bonners, the treasurer of the Columbia, fixed up a job on the actor.

He squared the matter with the reclerman on the beat, and one night when Lemoyne scuttled out of the stage entrance he was accosted by two supers "made up" as highwaymen. Two property revolvers were showed in his face, and the stern command to stand and deliver grated on the actor's ears. Up went his hands, and at the same instant he lustily cried for help in a tone of voice that could be heard for blocks.

At this juncture the stage doorkeeper rushed to Lemoyne's side and rescued him from the hold, bad highwaymen (?). The doorkeeper was given it for his brave deed, and during the rest of the Windy City engagement Mr. Lemoyne slept in his dressing room, and only ventured out in the daytime.

How to Write A Modern Play

"What constitutes a financially and popularly successful play?" was a question asked of David Belasco by a reporter recently, and he replied: "First of all it must be somewhat to the sympathies of the human mind, especially as regards the master passion—love. Secondly, it must have strong and novel situations, brought about in natural and simple ways. Thirdly, the plot should not require deep or difficult analysis, by which the audience may be wearied and puzzled with thinking, thereby losing the thread of the story. Fourthly, the language of the characters should be pain, direct and easy to understand, and the incidents, whether of comedy or tragedy, should flow as easily as possible as they might happen in real life. A perfect play is condensed reality."

"How do you write your plays—do you dictate them or use a pen?"

"Those parts of my plays," responded Mr. Belasco, "which require study, such as references to science, music or art, I write myself. But when I get to the more human side—when the villain and the heroine and the hero and certain the subjects are used at work making dramatic history—then I prefer to dictate. My thoughts travel fast then. I become the character I am creating. I act the part from beginning to end; I feel every emotion. I swear, I curse, I cry and laugh by turns. And all this time I am dictating as fast as the stenographer can take my words. Of course I have my spells of work, when I can do more work in three days than I can manage at another time in a month."

Then the reporter made him sit bolt upright by firing the following question at him: "Who, in your opinion, is the best American dramatic writer of serious parts?" After a few moments' thought he regained his composure and replied: "You have asked me a question which would be extremely difficult to answer without hurting somebody's feelings. The accepted leaders of the American drama are all men of education and talent, or they could not be accepted as leaders. They write as critics, not as apprentices, and each has his own peculiar manner of treatment. You cannot make comparison among Bronson Howard, William Gillette, Augustus Thomas, Paul Potter, Franklin Fyles and various other, including our women playwrights. Writing a play is far more difficult than any one imagines, and the playwright has to master his trade, just as does the shoemaker and the carpenter."

"Wherein do American playwrights differ from English, French and German authors?"

"They differ little from their foreign brethren save in being untrammeled by dramatic censorship. The public is their censor, and a sufficiently severe one. The fact that American plays are transferred unaltered to the London stage and are there received as to the manner, form proves their family likeness. The Germans differ from the Americans by looking less to the events than to the theories, to action than to motive. The result is that to idealism also in treating of political and social questions in a didactic style which the American mind prefers which would not endure. The American playwright differs from the French in the looseness of construction—restriction is displeasing, especially in the length and diffusiveness of speeches and in the reticence due to the distaste of the public for suggestive allusions foreign to the temper of the American people, which the Puritan element still continues to influence. In my opinion dramatic writing has gained in simplicity and directness, but lost in poetic literary quality. When people want to enjoy fine writing, they seek it nowadays in books, not plays."

"What is the best ingredient of a good play?"

"Of the hundred ingredients that go to make up a perfect play 99 are love. Stage pictures make the hundredth."

The Letters Were Mixed.

Henry Clay Barnabee, the great comedian of the Bostonians, had a recent experience which reminded him of receiving letters of introduction. At the end of his season last summer he spent some weeks in the country and made an excursion one day to the city later on and hear the voices of some aspirants for the stage. In the meantime he decided to spend the rest of his vacation at the seashore, and commissioned his manager, Frank L. Perley, to buy him a cottage. Later on a letter from Mr. Perley called his attention to the fact that he was due in the city to hear three various voices. Arriving in New York, he repaired to his hotel and telephoned Mr. Perley of his presence in the city. As he was about to take an afternoon siesta an attractive young girl called and handed his letter. It is to the credit of Mr. Barnabee that the missive he stared at the girl in a bewildered way and then explaned. The letter read as follows:

Dear Barney—I think I have found the place you want, and, with some slight alterations in her ragtime and a new song, Miss Kate Kearney will do for our purposes. Kearney was the name I gave to the cottage I bought for you. Do see if you took her out for a spin? You could then judge her capabilities.

P. L. PERLEY.

"What's the matter?" asked the young lady, looking astonished. Suddenly a light broke upon him. He somewhat gently said:

"Oh, you are all right, but it is that best I wrote Perley about. He has got his letters mixed." And then he explained matters. Two hours later from a very bad humor, he insisted upon singing her entire repertory.

The Cancan.

From theatrical time immemorial the cancan has been considered the quintessence of vulgarity. Although of recent years it has been compelled to divide honors with the cowboy dance. But few of the thousands—even the million—who have declined—who have heard the music and seen the dance know that it is a selection from one of Offenbach's best and most famous operas. In the day of vaudeville and burlesque a performance of that nature appears incomplete without the cancan. A man of mathematical turn of mind estimates that 92 per cent of all burlesques shall introduce the dance at some time on its programme, and that fully half of them use the piece as a finale. Thus is the genius of an immortal composer kept green in the memory of the people.