

PAPERING THE HOUSE

When a Weak Play Appears in a New York Theater.

PROPPED BY FREE TICKETS.

The Judicious Distribution of "Complimentaries" by the Manager Secures Well Dressed Audiences and Saves the Appearance of a "Frost."

Long before the curtain goes down at the end of a new production the manager has decided, nine times in ten, whether he has a success or not. But he does not mean to be caught napping in either event. If he believes the play is a "frost" or even a semi-success the house for the next few nights must bear every outward evidence of prosperity.

In other words, he must "back the line" of adverse criticism by "papering the house." For a week at least he must make a "front" in the orchestra chairs, no matter if there is desolation in the box office. Let him make the public believe the new piece has attracted a large number of patrons for six or eight performances and there is a chance of enough business to prop up a forced run of a few weeks, which may help things on the road. This means that "paper" or free tickets must be judiciously distributed.

Every manager of a theater has a large circle of friends. This may be due partly to his possession of a genial personality, but undoubtedly the business he is in has in itself an attraction for many. A majority of these people will accept passes when they are offered; some are not above asking for them, while still others—but these are rare—will buy tickets when complimentaries are not tendered.

When the manager has a play that is in danger of going to pieces for lack of patronage he sends tickets to all these friends of his and whenever possible obtains a promise that they will be used by the persons to whom he gives them. It is not difficult to extract such a pledge. Being on terms of more or less intimacy with the manager, the favored ones know he will be likely to see them in the theater or if they are not there that he will take note of those who do not use the tickets. He keeps a record of the seat numbers opposite the names of those who should occupy those particular chairs and can tell at once when his hospitality has been abused.

Another class which sees many plays in New York city gratis is to be found in department stores. Nearly every director of a theatrical company—as distinct from a theater manager—is on cordial terms with the heads of departments in large retail mercantile establishments. Each of these heads will accept from six to a dozen pairs of tickets occasionally to distribute among his subordinates.

Often it is possible to get rid of 200 tickets or more in a day in this way, and when this is repeated in four or five stores the manager is sure of the attendance of an appreciable number of well dressed young women in the newest millinery and style of coiffure, each with a respectably attired cavalier and all on their best behavior. These people may not be ultra fashionable, but they will not disgrace their environment.

Unless the theatrical man is acquainted with the department heads, however, it is not an easy matter to give away tickets in such an establishment. The average clerk in a large store, especially of the feminine gender, is suspicious. She does not understand such open handed generosity, and there must be a lot of explanation to convince her that in offering something for nothing the manager has not some sinister design. As for the male clerks, if he gives them any directly they are sure to tell every one what a pull they have with the manager and pester him for tickets ever afterward, particularly when he has a success, with "the free list absolutely suspended."

It is far less of an undertaking to buy a hundred dollars' worth of low priced goods than to make a present of two tickets apiece to a dozen persons behind the counter. The telephone girls, stenographers and manicurists look askance at free tickets from a stranger, although when their confidence is won they will generally accept them with due gratitude.—Theater Magazine.

Purdie's Panacea.

Tom Purdie, an old manservant in Sir Walter Scott's household, used to talk of the famous "Waverley Novels" as "our books" and said that the reading of them was the greatest comfort to him.

"Whenever I am off my sleep," he confided to James Skene, the author of "Memories of Sir Walter Scott," "I have only to take one of the novels, and before I have read two pages it is sure to set me asleep."

Plenty on Hand.

"Have you ever wondered about your husband's past?" "Dear me, no. I have all I can do in taking care of his present and worrying about his future."—Boston Herald.

Domestic Note.

"I've noticed one thing." "And what is that?" "When one gets loaded it's usually his wife who explodes."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

Our own anger does us more harm than the thing which makes us angry.—Sir John Lubbock.

THE RED DAB OF DEATH.

Tragic Mark on the Steel Skeleton of the Skyscraper.

"See that big blob of scarlet paint?" said the engineer as he pointed to a girder high up in the skeleton of the new skyscraper. "That red spot means that one of the men working on the building was killed by the girder sweeping him off the structure while being put in position."

The visitor craned his neck and saw a rough patch of vermilion paint on one of the floor girders up on the sixteenth story. "It must be a dangerous life," he said to his engineering friend.

"Yes. Those men up there are working under the chance of instant death at any moment. They'll walk along the topmost girder, 300 feet above the sidewalk—a little path of slippery iron five inches wide—and will lean outward against the wind. You or I couldn't do it for a second."

"Now and again there's an accident. A chap slips. A worker gets hit by a swinging girder and flung off. Another man takes an incautious step and falls off into eternity. The men working near by do their best to get at him if he manages to grab the girder he's falling from, and there are some swift and reckless races with death to get to their comrade at any cost in the five or ten seconds allowed them while strong fingers are sliding away from a slippery beam flange. If the worst happens and the man falls in spite of their efforts, then they apply the dab of red paint, and the ironworkers call it a day. They don't speak much of the man that is gone, as a rule. He's soon forgotten. The men consider it fate."

"You'd think, by the way," went on the engineer, "that the higher up these men worked the more careful they'd become. They aren't particularly careful, but they do guard against the hypnotism of height. One of the men working on a high girder gets paralyzed now and again by a sudden fear that holds him motionless and still on his iron beam."

"The men look out for this sort of thing, and the remedy is to distract his attention by a rough blow on the back or in some cases by exciting him to anger through any means in their power. When the man gets fighting mad he is freed from the paralysis of terror or whatever you may choose to call it. He gets up from his girder to make a rush for the other fellow to do him up, and the moment he is safe he is restrained by the other men."

"Whenever you see a skyscraper framework," concluded the engineer, "each dab of scarlet paint on the iron means that some man has come to his death. Every skyscraper and every bridge is the monument to some little group of unknown workers, laboring at dizzy heights and dallying with sudden death as part of their day's work."—New York Press.

A Poverty Stricken Queen.

Partly owing to the fact that she was wedded to an avaricious king and partly because she was generous with the little money allowed her Elizabeth of York, queen of Henry VII., spent but a small amount for dress. She was very often in debt, and the sums she spent were ridiculously small, 20 shillings (\$5) being the greatest amount expended at any one time. Her gowns were mended and turned, and new waists were made for them, as is shown by the record of bills paid to her tailor. These bills prove that she wore her clothes for a long time, for her gowns were obliged to be newly hemmed, and also that, though a princess of the great house of Plantagenet, she wore shoes costing but 24 cents, which were decorated with tin buckles!

Made It Clear.

A senator, speaking of the advantages of clearness of statement, told a story about a restaurant to illustrate his meaning. He said:

"This restaurant advertised a dinner, but not in the loose way many other restaurants advertise dinner as between certain hours, whether there would be enough dinner to last between those hours or not. No. The man who runs that restaurant has a proper knowledge of his responsibilities and of the exact use of the language. He advertised, 'Chicken pie, 25 cents; from 12:30 until gone.'—Saturday Evening Post.

A Cynical Statesman.

The saying that "all men have their price" is ascribed to Sir Robert Walpole. While speaking of a faction in parliament which bitterly opposed some of his measures he said, "You see with what zeal and vehemence these gentlemen oppose me, and yet I know the price of every man in this house except three."

Of some who called themselves patriots he said: "Patriots! I could raise fifty of them within four and twenty hours. I have raised many in one night. 'Tis but to refuse an unreasonable demand and up springs a patriot."

A Dilemma.

Mr. Crimso-beak—A hunter in Newfoundland who has lost his bearings or finds himself in a fog has no difficulty in finding the way, as, owing to the constant west winds, the tops of all the trees point east. Mrs. Crimso-beak—But suppose he doesn't want to go east?—Yonkers Statesman.

Married For Money.

"Do you mean to say that you married for money?" "In a way I did. I got married because I couldn't afford to stay engaged any longer."—Cleveland Leader.

Nothing can be produced out of nothing.—Diogenes.

DEEP SEA LIFE.

The Deposits on the Surface of Submarine Mountains.

Whether or not the light of day penetrates the obscure depths of the sea has not been settled by scientists, and the fact that some animals found at a depth exceeding 700 fathoms have no eyes or a very faint indication of them, while others possess very large and protruding eyes, helps to make the dispute all the more sharp.

Another strange thing about the lower depths of the ocean is that when its inhabitants possess any color at all that color is usually orange or red or reddish orange—for example, sea anemones, corals, etc. The surface of submarine mountains is strewn with shells like the virgin seashore, showing that it is the feasting place of vast shoals of carnivorous animals. When a codfish eats it takes an oyster in its mouth, cracks the shell, digests the meat and ejects the shell. Crabs crack the shells of their smaller neighbors and suck out the meat. This accounts for the mounds of shells which are found beneath the waves. All fish bones discovered there invariably crumble at the slightest touch, so completely have they been honeycombed by the boring shellfish, and, further illustrating the constant destruction going on in the ocean's depth, it is said that if a ship sinks at sea with all on board it will be eaten by the fish, with the exception of its metal portions, and not a human bone of its crew will remain longer than a few days.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

MADE WAGNER PAY.

An Early Sonata That Cost the Composer a Lot of Money.

Wagner when a young man wrote a sonata which had a fair success, but in after life he made every effort to suppress it. Going to the publisher, he said, "Have you any copies of that miserable thing still unsold?" "Yes," was the reply; "I have quite a number of them in stock."

"Send them to me at once, with a bill," said the composer.

A thousand copies were soon afterward delivered at his door. The bill was a big one, but it was paid, somewhat grudgingly, and Wagner thought he had done with the thing. What was his surprise, then, at receiving two or three months later another consignment, this time of 500 copies.

"I thought you had only a thousand of these things," he protested. "That was all I had in stock," explained the dealer, "but these have been returned by my agents, to whom I wrote that you wished to have the sonata suppressed."

Wagner winced, but there was nothing for it but to pay the bill. And thereafter whenever business was dull with this crafty publisher a few hundred copies of the sonata would be struck off on shopworn paper and delivered at the composer's door with a memorandum to the effect that they had just come back from remote places where they had been sent for sale.

Salesmanship.

A salesman in a furnishing store displayed to a friendly customer a gentleman's plain linen handkerchief at \$5. The man had always thought he was doing well to pay 50 cents and questioned the salesman about it.

"How can a man figure it that he gets his money's worth when he pays \$5 for a handkerchief? It doesn't serve the purpose any better, and he couldn't afford to tell any one that he was big enough fool to pay that price."

"He gets his money's worth," said the salesman, "from the added force of self respect that comes with his own personal assurance that he has the best that can be produced. That conviction helps him in urging his point and in swinging the big deal his way, and the \$5 is a mere item of incidental expense."

Ever afterward that customer gladly paid more not only for handkerchiefs, but for every item of his wardrobe. That is salesmanship.—Collier's.

Corfu's Queer Laws.

Corfu can boast of the most peculiar land laws in the world. The landlords are nearly all absentees, and their tenants hold the land on a perpetual lease in return for a rent payable in kind and fixed at a certain proportion of the produce. Such a tenant is considered a co-owner of the soil, and he cannot be expelled but for nonpayment of rent, bad culture or the transfer of his lease without the landlord's consent. Neither can his rent be raised without his permission. Attempts have been made to alter the law, but both landlords and tenants are apparently satisfied with a system that dates back to the time of Homer.

Absolute Equality.

The Woman—The tax office is one which I simply love to go to. The Man—Very few people do. Why do you like it? The Woman—Because it is absolutely the only place where no discrimination is made against me because I am a woman. They let me there pay just as much as if I were a man.—Baltimore American.

The European Plan.

Landlord (after fair guest has fainted at sight of her bill)—Jenn, I have sent the boy for a glass of water for the lady, and I want you to see that 10 cents is added to her bill. Understand?—Fliegende Blätter.

A Good Break.

The Shopper (in china shop to salesman)—You don't break these sets, I presume. The Salesman—No'm, but our errand boy does sometimes.

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