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The famous valet of Red Gap, as he is visualized at the Lyric in the person of Ralph Herz, appears at the right; while George Hassell, as his English master, is standing nonchalantly at the left.

CHARLES HOYT AS HE WAS

By OTIS HARLAN

Charles Hoyt's farces, tremendously popular in the 90's, are coming back as photoplays. Here one of Hoyt's principal players and closest friends recalls something of the man who was to supply him, posthumously, with such photoplay vehicles as "A Black Sheep."

I first met Charles Hoyt in the Neil House, Columbus, Ohio, in the spring of 1887. He was there rehearsing his play, "A Hole in the Ground." I amused him with some little elocutionary performances, and, although I had never been on the stage at that time, he engaged me for his new play and I appeared under the Hoyt & McKee management for many years.

Hoyt had a way of writing about his players' personalities, and it was while "A Hole in the Ground" was on the boards that he wrote "A Brass Monkey" and put me in to do the song "Razzle Dazzle." The writer of this song, William Barton, was so pleased that he made me a present of the song, "The Wild Man of Borneo," which we did in "A Brass Monkey."

Hoyt always produced his pieces for two weeks in the spring around New England, then remained for a week in Jersey City, then closed for the summer, almost ready to produce the piece without change in the fall. Any alteration in the plot he would make in the summer months.

Hoyt had an unusual method of developing his intimate friends about an idea, and it was wonderful how he would enlarge it. Every time Hoyt told his idea he had some new comedy interest and he built up his plays by telling the stories over and over again. He would then sit down and write an entire show in two or three days, for he had all the construction in his mind.

I have seen Hoyt sit in our Pullman sleeper, even in the daytime, with the window shade drawn down over his head, looking out but seeing nothing but the funny ideas that were tumbling out of his fertile brain. He was undoubtedly one of the most prolific and most successful playwrights that America has ever known. He wrote all of his manuscripts in long hand, later having them typewritten.

Hoyt was a man difficult to approach. His most intimate friends never called him "Charlie." As a man he was cold and reserved. Frank McKee, his partner, even called him "Mr. Hoyt." He was also most economical with the payroll. For three years I drew \$5 weekly. He liked to split the difference in salaries. One actor demanded \$40 weekly and got \$25. Another asked for \$35 and received \$22.50. But aside from business hours, in the cafe or in the dining room he would demand all checks. In business he was close; in social life unusually liberal.

Poor Charles Hoyt died in a sanitarium at Charleston, N. H., in November, 1900. Governor Rollins, of New Hampshire, had been petitioned to investigate his case by people who asserted that Hoyt was not insane, but was being kept in charge for some ulterior purpose. I had called upon Hoyt previously and knew that he was not in his right mind. I have seen him shave himself in his later years while wearing a hat and an overcoat in sultry weather. He was undoubtedly losing his mind for several years before any one appreciated that fact. He had a horror of the fleur-de-lis. Did he but spy the device at any time or place he would beat a hasty retreat.

Hoyt had a great fund of stories and his humor was wonderful. Everything

seemed to strike his funny side. Even the names of his characters are studies in true humor.

He didn't like to write for people he did not know well. He started "A Black Sheep" for William Hoey, and with reluctance. Before the contracts were signed there was a hitch and Hoyt tore up the contract. Then he sent for me. He told McKee in my presence that he would rather write the play around my person-

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ality. "A Black Sheep" was a great success on the stage and will be, I predict, as great a success when released in motion pictures.

"A Contented Woman" was written for his wife. It is as up-to-date today as it was 19 years ago, for it deals with the suffragists. You have, perhaps, noticed that all of the Hoyt comedies start with "A." It was just another one of his peculiarities.

Little did I think, when acting in Hoyt comedies years ago, that I would again star in them in motion pictures. But here I am and I am as fond of Hoyt plays as ever.

"How any one can go back to the speaking stage after playing in photoplays, I cannot understand," says Edna Mayo. "The terrible monotony of playing the same piece night after night almost drives one to madness at times. In photoplays, you feel when you have finished a play that you have accomplished something. It is there on the screen for all time, just as an artist's completed picture lives forever on canvas. Motion pictures are refreshing. The stage is nerve-shattering."

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