GEORGE ARVINE

Heading the New Arvine Stock Company at the American Theatre

"AND THE LAST SHALL BE FIRST"

The Idea of Turning a Play Backward Caused Cohan & Harris Thought

"In writing 'On Trial' I came on the idea of writing a play backward," says Mr. Reizenstein, author of the play coming to the Garrick. "What I wanted to do, not only for the novelty of the thing, but as training in the technique of playwriting, was to make the last act the further off than the first, and so reverse the usual process by which a play is written. I did that. The result, however, was not satisfactory.

"It was then that the idea of the trial appealed to me as a sort of a frame for the scenes, a link, as it were, to connect those scenes which were so separated in point of time. My scheme had been to show the courtroom only in the first scene and the last. I meant to have a dark stage with the voices of the lawyers and witnesses. My reason for not visualizing the courtroom was the difficulty of making the quick changes. Arthur Hopkins, who had read the play and had confidence in it, invented the mechanical process of which the quick changes are made.

"When the play had been submitted to Cohan and Harris and Mr. Hopkins, there seemed to be no objection to the idea of the play beginning with what would ordinarily have been the last act and moving along to the first act, which was in the place that the first act should have been with the separating scenes in the courtroom. But I had written this play with an altogether different plot from that which is now used. There was a murder, and a trial, of course, was shown. But the scene was in the Kentucky mountains, and there was a feud. But the brother who was not involved in the feud was killed, and it was a mystery of explaining this that made the play.

"But my managers did not think that there was any 'punch' in that story. They wanted another murder and another trial. So in six days I wrote 'On Trial' as it is being played now. Of course that allowed me a very little chance for characterization. I do object to the charge that the language is ignorant. I did not try to write fine language, but to make it colloquial and characteristic of the speakers."

A MANN OF MANY PARTS, COMIC OR SERIOUS

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the spear up." In fact, Mr. Mann has many delightful memories of Booth and Barrett and Salvini, which he loves to relate to newspaper and clubmen in some of his happy dramatic talks before them.

Deep down in his heart he even now nurses the fond ambition one day to play Shylock. Of course, the first thing that occurs to one's mind in connection with this actor's achievements is to consider his inimitable "broken-German" comedy roles, which gave him his first great national fame. It was in 1895 that he leaped into celebrity by his portrayal of Her von Moser, in "The Strange Adventures of Miss Brown." On the heels of that big success he simply took the country by storm with the grotesque eccentricities of his Hans von Spoofenburgh, in "The Girl From Paris." Then came Nix, the Inspector of "Vires," in "The Telephone Girl." Hans' saying—"It's to laugh"—became the motto of Louis Mann, and it was to laugh with "laughter holding both its sides," whenever Mr. Mann appeared in a "broken-German" dialect twisting role, or in a French role, such as Lebardi, in "The Girl in the Barracks," or Jean Poujol, in "Julia Bonbon."

As one reviews these characters one sees how remarkably different they all were. Von Moser, the meek, much suffering music teacher; Hans, the stolid, stupid spa innkeeper; Nix, the conceited, rumtious telephone inspector; Hochstuhl, the explosive, impulsive, but lovable old school director in "All on Account of Eliza." Lebardi was the suave-fashioned chocolate millionaire, while Poujol was the gay, brutal type of boulevardier. Mr. Mann has since these days given us such other allied roles as his Heinsie Blindler in "The White Hen," and his Hoch der Counsul in the Nirdlinger comedy. But he has achieved, as well, such deeply humanized roles as his Gottfried Plittersdorf in "The Cheater" and his John Krauss in "The Man Who Stood Still" (the New Generation). A youthful and romantic role was that of von Walden in "The Second Fiddle," and he played a deeply pathetic part in "Master and Pupil." The Boer dialect and character was mastered by him in his part of Oom Peit Prinsloo in Paul Potter's South African war play, "The Red Kloof." Mr. Mann even astonished anew those many admirers of his who thought they had come to realize his gamut by appearing in "Elevating a Husband" in the character of a young New York "hick," Charles Sample, a five-cent store merchant, with a warm heart but after cold cash.

Mr. Mann began his dramatic career at the age of 3 in the new Stadt Theatre, New York city, his birthplace. The new Stadt is opposite the Old Bowery. There the little Louis began in German drama. Going to the Pacific coast, he appeared in juvenile roles in the Barrett-McCullough company, in San Francisco. He played in "Othello" and "The Gladiator" with Salvini, Louis Morrison and Marie Prescott. He was in original cast of Oscar Wilde's first play, "Vera, the Nihilist," when it was given its first American production at the Union Square Theatre, New York, away back in August, 1883. With Daniel Bandman, he acted in "Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." He was in the famous "Incog" cast, in 1892, along with Robert Edeson, Harry Davenport, Charles Dickson and Ellen Bur. Clara Lipmann was also in that cast and became his wife. Mr. Mann's picturesquely variegated career has even included burlesque. In 1895 he convulsed all New York city by his burlesque Svengal, in "The Merry Whirl," at the New York Casino, and he was one of the noted members of old Weber-Fields aggregation.

With Louis Mann, in "The Bubble," which is his latest and greatest success, will be found the original cast, which comprises Laura Walker, Auguste Bermester, George Wellington and Ivan Miller, all of whom have been associated with Mr. Mann in his previous successes of the past.

INCE, MOVIE MAGICIAN, BY ONE WHO KNOWS

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did at the outset. The same is true of George Beban, and you could not entice Beban away from Inceville. Both Hart and Beban have scored sensationally under Ince.

If anything is needed to typify the Ince policy it is the care with which he selects his artistic colleagues. Frank Keenan, perhaps the best character actor on the stage today, is the latest arrival at Inceville not merely making an excursion from stage to screen. Ince has Keenan signed for a season.

There is no purchasing of fame in the Ince policy. When he induces an actor to change his environment from the stage to the screen, it is the merit of that actor which counts. This is true even in the extraordinary engagement of Billie Burke to secure whom Ince began to plot and plan a year ahead of her final capitulation. Miss Burke was paid, it is stated, no less than $40,000 for a few weeks in the idle season—but so certain is he that this stage idol will register on the screen, that Ince would increase her honorarium if he could prolong her stay at Inceville indefinitely.

It will be recalled that when the interests, who will perpetuate the name of Charles Frohman heard of Miss Burke's threatened excursion into filmdom, they immediately issued an embargo wherein the popular actress was told that if she dared to bestow of her art for the screen her contract with the Frohman syndicate would be automatically annulled.

But Billie Burke was not to be stayed by such threats. Had Charles Frohman lived she would have not only consulted him, but would have abided by his decision. Charles Frohman did not have contracts with his stars, but when Miss Burke became Mrs. Ziegfield a contract was deemed a necessity.

Miss Burke argued that if her husband and future manager believed that the Ince offer of $40,000 for about a month's work before the camera should be accepted, there was no reason why the Frohman interests should object. Ziegfield gave his consent only when he was assured that the film entourage would add immeasurably to Miss Burke's vogue, on stage and screen alike, and, as he is to direct her future stage career, he is expecting that a new public created from the millions who will see his wife on the screen, will later flock to the box office of the playhouses when she resumes her conquest of the speaking stage.

Where Ince will stop in his resolution to gather at Inceville the world's best-known players may not be predicted, but it is certain that his ultimate aim is to possess a permanent organization which shall be worthy of comparison to that never-surpassed roster which the late Augustin Daly had at his command in an era of the theatre when his model stock company included Ada Rehan, John Drew, James Lewis, Fanny Davenport, Charles Fisher, and as many more names which today grace the annals of a glorious stage era.

Ince can afford to wait a year or two before he attains his final aim in this respect, for besides Miss Burke and the star previously named he has at Inceville a score or more of the erstwhile Broadway stage favorites, not one of whom could have been induced to make such a change as recently as two years ago. Among these are Dustin Farnum, H. B. Warner, Willard Mack, George Beban, Ossian Johnson, Julia Dean, Jane Grey and Katherine Kaelred, while the number of real products of the new art without stage achievement to their credit is even larger.

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