

This Week's Attractions

- Van Ness—Grace George in "Divorcans"
- Novelty—De Wolf Hopper in Light Opera, "Happyland"
- American—"The Virginian"
- Princess—"When Johnny Comes Marching Home"
- Orpheum—William Hawtrey Heading Vaudeville Show
- Alcazar—War Drama, "Barbara Frietchie"
- Central—"How Baxter Built in"
- Wigwam—Vaudeville

**WILL H. BRAY'S
 RESEMBLANCES
 AND
 REMINISCENCES**

By Walter Anthony

WE had been talking quite a while when Bray—Will H. Bray, veteran actor and Uncle Tom this week at the Princess—asked me: "Whom do I look like? I'm not 'stuck up' about it at all, but whom do I resemble?" He had his slouch hat on and ordinary street attire. I hadn't thought of the similarity before, but answered: "Why, you look like Bryan."

"Golly," he said. "Now, whom do I look like?" He took off his hat, and I said, "McKinley," looking at his sparse gray hairs. Bray took a pair of rimmed eyeglasses from his pocket and, putting them on, dared me to venture another guess. "Mansfield," I said, and that was right, too.

"This confounded countenance of mine is continually getting me called names," he said. "It has confused me with scores of men. I've been taken for a senator from Missouri and a congressman from Maine. I would have been taken for Bryan scores of times had it not been for my taciturnity. I look like this man when I have my hat on, and like that when I take it off, and still another when I wear my glasses, but—and I say it without conceit—I have never been taken for a poundmaster, a ward politician or a crook. If I can not resemble Will, at least I don't look like Tom, Dick or Harry."

Bray's striking similarity to so many different men suggested, quite naturally, this question:

"Do you think the actor's physical adaptability to resemble, outwardly and without effort, other persons is the visible sign of a mental and spiritual shiftness which expresses itself in his capacity to become, at will, like those it is his profession to portray?"

"What's the use?" he replied, Yankee-like. "An actor is like the historic maid who, you recall, went a milking and whose face was her fortune, 'sir, she said."

"But it hasn't done me much good, at that, for I got side tracked on coon parts because I was once the minister to Dahomey, and most all of my stage work has been behind the black hue of burnt cork."

"Once I thought I had put the can of cork away for good. It was in New York, several—never mind how many—years ago. McKee and Harris produced a play by Pond called 'Life.' It was a study in metropolitan life and was harrowing enough, I can tell you. I played a role like that of Bill Sykes. Opposite me was Annie Irish. Minnie Dupree was in the cast, and so were George Boniface Sr., Sydney Booth and Charles Cherry. That's a pretty fair crowd, isn't it? Well, it was a great production. The management spent lots of money on it and the play started out under the best kind of circumstances. I was pretty nervous about my part, because I intended to do or die. They don't make good 'nigger' roles any more and I was going to make good in the skin God gave me. I told my wife to stay away because I got nervous on first nights when she's in the audience and I've a trying part. That's funny, isn't it, when you think how long we've traveled the world together. Anyway, I told her to stay home, and she, like any good wife would have done, said 'all right,' and then she came just the same and hid up in the gallery somewhere so that I couldn't see her.

"When I came home that night she said: 'Will, you never will have to put on cork again. You've made the hit of your life.' Then she told me about the comments she had heard from those around her, and any one could tell I had 'made good.' I went to bed pretty happy and next morning was up bedtimes to read what the papers had to say. They were fine notices and I swelled up with pleasure and pride. I was truly entitled to. Every one in the cast was praised, and the production was given proper credit. But how they did go after the play and the man who wrote his name at the bottom of it! 'Life' was the best abused piece it has ever been my bad luck to appear in, and that's a record because I've been playing since—well since before you played with a rubber ring." (Which isn't true at all as it afterward turned out when he began to talk dates.) "As

a consequence of the grilling the play received the show languished, drooped and died. It dragged out a run of one consecutive week; then it was taken into a back lot and shot. Thus did 'Life' and my hopes of playing white face expire.

"It isn't that I do not like coon parts. I do, if they are good. But they are not usually good any more. The 'colored' roles are not what they used to be, and it is really a misfortune to have been as successful as I have been in the roles of other days when the darkey was expected to be a real part and not a 'bit'."

"Yes, Uncle Tom in 'When Johnny Comes Marching Home' is a good part, but that is one of the older pieces now. Let's see when was that put on first?"

That led to the dates, and with a nimbleness of mind quite as alert as his quick brown eyes Bray jumped back to the year 1871. Over that stretch of time hovers in his mind enough material to write a book which would be valuable history of the drama. The names he conjured up—not forgetting Hoyt, with whose productions for eight years he was identified, though he played but two roles all that time.

"George Cohan hates Providence, R. I., doesn't he? Well, that's how Hoyt felt about Bellaire, Ohio. Why he should hate that particular spot in Ohio I never found out, but once when we were on the road with a 'Texas Steer' our paths over the country crossed. I asked him where he had been. 'In Bellaire,' said Hoyt. 'How was trade?' I asked. 'Pretty good,' he answered. 'What are you mad about, then? Don't you like Bellaire?' You know Hoyt always talked with a drawl, pulling his mouth anglewise. He said with complete conviction: 'Compared with Bellaire Dante's dream of hell was a beautiful vision of joy!'

"But let's get back to time, which is flying."

Bray was putting on an old pair of shoes by this time and getting into the habiliments of Uncle Tom. The boy outside had shouted "Half an hour! Half an hour!" and Bray had still those 35 or 36 years to traverse.

"You see these shoes? Well, I'm a crank about shoes. I always see to it that they 'belong' to the role. I have a pair still that were given to me 26 years ago. They are dandies. The man who gave them to me was playing in the orchestra the night that Lincoln was shot. What was his name? I think it was Bill Withers. My memory is fine for dates, but not for names, you see."

"It was in 1871, then, since you insist on dates, that I made my debut. The play was 'Red Pocketbook,' the theater was the old Metropolitan, and the place San Francisco. Yes, it was the Metropolitan, in Montgomery street between Washington and Jackson. Old John Woodward was manager. He's the man who wrote the one time popular song about 'Joe Bowers.' Don't you know the song? It was a great hit those days. You know I've done a little composing myself, but not lately. I'm the man who wrote 'Hippy Hippy Hoy, Papa's Baby Boy!' 'I'm a Dandy, but I'm no Dude,' and others besides. Why I wrote ragtime 25 years ago. Nellie McHenry sang it, too. The title was 'Sinners, Put on the Golden Uniform.' May Irwin sang it later, and I wrote another ragtime song, too—'Good Lord, Will You Help Me on My Way?'

"But we're skipping again. It was a regular stock company at the Metropolitan and I was just a beginner, but in my few years there I played in the same company with Maggie Mitchell, Lotta, E. T. Stetson, David Belasco, who made his first appearance in 'The Corsican Brothers,' Mary Gray, Annie Pixley and her husband, 'Bol' Fulford. I had a season of road work in California. In the 70's that wasn't what it is now, either. But I always ate, and never walked ties, so perhaps after all they were not days of hardship. What friends I made!

"In 1876 I went east—and what do you think?—went into vaudeville. That's what I did, and it is still the style. Only then we didn't call it vaudeville. We called it 'variety,' and sure that's what it was. Then J. K. Emmet Sr. came along and for three seasons, I was with him. I played in all his versions of 'Fritz.'



IN NEBRASKA
 "AS I LIVE,
 MY OLD FRIEND
 BILL BRYAN"



Will H. Bray



IN NEW YORK
 "SAY GILL
 DERE'S
 RICHARD
 MANSFIELD"

FRANK CAMPEAU
 as TRAMPAS
 IN THE VIRGINIAN
 at the AMERICAN
 THEATER.

"When Johnny Comes Marching Home." William G. Stewart was Colonel Graham and Maurice Darcy was Major Martin. Then there were Homer Lind, Albert McGucken, Thelma Fair and others I don't remember now.

"Did you meet Willis Sweatnam when he was here with 'George Washington Jr.?' There's another old timer at the black face part. And his is a sweet soul. If you didn't meet him you missed a gentleman, sure. I've known Sweatnam for 30 years and more. He's the salt of the earth."

I remembered when I met Sweatnam he said: "If you haven't met Bray you are overlooking a gentleman. He lives in Berkeley now. His son is getting ready to go to the university, and Bray and his wife! You should meet them!"

"After the successful seasons of 'When Johnny Comes Marching Home' were done I came marching back home to San Francisco. I was here when the fire came, and that's why I haven't any programs or data to refresh my memory for names. And here I am and here I'll stay I guess unless some one writes another good coon part and tempts me away with it. For the lure of the lights is still strong, and—but there's my cue," and away he ran, forgetting the 38 years he had traversed in his dressing room at the Princess.

"Thief" Coming in Disguise

W. H. Leahy tells me that San Francisco is assured a regular New York production of Bernstein's "The Thief," which has had such a phenomenal run in the great eastern city. According to Leahy, he and J. J. Gottlob conferred with Frohman about the matter and the latter decided to send the play and the players straight across the continent to the Golden Gate without a single stop; not even at Chicago.

"San Francisco will see the piece before any other eastern city has a chance," says Leahy. "and Bellow and Illington will head the same company that made the play so great a hit in New York. When I left that city Gottlob was endeavoring to secure other things for San Francisco presentation before they and the scenery and costumes had been worn thin by a long tour of the one night stands that bristle all the way from the Atlantic cohomers to the Pacific coast."

It will mean much if other first class attractions are so secured. It will signify that the coming of the second, third and fourth companies to the coast will gradually cease. There is no question that New York managers are coming to realization of the fact that San Francisco is on the theatrical map, and will not much longer stand imposition at the hands of the men who give us what they want, whether we want it or not.

In this devoutly to be desired condition the Alcazar and the Princess are large factors. The standard of stock attractions here is so high that the deadly comparison between what we have at home so cheaply frequently puts imported high priced attractions out of countenance for their shoddy appearance and third rate casts.

New Attractions at the Local Playhouses

There will be enough at the theaters this week to keep playgoers seeing the new plays. At the American, Novelty, Van Ness, Alcazar, Orpheum, Cen-

tral and smaller houses new attractions are offered. Only the Princess retains its last week's show, and it ought to. "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" will not be withdrawn as long as the public keeps up its demands for seats, which for next week, the management says, is large.

The following is, in substance, what the managements of the local theaters have to say about their attractions for the week:

Van Ness

Grace George, direct from her New York and London triumphs, comes to the Van Ness theater for a two weeks' engagement Monday night, presenting Margaret Mayo's version of Sardou's "Divorcans." Miss George will appear in the role of the captivating and

"Fifteen minutes" yelled the boy outside the dressing room door, and we were only up to 1877.

"After that I was with the beginnings of farce comedy in America, playing with Mestayer and Vaughn (of the old California theater—the real original old California) as 'The Tourists in a Pullman Palace Car.' Do you remember 'Fifty cents all around, please—with character' at the old Baldwin theater? We played there April 11, 1881.

"We'll have to skip some. Between that time and until I joined the Hoyt forces I played in a great many plays and places. In fact, I've done everything in the theatrical line except I haven't sung in grand opera, nor carried a spear, either, and I've never been with a circus.

"I joined Hoyt's company in 'A

"Texas Steer" in 1890. Flora Walsh—rest her sweet spirit—was 'Bossy.' Tim Murphy was a member of the cast, but I do not remember what he played; Newton Chisnell was 'Brassy Gall.' Oh, and Julius Kahn for a while was 'Brassy Gall,' too. I was the minister to Dahomey, of course.

Congressman Kahn—who wasn't a congressman then—was taken on when the company reached San Francisco. Chisnell was sick, and I remembered how Kahn had shone in amateur theatricals here, and so when the show struck San Francisco we located Kahn and put him to work. He played with us in this city, Los Angeles, Sacramento and Fresno. Then Hoyt jumped in and played the part himself, though Kahn's 'Gall' had been an entirely adequate performance, I must say.

"The only other piece I appeared in with Hoyt was 'A Contented Woman.'

Hoyt had married again by that time, and his leading woman was Caroline Miskel Hoyt, his wife. She was a beauty, too. I created the role of Vandyke Beard. We played in this city at the Baldwin in the season of 1895-6. George Ober and his wife, Will Currie, M. B. Snyder and his wife were some of the principals with me in the cast."

"The orchestra by this time was playing 'My Own United States.'"

"It was five years ago almost to the day when I appeared in Newark, N. J., as the original Uncle Tom in 'When Johnny Comes Marching Home.' Lucille Saunders was in that original cast, so was Aigernon Aspland, who has been out here since. Maude Lambert, who was an original Florodora girl, was the original Cordelia Allen in

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