

## EUGENE WALTER.

Since the appearance here in the past three weeks of Eugene Walter's two great plays, "Paid in Full" and "The Wolf," both of which provoked a great deal of discussion among those who saw the productions, considerable interest has been manifested by local first-nighters over the young author.

Before writing his two successes, Mr. Walter was a newspaper man, soldier, sailor, adventurer, and tramp of the Jack London type. He worked on the newspapers of various coast cities and Denver, and one memorable night figured in a notable stud poker game at Pocatello, Idaho.

The following account of his hard struggle to secure recognition as a playwright is told by Tex Charwate, in the New York Morning Telegraph:

New York is opportunity.

This is quite true when the assertion is made as a broad, general statement, and it is no less true when one says that New York is opportunity for those who have to do with the theater, either as actors, managers, playwrights or ordinary stage hands.

An impression prevails throughout the country that sudden changes of fortune are incidents of Western development, and that success in the East, if it comes at all, comes only after long and painstaking effort.

Painstaking effort is a good thing anywhere, of course, but the wheels turn rapidly on Manhattan Island.

And nobody knows this better than the author of two plays running on Broadway, one of them a conspicuous success of the season, for this same author was forced many times, by circumstances over which he had no control, to seek the soft cushion of a park bench and substitute it for a corner of a park bench and substitute it for a corner no longer ago than last summer.

He ate casually and when he could.

From a park bench and intermittent dairy lunches to one of the comfortable suites of a Broadway hotelery within less than a twelve-month is going just about as fast as any Western miner ever lifted himself from a grub stake, consisting of bacon and flour and black coffee, to a porterhouse steak with the accessories that belong.

And the successful playwright has the best of the miner in a hundred ways. He may live in New York for one thing and his royalties are an inexhaustible mine so long as he holds on to his copyright. Moreover, as he digs notions instead of nuggets and carries his "prospect" under his hat, there is little danger of the lead becoming exhausted.

It is gratifying to know that the former habitue of Bryant park has not been spoiled by his good fortune. He does not despise the estate from which he sprung, but on the contrary, is inclined, now that he is on Easy Street, to make a joke of it. Perhaps the experience did him good, stimulated his imagination and made possible his arrival—although if the truth must be told, he had money and varied experiences before registering at the Hotel de Bryant park.

For one thing, at the age of 13, when most of his neighbor boys in Ohio were being carefully hot-housed by doting mothers, he had to get out and dig for his daily delicatessen. It goes without saying, therefore, that after he turned his attention to the literary game he had to plug away at it without having his mental cards marked with the fine celluloid finish of a college education. The spades of toil have always been his trumps. First, he was a "tally boy" in a Sandusky lumber yard, and there he learned that life was full of splinters, cross-grained, knotty-problem, and that a large number of men whose

pretensions are big, store sawdust in that part of their craniums where the sweetbreads of intelligence and thought are supposed to lodge.

In due time the future playwright fled from the lumber yard, because he was somewhat undersized and his companions had fallen into the diverting habit of using him for a punching bag.

Next he was impresario of a carboy in a Cleveland chemical concern, and next he found his way into the copper region of Michigan. He should have coppered this bet, as it was a losing venture and forced him into the merchant marine service of the Great Lakes. As a jackie he absorbed a good deal of local color, with which he later attempted to paint the pages of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, upon which he got a job as a reporter, which he soon outgrew.

Then a terrible thing happened.

He came to New York and got a reportorial job on the New York Sun.

The playwright denies that he slept on park benches voluntarily as a penance for this offense, and he feels quite sure that in time he may be able to live down this with other sections of a busy past that might not meet with approval from the "rigid, frigid, good people" of his native land.

With an imagination that was easily set in action, the gaudy picture of a cavalry squad hung in front of a recruiting station, next caught his eye, and he enlisted, being assigned to Troop H of the Sixth. This took him to North Dakota, and from there he was sent to Arizona. He finished his term of enlistment by serving through the Spanish war.

Naturally his first play, "Sergeant James," was of a military flavor, and quite naturally it was a failure, although Kirke La Shelle liked it and did his best to make it a success.

Most first plays are failures.

Disgusted, the author threw up his job on the Detroit News, and declaring that he had met with nothing but "frosts" most of his life, he would go up to the frost factory and discover if possible why he was in the wrong. It took him a good while to get there, but he finally arrived in Dawson City, Alaska, where he bought an outfit, and with one companion went to Fort Reliance, a Hudson Bay post, on the delta of the Mackenzie river. He and his partner covered nearly a thousand miles and suffered many hardships, but they did not strike pay dirt. His next job was on the Seattle Star, where he stayed only a short while.

He had been on Broadway once. That's the answer.

But it's a good way from Seattle to the Bowery, and the walking is never good. Freight trains run with great regularity, however, and the playwright boarded a freight. After a week he was pocketed at Pocatello, Idaho, where a kind-hearted barkeeper gave him a drink.

Then a native strolled in and bought him another, and then, being two drinks opulent, he treated the native and the bartender, settling the score with a game of talk.

Others came in and stud poker was proposed. The crowd wanted a dealer, and the wayfaring literateur agreed to act in that capacity.

The dealer never loses at stud poker, and a nerve is as good as a bankroll. He dealt all night and until the next afternoon, his rake-off being \$175.

This affluence gave him a contempt for Broadway, even, and he headed for Texas, where he became a cowboy.

There, in a fit of homesickness for the white lights, he wrote "The Sunny Side of Broadway," which he sold to Murray & Mack for enough money to take him to Denver, where, while working on the Republican as a reporter and dramatic critic, he met Al G. Field, and obtained a job as

(Continued on Page 11.)

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