

OUR THEATRICAL PLAYGROUND.

"THE PLAYERS."

PERHAPS the most notable event in the players' world, with which the new year was ushered in, was the presentation by Edwin Booth to the organization of leading actors known as "The Players," of a magnificent club-house in Grammercy Park. As the old year drew to a close there assembled a brilliant audience of players and guests, and at the stroke of twelve Mr. Booth handed over the deed to the property to Mr. Augustin Daly, of "The Players." Mr. Booth closed his presentation speech in the following happy manner: "Though somewhat past the season, let us now fire the Yule-log, with the request that it be burnt as an offering of love, peace and good-will to The Players." While it burns, let us drink from this loving cup, bequeathed by William Warren of loved and honored memory to our no less valued Jefferson, and by him presented to us; from this cup and this souvenir of long ago—my father's flagon—let us now, beneath his portrait and on the anniversaries of this occupation, drink: To the Players' Perpetual Prosperity."

Mr. Daly responded appropriately in behalf of the club, and after a general grasping of hands, all adjourned to feast around the generous board. In every way this new home is most complete, and the decorations are handsome and solid. In the lounging room are two oil paintings by Joseph Jefferson. Beside them hangs Sir Joshua Reynolds' celebrated portrait of David Garrick. There is also a Gainsborough, and a portrait of John Gilbert by J. Alden Weir. A goodly collection of dramatic literature fills the library on the second floor, Mr. Booth having presented 1,200 volumes, and Mr. Lawrence Barrett 2,000, besides a large number of rare works from Augustin Daly, T. B. Aldrich, Stanford White and others. An excellent maxim is found directly above the great seal of the order, which is inserted in the ornamental brickwork under the mantelpiece. It reads thus:

"Good friends, for friendship's sake forbear
To utter what is gossip hears
In social chatt, lest unawares
Thy tongue offend thy fellow-players."

OLD ENGLISH COMEDY.

FOR his annual comedy revival Mr. Daly has chosen Capt. George Farquhar's "The Inconstant; or, the Way to Win Him." This play has not been seen in this city since 1873, and in Mr. Daly's hands the somewhat doubtful *morale* of the play has been improved, and thus the revival was practically a first performance of the play. The change to suit modern ideas has been admirably effected, though possibly the fifth act might have been subjected to closer censorship. It is needless to say that Mr. Daly's band of players acted their parts well. The public has come to accept that as almost a foregone conclusion. Miss Rehan as *Oriana* is the same person that has pleased us so long, but in the mad scene she strikes a key that is almost pathetic. The "Inconstant" may be looked upon as a success.

SHAKESPEARE AT PALMER'S.

PLAY-GOERS in New York have no reason to feel dissatisfied with the feast spread before them this season, Shakespeare has not been neglected for the newer generation of writers. Rarely has a play, however, been put on the stage in a more complete way, with greater magnificence and attention to details, than "Antony and Cleopatra." Mr. Abbey has spared no expense, and surely it would be difficult to find an actress to look the part better than Mrs. James Brown Potter. Whatever may be her faults, she has succeeded in ridding herself of some of them, and in gesture, walk and pose this improvement is most marked. She still lacks facility in expressive speaking. Thus the presentation is of a spectacular sort, and on that fact will have to depend success or failure. The single scene which perhaps impresses the interested spectator most is revealed in the entrance of *Cleopatra's* barge—"a bizarre painting of Egypt's historical convoy, with its flowing sails of magenta, its glittering front and sides, its silver oars, its fawning slaves, and, over all, the tinkle of drowsy music." The acting version of the play is by Mr. Kyrle Bellew, who himself assumes the character of *Antony*. He is not a roystering old ruffian; one does not behold scarred limbs and grizzled locks. The *Antony* of, Kyrle Bellew is tender in speech, soft in action, and ever the lover. The play is scheduled for an extended run, and will doubtless receive a generous share of attention.

MACBETH.

AT the Fifth Avenue Theater Mrs. Langtry has been acting *Lady Macbeth*, and has won a good measure of success, which deserves recognition for the reason that her conception of the part differs from that acceptable to most Americans. Charlotte Cushman's *Lady Macbeth* was a grim, imperious virago, and we have accepted that version as the true one. In Irving's celebrated revival of the play, Ellen Terry presents a coaxing, loving, charming contradiction to the Cushman model. Mrs. Langtry has chosen a middle path. While not wholly able to cope successfully with the part, she gives a thoroughly interesting portrayal. In the sleep-walk scene she is bravely original. Utterly sacrificing her comeliness, she comes out from her bedroom like a veritable corpse from a tomb, a figure to shudder at in a theatre and to fly from if met near a churchyard. While her reading of this particular scene will call forth some condemnation perhaps, considerate judgment must also accord praise.

The *Macbeth* of Mr. Charles Coghlan was thoughtful, but hardly satisfactory. It lacks the fire and passion which make the character such a strong one in the hands of some actors. Mr. Joseph Wheelock, as *Macduff*, was as successful as that conscientious actor usually is in all he undertakes, and he called forth the enthusiasm of all by his painstaking work. On the whole the venture may be looked upon as a success.

