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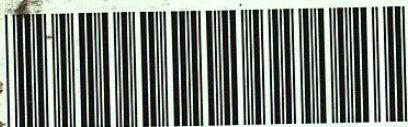
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MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, N. Y.
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THE
PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION
OF
AMERICAN THEATRES.

BY
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*Author of "Architectural Iron and Steel," "Skeleton Construction
in Buildings," etc., etc.*

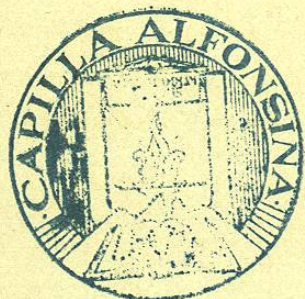
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PREFACE.

THEATRES, opera houses, and public halls among the cities of this country have become so numerous, the planning and construction so governed by stringent building laws enacted and revised from time to time for the safety of the public, that the author has been induced to prepare this volume for architects and others interested in this class of structures.

In the preparation of the work the writer is under obligations and here makes his acknowledgments to well-known architects who have made the subject a special study, and from their latest examples of modern theatres the illustrations have been taken.

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THE PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION OF AMERICAN THEATRES.

INTRODUCTION.

WE are informed that dramatic history in New York began more than a century and a half ago. The first dramatic performance ever seen in America was given in this city during the last week in September, 1732. The first playhouse was the Nassau Street Theatre, on the east side of Nassau Street—then called Kip—between John Street and Maiden Lane. It was a wooden structure, and opened March 5, 1750. Kean and Murray were the managers, and the play for the first night was *Richard III*. There were performances twice a week, and the season lasted for five months. This house gave way to a new one, built in 1753 by Lewis and William Hallen, the one a manager, the other an actor; but in a few years the new house was converted into a church for the use of the German Calvinists.

David Douglass built in 1761 a theatre at Nassau and Beekman streets, where Temple Court now stands, at which, on November 26th of the same year, *Hamlet* was presented for the first time in America. The cost of this playhouse was \$1625. The dimensions were 40 by 90 feet.

From 1761 to the present time what a contrast and advancement are perceptible!

The Madison Square Garden and the Metropolitan Opera