

## HISTORY OF ELKS.

(Continued from Page 1.)

"Sweet Evalina," or it may have been "Shoo Fly." The time was of their era.

At any rate it gave Vivian his opening for butting in, with results today that stand as one of the biggest, loveliest and best of fraternities.

The young Englishman walked up to Steirly and offered to entertain the company by singing, and his proffer was accepted. He had a sweet, sympathetic voice, he was alone and discouraged, and something of all this must have been heard in his tones; for when he finished and started to resume his seat, he found himself the center of the assembly, and with the vivacity and impulsiveness of the craft, the actors at once made him an old warm friend.

Meanwhile the landlord had come in and heard the youth's voice; he saw he needed employment, and he sent at once for the manager of Butler's theater, who heard Vivian and gave him work.

Steirly could not do enough for a fellow artist, so he took Vivian home with him to the actors' boarding house, kept by Mrs. Giesman at 186 Elm street, and stood good for his board bill.

On a Sunday afternoon Steirly took his new old friend downstairs to the back parlor, where he found a dozen actors, engaged in telling stories, knocking their rivals, singing and joshing as actors will on a no matinee day.

It was Vivian who made the thirteenth, but lighthearted folk make light of omens, and wisely they spent an afternoon of rivalry in good-fellowship.

This was all sunshine and sustenance of sentiment to Vivian, and he insisted that permanency should be given to the meetings and to that end they should organize.

This was done at once, and after some argument, for the English members wished the club made a chapter of a secret society of their own—once called the Buffaloes—it was finally decided to take the name of the Jolly Corks.

There is a tone of perhaps superfluous exhilaration about this title, but it proved most popular, and the society grew rapidly away from its 13 founders.

It is just as well you should know who those 13 were, who built so wisely for the good of the good.

For of them six are, or were at last information, living: These are Richard R. Steirly of Hoboken, N. J.; William R. Bowron of New York lodge, No. 1, now a familiar figure in Los Angeles; John T. Kent of Jersey City lodge, No. 211; Frank Langhorn of Plainfield, N. J.; John H. Blume of New York city, and Harry Bosworth of Astoria, Long Island.

Those who are numbered with the "absent" at the 11 o'clock toast are: William Carleton, Henry Vandermark, William Sheppard, Edgar M. Platt, M. G. Ashe, J. G. Wilton and Charles A. S. Vivian.

Of course, the Elks are no longer Jolly Corks. Vivian's association developed with such speed that Mrs. Giesman's back parlor was too small and a hall was taken at a place conducted by Paul Summers at 17 De Lancy street, and on Sunday, February 10, 1868, the name was changed to the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

By what process of reasoning this designation was taken has not been made clear, but the executive committee found that it was most appropriate when they held their first meeting, which was in the offices of Barnum's old museum.

Over the door hung an elk's head. A copy of Goldsmith's "Animated Nature" was sent for, and the committee read up on the Elk.

Mr. Goldsmith said that the Elk was "fleet of foot, timorous of doing wrong, avoiding all combat, except in fighting for female and in defense of the young and helpless."

That determined the question finally, for though the title had been chosen, the report of the committee was to be heard on Sunday, February 16, and by a vote of eight to seven the Elk was chosen as the crest of the order.

For a brief period the association was confined to actors, the full title being the Performers' Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, but after the first benefit performance at the Academy of Music on June 8, this was dropped and members of the required personal quality were taken from all walks of life.

It was at this point that the first and last display of "temperament"

was made, and for a time an unpleasant condition resulted. For when the benefit was planned Vivian, the founder, was playing in Philadelphia.

Only an actor or a theatrical reviewer can understand his feelings when he found that his name had been left off the programs and the posters. Poor Vivian was like many other men to whom the world owes gratitude: he could build more wisely for others than himself.

He was infuriated, and his friends, including Steirly, Kent, Vandermark, Platt, Ash, Blume, and Langhorn, made a lively serap for him.

This led to reprisals, and at the next lodge meeting they were deprived of the password, and there was a strenuous controversy.

Vivian, meanwhile, had dropped the order, from resentment at his treatment, so no proceedings were taken against him, but his opponents succeeded, without trial, in expelling Steirly, Langhorn, Kent, Vandermark, Platt, Ash and Blume.

Possibly, under the stress of the situation, the prime virtues of membership in the order were infringed for the time.

The order of expulsion stood, and Vivian, father of Elks, remained a self-exiled brother.

There was constant, however, a feeling that injustice had been done, and, as the tide of excited animosity ebbed, the feeling spread that the wrong should be righted.

While this spirit was developing, Vivian drifted away to Colorado. He dropped out of touch with the brothers and, in fact, was forgotten, as new members flocked in and the old stepped to the background in the activities of the order.

And, in 1880, he died in Leadville, and was given a wonderful funeral by the Knights of Pythias. Every citizen of Leadville marched in the parade, the only band headed the procession, and, as far as expenses went, the event was made notable.

But again Vivian, as in life, in death became forgotten. The plank headboard to his grave rotted, and when, ten years later, the order officially learned of the situation, as full amends as was possible was made.

The unmarked grave in the Leadville cemetery was opened; the bones of the man who sang the Elks into existence were taken to Boston, given interment under a monument of beauty, and today the mausoleum of the Elks' father stands a constant witness to their gratitude to their founder.

True to the traditions of justice and right, the order did not stop at this, but the whole matter of the expulsion of Vivian's supporters was laid before the grand lodge meeting in Detroit in 1893.

It was not an impassioned nor sentimental view of the proceeding which was made, but a clear, judicial passing upon facts and evidence.

On this basis, and after thorough trial, the snap decision of former years was reversed and the expelled Vivianites were restored in all honor and standing as members of the order.

As far as I have heard, this was the only occasion of strife in the order, and as soon as it was realized that wrong had been done reparation was made and the dignity of doing what is right maintained.

For a time histrions dominated the order.

And even now their influence is considerable, for every actor of position is either an Elk or desires to be one.

In fact, all Elks are good actors, but all Elks are not actors. Today the great preponderance is made up of men in other walks of life, a wise and broad catholicity of judgment in determining the selections of members has prevailed, so that in the lodges are found the best, the brightest and the most attractive of the world of men.

But throughout a happy masculinity of sentiment exists.

It is due to this trait that the agreeable familiarity of "Hello Bill" is in vogue.

"Hello, Bill" has no part, I am told, in the official ritual of the order, but is simply a growth of the easy association that binds the kindred personalities which form the organization.

An Elk may be a judge of the supreme court, and another may be of a humble vocation; but if the two meet, recognizing each other as members, one is likely as the other to extend the greeting of "Hello, Bill."

The little phrase means nothing technically, but practically it has more eloquence and feeling to it than

is often contained in pages of ritual. There is much about the order that had its birth in an illusive obscurity.

Such is the touchingly beautiful 11 o'clock toast, "To Our Absent Brothers."

Wherever Elks gather, whatever they may be doing, as the clock hands mark the hour of 11 in the night, a glass is filled and lifted toward heaven and is quaffed with each having in mind the "absent."

"Absent" may mean a mile away or a thousand, or gone over into eternity, for Elks never die—they are simply "absent" when called by the one permanent Exalted Ruler.

Tradition associates with this lovely custom the name of Vivian.

For some hold that it was at that hour his soul flitted in that lonely room in the lodging house in Leadville and that he was not only the first Elk, but the first to be "absent."

That this is not sustained by the facts, that before Vivian's death the toast had become a feature of Elks' meetings, may be so; still it can do no harm to believe that the tribute does pay a duty to the memory of that apostle of companionship, who savored the sweetness of life and handed it on to his present three hundred thousand brothers.

True to its first principles, the order has never assumed anything of a commercially practical trait.

It is solely fraternal with no insurance nor sick benefit appurtenances.

But fraternity does not rely on the provisions of insurance policies, nor the exact income of a disabled man has been earning.

I cannot speak by the card, not having the fortune to be a member, but as a sort of brevet Elk, as one who has professionally learned much of what they do, which is not proclaimed in the newspapers, I can testify to the fact that were I an Elk I would not worry about neglect or want in case of misfortune.

There is charity about the order, not officially, perhaps, but also not limited by the restrictions that are bound to official benevolence.

What they do for each other officially in case of need I cannot say; what they do for each other in case of need unofficially I do know to be the limit—and considerably more.

And what they do for others, such as poor children, and the afflicted generally, if you knew it all, would force you to take off your hat every time you had the honor of seeing an Elk.

Meet an Elk for the first time and you will want to meet him again. It is hard to define just why, but there is some mystic hypnotism about him. Before you have been with him five minutes he has said something pleasant and kind and you leave him feeling better for having met him. The essence of good fellowship instilled by Vivian still lives and thrives. It is there, it is always there. Let it be hoped it may never wane.

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