

HIS VAUDEVILLE VENTURE

STRANDED ACTOR WILSON TASTES SWEETS OF REVENGE.

Given Denver Manager Dose of Own Medicine and Shows That Good Actors Are Not Cheap.

Hopper Wilson was an actor of no mean ability, and a man of honor—whose word was as good as gold, and whose promise was never broken. To break faith with any one he considered dishonorable, and, once he gave his word, he could be depended on to the last. And he was equally particular in regard to promises made to himself, which to break without reasonable excuse would remain, in his estimation, an unexcusable sin. He was a crank on this subject, and among those who knew him it was a standing joke that if Hopper Wilson made an appointment on New Year's day to meet a party exactly one year later, at four minutes past the noon hour, on the southwest corner of Victoria Square, in Calcutta, India, he'd be there to the second, and would raise the very dickens if the other fellow happened to show up a minute later on the northwest corner.

He had an appointment once with a well-known manager one afternoon at 2 o'clock at the California Theater, in San Francisco. He was there 10 minutes after the hour, and then flew off in a huff. Five minutes later the manager showed up, but that five minutes lost Hopper Wilson a good engagement at a salary of \$50 a week. Somebody told him about it a day or two later, and he simply answered: "Well, that's my loss and his gain." After that Hopper Wilson became known among his associates as "Hothead" Wilson, which the gallery gods soon changed to "Hothead."

Popular With Audiences. Wilson was popular with the theatergoers of many cities on the Pacific Coast. He had always managed to hold a good position, sometimes with stock companies and again with road attractions. He was a conscientious actor, was never intoxicated, and, above all, was a man to be depended upon; consequently he was seldom without an engagement.

But even the best of the "profess" "go up against it," and Wilson got his when he became a member of Brown's Corrugated Bellringers and Tin-Whistle Vaudeville Show. Like a great many actors, Wilson became possessed with an insane desire to go on the vaudeville stage, and that's how it happened that he got mixed up with the corrugated bellringers. Brown collected some fairly clever vaudeville performers, intimated that several National banks were backing him, and made good his talk by floating a few rolls of bronzed silver dollars, which the actors thought were "twenties." Then he took the "gang" over to Solomon Levi's Theatrical Agency, where he opened a sample bottle of whiskey, that drummer had given him, and after a drink all around, handed each of the crowd a Turkish cigarette.

But Brown's corrugated bellringers soon hit the wall, like all the rest of the "seven-up snaps" that leave San Francisco. He was way down in Utah somewhere that the ringers played a few days, and then Brown slipped out with what funds there were in the treasury, leaving his company to shift for themselves. Wilson "shook" the crowd and went north to Provo City, where, a few days later, he fell in with a little traveling dramatic organization, which carried him on to Denver, and then "busted." But Wilson was at home in Denver, having played a number of engagements there, and knew that he was considered something of a favorite.

One day he met a friend on the street, who told him that the Grand Opera House was to be opened soon for a regular season of stock.

Knew Him. "The company is coming from 'Frisco,'" said the friend, "and one of the head guys is here now. I think his name is 'Hothead'."

"Hothead," repeated Wilson, thoughtfully, "wonder if you haven't got the name twisted a little? Isn't Hothead's name 'Hothead'?"

"Yes, Hothead's name is 'Hothead,'" answered his friend. "Know it was some kind of a hide. Do you know him, Hopper?"

"Yes, I know him; but better by reputation than personally. Anyway, I'll go and see him."

Wilson reached the theater just as Hothead was going to supper. They recognized each other, and the greeting passed off pleasantly enough.

Hothead was a pretty smooth article, as the saying goes, and always made it a point to handle his acquaintances with soft gloves. He knew Wilson's talents and readily saw that this was a man who was not a flourishing one. Perhaps with a little scheming, his services could be secured for the Grand stock company at a very small salary.

"Come in and have something, Wilson,"—that's how he always began operations— "and tell me what you're doing in Denver, at this time of the season."

"Oh, I got mixed up with a mighty bad proposition; got dumped over in Utah, managed to reach Denver, and there you are. Heard a little while ago that you were in town, and I opened the Grand with a stock company, and came over to see if there was an opening."

"Well, Hothead began, 'there's nothing for you in the opening piece, but I can place you for the second week and the balance of the season. But you'll have to come down low in your salary if you want to talk business. Actors are cheap when the season is over, but full of 'em.' A satisfactory agreement was soon reached and everything arranged for Wilson's engagement after the first week. When the second week arrived, Wilson, of course, was introduced to all the members, but had to admit to himself that he wasn't very favorably impressed with the crowd. With one or two exceptions, he put the whole bunch down as having been corralled in some San Francisco school of acting, of which, unfortunately for the public, there were quite a few.

Opening Night. The opening night finally arrived, and a large crowd came to the Grand Opera House to see the new company. Wilson took a seat down near the stage and watched the performance, but it was a painful proceeding. The company and show were bad, and many people left after the first act. Wilson himself started home after the second act, but just as he was about to leave the theater, he was approached by Hothead.

"Say, old man," he said, "we've got to postpone 'Lynwood' for a week, as I've received a telegram that the paper won't be here on time. I'm sorry, but it can't be helped. Will have to fill in next week with 'Plated Fool.'"

"But can't you use me in that?" suggested Wilson.

"Oh, couldn't think of it. You see, you're something of a favorite here, and we want to feature you in 'Lynwood.' Don't you worry about it, though, as everything'll be all right."

But Wilson would have worried could he have known what was in Hothead's mind. Just now this man had no intention of engaging him, because it would mean money out of his pocket. The Grand Opera House stock company was largely composed of ambitious amateurs, some of whom possessed more money than brains, and who worked for it was exactly what such men as Hothead were looking for, and he considered it a good thing when

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