TEN YEARS OF OREGON

By Daniel Lee and J. H. Frost

Chapter VII—Continued.

In this state of suspense Mr. Hunt was detained at the Marquesas until the 23d of November, when he proceeded in the Albatross to the Sandwich Islands. He had still hoped that the annual ship would be found here; but, alas, for the Lark! for, notwithstanding she reached in safety within a few degrees of the Sandwich Islands, here a gale sprung up in the fury of which she "broached to," when two waves completely upset her. The masts and rigging were cut away, but she was left a mere hull, full of water. After the gale had measurably subsided they rigged a temporary stage on which the crew raised themselves above the water and in this way, suffering beyond description from exposure, hunger and thirst and after losing the first mate and four seamen, on the 21st they descried, to their great transport, a canoe approaching, managed by natives. From them they obtained a very welcome supply of potatoes. The second mate went on shore in the canoe to procure help to tow the wreck into harbor, but neither man nor help returned. The next day ten or 12 canoes came alongside, but rendered no aid. They all now abandoned the ship, got into the canoes, and reached the land at no great distance. As soon as they touched the beach they were surrounded by natives, who stripped them almost naked. The name of this inhospitable island was Tahoorowa.

In the course of the night the wreck came drifting to the strand, with the surf thundering around her, and shortly afterward bilged. The natives would not allow the seamen to help themselves to the provisions which floated on shore, neither were they allowed to go on board the wreck. Mr. Ogden made his way to the Island of Owyhee, and endeavored to make some arrangements with Kamahamaha, the King of the Sandwich Islands, for the relief of his companions in misfortune. The King agreed to furnish the crew with provisions during their stay in his territories, and to return to them all their clothing that could be found; but he stipulated that the wreck should be abandoned to him as a waif cast by fortune upon his shores. With these conditions Mr. Ogden was fain to comply. Upon this the great Kamahamaha deputed his favorite John Young, the tarpaulin Governor of Owyhee, to proceed with a number of the royal guards, and take possession of the wreck in behalf of the crown. This was done accordingly, and the property and crew were removed to Owyhee. The royal bounty appears to have been scanty in its dispensations. The crew fared but meagerly; though, on reading the journel of the voyage, it is singular to find them, after all the hardships they had suffered, so sensitive about inconveniences as to exclaim against the King as a "savage monster," for refusing them a "pot to cook in," and denying Mr. Ogden the use of a knife and fork which had been saved from the wreck.

Such was the unfortunate catastrophe of the Lark. Had she reached her destination in safety, affairs at Astoria might have taken a different course. A strange fatality seems to have attended all the expeditions by sea, and those by land were not much less disastrous.

Captain Northrup was still at the Sandwich Islands when Mr. Hunt arrived on December 20. The latter immediately purchased, for $10,000, a brig called the Pedler, and put Captain Northrup in command of her. They set sail for Astoria on January 22, intending to remove the property from thence to the Russian settlements on the northwest coast, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the British. Such were the orders of Mr. Astor, sent out by the Lark.

We will now leave Mr. Hunt on his voyage, and return to see what has taken place at Astoria during his absence. On October 2, about five weeks after Mr. Hunt had sailed in the Albatross from Astoria, Mr. M'Kenzie set off with two canoes and 12 men for the posts of Messrs. Stuart and Clark, to apprize them of the new arrangements determined upon in the secret conference of the partners at the factory.

He had not ascended the river 100 miles when he met a squadron of ten canoes sweeping merrily down under British colors, the Canadian carsmen, as fitted out by Mr. M'Tavish, with Mr. Stuart, another partner of the Northwest Company, and a number of clerks. They had heard of the Pheobe and the Isaac Todd being on the high seas, and were on their way to await their arrival. In one of the canoes Mr. Clark came passenger, the alarming intelligence having brought him down from his post on the Spokane.

M'Kenzie determined to return to Astoria with them. So, veering about, the two parties camped together for the night. The leaders, of course, observed a due decorum; but some of the subalterns could not restrain their chuckling exultation, boasting that they would soon plant the British standard on the walls of Astoria, and drive the Americans out of the country. In a secret conference held between Clark and M'Kenzie, they agreed to steal a march on the other party, and get down in time to apprise M'Dougal of the approach of these Northwesters. The latter, however, were completely on the alert; just as M'Kenzie's canoes were pushing off, they were joined by a couple from the Northwest squadron, in which was M'Tavish, with two clerks and 11 men. With these he intended to push forward and make arrangements, leaving the rest of the convoy, in which was a large quantity of furs, to await his orders.

The two parties arrived at Astoria on the 7th of October. The Northwesters encamped under the guns of the fort and displayed the British colors. The young men in the fort, "native Americans," were on the point of hoisting the American flag, but were forbidden by M'Dougal! The young men were exceedingly galled by the tone and manner assumed by the clerks and retainers of the Northwest Company, who ruffled about in that swelling and braggart style which grows up among these heroes of the wilderness. They, in fact, considered themselves lords of the ascendant, and regarded the hampered and harrassed Astorians as a conquered people.

On the following day M'Dougal convened the clerks, and read to them an extract from a letter from his uncle, Mr. Angus Shaw, one of the principal partners of the Northwest Company, announcing the coming of the Phoebe and the Isaac Todd, "to take and destroy everything American on the Northwest coast."

This intelligence was received without dismay by such of the clerks as were "native Americans." They had felt indignant at seeing their National flag struck by a Canadian commander, and the British flag flying, as it were, in their faces. They had been stung to the quick, also, by the vaulting airs assumed by the Northwesters. In this mood of mind they would willingly have nailed their colors to the staff and defied the frigate. She could not come within many miles of the fort, as they supposed by their cannon. The cool and calculating spirits, however, at the head of affairs, felt nothing of the patriotic spirit of indignation which characterized these young men and every true American when an insult is offered by the retainers of any foreign despot. The extract of the letter had, apparently, been read by M'Dougal merely to prepare the way for a preconcerted stroke of management. On that same day M'Tavish proposed to purchase the whole stock of goods and furs belonging to the company, both at Astoria and at the interior posts, at cost and charges. M'Dougal undertook to comply, assuming the whole management of the negotiation in virtue of the power vested in him in case of the nonarrival of Mr. Hunt. That power, however, was limited and specific, and did not extend to such an extensive operation. No objection, however, was made to his assumption; and he and M'Tavish soon made a preliminary arrangement, perfectly satisfactory to the latter.

Mr. Stuart and the reserve party of Northwesters arrived shortly afterward, and encamped with M'Tavish. The former exclaimed loudly against the terms of the arrangement, and insisted upon a reduction of the prices. New negotiations had now to be entered into, and to say no more of the peremptory tone assumed, and the insults offered by the Northwesters, notwithstanding they were completely at the mercy of the inmates of the fort, the terms of sale were lowered by M'Dougal to the standard fixed by Mr. Stuart, and an agreement executed on the 16th of October, by which the furs and merchandise of all kinds in the country belonging to Mr. Astor passed into the possession of the Northwest Company at about a third of their real value.

Not quite $40,000 was allowed for furs worth upward of $100,000. Beaver was valued at $2 per skin, though worth $5; land otter at 50 cents, though worth $5; sea otter at $12, worth from $45 to $60; and for several kinds of furs nothing was allowed. The goods and merchandise for the Indian trade ought to have brought three times the amount for which they were sold.

The Northwest Company also guaranteed to such as did not choose to enter into the service of that company a safe passage through all their posts in the interior, and the amount of wages due them was to be deducted from the price paid for Astoria.

M'Dougal did not satisfy Mr. Astor in reference to the integrity of his conduct in thus abandoning the enterprise, and disposing of the property, as will appear by an extract from a letter written by that gentleman to Mr. Hunt. "Had our place and our property," said he, "been fairly captured, I should have preferred it. I should not feel as if I were disgraced."

Shortly after concluding the above agreement M'Dougal became a member of the Northwest Company, and received a share productive of a handsome income.

On the morning of November 30 a sail was observed doubling Cape Disappointment. It came to anchor in Baker's Bay, and proved to be a ship of war, and, for fear that it might prove to be an American vessel M'Tavish loaded two barges with all the packages of furs bearing the mark of the Northwest Company and made off for Tongue Point, three miles up the river.

In the meantime M'Dougal, who still remained nominal chief at the fort, on his way to the ship instructed his men, who were recently in the employ of the American Fur Company, to pass themselves off for American or Englishmen, according to the exigencies of the case.

The vessel proved to be the British sloop-of-war Racoon, of 26 guns, and 120 men, commanded by Captain Black. The vessel had sailed from Rio Janeiro in company with the Phoebe and Cherub, as a convoy to the Isaac Todd. Mr. John M'Tavish, partner of the Northwest Comany, had taken passage on board of the Phoebe, to profit by the anticipated catastrophe at Astoria.

But as the convoy had been separated by stress of weather off Cape Horn, and as nothing had been heard of the Isaac Todd afterward, and as intelligence was received of the mischief that Commodore Porter was doing among the whale ships, Commodore Hillyer ordered the Racoon to the Columbia, while the other two went in search of Porter.

The officers of the Raccoon were in high spirits. The agents of the Northwest Company, in instigating the expedition, had talked of immense booty to be secured by the fortunate captors of Astoria. Mr. M'Donald had kept up the excitement during the voyage, so that there was not a little midshipman on board but was ready to burst with hopes of obtaining sacks of prize money, nor a lieutenant but felt his importance, if possible, more than ever, when he dreamed of the treasures which they would bear home to old England, and throw down at the feet of their wives and sweethearts. But when there is not a sufficient allowance made for shrinkage, as one observed, we are apt to shrink in our dimensions when we fail in realizing a consummation of our fond and long-cherished hopes. It was so in this case with the "lieutenants" and "middies," when they learned that their warlike attack upon Astoria had been forestalled by a snug commercial arrangement, and that their anticipated booty had become British property in the regular course of traffic; and that all this had been effected by the very company which had been instrumental in getting them sent on what they now stigmatized as a fool's errand. The captain himself felt so indignant on finding that they had been so completely duped and fooled by a set of shrewd men of traffic that we may reasonably conclude that he shrunk away to the common size of an ordinary "Jonathan."

In a word, M'Dougal found himself so ungraciously received by his countrymen on board the ship that he was glad to cut his visit short and return to shore. He was busy at the fort, making preparations for the reception of the captain of the Racoon, when his one-eyed father-in-law made his appearance with a train of Chinook warriors, all painted and equipped in warlike style.

Old Comcomly had beheld with dismay the arrival of a "big war canoe," displaying the British flag; and having learned something of politics by his daily visits at the fort, he knew of the war existing between the nations, but knew nothing of the arrangements between M'Dougal and M'Tavish. He trembled, in-law, and the glory of his daughter, in'law, and the glory of his daughter, and assembled his warriors in all haste. "King George," said he, "has sent his great canoe to destroy the fort and make slaves of all the inhabitants. Shall we suffer it? The Americans are the first white men that have fixed themselves in the land. They have treated us as brothers. Their great chief has taken my daughter to be his squaw. We are therefore as one people."

His warriors all determined to stand by the Americans to the last, and to this effect they came painted and armed for battle. Comcomly made a spirited war speech to his son-in-law, and offered to kill every white man from King George's ship that should attempt to land, which would be an easy matter, as the ship could not reach the shore by a considerable distance, and as the crew would be obliged to land in boats, the old chief could lay concealed in the thicket, on shore and cut them all off as soon as they landed.

But what must have been the astonishment of the old visitor when M'Dougal advised him and his men to lay aside their arms and war dress, and wash off the paint from their faces and bodies, and appear like clean and peaceable savages to receive the strangers courteously, for notwithstanding the ship belonged to King George, her crew would not injure the Americans or their Indian allies.

This was so contrary to the old chieftain's notions of receiving a hostile nation that it was only after M'Dougal repeated in the most positive manner the assurance of the amicable intentions of the strangers that he was induced to lower his fighting tone. He said something to his warriors explanatory of this singular posture of affairs, and in vindication, perhaps, of the pacific character of his son-in-law. They all gave a shrug and an Indian grunt of acquiescence, and returned in a sulky mood to their village to lay aside their weapons for the present.

As soon as the proper arrangements were made, Captain Black caused his boats to be manned and landed with befitting state at Astoria. From the talk that had been made by the Northwest Company of the strength of the place, he expected to find a place of some importance. When he beheld nothing but stockades and bastions calculated for defense against naked savages, he felt an emotion of indignant surprise, mingled with something of the ludicrous. "Is this the fort?" he cried, "about which I have heard so much talking? "Why," said he, adding an oath, "I'd batter it down in two hours with a four-pounder." But when he heard of the amount of rich furs that had been passed into the hands of the Northwest Company, he was outrageous, insisting that an inventory should be taken of all the property purchased of the Americans, with a view of ulterior measures in England for the recovery of the value from the Northwesters. As he grew cool, however, he relinquished the idea of preferring such a claim, and reconciled himself, as well as he could, to the idea of having been forestalled by his bargaining coadjutors.

On the 12th of December the fate of Astoria was consummated by a regular ceremonial. Captain Black, attended by his officers, entered the fort, caused the British standard to be erected, broke a bottle of wine, and declared in a loud voice that he took possession of the establishment in the name of His Britannic Majesty, changing the name of Astoria to that of Fort George.

Although this was explained to the Indian warriors as being a friendly arrangement and transfer, yet they shook their heads grimly, and could not be persuaded that their ancient allies were not all subjugated to a state of slavery until they beheld the Racoon depart without taking away any prisoners.

As to Comcomly, he no longer prided himself upon his white son-in-law; but, whenever he was asked about him, he shook his head and replied that his daughter had made a mistake, and, instead of getting a great warrior for a husband, had married herself to a squaw.

On the 28th of February, the brig Pedler anchored in the Columbia River. This was the vessel which Mr. Hunt had purchased at the Sandwich Islands, to take off the furs collected at the factory, and to restore the islanders to their home. Mr. Hunt expressed his indignation in the strongest terms when he learned in what manner M'Dougal had disposed of the whole establishment, and determined to make an effort to get back the furs. As soon as his wishes were known in this respect. M'Dougal came to sound him on behalf of the Northwest Company, intimating that he thought the furs might be purchased at an advance of 50 per cent. This overture was not calculated to sooth the angry feelings of Mr. Hunt, and his indignation was complete when he discovered that M'Dougal had actually been a partner of the Northwest Company since the 23d of December. He had, notwithstanding, retained the papers of the Pacific Fur Company in his possession, and had continued to act as Mr. Astor's agent, besides divulging to his new associates all Mr. Astor's plans of operation, and copying his business letters for their perusal! Mr. Hunt, with some difficulty, obtained possession of the papers of the concern, and brought the business to a close; remitted the drafts of the Northwest Company in Mr. Astor's favour to him by some of his associates who were about to cross the mountains, and embarked on board the Pedler on the 3d of April, and bade a final adieu to Astoria.

The next day, April 4, Messrs. Clark, M'Kenzie and David Stuart, and such of the Astorians as had not entered into the service of the Northwest Company, set out to cross the Rocky Mountains.

These return parties from Astoria, both by sea and land, experienced on the way as many adventures, vicissitudes and mishaps as the far-famed heroes of the Odyssey. They reached their destination at different times, bearing tidings to Mr. Astor of the unfortunate termination of his enterprise.

At the return of peace, Astoria, with the adjacent country, reverted to the United States by the treaty of Chent, on the principle of status ante belum, and Captain Biddle was dispatched in the sloop-of-war Ontario to take formal repossession.

For various reasons, the most important of which being the supineness of the American Government to act in the premises, when solicited to do so by Mr. Astor, he made no further efforts to reoccupy Astoria.

The British Government soon began to perceive the importance of this region, and to desire to include it within their territorial domains. A question has consequently risen as to the right of the soil, and has become one of the most perplexing now open between the United States and Great Britain. In the first treaty relative to it, under date of October 20, 1818, the question was left unsettled, and it was agreed that the country on the North-west coast of America, westward of the Rocky Mountains, claimed by either nation, should be open to the inhabitants of both for ten years, for the purposes of trade, with equal right of navigating all its rivers. When these ten years had expired, a subsequent treaty, in 1828, extended the arrangement to ten additional years. So the matter stands at present.

Having recorded all the leading events in the history of the Oregon Territory, from the time that the Northwest Coast was discovered by Captain Cook until the overthrow of Mr. Astor's bold and enterprising scheme to colonize and call into requisition the resources of that wilderness region, I will pass on without any further reflections upon the subjects just treated, except recording my regrets, with those of Washington Irving and others, that our Government should have neglected the overture of Mr. Astor, and suffered the moment to pass by when full possession of this region might have been taken quietly, as a matter of course, and a military post established, without dispute, at Astoria. The second period of ten years has elapsed, during which the powerful, because very wealthy, British Fur Company has monopolized all the trade, with a very small exception (and, consequently, an untold amount of wealth arising therefrom), of that vast country, from California, nay, of California itself, to a great extent, and from that to Kamschatka. What profits the Americans have derived from that country have been procured by great toil; because, when they reached that coast they found themselves unprotected, and goaded on every side by this powerful monopoly, which possesses a sinking fund of two millions sterling, if the writer has been correctly informed, for the express purpose of competing with every vessel that may come on the coast for the purpose of trade. And they possess not only the means, but also the men, qualified in every respect for the accomplishment of the several duties assigned them. And the object of this "honourable" company is to control the destinies of the whole country, as far as they may be permitted so to do, and to drain it of its last farthing of wealth; and if at any time it should become necessary for them to take up their traps, and vast herds and flocks, they can accomplish this as expeditiously, and with but little more loss, than M'Tavish sustained when he packed the furs purchased at so fine a lay from "Comcomly's white son-in-law," into his barges, and scud away from Tongue Point. For they have their anticipated headquarters ready for occupancy at any time, on Vancouver's Island, a little above the 49th degree of north latitude. Their vessels are ready at short notice, by which to convey their peltries, goods, etc., and their Canadians are most obedient to their superiors, can very soon drive the flocks and herds through to Nesqually (Puget Sound), and from thence to headquarters. And what will they be obliged to leave behind? Why, nothing but a few miserable buildings, the best of which consist of posts set up, which are then filled in with slabs from the sawmill, sealed up in the inside, in a very rough and cheap manner. And if there should be a more important location, such as that at the Walamet Falls, for instance, the best water privilege in the country, then individuals of the Honourable Hudson's Bay Company mark out their claims, as Dr. John M'Laughlin, the "principal agent of the company west of the Rocky Mountains," has done, at the above-named falls, where he claims a mile square, embracing that side of the falls which is, by far, the most important side. There he has a sawmill in operation; and there a company of Americans have, also a sawmill and flouring-mill in operation (which are, however, claimed by the doctor, until some government shall take it in hand, and settle the dispute between them, the two mills being located, as the doctor will have it, upon his square mile).

Upon that claim the above-named gentleman is building a city, and was selling off small city lots at $100.00 apiece, to "native Americans," too, and gives them a good warrant deed! Does not this argue that British subjects actually possess the right of soil in that territory? The writer was creditably informed in the Spring of 1843, while at Walamet Falls, that the doctor had just sold 20 lots at the above-named price. And how these claims be disposed of if our Government should recover full possession there? Why, all these individuals would have to do would be simply to "hoist the American colours," and proclaim themselves American citizens, and then "they would be alright," and might continue as agents of the Hudson's Bay Company, in carrying forward their lucrative operations still. Thus the reader may perceive that the country is not only being drained of its wealth by the removal of its furs and skins, wheat and other grains, butter and lumber, to England and other foreign markets, but even the soil itself is being disposed of, and that to Americans, too, in order to fill the already overflowing coffers of that vast trading establishment.

And are the gentlemen of that company blameworthy because they are engaged, heart and hand, in this money-getting business? No, not in the least. They are, on the contrary, worth of ten thousand praises; for a kinder and more hospitable company of gentlemen, I doubt, cannot be found on the glove. Never the poor wanderer be turned from their doors unfed or unclothed; and their many acts of kindness bestowed upon the writer and his family will ever lay him under obligations to love and respect them. But, if there is any blame to be attached to anyone because of the course that has been, and is being, pursued there, at whose door must it lie? No doubt it must lie at the door of our Government at Washington. There, "Uncle Sam" has been smoking and dosing over the subject, like his "worthy predecessor," "Peter Stuyvesandt," since the time that Captain Biddle was dispatched in the sloop-of-war Ontario to take repossession of Astoria. And if, at any time, he has been aroused from his sweet repose, it has been only effected by a hunch from "oJhn Bull's" elbow, reminding him that the term of treaty had expired, and that, in order that "John" might apply his "muck-rake," as Bunyan said, with renewed energy in scraping the remaining wealth out of the country, it would be necessary ot renew it. But we will leave this topic to be discussed by the able politicians of the day, and will now proceed to give a description of the face of the country.

CHIMMIE FADDEN'S LETTER

Some Novel Views on Playwriting

"I'M TINKING of writing a play," says Mr. Paul de odder evening while I was fixing de log fire in de library where dey sits nights when dey hasn't to go no where, and can stop to home.

But, foist, listen: Since Miss Fannie has married Mr. Paul it takes a crowbar and a argument for to get him started out of de house after dinner. It used to take a safe-deposit lock and a guard wit a gun to keep Mr. Burton, what was Miss Fannie's odder husband, to home—and den he'd make a sneak somehow. Duchess says dere is no romance about de married life of Mr. Paul and Miss Fannie, because dey just seems to be stuck on each odder's company, and don't have to have in de neighbors to see how comfey dey is getting along.

"What do you want em to do, woman!" I asks her. "Do you want em to have de lime light turn on em all de time when dey is satisfied for to be up stage, and doing no song and dances for de gallery; or do you want em to rough house for a romance?"

"Could you write a play about em?" says Duchess.

"No, nor you couldn't write no Police Court story about em. If dat is de kind of ting dat you calls romance, why do you let out such a high C brand of holler when I takes a night off witout asking you to keep tabs on me route?"

"It is of a difference," dat goil says. "One's own husband must be of de behavior conventional; but de husbands of odder women is of de commonplace when dey is always a cat by de fireplace. One does not wish to be a play, but to see a play."

Dat's a funny ting about women, and I hasn't found de ting about 'em dat's not funny, dat you never hear 'em talking about husbands what is de kind of husbands dey wants for demselves. Dat's de difference between husbands and bonnets; every woman would like her bonnet talked about, but none 'em wants deir hubby de talk of de town. Even de women dat changes husbands near as often as dey change bonnets; dey wants de husbands dey has to be a good boy; dough its dollars to doughnuts dat de reason dey picks out a new husband was dat he rough-housed his own fireside, and so made a hit wit de divorce-and-remarry star.

But, as I was saying, Mr. Paul, he looks up like he'd just had a dream dat was true, and he says: "Me dear," he says, "I'm t'inking of writing a play."

"What will it be about?" asks Miss Fannie, "crime or crinoline?"

"Dat's de very point," Mr. Paul says, pushing his glass to de edge of de table so as I'd know it wasn't out of commission. "I has it all settled but de subject."

"Perhaps it don't need none," Miss Fannie says. "Some dat we has gone to dis season had no subject vis'ble to the naked eye."

"But dey was wrote for gold, not fame," says Mr. Paul. "So long as I has you, a loaf of bread, a flask of wine, singing by de side of me in de wilderness, I am to de good," he says, "two up, and one to go, wit de clubhouse in sight, and all me new balls in de caddie's pockets, and all his old balls in me club bag."

"Paul!" says Miss Fannie, "what in ever are you talking about?"

"Heaven," he says. "Now I'll tell you about me play. De di'logue will be sparkling, witty and epigastic——"

How's dat? Epigramatic? Dat's de word. I didn't have quite a strangle holt on it. Some of Mr. Paul's words, like dat one, he makes up as he goes along, just to give the ha-ha to de wold books.

"Dat'll be splendid," Miss Fannie says. "Dere's everyting in de di'logue."

"Everything but de dough," says Mr. Paul, taughtful like. "A play wit notting but beautiful di'logue would have to run on hot air; and I'm told by certain gents in de business end of de profession, dat dere is notting in dis wide, wide world dat will shrivel up so fast under the influence of a strict hot air treatment, as a play."

"Den you must give it someting else," Miss Fannie says, getting interested.

"So I am told be de experts I has engaged to advise me. I shall have a suspended interest hung up in de foist part of de foist act, and never cut it down till de coitain at de end of de last act."

"I should tink it would holt de interest for to be hung so long," Miss Fannie says. "Couldn't de poor ting be let down now and den, for de doctors to feel of its pulse, and see was it alive?"

"Dat will be a good line," Mr. Paul says. "It wouldn't do to iltreat an interest; dere is so few of 'em going about de stage dese days, dat any wise guy—" dose wasn't quite his words, but I has to straighten out his langwudge once in a while, or he'd get his meaning lost in de shuffle. "Any wise guy dat gets holt of a real interest for a play must keep it alive till all de odder playwriters has had deir hack at it."

"What kind of a interest will you have?" she asks, as Mr. Paul stops to see had I fetched de bottle from de right bin.

"My interest will be heart interest, mixed wit a religious, and money, and mind cure interest. We must catch 'em going and coming; de gallery and de boxes; de managers and de critics."

"Dat will be too lovely," Miss Fannie says. "When will you put your play on?"

"I would be willing to put it on as soon as it is wrote, but I'm advised dat it is de usual ting to keep it on cold storage for a few years, den to take it to England and have it done dere, for to insure it a hearing here. Having me di'logue and interest all attended to, I'm told dat all dat is needed den is a dozen or so new and howling situations; a sympathetic part for de leading lady, four good coitains, novel stage effects, some lighting stunts dat will knock Broadway silly, some mechanical novelties, gobs of realism, eight scenes never tried before, a backer wit a million to boin, and a cheerful temper not likely to get running rusty when de stage manager knocks everything but de title out of me manuscript."

"But you have said notting about de subject," says Miss Fannie when she had catched her breat.

"Dat I has not decided upon, as I was saying. Everyting else is fixed, but de subject bodders me. I has tought of de open ditch on Broadway, but de day when de public would stand for stage horrors is passed; de open door, wit a Russian gunboat guarding it has come to me mind, but de objection is dat it might be mistook for a political play, and dat is too much like hard wolk for to be swallowed for amusement. Everyting else is dead easy, but de subject is a corker for fair. De Brooklyn bridge at de rush hour I has under consideration, but Manhattaners would say dat it was too exaggerated—and Brooklyners would mob it."

Mr. Paul stops to oil his bearings, and Miss Fannie says why don't he take some of de books wrote by a felly named Scott.

"I should tink," says she, "dat de score of adventure books dear Scott wrote would give you subjects, and dey is in de line of lots of plays dat has been successful lately."

"Me dear," he says, "you prove dat it is you, not me, dat should be de playwright of de family. A gent I know who has notting to do has been going to de teeaters de last five years for de sole poipose of running down de beginnings of de modern historical-novel-plays, and he is tickled to deat wit his record, for he has found dat not one of me old fren Scott's novels has escaped. Dey is all on de stage, under new names. If you had only give me dis tip a few years ago I'd now be dragging royalties from de box offices of Sudern, Mansfield, Hackett, and a bunch of lady stars as well. No, we must seek someting new, and at dis blessed moment I'm divided between de eclipse of de moon and 'when is a fish why it bites' as de subject of me immortal drama."

I shouldn't wonder but Mr. Paul was kidding a little in dat game of talk. If I had time to write a play de subject wouldn't bodder me a little bit. I seen a play on de Bowery once and it was de corkingist play dat ever was acted out on top of de stage. De name of it was "De Floorwalker's Folly; or, Grand Street by Gaslight." Say, it was a peach! De Floorwalker was de villain, but in de start tings comes his way so fast that he had to dodge 'em. Dat's funny, too. Villains always truns sixes at de start, and twos at de end. I wonder why? When I writes me own play, I'm going to give de villain a start to de bad, and have him put up all de margin dat's called for, and win out at de end wit hands down, giving de foe de ha-ha. Dat'll be realism, and you'll have to keep people out of de teeater wit a Gattling gun.

But as I was saying, dis play was to de good all right. De owner of de store has a daughter, see? And she was de star. Floorwalker says to her, he says, "Fly wit me to Grand street," he says, "and we'll live happy ever after de old gent gives me de store to run on me own account," he says.

"Sure, Reginald, dear," she says, "sure, as soon as I see is me hat on straight." But there was a goil in de store what sold corset-covers, and she had a call on de Floorwalker she wouldn't cancel. She wasn't de leading lady, but de one what wears black close, wit white cuffs and collar, and she says to de leading lady, "Daughter of de rich," she says, "what know you of de suffering of de poor?" Den de leading lady says, "Woman!" she says, "I have trouble of me own. What wouldst do wit me?" she says. Den Collars and Cuffs says, "I have notting in dis wold but me love for Reginald. He is a villain, but I love him; and e'en when he was a cash boy in de ribbon section I promised him my hand. Seek your playthings in de purlieus of de rich, but come not here," she says. "Oh, come not here!"

So de leading lady changes her makeup, and goes to wolk as a cloak model in de store for to get a fair line on Reggie. Nobody knows it but her and de audience. Reginald pipes off de new cloak model, and he gets gaily-gaily to once. She passes him out a bunch of goo-goo eyes, and when he tinks he is Number One, he says, "Fly wit me to Grand street," he says. "Fly wit me," says he, "and as soon as I marry de daughter of de boss, we'll live happy ever after I get a divorce," he says.

So she says she'd fly, and he got so chesty wit de way tings was coming to him, dat he couldn't button his coat.

Den we had Grand street at night, and, say, song and dance artists, and coonsingers, rag-timers, little German banders, and all sorts comes on, and dey says, "While we is waiting for de Williamsburg car," dey says, "let us sing," dey says, "and dance," says dey. Dey had Tony Pastors down and out!

Den de leading lady comes on, wit Collars and Cuffs behind her, disguised in de American flag; and dey lays for de villain. So does de gallery. Say, we wants to see him get de trun down so bad, dat even de ragtimers wasn't made to deir toin more dan six or seven times over. Well, well, he get de gaff for fair when he waltzes on. For a minute you couldn't hear what de leading lady was trunning into him. Den we hears her say, "Base catiff!" she says, "tinkst to wrong me as a poor cloak model wit a forty-two bust and a twenty-two waist! Naw," she says, "I am also de daughter of your boss, and de fren of de poor corset counter goil!"

Wit dat Collars and Cuffs truns off de flag, and waves it, and de gallery shies everyting dat wasn't nailed down dey could lay deir hands to, at de Floorwalker. It was great! "I will marry dis corset cover," says de villain, "if you will not get your pa to discharge me Saturday night." But de leading lady wasn't conned. "No" says she, "dis poor goil shall come to live in luxury wit me on Second avenue, and marry one of de German Barons I have use for." "By heavens," he says, "dis is hard for fair," he says. "But it is not all," says she. "De next healt food me pa gets out," she says, "your face shall be used to advertise it!" Den he falls dead.

I was telling Duchess how Mr. Paul was up against it looking for a subject for his play.

"Bah," she says, "one would tink to hear you talk, Master Cheems, dat dere is more dan one subject for a play."

"Dere is a million," I says. "I seen Johnnie Drew in six different pairs of trousers in one night, and he wasn't playing his best at datt. Dere is as many subjects as dere is plays," I says.

"Indeed, mon ami," she says, "when you have exhaust of de one subject you will stop writing plays. De subject is a boy and a goil, of any age from 14 to 80. Just a boy and a goil, dat's all. When you has seen one dat is not so, come to me, and I will show you a nice dinner of bread witout butter, an egg witout salt, and some wine dat is toined to vinegar, and I will watch you eat dat dinner. It will amuse!"

But Duchess is forn, and forn folks, when dey tries to use what Mr. Paul calls a figure of speech, dey always gets de horse before de cart.

I tink yet, dat Mr. Paul will make a killing wit his play. If he wants a subject, what's de matter wit Whiskers and Wily Widdy? Say, dere's no holding 'em! He's old enough to know better, and she knows enough to be older, and dey ain't a wedding inside of a year I'm not a foot high.

"Dey is as good as a play," I says to Duchess.

"Dey is a play," says Duchess. "Dey is playing de only play dere is."

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Nature's Good Reason.

New Orleans Times-Democrat.

Ev'ry little minx
Thinks she is a sphynx
And as far as men go there is ample truth
in what she thinks.

E'en the wisest man
(Tho' his knowledge span
All the distance life has traveled since the
merry world began)

Can not hope to know
Little Fan or Flo—
(Five feet two, including heels and hair
aigrette or velvet bow!)

Never can he guess
What a muslin dress
May contain by way of honor, fortitude and
tenderness!

Surely, that is best
For his peace and rest;
Nature doubtless would not have it any
other fashion, lest

There appear a dearth
Suddenly, on earth—
Dearth of men, ashamed of living when
they fathomed woman's worth.

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