Ticket Speculators as Critics

Broadway Wiseman Talks About Good and Bad Shows—Strange Ways of Earning a Living.

"HERE you are. Want seats? Two good seats down in front. Nothing left inside. All right, sir; try and see. No, he don't want seats downstairs. He's a dollar man. You'll see him come out in a minute and go looking for the family-circle entrance."

"Pretty slow work for you speculators today, is it not?"

"Like a twin brother to a funeral. I am goin' to get stuck with this bunch, sure. Eight of 'em, I think. Lemme see. Yes, eight to the bad."

"At $2 each?"

"Two dollars, nothing, young fellow. Do you think we buy 'em at the box office?"

"Don't you?"

"Not much. They know us all too well. We have to get 'em from the hotel men. I'll put you wise to that. Gee! ain't it cold?"

"And do you pay the hotel men their advance on the box office price?"

"Sure we do. How else? Say, don't let 'em fool you. You take it from me that we always give up $2.25 and generally $2.50 apiece for every ticket we get."

"Can't you get them from the box office by messengers?"

"Naw. That game's played out. They're dead on. Try it once in awhile, but it don't pay. More fuss and bother than it's worth."

Where the Profit Is.

"Then your profit is what you can get for a ticket above $2.50?"

"Sure's you're a foot high. Say, you're a reporter, ain't you? Well, now, I tell you right to your face, the newspapers ain't givin' us no fair deal. I don't know why you want to stop us from makin' an honest living. We don't do nobody no harm, and we are a public convenience. Look here, I'll bet there ain't an honester business in New York than ticket speculatin'. Why, look at the cheats in many a store—selling Connecticut cigars for Havanas, and chargin' a dollar apiece for silk neckties that ain't nothing but cotton, and passing off pieces of glass for diamonds. Aw! It makes me tired! Why don't they jump on them fellows?"

"Well, never mind the ethics of the question. Tell me what you think of the dramatic season from the sidewalk speculators' standpoint."

"That's easy. Rotten!"

"Artistically or financially?"

"All kinds of ways. Say, I've been in the business 30 years and—here you are, lady; right down in front. Yessum, rows from the front. How many did you want? Three? Yes, I got three right together. Here they are. Best seats in the house. Ain't nothin' inside at all—no use trying. Sure, you can see right on the tickets where they are. In E and F, very best seats in the house. Yessum. Only three dollars each. Thank you. Nine from ten is one. There's your change, ma'am. Well, as I said, I've been in this business for nearly 30 years and I never seen anything like it is this year. New York seems to have mighty little use for the theater."

"Rows From the Front."

"What did you mean by telling that old lady that the seats were 'rows from the front'?"

"Just that. Rows from the front. That's true, ain't it?"

"But how many rows?"

"Aw, what's the use of tellin' her? If I'd said fifth and sixth rows, she would have wanted them in the second and third. Then if I'd have told her these was just as good it would have started an argument and it would have been all off. Just get a woman to arguing and there's nothing doin'. You've got to make a snap judgment or you're wasting your time. It's nothing but hot air and no money after you begin a game of talk."

"But you told her they were together?"

"Well, ain't they? Two in E and one in F, right behind. I told her they were in front. I didn't say they was all in a row."

"Won't she come back and ask to have them changed?"

"Naw. A man might, but not a woman. Once she gets seated she won't feel like making a fuss and coming out again. Besides, the curtain will be goin' up in a minute and then you couldn't drag her out. She will want to see it all and get her money's worth. Well, I've only got five left anyway, two pairs and a single."

"Will you reduce the price now?"

"Sure; after about 15 minutes I sell 'em for anything I can get. I'll hold up to two and a half as long as there's any chance of latecomers, so as to break even if I can, and then I'll let 'em go at any old price."

"Can you usually get rid of your stock to late comers at cut rates?"

"No, not generally this season, if you are carrying much of a bunch. After the first act you might as well quit. No use standing around and freezing for an hour on the chance of picking up a stray dollar."

"What do you do with the unsold seats?"

"Oh, of course, we figure not to have any. Try not to overbuy. We can guess at it pretty close after a few performances. Then, if I have any left, I go in to see the show myself or give 'em to my folks or some of my friends."

"So you sometimes help paper the house?"

"Sure! More than you would think fer once in a while. I've known many a show along the street here, when the management bragged about packing the house, and where I've given free seats. Oh, it's a great game, I tell you. These managers are the steadiest bluffers going, but we don't want any row with them as long as they leave us alone, and we know our rights, too. Say, Jim, you take the other side of the entrance. Don't stand in so close. That fellow on the door is watchin' you and that young snipe will be comin' out again with his line of talk about keeping eight feet away."

"Are you supposed to keep eight feet away?"

"That's just an idea of some fresh house manager. As long as we don't block up the entrance or interfere with the people goin' in, we can do business anywhere on the sidewalk. Our licenses allow that. They won't let us stand in the lobby, but that's a bluff, too. What's the odds where we stand?"

Gratuitous Boomers.

"You really think managers do not object to having you in front of their houses?"

"Why should they? Ain't we plugging their business for them all the time, helping to fill the house and cracking up the show to everybody that comes along? Say, they ought to pay us for advertising their shows. We never knock 'em. We always plug 'em. No use telling a man it's a bum show and try to sell him a ticket to it at the same time, is there? That would be clean dotty. I'll gamble I've told more lies about New York shows than I'll ever get forgiven for."

"What are the easiest attractions to sell tickets for?"

"The most successful, of course. No use trying to sell tickets to a dead one. Tickets for tonight! Here you are, sir! Tickets! Boxoffice prices. Give you best seat in the house. Yes, sir, right there; you can see on the diagram for yourself. Center of the house. Yes, sir, it's the best show on Broadway. All the papers say so. Turn people away every night. Not a seat left in there. No, you haven't missed anything at all; curtain's only just gone up. There's a pair of seats you can see everything from. Five dollars. That's right.—Well I'm not going to get stuck so much after all!"

"Why did you tell him boxoffice price?"

"It is just what I paid for them. I didn't make a cent."

"Is it a good show?"

"Worst ever, if you want to know on the level. There's enough paper gone in there tonight to half fill the house. I wouldn't be sellin' tickets here if I hadn't been stuck by buyin' 'em before I found out about it. I was nipped that time. A case of too quick. You can tell the show that's goin' down hill every time. The women stand around and look anxious and the men seem to be afraid of getting in the line. People who have paid for their tickets rush right up to the door as though they owned the place."

No Harvest This Year.

"Are you going to come out even on the season?"

"Great Scott, no! We stand to lose this year about all we made in the last ten years. There are no new 'specs' in the business this year. Nothin' in it fer them."

"The business is better now than it was at the beginning of the season, is it not?"

"Yes, it has picked up a bit lately. You see, it opened with a lot of poor attractions, and so the public wouldn't go. Then came the Chicago fire, and that knocked everything out, and then the bad weather didn't help any. We didn't need either the fire or the cold in our business—not to speak of."

"What class of shows has been doing the best?"

"None. Some of the big stars have done fairly well for a while, and the opera has helped us out a lot, but there have been too many tame musical shows. The public seems to have been overfed with them. You can't lay any rule down this year, though. Some shows that have been 'way up in art have been 'way down at the box office. And then again some silly thing has caught 'em good. Tickets? Tickets for tonight? Best seat in the house for a dollar. No, he's nothing. Only a programme hunter."

"And what's a programme hunter?"

"There's a lot of folks do that. Mostly women at the matinees, though. They go in the lobbies just to pick up a programme if they can."

"What for?"

"Just to take home and four-flush their friends about havin' seen the show. Make out they have been to the theater and flash the programme to prove it. Want their friends to think they are great patrons of the theater, you know. Talk a lot of guff about the actors and pretend to know some of 'em. Nothing but four-flushing all the time."

"Are there many speculators in New York?"

"Quite a number. Just 81, if I remember right."

"Are out of town people pretty good customers?"

"Only the drummers. The yaps had rather stand in the line for two hours than pay a quarter extra. Here's one now. Looks like he came from up the state. Guess I can land him. Tickets, tickets, sir? Best seat in the house for half a dollar. There you are. That's all he'd pay, and I'd rather have the 50 cents than the ticket."

ADMIRAL URIU AT ANNAPOLIS

A Classmate Tells Stories of the Little Jap—He Was a Good Fellow and Was Graduated Well Up With Class

New York Sun.

OVER the coffee and cigars at the Delaware Society dinner on Thursday night William H. Stayton, formerly of the United States Navy and now a lawyer in the city, told some stories of his old Naval Academy classmate, Sotokichi Uriu, now Rear-Admiral of the Japanese fleet that turned out to be such a surprising proposition to the Russians.

"Congress passed an act back in the '70s allowing Japan to send one cadet a year to the Naval Academy on payment of their pro rata share of the actual expenses.

"Japan bunched her privileges and sent four cadets at one time. They entered in the class of '81. Uriu was one of these and Yunoski Enoye, a nephew of the Mikado, was another. These two chaps roomed together. We cadets heard that this was done at the Mikado's request, and we naturally concluded that Uriu was of noble blood, too.

"At that time class feeling was very strong in Japan. Unless a man was of noble blood he could not address even the remotest ramification of the royal family without humbling himself to the ground. Neither Enoye nor Uriu showed the slightest trace of class arrogance, however. They were simply good fellows well met, like all the rest of us. But it afterward leaked out from a roundabout source that Uriu belonged to the laboring class, the lowest in the Japanese social scale.

"As a youngster Uriu was of an inquiring, mechanical turn of mind. He was the kind of a fellow that could take a watch to pieces and then put it together again. A wandering English carpenter came to Uriu's native village, and the progressive little Jap saw that here was an opportunity to learn a new language. He scraped an acquaintance with the carpenter, and got him to teach him the English language as the cockney laborer knows it. In spite of his academy training Uriu's English is still well flavored with cockneyisms.

"Then Uriu heard of the competitive examination that was to be held at the Royal School of Tokio for the Naval Academy appointments. It was understood that the examination was to be open only to the sons of the nobility. But Uriu presented himself just the same, and asked to be examined. Japan had already broken pretty well away from her old feudalistic ideas. The workingman's son was admitted to the examinations, and he carried off one of the prizes. It was the Mikado's idea that a chap who had proved himself the mental equal of the three other Japs who were going to Annapolis should be put on the same social level. It was for this reason that he requested that Uriu and his nephew should room together.

"Uriu was very popular with the Academy boys. He proved his spunk on a number of occasions, but what the fellows liked about him was his absolute squareness. McGiffen, that roving fighter who afterward became mentally unbalanced as the result of wounds received in the battle of the Yalu River and who committed suicide in the Post Graduate Hospital, was a classmate of ours. He once said of Uriu: 'That fellow's the only real Christian in the Academy.'

"The description fitted him so well that he became known as 'the real Christian'—a name that stuck to him throughout his Academy days.

"When he entered the Academy he got a good old-fashioned Annapolis hazing, like all the other fellows, and he stood it like a major. When he became an upper classman and privileged to haze the incoming fledglings, he also lived up to the Academy traditions. He weighed only about 115 pounds, and was one of the smallest fellows in the Academy. I remember seeing him get hold of big George Ferguson, now an assistant engineer of the Brooklyn Bridge.

"'What's your name?' demanded Uriu.

"'Ferguson, sir.'

"'Spell it.'

"'F-e-r-g-u-s-o-n, sir.'

"'Spell it over again, and remember that you're addressing your superior.'

"'F sir-e sir-r sir-g sir-u sir-s sir-o sir-n sir. Ferguson, sir.'

"Uriu was converted to Christianity while at the Academy, and though he returned to Japan immediately after graduating, he has remained a Christian. He joined the Academy branch of the Y. M. C. A. Every now and then he would go to McGiffen, who was a wild, turbulent character who steered very shy of religious services, and ask him to go to Y. M. C. A. services.

"McGiffen never refused these requests of Uriu, but there was not another man in the Academy who could have got McGiffen anywhere near a church.

"Uriu gave us one splendid exhibition of his spunk. His countryman, Serata, had stumbled during a drill and discharged his rifle. It was loaded only with a blank cartridge, but the wad struck a man in the front rank and inflicted an ugly-looking scalp wound.

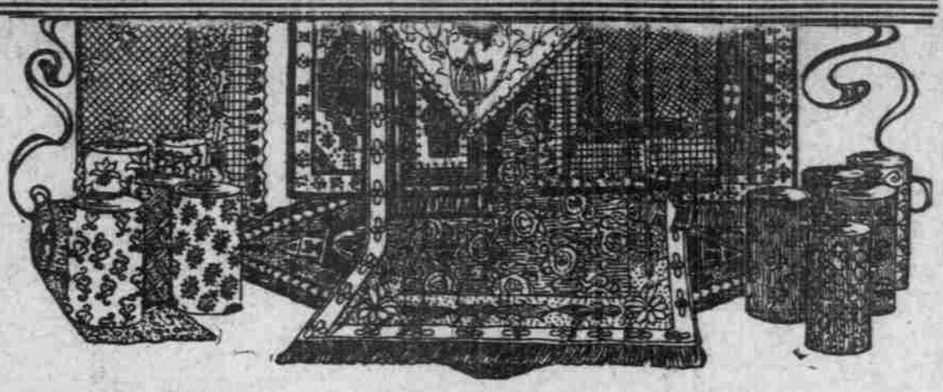
"Serata took the thing very much to heart. He went to his room and kept bemoaning the injury he had done his classmate. Six or eight of us fellows went to tell him that everybody knew it was an accident and to come out and join the crowd.

"Uriu had already gone to Serata's room. When he heard us coming he jumped to the conclusion that we were going to thrash Serata. He began to barricade the door with furniture, but we were too quick for him and forced an entry.

"There wasn't one of us who was not big enough to throw little Uriu over his head, but Uriu sailed into the whole crowd and fought like a devil. Of course it took only a minute to pin him down and explain our mission. In his studies Uriu was always weak in grammar, rhetoric and American history, but in all other subjects he stood about sixth or seventh in a class of 134. At graduation he stood fourteenth. The graduation of the Mikado's nephew was more a mark of our friendship for Japan than a testimonial of the young man's fitness for that honor.

"While at the Academy Uriu met a Japanese girl who was a Vassar student, and they subsequently married.

"So that we can keep tab on our old classmates, our class society regularly sends out printed slips asking: 'How old are you?' 'Are you married?' 'Have you any children?' and other personal questions. Uriu always responds. The last time we heard from him he said that he was 43 years old, had five children, and added that English was the language of his household from the children up."



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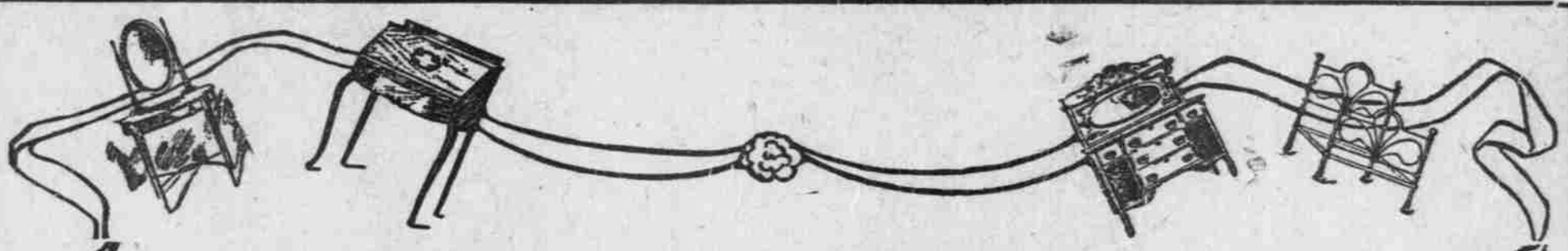

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PANAMA BURLAPS, 50 inches wide in dainty olive and terra cotta shades. Appropriate for hangings used in combinations with Mission and Colonial decoration.

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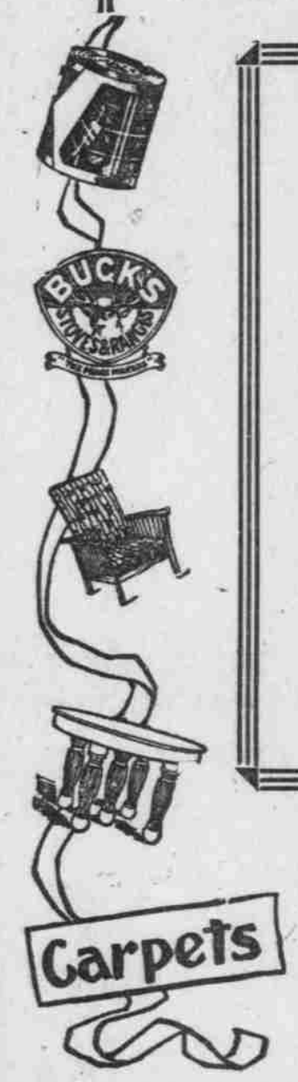

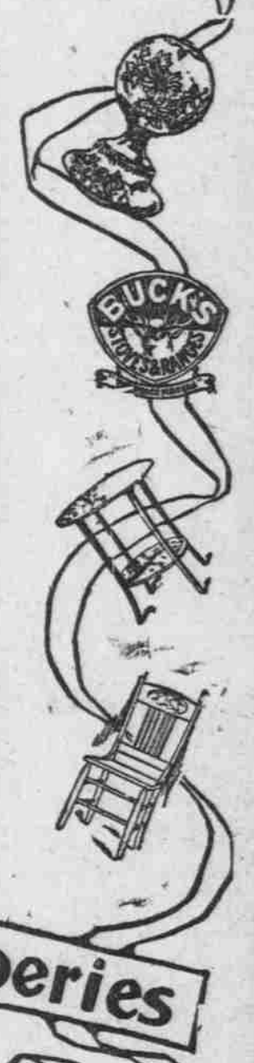

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THE COURSE OF TRUE LOVE.

Far From Smooth Did It Run In This December-May Case.

Chicago Inter Ocean.

Although all the world loves a lover, and although Samuel Michaels, the lover in this case, is 70, and deserving of more than ordinary consideration, it is impossible to approve of his violently affectionate course in the case of Enia Burns, aged 16.

Miss Burns, it appears, is a domestic in the Shock home, a name peculiarly appropriate to this love story, as will be seen when all the facts are brought out. Enia Burns spurned the advances of Samuel Michaels. She would not give him a peg to hang his hopes upon. She would not permit him to see her.

The Shock home is situated in the country. Needless to say, it is situated in the country contiguous to Kokomo, Ind. It was a structure of brick valued at $4000. To demonstrate the intensity of his love for Enia Burns, Samuel Michaels, it is alleged, conspired with certain others to shock the Shock home with dynamite, which they proceeded to do, and the shock almost killed Enia.

However, being a resident of that part of the State of Indiana which lies contiguous to Kokomo, Enia recovered from the shock, and, much to Samuel Michael's satisfaction, as establishing the soundness of his theory of love-making, she began to exhibit a decided change in her feelings toward him. She even agreed to an elopement, and in the fullness of his happiness her ancient suitor not only confessed the part he had taken in shocking the Shock home, but gave her other information which goes to show that with the assistance of his confederates he was about to dynamite other houses where she was in the habit of staying from time to time.

The sequel to all this is that Samuel Michaels, William Wagner, Mrs. William Wagner and John Bowen are now locked up in the Kokomo jail, while Enia Burns is expected in the forthcoming trial to furnish evidence which will send them all to the penitentiary. And the moral of all this is that you can never tell exactly what a shocked girl will do.

Farming on Shares.

On some large estates of the wheat districts of New South Wales, farming on the share system is extensively pursued. Under this system the landholder provides the land and the seed, while the farmer finds the plant and labor. The allotment of the harvest is, of course, based on individual agreements between the parties concerned and varies accordingly; but in all cases the division is characterized by equitable terms. In certain instances it is agreed that the first two bags of grain per acre go to the farmer, the third going to the landholder. Should the yield exceed three bags the farmer takes the excess. As the average yield per acre during the present season approaches 20 bushels, the share-system farmer, working on such a basis of division, has every reason to congratulate himself.

Visitors to Portland

Should not miss the delightful trips up and down the Columbia River. Particulars at O. R. & N. city ticket office, Third and Washington.