

# LITTLE OLD NEW YORK

## THEATRICALKY

### HOW THE TOWN LOOKS TO A PORTLANDER AFTER ABSENCE OF A FEW YEARS



HATTIE WILLIAMS  
"THE LITTLE CHERUBS"



FRITZI SCHEFF  
AS  
"MILLEMOUSTE"  
"THE HIT OF LAST SEASON AND THIS IN NEW YORK"



JOHN DREW IN  
"HIS HOUSE IN ORDER"



FLORENCE ROBERTS  
IN THE STRENGTH OF THE WEAK

BY A. H. BALLARD.

NEW YORK, Oct. 1.—(Special Correspondence of The Sunday Oregonian.) New York. That's all. Skyscrapers, humidity and trim ankles. Cabs, cars and cash. Restaurants, roysterers and revels. Awkward autos, antediluvian actors and anemic blondes.

A million females in translucent shirtwaists paired with a million males in George-M-Cohan suits. Triumphators of alliterative tintinnulation descriptive of today's Little Old New York might be built without number. They would all express the first and strongest impressions that the town makes upon the person who has returned home after many days.

It is, altogether, not counting cats, upwards of four million souls—money, and the lack of it, actuating their every fiber. Carlyle calculated that in London the millions were mostly fools. He would have said that in New York now they are all fools.

The biggest surprise that I have had is to realize that I am not the prize fool of the place. Its immensity, its wealth, its enormous and diversified activities, I supposed had, during the 10 or 15 years of my absence from Park Row, reached proportions that would daunt me. Its people and its gigantic structures I presumed would paralyze my wandering senses.

But I fall to daze or become paralyzed. I find this burg the same as ever, only taller and larger, and moved up town about ten blocks in the center. New Yorkers are a little harder worked, somewhat more bloodless, quicker in slang, keener in the acquisition of a dollar, outwardly more gorgeous, just as unmindful of discomforts in habitation, just as fun-loving, quite as bustling and burn-the-candle-at-both-ends-ish as ever. They seethe in the heat, work like the devil, dress clean, swagger and strut on the highways, pinch at home, and cry after the lights are out, just as they used to do in the '80s, and will ever continue to do as long as life has cities to curse it and bless it.

The very rich and the very poor are the unhappiest, and the middle classes are the happiest, just as they always are in urban settlements.

It seems to me that New York preaches a sermon that is intensely worth while. It tells the philosophy of America as no other place tells it. It proclaims the virtues and the shortcomings of the American in unmistakable terms, in glowing language to the sympathetic observer. It seems to me the most interesting and instructive city on earth. Heaven well all know about, so that we can make comparisons later—if we continue to do what the Portland plutocrats desire.

I remember that I once took especial delight in England in feeling and thinking and quietly declaring that I was an American. They have such a constrained and provincial conception over there of what an American is. It is a fact that the majority of them hold the opinion that nearly every American says "I guess" in each sentence he utters, and that the particularly distinguishing characteristic of an American is that he habitually scratches a match on the seat of his trousers. It always, at length, is up to every American on Alibion's shores to dem-

onstrate that his accomplishments and his attainments have passed beyond the "guess" and the vesta-igniting stage.

Ergo, I take delight now in asserting on the street, in clubs, on many occasions, that in Portland they buy more New York newspapers each day than did San Francisco before its fall. That proves to me that Portland keeps a sharp eye on the doings of this metropolis—that its people come here often that they are eager to read about what is going on generally here, that in a way they recognize this city as the representative of their Americanism, and the center from which emanates the original impulses that give color and verve and vitality to the fundamental currents of American life. Of course in some respects New York is narrow, conceited, dictatorial and disdainful of outside merit. I met Murray and Mack the other day on the street. I saw John Lynch, a schoolmate of mine, who is now the president of the great Terminal Warehouse Company, and they both greeted me with the same shrug and sneer. The popular pair of comedians whom I know only as clever people of the theatrical world, and the vastly successful young man whom I have known from boyhood, in an instant after telling me that they were glad to see me, repeated the chestnut so everlastingly dear to the hearts of the real Manhattanese, "It's true, old man, when you leave New York you're camping out."

That is the view that every plodder who has attained any appreciable progress whatever will take. That is the opinion you will find expressed by every one who has succeeded in pushing his head the least bit of a way above the average line between success and failure. The tremendous hordes of struggling masses, the terrible gnats of humanity in the overcrowded districts, we must leave to the delving sociologists.

I came here to see and describe the scenes of my novitiate in journalism, and to let loose some of the thoughts and deductions that this wonderful place puts in my brain in consequence of simple contact. I am somewhat in the position of a newcomer who enters an artist's studio. The artist's has been painting a picture, and even a less lettered man than the artist may see something about the picture that was not discernible to the artist himself, who has been watching and studying his work for so long a time continuously. Thus New York, from which I have been absent months uncountable, strikes me as an old friend whose features are the same, and still not the same, and I can note the trend of the days, the ravages of time, the creations of the hour, the flow of the current, the evident goal toward which the metropolitan life is tending, as perhaps one who has unintermittently mingled here cannot.

The theatrical world is so large now, that I will have to give it to you in bunches. The best way seems to be to take the various enterprises, the various featured people, the various stars of the theatrical firmament, and deal with them according as they are scheduled to be mentioned, brought out and paraded over the country by the several larger producing managers.

Some new plays have been already put forward, but nothing as yet that may be chronicled as a decided or spectacular hit. Two old successes are the strongest factors in the public mind yet this year, and these are the New York public and immense floating population (which includes liberal samples from all the states of the Union to the tune of about 300,000,000 per day) go.

These two successes are "Mademoiselle Modiste," that exquisitely refined and artistic opera bouffe in which Fritz Scheff has starred for 300 nights at the Knickerbocker, and which now goes on the road and will visit Portland at the Hellig, and David Warfield in his absolutely match-

less character impersonation of "The Music Master."

Such people in the dramatic producing business as Klaw & Erlanger, Charles Frohman, Henry W. Savage, Liebler & Co., John Cort, Wagenhals & Kemper, Charles Dillingham, Henry B. Harris, David Belasco, Harrison Grey Fiske, the Schubert Bros., etc., although their undertakings vary in amount and quality, certainly mark out the natural lines of classification which I must follow in describing the happenings and portraying faithfully the theatrical picture that is now being painted here, and which will be exhibited as the year waxes to its fullness, all over the United States, including that nestling spot of picturesque beauty and refined appreciation Portland, Oregon. The theatrical managers and owners whom I have mentioned are, of course, not by any means the only ones. They represent, however, the hub of the plays and the amusements that are to be offered to the American public of the better class this year. In other lines there is a vast amount of praiseworthy activity—in melodrama, in vaudeville, in burlesque, in the multitude of conglomerate aggregations that fill the second rate houses throughout the land. I should say that three-quarters of all the theatrical stuff that is put forward is absolutely meretricious, even among the comedies of the best and most pretentious. Even Charles Frohman does not put on a good and lasting play once out of four times trying. And, as Rose Stahl says in "The Chorus Lady," "I am not a member of the avvil chorus, and I am mentioning no names; but there are people in this chorus who, if they were where they should be, would be making beds." This remark applies to 80 per cent of the actor folk who infest Broadway, some of whom obtain positions, but the majority of whom either starve most of the year, or do worse. I mean to say that we look to Frohman, to Dillingham, to Belasco (and, let me whisper, to Cort also now) for something that will catch on and stay in our minds. They are clever and brainy, and either have or can command money. They have organizations, business organizations, here that must be seen to be appreciated. The machinery of business works in a well-ordered way, and they grind out stars and successful productions each year, not by

taking drudgery and careful calculations, backed up by an amount of finesse and machivellian diplomacy of managerial intercommunication and allied interests that would startle and astonish the layman unacquainted with the ways and methods of the inner theatrical world.

To sum up, William Winter is the ablest writer in the theatrical situation. Many of the other writers are considered grandmothers and neophytes given a dangerous amount of power, and a few of the younger ones, barring their newness, are considered promising. David Belasco is held to be the wonder that he is—both as a play stealer and a piece of pure magic as a stage carpenter. Charles Frohman is counted the standard for the exploitation of plays and players that will stand the test of time. Dillingham is growing fast into one of the biggest factors. (He has signed Mrs. Leslie Carter for five years. She got married and had to quit her David Belasco, who trained her, you know.) I hereby and herewith predict that John Cort, now a novelty in New York, butting into the Great White Way pungently and incisively with Florence Roberts and other stars, whom he is conducting to undoubted triumph, has the spunk, the courage, the popularity and the skill, not to mention the utterly essential daredevil effrontery, to ride over opposition and win by sheer force of his own personality and grit. I predict that "Ben Hur," what may you expect? I shall be there and tell you about it. It won't blind me. The magazines are going to explode, all of them, in their descriptions of it. It is so magnificent. Money has not been lavished upon it. That is not the word. Money has been spilled upon it just as you would expect a pot of coffee. That's what's the matter with the New Amsterdam Theater—about

which they have made so loud a noise—the ornamentation everywhere in audience is so previous, so insistent, so overwhelming that it surfeits you like the ceaseless caresses of a maiden scorned. They might just as well have studded it with gold pieces to show that they had the money.

In the list of openings, thus far, Lillian Russell's new play, "Barbara's Millions," has not been well received in Chicago, but when it comes here in a few weeks, in case they do not withdraw it, New York may like it better. The critics in Chicago think that it is one of Paul Potter's worst, but Miss Russell is immensely liked here. She is a wonderful singer, and the sweetest-looking thing God ever made, and she keeps her youth. If it gets out to Portland, Cathrine Countess, who is leading woman in the cast, will help Lillian draw discrimination theater-goers to the Hellig.

There have been a few sporadic indications of permanence in ventures that have already showed their heads. "His House in Order," John Drew at the Empire is Finer's latest, and not his best. "The Little Cherub," at the Criterion, is the tuncfullest musical comedy that is now ringing in people's ears. A couple of swiflers have been received enthusiastically at the Casino. Savage's "The Man From Now," clever cast, beautiful production, Harry Bulger the star, musical flip-flop, Porodora imitation, patchwork musical comedy, now running at the New Amsterdam, will go on the road and you will see it. It is worth the price for Bulger's drollery and the costumes alone.

Even the broiling heat and the super-saturated atmosphere that has made the theaters veritable Turkish baths do not deter the people from cramming the houses of amusement full, nearly everywhere to capacity every night. It is a glorious outlook for the managers, in so far as willingness to go and sample their goods is concerned. The New York public itself, augmented by the prodigious transient element, simply is amiable to an astounding degree. They will go and look at almost anything. But the wise owners who risk their money know that it is only the good and the really meritorious that will "go over," as they call real success, and earn the big money both here and on the road.

The arbiters, the generals, who are

running this campaign to entertain the busy, the complaisant, the rich and prosperous American public, those keen-witted men who plan and scheme here in New York, and risk millions each year to provide amusement and attractive "shows" bidding for the patronage of this great land of the trusts and home of the wage-earners—these artistic business gamblers in the most enticing game among the later stage vocations that have attracted capital are all agreed on one point. Some of the biggest of them have told me in so many words: "We can stage the play. We have an abundance of actors and actresses. It is not the stars you want now—it is not the name of the man or the woman you want. It is the play. The play must be right first and then we are fixed well to supply the rest."

This season, so far, the play has not yet arrived. The managers are looking for it. They snub the would-be neophytes. They do not admit on

the housetops anything whatever of their affairs or their needs. But they are all looking for the play that the public will cotton to, all the same. They have found out that in the end the play's the thing. They say that "Zaza," "Sapho," the flaunting of lust and irregular relations on the stage, is not what the public wants now. They are always busy in estimating the public pulse. They want plays that go back to nature, and let us see again that truth and purity and sweetness and kindness may brush away the boister of life and deliver us from the woes that civilization thrusts upon us. They want a play that makes one laugh through the tears, and every one it yearning for the ideal of a good woman in whom the American gentleman can find an excuse for the resuscitation of his inborn chivalry.

You, Mr. Green, in Portland; you, Mr. Sayre, and you, Mr. Blethen, in Seattle, take a tumble and write that play.

A. H. BALLARD.

### Skillful Stagedriver With One Arm

Hood River-Mt. Hood Jehu Surprises Travelers by His Driving.

JOHN FREDENBURG, who drives the stage from Hood River to the Mount Hood Postoffice, a distance of about 15 miles, is said to be the most remarkable stage-driver in the United States. He has but one arm, his left, and can hardly lift it on a level with his face. His right leg also is disabled, being shortened about eight inches. Yet with his crippled left arm Fredenburg can drive either two or four horses as skillfully as most men can with two good arms. Travelers who take the stage at Hood River are amazed and somewhat alarmed when they see the man who is to drive the team over the narrow grades that follow the bluffs above Hood River, but their fears are quickly set at rest when Fredenburg gathers the reins and starts out.

But their wonder increases. Innumerable packages have been crammed into the stage, from a spool of thread for some woman along the road to a roast of mutton, all of which he delivers without a hitch. After leaving the boundary of the Hood River free delivery route, the stage-driver becomes the mail carrier, and deposits its mail in boxes along the road.

He drives his wagon close to the many mail boxes set in front of the farm houses and carries the papers and letters. He delivers the Oregonian in upper Hood River Valley one day ahead of the rural free delivery carriers out of Hood River.

After delivering the innumerable packages and mail along the road, Fredenburg arrives at the Mount Hood Postoffice about 5 P. M. Up to this time he has been stage driver, express agent and mail carrier, but that is not all. He runs a large ranch in the Upper Hood River Valley, where his parents live and which he is having cleared. He has more energy than two or three men notwithstanding his crippled condition. He is cheerful and accommodating to the public and is very popular. He is said to be paying court to a charming young widow.

### S.S.S. PURELY VEGETABLE

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