REAL ROMANCES OF THE BUSINESS WORLD

A Tip That Made and Spoiled a Show

WHEN theatrical New York was bounded on the south by Niblo's Garden and on the north by Wood's Museum in Broadway, near Thirtieth street, Stockton knew almost everybody connected with the metropolitan stage. He was in a theater nearly every night. Sometimes he went to half a dozen, looking in at this show or that show for a few minutes. He was a newspaper man, and was welcomed by every manager. He was a crony of Jim Hill, Maurice Barrymore, Johnnie Mackay and of a lot of old boys now forgotten. He thought he loved the stage, but suddenly its people and its tinsel palled on him and he soured. Tragedy, comedy, farce, comic opera and vaudeville lost their charms. If he went to a show once a week he became bored. If he went once a month he felt he had wasted some time. Then he made a compact with himself that he would only go to a theater once a year.

The shows that he went to see he looked at with critical and probably unjust eyes. He measured all performances by those he had seen when he was younger, more impressionable and more ardent. He could not find anything in latter day productions to go into rhapsodies over.

ONE day, about six years ago, a woman connected with the stage called on Stockton, who from a reporter had advanced to an editorial position. She was an old friend and knew his oddities, and one of her questions was as to how long it had been since he had been to a theater. When she was told it was more than 15 months she said she had a favor to ask him, and that was to look in at a show she had seen the night before and had been much impressed by.

"What was it?" asked Stockton.

"Don't laugh, now," she said. "It's over on the Bowery. It's in Miner's Bowery Theater."

"What!" exclaimed Stockton.

"Yes," she replied, "it's a burlesque show. And I'm not going to leave this office until you promise to see it."

A Bowery show was little short of slumming, in Stockton's estimation, but he thought so much of his caller, and she was so insistent, that at last he consented to go there the next night. He went, and the day following his visit the woman was in to see him again.

"Well, what do you think of it?" she inquired.

"I never saw such a scandalous disregard for the law before," he said. "I was in fear of my life. If there had been a fire or a panic there would have been a terrible disaster. All the aisles were choked with people, and there were at least 200 persons seated on the stage."

"But what about the show?" she inquired.

"It doesn't belong in the Bowery," he said. "The manager doesn't know what he's got. It's far, far better than nine-tenths of the Broadway productions. There are three persons in the company who could be made Broadway stars. It's the best balanced troupe I've seen in 10 years. That woman Chulita is a delight. That man Shaw is almost as good as David Warfield; and that man Corday is an artist. The costuming was perfect. The chorus is admirably trained. The show isn't burlesque. It's the highest type of vaudeville. If I had it I'd transplant it to Broadway and make a fortune. It's exactly what New York wants."

THE woman was delighted. It confirmed her ideas exactly. She told him something about the history of the show. The company had been knocking about the burlesque houses in the East several years, playing what is known as the "Eastern Wheel." It went the rounds of Harlem, Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Williamsburg, Albany, Troy, Providence, Hartford, New Haven and the Bowery. The highest-priced performer got $60 a week; the members of the chorus got $15. The whole show cost only about $600 a week.

The woman thanked Stockton and went out. Half an hour later she called him on the telephone.

"I've just told White, the manager, what you said about 'Music and the Maids.' He's wildly excited about it. He says if you will let him, he will put what you say about the show on three-sheet posters and cover the town with it. He wants to use your name on the billboards. He says it will be worth a lot to him. He knows he has a great show, but you're the first man outside the burlesque field who has told him so. What do you say?"

Stockton said "No." He had no inclination to be a booster for a Bowery burlesque troupe. He had a fair share of modesty and no desire to see his name in print, especially on the billboards of New York.

THE woman pleaded, and the manager pleaded, but Stockton was firm. Then the woman came to the office again and asked Stockton if he would write out what he had told her. Stockton reluctantly agreed, on the manager's promise that the criticism would be used only to show to the manager's friends, and particularly to proprietors of amusement houses on Broadway. White made the rounds of the Broadway theaters with Stockton's criticism in his hand. One and all of the managers turned him down. They had no use for a Bowery burlesque show. They advised White to stick to the "Eastern Wheel." White did so for several months more and then he took the bit in his teeth. He rented a barn of a place at the farthest north of theatrical Broadway. The theater was a morgue. No show that had appeared in it had made a dollar of profit. The seating arrangement was poor, the acoustics were wretched, and the stamp of dead failure was on everything about it. "Music and the Maids" opened there one night to a slim audience. The critics paid little or no attention to it, but somehow the box office receipts steadily increased. The first Saturday night the house was filled. The second week the theater had $5000 in it for the first time in its history. The third week people from Fifth Avenue, Riverside Drive, and the most fashionable portions of New York began to go to see "Music and the Maids." At the end of the month it was the talk of New York. It ran more than a year. At times the house was sold out weeks in advance. From $5000 a week the receipts mounted higher and higher until they passed $12,000. Chulita became famous. Pages after pages of stories were written about her.

AND there was a good deal to tell. She had been a newsgirl in St. Louis and had sold papers and flowers about the theaters at night. She got a craze for the stage and hung around the stage door begging for a chance for an engagement, until at last she was taken in at one of the shows. Then she drifted East. She was of French descent, bright and clever, but uneducated. She sang well and danced with an abandon that was captivating. She was grace personified. Not only was she beautiful of face, but beautiful of form. She was less than 25 when she made her appearance in Broadway. How she went through the burlesque circuit six or eight years without some theatrical scout discovering her talent is only evidence of how blind theatrical people are to what is developing in the various branches of their business.

Shaw was a really fine actor. He had studied Warfield and had many of his mannerisms. All he needed was polish and self-restraint. Broadway saw in Shaw far higher ability than Chulita possessed. Managers got after him at once, wanting to win him away from White. They were willing to have plays written to get him, and were anxious to star him in the best houses. He had almost as much written about him as Chulita had about her.

Broadway also saw a lot of talent in Corday, and it was predicted that he would become one of the best of comedians.

Aside from these three big figures what delighted Broadway most was that wonderful chorus. Old theatergoers hardly could believe that this had been a burlesque show chorus. In burlesque the chorus usually goes to "beef." The women are selected because they are big, voluptuous and mature. White, however, had gone to the other extreme. He had picked out the smallest of "broilers." Small people usually have ginger. This chorus was dressed so the girls seemed much younger than they really were. Everything seemed to fit and to match. There was a dash, a spirit, a verve to every bit of the show. Possibly one explanation of the exquisite balance was the harmony that prevailed among the players. Nearly all of those "broilers" were married—married to men in the show. There had been more romance and marrying among the 'Music and the Maids" troupe than in any other body of players in the business, perhaps.

FROM the day he went to Broadway White coined money. He had a good profit on his first week, a larger one on his second, and larger and larger thereafter. Before he had been on Broadway two months his net profits averaged nearly $1500 a day. The morgue had been transformed into the most profitable playhouse in the metropolis. Night after night from 50 to 100 automobiles were lined up around the theater. After the show on Christmas night the whole troupe went to one of the great lobster palaces near by. The big ballroom had been engaged. Everybody from the manager down to the scene shifter and the callboy was there. Several hundred of the most prominent Broadwayites, first nighters whose names are familiar to all New Yorkers, were guests at that Christmas supper. It was a good, solid repast, with very little liquor, lots of substantial fare and an abundance of good humor. When they had finished eating the curtain on a little stage was drawn back and there stood a monster Christmas tree. There was sentiment in nearly every present that that big tree contained. Most of the articles that were given by the women of the company had been made by their own hands, for the "Music and the Maids" members were good, homeloving people, and the family spirit was strong with all of them. Nearly all of them were getting good salaries by this time, for White had increased their pay, but they weren't rich enough to be extravagant. For a good, wholesome Christmas supper of people of the player world that one was a model.

There seemed to be no end to the popularity of the show. It ran through the spring and it ran through the Summer, crowded to the doors at every performance. Veteran managers with frosts on their hands, with heavy payrolls and light receipts, looked at the morgue of upper Broadway and wished they could find a gold mine like it. All sorts of offers were made to Chulita. Extravagant inducements were laid before Shaw to win him away. Corday, too, had lots of temptation. White had to raise salaries again after a while to keep peace in his family.

WITH prosperity he got new ideas. He was not satisfied with the troupe as it stood. He wanted to give more tone to it. Chulita had been charming in her old costume as a dancing girl. It set off admirably her raven black hair and her sparkling dark eyes. He thought a change of garb would be a good thing. He had her dress in long gowns, wonderful creations from Paris. This was pleasant to Chulita, for she had the truly feminine love of beautiful raiment. She did not dance so well in the long gowns and the illusion was lost. When it was suggested to her that she shed the Paris gowns and go back to the old garb she was rebellious. She and White quarreled. So did Shaw and White. Shaw began to think he was not played up enough; that he was being subordinated to Chulita, whereas everybody realized that Shaw was a great actor, while Chulita was only a good singer, good dancer and a good looking woman.

Once the spirit of dissension got into that burlesque troupe it ran riot. Cliques formed, quarrels developed, and in a short time one-half of the company wouldn't speak to the other half. The chorus lost its ginger. Chulita no longer danced with abandon and grace. Shaw lost his naturalness and become stagy and pompous. Corday lost that delicate sense of expression in his acting. From the best balanced body of performers in New York the "Music and the Maids" people degenerated into an ordinary lot. It did not take long for the public to discover the change. Then Shaw deserted to go starring. Chulita followed soon after. Corday went with her. White tried to fill the gaps, but could not. The receipts began to run off, and he closed after one of the longest runs New York has known, and unquestionably the longest run that any burlesque company in America has known. He got time in some other cities, but his newly formed company did not draw like the old one. While he was successful, he got credit for being a great organizer and a wonderful judge of merit. He was not. The fine balance in that company was an accident. He was like the average theatrical manager, a person of only ordinary intelligence. But he left the morgue $350,000 richer than he went into it, and he made a name for himself. Never from the day he left it has the morgue housed a success.

A MAN who makes $350,000 in a year from a theatrical show has to display a lot of good management if he is going to retain it. White believed he made the "Music and the Maids" show. He had supreme confidence in his own good judgment. He had tasted success and wanted more. He was tired of burlesque and he aimed higher. He put out a big musical comedy show. It didn't go. It had fair music and good people, but it lacked snap. White lost a lot of money. He tried another venture of the same kind. That was a dismal failure. Then he became desperate and plunged. In a few years his $350,000 was gone and more, too, and he had to go into bankruptcy. He still believes he is a great manager, but he has gone back to his early love and is a burlesque producer again. Shaw, flattered and pampered by the praise he got from the public and from the students of the stage, came out as a star. The play was written especially for him. He was on the stage almost every minute, from the rise of the curtain in the first act to its fall in the last. He thought the play was magnificent. It appealed strongly to him; but it didn't appeal to the public. He did not realize how his extreme vanity spoiled the performance. There was lots of evidence of fine ability, but he was overly prominent. To use a slang term, the show was ruined by a case of "big head." He quarreled with the manager who starred him and was taken up by another. Again he failed because he did not want anybody to have any chance in the show except himself. Broadway knows him no longer. A fine actor, ruined by success.

ONLY Chulita holds her own. She was the star of a musical comedy that made some money and brought her the good opinion of a fair number of persons and then she had the good sense to marry Corday. Now the two of them are in vaudeville. Chulita is a headliner and gets big money. She does not wear Paris gowns on the stage. She is back to the dancing girl garb. She is a beautiful creature and on the stage she is charming.

Of all that capable company that made the jump from the Bowery to Broadway and took the town by storm she is the only one who was not injured by it. White dreams of another turn in the wheel of fortune that will bring hundreds of thousands of dollars to him again. He has framed the letter he got from Stockton about six years ago. It used to hang over his desk in his office in the morgue. To visitors he used to show that letter and say it marked the turning point in his career. It now hangs over his desk in the office where he manages his troupe of burlesquers. If he ever gets another well-balanced company together he hopes to get Stockton to visit the show and write another letter like that.

But Stockton will not. He never saw the "Music and the Maids" from the night he visited Miner's Bowery Theater. He does not think success in any business is a good thing for a man who is not prepared for it or who is not strong enough to handle it when it comes to him. He thinks that instead of doing a good turn for White and the others, it would have been better for all concerned if he had not gone to Miner's that night and been the innocent cause of changing the course of the lives of those burlesquers. So now instead of limiting his visits to theaters to one a year he has made it one in two years. And he has cut out burlesques.

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Ten Minutes With The Funny Men.

SOME·OF·THE·QUIPS·AND·JESTS·FROM·PENS·OF·THE·NEWSPAPER·HUMORISTS.

Terse Tales From Humorous Pens

AN OBJECT LESSON.

Dr. Elmer Ellsworth Brown, the new chancellor of New York University, was talking about his desire for a larger and deeper study of the arts in American colleges.

"In youth," said Dr. Brown, "the taste is formed, and it will be a taste for fine and beautiful things or else it will be a taste for tawdry and false things. Without great care it will be a taste of the latter sort. Let us be warned by the anecdote of the little Kiantone boy:

"This little boy was taken one Summer day to the circus for the first time.

"'Well, dear, how did you like it?' his mother asked on his return.

"His eyes widened and he answered wih earnest, and grave enthusiasm:

"'Mamma, if you once went to the circus, you'd never, never consent to go to church again in all your life.'"

ONLY IN BOOKS

Spokane Spokesman-Review.

"I say, is this the novel you advised me to read?" said the cabman to the librarian.

"Yes," replied the librarian, "that's the one."

"Well," replied the cabman, "you can just take it back. There's nine people in the first four chapters who hired cabs, and each of 'em, when he got out, 'flung his purse to the driver.'"

TELLING THE TRUTH.

On little Arthur's birthday he received a present of a very large furry toy monkey.

Two days later his father found it lying in a corner with both eyes missing.

"My boy," asked father, more in sorrow than in anger, "why have you spoiled that beautiful monkey by pulling its eyes out?"

"Didn't," retorted Arthur briefly.

"Don't tell any untruths," snorted father, more in anger than in sorrow, "or I'll punish you! Why did you pull the monkey's eyes out?"

"Didn't!" repeated little Arthur defiantly. Then he hurried on, as father took off his slipper. "I—I pushed them in."—Answers.

FOILED.

The lovers whispered together before the door of her father's hangar, planning the last details of their elopement.

"Hurry, dearest," he urged. "We will wheel out your runabout monoplane and together we'll fly away on the wings of the night, nevermore to be separated!"

"Wait," she exclaimed. "I have a better plan. We will run it out and hide it in the old stable; then we will walk to the trolley and papa will never suspect us."

They were hardly half a mile on their way down the road when, from overhead came the roar of the triple propellers of the racing monoplane as papa dashed out into the darkness in hot pursuit.—Puck.

RESPECT FOR IMPROVEMENTS.

Cy Pose was considered somewhat of a character around Hickory Forks. When he built his new house he declared that it was not going to be a mere place to stay in. He was going to have all the "frills." Anyway, he had a doorbell, then a new thing in the neighborhood.

Soon after the new house was completed Josh Briggs, an old neighbor who lived on the farm just up the road, came over one Sunday afternoon for a little call. It was pleasant Fall weather. The windows were all open, but the front door was shut.

Josh knocked a little timidly, for everything looked pretty fine. Cy, comfortably rocking in the front room, gave no heed.

Josh knocked again — louder. Cy rocked away, silently.

Josh grew restive after a moment's wait and knocked again—a good loud knock. Cy rocked on.

Josh changed feet, wiped his face, puzzled and offended, for he knew the folks were at home. Once more he tried it—a loud, continued knock that resounded over the entire place.

Whereupon Cy, still rocking comfortably, yelled:

"Ring the doorbell, consarn ye! Don't you know nothin'?"

PUNISHMENT OF IMPUDENCE.

A farmer driving along a country road was thus rudely accosted by a young man whom he met: "Hello, Reuben! Give me a lift to Hightstown, will you? I might as well ride with you as walk."

So the young man climbed up, and beguiled the way with lively chatter After a few miles had been traveled, he said: "It's quite a distance to Hightstown, isn't it? It's a good thing for me that I met you."

"It is quite a distance," answered the farmer.

After a few more miles, the young man asked: "Say, farmer, how far is it to Hightstown, anyway?"

"Well," replied the farmer, "keepin' right on the way we're going now, I sh'd say 'twould be about twenty-four thousand miles or so; but if you wanted to git out and walk back, it wouldn't be very much more than ten miles."—Youth's Companion.

Quips and Flings

"George Washington never told a lie. It does not seem possible."

"He knew it would be of no use."

"How so?"

"He married a widow, and you can't lie to a widow and get away with it."—Houston Post.

• • •

"I don't think I'll lecture any more in Boston."

"Wasn't your last lecture a success, Professor?"

"Well, I had hard work to convince the audience that I knew as much about the subject as they did."—Pittsburg Post.

• • •

"Where do you go for the Summer?"

"To Punk Beach."

"Why?"

"To be frank, because it is cheap."

"And how do you pass the time?"

"Oh, we all sit around and explain why we got tired of Newport."—Washington Herald.

• • •

Guide (in Venice)—This is St. Mark's.

American Tourist (smilingly)—Ah! The patron saint of the tourists, I presume?—Puck.

• • •

Mrs. Yeast—I just love to shut my eyes and think.

Mr. Yeast—Why don't you try that with your mouth sometimes, dear?—Yonkers Statesman.

• • •

Young Husband—What a glorious day; I could dare anything, face anything, on a day like this!

Wife—Come on down to the milliner's.—Fliegende Blaetter.

• • •

Groom—Now, Master Jack, if we was to meet any of the royal family, how would you salute 'em?

Little Boy—Same as the soldiers do—hold my hand up to my hat and look as if I was going to burst.—London Punch.

• • •

Mary—Doesn't Ida keep her hardwood floors in beautiful condition?

Alice—Perfect! Everyone who goes there is carried out with a fracture or a dislocation.—Harper's Bazar.

• • •

Author—The very first thing I sent to a magazine was accepted.

Young Friend—Was it poetry or prose?

Author—Prose. It was a check for a year's subscription.—Boston Transcript.

• • •

Book Agent—Here's a book, "A Million Ways to Make a Thousand."

The Man—I bought one before.

Book Agent—No, sir; that one was "A Thousand Ways to Make a Million."—Judge.

• • •

"I believe I'll break my engagement to Cholly. He can't really love me.

"Why not?"

"He writes me such short letters. Look at this—only seven pages!"—Louisville Courier-Journal.

• • •

She—Didn't you say you'd go through fire and water for me?

He—Yes, but I'm blowed if I'm going through bankruptcy for you!—Yonkers Statesman.

• • •

Chief Clerk (to office boy)—Why on earth don't you laugh when the boss tells a joke?

Office Boy—I don't have to; I quit on Saturday.—Satire.

• • •

There was a frightful disturbance on the lower deck of the Ark.

"See what's the matter, Ham," said the skipper. The young man was gone for some time.

"It's all right now, dad," he said. "The bull moose was trying to butt the elephant overboard."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Among the Poets of the Daily Press

TREASURES.

They got a bran' new baby
At Bud Hicks' house, you see;
You'd think Bud Hicks had somethin',
Th' way he talks to me!
He comes around a-braggin'
An' when he wouldn't quit
I said, "What good's a baby?
You can't hunt fleas on it."

Then Bud turned to an' told me
How loud that kid could yell,
An' lots I can't remember,
He had so much to tell.
But I got tired o' hearin'
An' so I ast him, quick,
"If you wuz in a-swimmin',
Could it go git a stick?"

There is no use a-talkin',
Bud thinks their baby's fine!
Huh! I'd a whole lot rather
Jest have a pup like mine.
I'll bet it's not baldheaded!
But, if Bud doesn't fail
To let me hear it yellin',
I'll let him pull Spot's tail!

—Atlantic Advocate.

JUST AS SURE.

Just as sure as you shake things out
And live life right with God
The things gone wrong will all go right
In the way you have to plod.
Just as sure as you balance accounts,
And set yourself dead straight
You will find your affairs all right side up,
With nothing to blame on fate.

Now, the best of us in our time and place
Get off the track in a way,
And we yield to the world and flesh—ah yes—
To the devil himself, some day.
But the moment comes when we see the glow
Of the right shine clear and whole;
And, oh, how eager we are to turn
And re-establish the soul!

Just as sure as we do it, men,
As we look on the truth's pure face,
And cry to the false gods luring us,
That there is no life but grace—
That instant full on our hearts there falls
The balm of a peace unknown,
And all comes right and we find the dark
And the night and doom have flown.

Just as sure as we stand up straight
As the Lord intended again;
Just as sure as we catch our breath
And are men with the strength of men—
Just as sure as we leave the dark
And live right with God.
The things gone wrong will all come right
Wherever we have to plod.

—Baltimore Sun.

DESICCATED WISDOM.

Upon the principle of give and take
Some persons easily contrive to live.
They do the taking; no complaint they make
So long as others give.

Try not to look the fool. One's outward show
Not always is deceptive, you should know.

Courtship is the prospectus; marriage soon
Results in an insolvent honeymoon.

For lack of courage from that road to stray,
Some men plod down the straight and narrow way.—New York Globe.

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