

"THE GREAT DEBATE." Election is at hand and you should read it. FREE with the Gazette one year.

OFFICIAL SEMI-WEEKLY PAPER Heppner Gazette.

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SIXTEENTH YEAR HEPPNER, MORROW COUNTY, OREGON, FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1898. NO. 658

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STRANDED. By LUE VERNON.

They left San Francisco in high spirits, for a tour of the "Northwestern" circuit, and the members of the small repertory company were as jolly and lively a crowd of theatrical people as one would wish to meet.

Each and every member of the organization seemed much pleased, and glad to know that for a while at least the noise, bustle and clamor, even of dear old "Frisco", would be left behind.

It was in the golden summer time, and all nature was arrayed in her loveliest colors and toilet. For to one who has been accustomed to the hot, sweltering days, and the warm and sultry nights of some of the large Eastern cities, with their cloud-reaching buildings, a summer spent on the Pacific coast means to that individual, peace, comfort and happiness.

The mad rush to the Klondike gold fields was at its height, and thousands of people were crowded in every spot between San Francisco and Seattle. Every hotel and lodging-house was jammed full of northern-bound gold hunters, who were awaiting to get passage on the boats, but as a matter of fact this was a difficult task to accomplish, as every available space that would accommodate the form of a man, on the steamers, had been sold weeks ahead of a handsome price.

Still the goldseeker's loss of time was the business man's gain, as naturally, while waiting for their chance to go north, they would spend money. So this is how the proprietor and manager of the little dramatic company figured he could make a few dollars for himself. He would organize this "snap" company—so he called it—and play all the small towns along the coast as far north as Skagway, then jump them, for this was his intention, as was learned afterwards.

"People are coming," he said, "from every known part of the universe and will— as the saying goes—have money to burn. After purchasing their 'outfit' for the long and difficult journey over the ice and snow-capped mountains, and waiting for the boat, or rather their chance to go, will very naturally seek for amusement at cheap prices, and I will get my share of the goldhunters' money. And, as there is no such word as 'fail' in my dictionary, I am more than confident that 'Hayes' New York Theater Company' will do the banner business on the coast this season. I am so sure of success that I have got every dollar that I possess into my attraction, and I will be sure to come out winner in the end.

Everything went well for a time, and the show seemed to be doing nicely. Business was splendid, and the much-advanced "man in white" appeared promptly each week, dressed in his best suit of clothes.

Though, as it may appear, not a quarrel had been recorded among the members, as yet. Angry words had not even been heard, something remarkable in a company of theatrical players, and it was noticed, and formed the subject of much conversation from the "heavy" man down to "prop", as to how each member of the company tried to outdo the other in making it pleasant and agreeable for the other.

This is mentioned for the reason that it is very seldom, indeed, if at all, that a theatrical company, either local or traveling, dwell together in strict peace and harmony as did the members of this dramatic troupe. For, as the public well know, in most theatrical companies it is a continuous series of quarrels and disagreements from the commencement of the season until the close. And even then it does not always end. For in several well remembered cases the members of a company kept up the fight or quarrel in the newspapers after the attraction had disbanded for the season, until the editors of the respective journals became disgusted and ended the war of words by refusing further "space" to the principals.

But I stray from what I set out to tell. Bright prospects and good business was not to last always; clouds of adversity began to spread over the manager's horizon, things were not turning out so rosy and bright for himself as he had "looked" it.

For some reason, why, no one could say, business began to fall off and night after night the curtain would roll up to empty benches. Then shortly the "man in white" was seen no more, the salaries were six weeks behind, and it was known that the show could not hold together much longer, so the manager had lost all the money he had put into the business, he had no more, and what was still worse, from some cause or other, perhaps best known to himself, could get no more, and it seemed as though fate itself had marked them out for revenge and to bring them to disaster.

Trouble was to store for them, and they now wished that they were back again in "Frisco", even with its noise, bustle and clamor. Still they did not complain, thinking and hoping the manager would get back home in some way, at least.

could not pay expenses, and realizing, no doubt, by this time that he had overlooked the word "fail" in his dictionary, skipped out with the few paltry dollars he had taken in—like the Arab, he had silently folded his tent and stolen away—leaving the company without a dollar, among strangers, and far from their homes.

When it was known for a fact that he had hurried away and left them penniless, a consultation was held by the performers to see what could be done and what was the best thing to do under the existing circumstances. They had weathered the season together, and came to the conclusion that it would be better for all concerned to try and hold together and work their way back to San Francisco, if possible.

They had been playing standard drama in country town halls all summer and now it was close on to the holiday season of the year—Christmas time. But as it appeared now, the day of "good cheer" would not be one of great happiness or of pleasure for the little company of discouraged players.

Still they struggled along in the best manner possible, they meandered from village to village, from town to town, just making enough in one place to get to another, but try as they would, do what they may, luck was against them, business grew worse and worse, and on Christmas Eve it seemed they must disband.

One of the members said: "If we hold out and can keep together a little longer perhaps we may get through somehow or other," and they all agreed with him, and with bright hopes of the morrow's big haul, it caused them to be anxious to reach the next "stand". Having no money with which to pay their railroad fare, the only thing they could do was to walk, in order to reach the next town.

The landlord at the hotel where they had been stopping finding out that they were financially embarrassed, placed an attachment on their trunks and baggage for their board bill, which they could not pay, thus leaving them without what little "wardrobe" they did possess.

Their trunks and baggage had been stowed away down in the deep, dark cellar of the "Crazy Horse" hotel. The proprietor had been heard to remark that "actor fellows" were a bad lot, and if the opportunity presented itself they would steal their trunks out of the house and he did not propose to let them have their "city made chests"—as he called them—until they had liquidated their board bill in full.

Nothing daunted, they started out and reached the next town, where they intended giving a performance as the bells chimed Christmas Day. They were planning as they trudged along the railroad track what they would do with the money they would make during the holiday week, thinking, with receipts big, that they could soon square up their debts and send for the baggage that had been attached, then, as the comedian said, "We'll be playing on velvet, and if we are moneyless, and wear patched clothes, we may have a streak of good business after all and have the stereotyped regulation run of 'one hundred and fifty nights', do a banner business and be compelled to hang out the 'S. R. O.' sign every night at 8.30, and then, my boys, if this comes true, we won't do a thing, see? Just have a hot time in the old town tonight, and live on the sunny side of East street."

After arriving at the town, the members of the company were to meet with disappointment and a sorrow that they would remember until their dying day. They started immediately to find the hall where they could give a performance, but their hopes were speedily shattered, for the ungentle, any limb of the law, designated as "marshal" of the village, who was neither courteous, civil, or even for that matter, polite, rudely informed them in his pompous Chesterfieldian way, that a law had been recently made which demanded a theatrical license fee of \$50, and, as if wishing to make the members of the unlucky company feel as miserable as possible, took it on himself to say that this law had been put into effect for the sole purpose of driving out the "cheap poor actors", as the good people thought it only right to vote this high license, so they would keep away from the town.

A performance could not be thought of. There was not \$10 among the company, and to even think of trying to raise the amount of the license fee, was well, it was entirely out of the question.

A terrific snow storm had set in, and the comedian volunteered to go and see the landlord of the only hotel in the place, and see if he would allow them to remain over night at his house. He explained the situation as to their financial condition, to him, while the rest of the company were standing on the platform at the depot awaiting his return.

His mission of charity was in vain, as the proprietor informed him that if they had no money to pay their way, they could not stay at his house, storm, or no storm. To all entreaties of the comedian he turned a deaf ear, and it was with a sad heart that he returned to the little crowd of brother performers and told them of his unsuccessful mission.

ROYAL BAKING POWDER Absolutely Pure

mas day, and were thinking of the dear ones at home. Think of this. On Christmas day, when kindness and charity is supposed to rule the hour, and "do unto others" is the golden rule, to be denied shelter, food, or a place to lay your weary head, turned out in the midst of one of the most terrific snowstorms in the memory of the oldest inhabitant on the Pacific coast.

The kind hearted agent at the little station invited them to come into the "waiting-room" and stay the night, he would keep a warm fire for them and told them he was only sorry that he could not give them free passage to their homes, but it was not in his power to do so, either officially or financially. Still, they were more than welcome to sit in the depot, keep warm, and make themselves as comfortable as possible, under the circumstances.

The company held another consultation, and it was to the effect that they should take the road that night for the next town, which was ten miles distant. When they made their intentions known to the agent, that they would try and walk to the next place, he insisted that they were foolish to undertake it as they never could reach their destination, in the teeth of the fearful storm that was now raging. But they could not remain there.

So in the face of the bleak storm they started, discouraged, hungry, and foot-sore. They were just passing the brilliantly lighted church, which was decorated with beautiful flowers, pot plants, and colored lights in tribute to Him, of whom it is said "loves even you", but which seemed hollow mockery to this little stranded troupe—when suddenly, with a cry of misery and despair the "heavy" man, faint with exhaustion, worn out from exposure and privation, fell at the costly stained glass door of the church.

The members went to his assistance and tried to help him upon his feet, but alas, it was no use, for in the soft pale light, streaming through those grand arched windows, out on the spotless snow, thrown by the brilliant colored gas jets in the church, it was seen that his life was ebbing fast away, and this added to their troubles, filled completely, their cup of bitterness and sorrow to the brim.

Inside the choir sang fervently "Peace and Good Will Towards Men" while through the "heavy" man's brain the words and music dreamily floated as his thoughts went back again to the fifth floor of a tenement house, on a side street in San Francisco, far away, where he knew a woman and two little children were hungry this Christmas day, and in his weary brain he imagined he heard the little ones say: "Oh, mamma, if papa was here we would have candy and toys, like the other little boys and girls, wouldn't we mamma, dear? And then the mother's reply, 'Your father is working to send you some,' said the sad woman through a tear.

"Can you come on with us, Frank," said the comedian in a trembling voice. "No, boys. My end is near. I tried to stay with you, but I could go no farther. The curfew of life will soon fall on me, rang down by nature's stage manager, who rules us all. If you ever reach 'Frisco', tell Mary, my wife, that I said 'hello' to her and the children, and tell the babies to be good, and always mind their mother. That's all—boys—I am sleepy."

He was dead. The sermon was over, the closing prayer was said while heads were bowed. On the steps outside a form lay still. With a snow-drift for a shroud. For a "white-winged" angel with icy breath had whiskered "come with me" To a land where stranded actors rest And they charge no license fee.

The news of the sudden death of one of the "actor" men, spread rapidly over the little town, and it seemed as if the pathetic occurrence had affected the hearts of the citizens, for they provided a place for the remainder of the company to sleep and eat, and showered kindness and heartfelt sympathy upon them. The comedian said: "The world seemed to have suddenly emerged from darkness to gleaming sunlight."

A grand benefit was tendered them by the citizens, assisted by the company, and it was a golden harvest. The entire receipts were handed to the company which enabled them to send the remains of their brother performer to San Francisco for burial, recover their trunks and baggage, and procure for each one a ticket home.

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