

BEING A PLAY ACTOR MAN GREAT SPORT FOR FISHER

Parent of Mutt and Jeff Tells His Friend Ashton Stevens of Chicago Something of His Brief Stage Career



(Editor's Note: While Bud Fisher was on his vacation recently, thereby making great trouble for the editors of the various papers that publish his Mutt and Jeff series, he appeared for a week in vaudeville in Chicago. It was there he met an old San Francisco friend—Ashton Stevens, dramatic critic of the Chicago Examiner. Mr. Stevens at once called upon Bud, with the following result, which appeared August 28 in the Chicago Examiner. It will give the readers of the Mail Tribune an insight into the life of Mr. Fisher, as he appears in vaudeville.)

BY ASHTON STEVENS.

"Hello, old California!" I cried to the parent of Mutt and Jeff, who is spending a week of his month's vacation as an actor man at the Majestic.

"Sassa! Don't spring that Golden Gate stuff here!" And Bud Fisher was almost solemn.

"Why not? Are you ashamed of the old spot?"

"No! It isn't that. It's—it's—well it's this way: I'm a Californian by reputation, but I was born right here."

"In Chicago?"

"Sure, in Chicago. Why don't you ask me how I like the city, and all that sort of regular interview thing? I've got answers to make Chicago glad she here me—if she can stand my act tomorrow."

"How do you dress for it?"

"I don't. I wear a sack suit like this, only darker; but if I hear the governor or the mayor is coming to look me over I will get my Tuxedo spangled and pressed."

"How do you like the work as far as you've gone—from Hammerstein's to Brighton Beach?"

"Don't for the love of Mike, call this work. I'm on a vacation!"

"Well, then how do you like your vaudeville VACATION?"

Calls It Great Sport.

"It's fascinating; it's sport; it's excitement. You get out there on the stage and don't do anything, but by the time you get off you're worn out. Of course, to be a regular vaudeville actor you've got to come off crying at the audience. You've got to say 'What an awful house tonight, and last night I went so big. You ought to hear 'em—the regulars.'"

"Let me hear 'em!"

"You ought to stick around behind when a man and wife have done their turn. It's great! 'You did yours wrong,' says he. 'I didn't; you did yours wrong,' says she. 'Shut up,' says he. 'Shut up yourself.' And they close the door of their dressing room and go to it."

"Do they ever bother you for being an outlander?"

"Not largely," said Bud. "Not greatly. But—say, did you ever hear of a vaudeville hero named J. Francis Dooley?"

"Worse than that, I've seen him."

"But you never dressed with him. I have. He liked to have a room away from his wife, who is particular; and he asked me if I'd take him in. I was tickled to death—for I hate to talk to myself anyway."

"Well," Fisher went on, "Dooley had an auto and so had I—ground climbing is good enough for me. We kept our machines in the same garage, and one night I ran out of batteries and borrowed three of his. Dooley volunteering, you understand. Batteries cost 15 cents apiece, and the usual regular person would as soon think of returning a battery as a cigar. I don't return cigars, and I didn't return Dooley's 45 cents' worth of battery. And just for that he made an assault and battery on me."

"Really?"

Just One of His Jokes.

"No; not really. That's comic stuff I've learned in vaudeville. My act came just ahead of Dooley's, and at every performance he'd go on and burlesque me. He'd draw a sketch in the air and say to the audience: 'Who is that great actor we have just had with us tonight? Ah, yes, I recall—it's the immortal Fisher. He's a genius actor, but he has no memory for borrowed batteries.'"

"And here's the rub of the story. On the final matinee, I am in the wings and Dooley calls out to me from the stage: 'Actor Fisher, this is the end of the week, and you's better get me my batteries before night! Then he told the audience the whole story and got a big laugh on my expense account."

"But"—and Bud Fisher, a little dark-haired chap with eyes that sing when they laugh, laughed—"I gave him back his batteries. I waited till the last night's show. From the wings I listened to his monologue

about the borrowed batteries. I let him finish it. I let him go half way with his song. And then, plum in the midsection of his singing, I walk out to the center of the stage and hand him his three batteries. Nobody heard the balance of that song. It was muffled by the roars of the audience. They howled."

"Did anything like that happen when you opened at Hammerstein's?"

"Nervous as a Turkey."

"Worse; vastly worse. I was as nervous as a tender turkey the day before Thanksgiving. I was whist-

ling behind the stage to keep my shoes from freezing. Somebody took a pipe at me and says, 'For the love of Michael, you're not going on without being made up!' I was dressing—rooming with a fellow named Gene Green, and he undertook the job. He made me look like himself. I had rouge to the ears. He even 'beaded' my eyes. I wiped it all off and took a hand on myself, when along came a blackface comedian—Haines, of Haines and Video—and he says: 'You're all made up like a villain; that'll never do.' So he repaints the face. And just as he finishes Belle

Blanche turns up and says I'm too light for that makeup, and Belle proceeds to decorate my optic region with a smear that I think is called juvenile blue.

"Thus properly fixed," groaned Bud, "I went out to the footlights. And believe me, if my name hadn't been printed in the programme, I would have passed as Consul, the monkey."

"Didn't you have any real friendly advice?"

"Sure," he twinkled—"after that first show was over. This is what I got handed to me: 'Your act was all

right Bud, but why didn't you go on and do it straight, without that comedy makeup.'

Some Fisher Philosophy.

"A man's best friend is himself—in vaudeville," Mr. Fisher philosophized. "Although I was once a friend to a fellow artist. We won't name no names. But we were together in the bill at Hammerstein's, and he drank—that is to say, he dived in the stuff with eyes and mouth wide open. Talk about drowning yourself in drink! This fellow must have had a cork suit. But he was always on the job; and always getting it hot from the manager. The manager would say to him: 'You'll have to work faster; your act is flopping, they're walking out on you.'"

"Well, to cut it to three-column measure, one night my friend Mr. Thirst got so mussy that a cop pinched him. I saw him as they started him for the Forty-seventh street station house."

"Come along, Bud," he yells, 'I may need some bail.' I went and I went his bail. And to be sure he wouldn't blow his bail I went down to the court with him next morning. And take it from me he was the sickest actor that ever had his hose on. He was dying while you waited. And the judge, he starts in to give the lecture course—how a man of his talents and appearance shouldn't behave like a common bum—and all the rest of the daily bunk, till of a sudden my friend Thirst lifted his sick face up to the judge's and he says:

"Listen, judge: You'll have to work faster; your act is flopping; they're walking out on you!"

Talk of Mutt and Jeff.

Fisher joined with my laughter; his eyes batted sparks. He that makes the nation laugh can also laugh himself.

And when it was over I pried him for something about his regular profession, his Mutt and his Jeff. I asked him if he ever got stale and cried for help and suggestion.

"I get stale often enough," he answered, not at all like an actor, "but I never accept help. When a man does that he loses his personality."

"When you finish one adventure of Mutt and Jeff, do you follow right along with another idea?"

"Nope I forget 'em till 5 the next afternoon, when I tune up a couple of cigarettes, think over three or four

ideas, pick out the best of 'em, draw it, put on my hat and walk blissfully away. My best idea may not be a good one, but it is the best I have, and I do my best with it."

"I say to myself that it's the best I can do that day, even if it is rotten. No man can invent this sort of foolery day after day and keep his work even. Sometime a fellow's as sick as a dog and he has to buckle down to a desk and try to make the people laugh. Maybe just got some bad news—bad news from home—a crusher. But he's got to go on just the same and try to club a smile out of the public. I broke three ribs in a machine and for three days I had a drawing board on my knees in bed, grinding out Mutt and Jeff."

Questions Bore Him.

"But broken ribs aren't half so bad as the questions people ask you. Always, inevitably, they are the same questions."

"Give me," said I, "a few of those choice bromides." And thus he gave:

"How did you hit on the idea?"

"When, ditto?"

"Did you know somebody like Mutt and Jeff, or did you just make 'em up?"

"I've got a little boy at home who can draw a Mutt that you couldn't tell from one of your own." And so on.

"Do you ever work ahead?"

"Nope, never get up a supply. It might not last to the market. I do 'em day by day, according to the pulse of the people."

"Do you get a hand on that?"

"Sure. I feel the public's pulse. I know, perhaps better than any one else, when the stuff is bad. But I also know when I put one over. And I say to myself: 'That got over good; let's give 'em some more like that tomorrow.'"

"Where did you study art, Bud?"

"Are you trying to Dooley me? I never borrowed your batteries."

"Didn't you ever go to an art school?"

"Nope."

"Didn't you ever study drawing any way?"

"Only in the show business. I never was passed in drawing when I went to public school here in Chicago. I don't know what drawing means. I—if you get me—I try to make 'em doing what I want 'em doing."

I think I got him.

DR. WALKER, ONE OF WORLD'S UNIQUE WOMEN, DRESSES AS MAN



DR. WALKER, BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR, WEARING A VELVET SHIRTEE.

Dr. Maary Walker, in Public Eyes For Many Years, Continues To Take A Keen Interest in Public Affairs.

One of the world's unique women is Dr. Mary Walker, of Oswego, N. Y., now living in what might be called retirement when her past prominence in the public eye is considered. Attired in a man's frock coat, man's trousers, wearing a man's silk hat, and carrying a man's cane, Dr. Mary Walker was once a leading topic of discussion, when she was touring the country and lecturing upon the proper dress for women. Dr. Walker did not dress for notoriety's sake. She dressed as she did because she believed that such was the proper way for women to dress and she so believes today.



DR. WALKER IN HER FIRST PRINCE ALBERT COAT.



DR. WALKER AS SHE APPEARED IN NEW YORK IN HER LAST PLATFORM ADDRESS.

She had the courage of her conviction and was willing to pay the cost. It has been many years since her name first became famous, and it has also been many years since she ceased to try to inculcate her views. Her mind today, however, is as bright as ever, and she continues to take

the keenest interest in all public affairs.

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