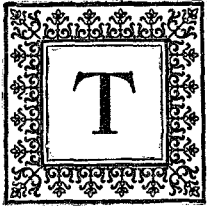


The One-Night Stand

SOME MEMORIES OF A LOCAL MANAGER

BY CHARLES NEWTON HOOD

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM EARLY PROGRAMMES



THE typical "one-night stand" of the old days is practically a thing of the past.

I had neglected to appreciate it until I chanced to glance over the "routes"

and the "correspondence" in a dramatic publication the other day. I mean the "one-night stand" of the funny "cracks," the "one-night stand" of tradition; the village hall, "opera" house, or Memorial Theatre in the town of 4,500 to 7,000 population of the latter part of the recent century, its management and the traveling combinations which paused for an evening to furnish the weekly thrill.

The moving pictures, the high railroad fares, and the excessive expense of everything connected with the outfitting of an attraction which can compete with the moving picture as an evening's entertainment for the people of the moderate-sized town have entirely changed the business, and the "one-night stand" of humorous memory is no more.

For twenty years, from 1890 until 1910, I was one of the managers of a typical "one-night-stand" theatre; I fancy that I was pretty nearly, also, a typical manager. I remember our start. The management of the "opera-house" had been relinquished because the local manager's beautiful bass voice had attracted the attention of a comic-opera director, who had offered a salary which seemed princely in comparison with the precarious income and risks incident to "one-night-stand" management, so my chum and I "hired the hall." I was working in my father's shoe-store, my chum was working in his father's grocery-store, but our incomes from these efforts were so far below our desires that we had decided to take up,

as a firm, and as "side-lines," so to speak, everything which did not require capital or undivided attention.

Local correspondence for city dailies was our first venture, then we secured the agency for several insurance companies, fire, life, and accident, and then we assumed the management of the "opera-house."

Our opening attraction was Estelle Clayton in "On the Hudson"—the one adventure into the legitimate of Hi Henry, the minstrel man. The gross receipts were \$226.72. Our share, at 75 per cent and 25 per cent, was \$56.68. Our expenses were \$28.50, and we were promptly wedded to the management for many years. Subsequently we bought out the local bill-poster and his billboards and hired him to work for us, managed the local lyceum courses, started a modest daily paper, and otherwise made ourselves more and more typical local managers of the time.

I knew a lot of local managers in those days. Two of them were editors of local weekly papers, one was a clothing merchant, another was the landlord of a village hotel, another was the lessee of the "opry-houses" in four towns, and let that suffice to keep him engaged, and a lot of them were head officers of their villages, and so, ex officio, were obligated to deal with the troupers that played "The Town Hall To-night," and so on.

The end of the "one-night stand" came into sight when, in villages all over the land, proprietors of feed-stores and the like who were not doing too well and had heard what had happened at Salamanca, N. Y. (where the first permanent moving-picture "store show" was established and proved a paying venture), closed out their stocks, bought some undertaker's chairs, a white sheet, and a projecting-machine, and began collecting dime admissions.

Anybody became a manager, and it was a business by itself and not a sideline. "Previous experience unnecessary." In a little while the picture business had prospered and big first-floor theatres replaced the converted feed-stores, and the old town halls on second and third floors

dance, a church fair, or a rival entertainment by local talent.

The evening of the week when the stores were open and trading was general and the merchants and their employees engaged must be avoided, and a successful revival meeting would almost invariably knock business. One of the drawbacks and yet one of the beauties of the show business is that at ten o'clock every night the manager knows whether he has made or lost and how much. There are no goods left on the shelves, which may be worked off successfully another day, and every admission paid after the expenses are met is clear profit. And when you stop to think that we had to appeal in one theatre to all of the various tastes which required, even in a moderate-sized city, at least three or four houses catering to different patronage, our booking problems were not our smallest.

In those days there were certain attractions which came to the same towns every year. (Our house was in a New York State town.) Howorth's "Hibernica" was one of them. A panorama of painted pictures of Ireland, on a huge strip of canvas, which was passed from roll to roll, across the back of the stage, while a lecturer described the scenes. "I will now take you on a tour through the Lakes of Killarney—upper, middle, and lower lakes." He would snap his fingers, the assistants would turn the cranks, the orchestra would play "Killarney," and many in the audience would be enjoying the old scenes for the eighth or tenth time. Occasionally, between scenes, dancers of Irish jigs and various other "specialties," as they were called in those days, would be introduced, and, altogether, it was a pretty satisfactory show and always drew a good house in the smaller-sized towns.

Tony Farrell in "The Irish Corporal" was another regular, the drama being frequently changed, but it always had about the same plot. Then there were Gorman Brothers' and Hi Henry's Minstrels and always from one to three "Uncle Tom's Cabin" companies, with band and orchestra and a parade. It was amazing how

SEASON 1899-1900.

FOURTH BIG YEAR

—OF—

CONTINUOUS SUCCESS

...OF...

DENMAN THOMPSON and GEO. W. RYER'S
BEAUTIFUL PLAY

The Sunshine of Paradise Alley

WRITTEN FOR THE PEOPLE WHO ENJOYED
THE OLD HOMESTEAD.



THE GREAT EAST RIVER DOCK SCENE,
With the Illuminated Painting of Brooklyn Bridge.

were left unused or remodelled for storage or business.

Whether the villages have been the gainers I hardly want to say. I fancy that they have, on the whole, as I look over the list of attractions which we played in those twenty years, but it was an interesting period in many ways. About one show a week was considered perfect booking in a town of 4,500 to 7,000. Our town was 5,500. The towns of this size would stand one a week, but not more, profitably, and the bookings had to be pretty well spaced at that. The greatest care had to be taken that the weekly booking did not conflict with some other big local attraction—a large

"Tom shows" never seemed to fail of business. I suppose that in those twenty years I played in our house not less than forty "Uncle Tom's Cabin" companies, and we never lost money on an engagement.

One "Uncle Tom" show came to us without a Little Eva. The child was sick and could not work and could not be replaced on short notice.

"What can you do?" I asked. "You can't play Tom without a Little Eva any more than you could without an Uncle Tom or a Topsy."

"Easiest thing in the world," announced the manager. "Just watch me. You never can stump a Tom manager." And this is what he did. He simply slipped over to a neighboring town and borrowed a little girl who was of the right age and, of course, unknown to our people, dressed her up in the clothes of the missing child actress, coached her in keeping her lips more or less in motion when she was supposed to be speaking, and the show went on.

When Little Eva was on the stage she was always stationed rather close to the wings, and a woman actor off-stage spoke her lines in a loud pitched voice, while the child, always with some other actor near her, merely made her lips move, when she didn't forget it. It was amazing how the subterfuge got away with the situation. In the death-scene of Little Eva, the child merely lay on the cot, which had draperies reaching to the floor, and the actress who was literally her "under-study" had crawled under the cot before the curtain went up, and the touching lines of the death-scene were delivered with even more than the usual effect.

In the scene where Uncle Tom talks to Little Eva about her angelic visions, earlier in the play, as she stands leaning against his knees, the dialogue goes something like this: "I see angels bright and fair, Uncle Tom."

"Whar, Miss Eva? I don't see dem."

"Why, up there, Uncle Tom, can't you see them, up there?" Which would have been beautifully pathetic

if the voiceless and considerably embarrassed little girl had not been nervously exploring one of her nostrils, at the moment, with an investigative little finger.

In those simple days when the best prices that we could get were "25, 35 and 50 cents, with a few extra choice seats at 75 cts., *Positively none higher*," it was absolutely necessary that all expenses be kept at the minimum, and one of the most perplexing expenses was the orchestra. For a time we solved this by paying the leader one dollar per performance, and

Bent's Opera House

COOPER & HOOD, Managers

Wednesday Oct. 22, 1902

Vance, Sullivan Co. Present

HER MARRIAGE VOW

By Owen Davis

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Ned Benton, a telegraph operator.....Gray B. Towler
Bill Walters, engineer of No. 7.....Wm. Finney
John Carlton, son of the railroad supe'd't.....Harold Mordaunt
Larry Leary, fireman of No. 7.....Arthur Snyder
Daffy Dan, not such a fool as he looks.....Raymond Capp
Eben Chubb, postmaster and storekeeper.....James T. Malone
Bull Burke, a loafer.....James M. Terence
Jencks, keeper of the asylum.....James Briggs
Kate Walters, Bill's daughter.....Anna Laying
Hester Norton, a woman of society.....Katharn Stanton
Almira Walters, Bill's sister.....Ada Sherman
Maggie Claire, her niece.....Madeline Clark

SYNOPSIS.

ACT I.

Bill Walter's Home

ACT II.

Kate's apartment in Boston. Six months later.

ACT III.

The railroad crossing at Highhead.

ACT IV.

Scene 1—Same as Act 1.

(One minute wait)

Scene 2—Same as Act 3.

Election Night.

FULL RETURNS and a BIG SHOW.

Col. C. H. Rose's Comedians. Large company of High Class Artists giving the best Specialty Show on the road.

Full election returns, by special wires, read from the stage as fast as received.

Come and have a good time and hear the result.

Admission 25 cents.

D. J. Benson, Printer, 544 Main

allowing him to recruit as large an orchestra as he liked with the privilege of seeing the show free from the orchestra pit, in return for their best efforts. Sometimes, for a particularly good show we would have ten or twelve in the orchestra, most of them doing their best—at least none of them was ever shot—but we strongly suspected that some close, but non-musical, friends of the leader were allowed to borrow brass instruments and help as much as they could with corks in the mouthpieces. In fact, the story of how one overture was spoiled by corks slipping out of a trombone and a tuba is tradition among the members of that old orchestra.

One of our bill-posters played a cornet in the local band and on show nights he helped out in the orchestra. That season McLean and Prescott were playing a Shakespeare repertoire and filled in an open date at our house, giving "Richard III." Of course, being a company playing pretty big city time, they were good sports, and put up with our meagre facilities, as high-class people always do in every profession.

"We need," said the stage-director, "a trumpeter in the last act, scene IV, for a flourish. Have you a cornet-player in the orchestra who could handle it?"

"Why, yes," I said. "I think so, if you can make him understand what a 'flourish' is." So I called the bill-poster.

"We want," said the stage-manager, "something that sounds like a flourish of trumpets, just before the last scene of the last act, but I guess we can get along with one trumpet, and a cornet will do for that. Do you understand?"

"Why, no. Not exactly."

"What we want is for you to blow a 'flourish.' The scene opens, you know, with 'alarums and excursions,' something to give a martial touch."

"Oh, yes, I understand. Sure I can do it."

"You're sure that you understand?"

"Certainly. I've done it before, back of the scenes."

The play went pretty well and Mr. McLean and Miss Prescott were very much pleased. The cornetist duly appeared behind the scenes and McLean as Richard was ready, in the wings, for the "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a

horse," lines. The drop changed. "Now!" exclaimed the nervous stage-manager. "Quick, something martial!" The trumpeter raised the cornet to his lips, and Richard strode out onto fateful Bosworth Field to the strains of "Marching through Georgia," faultlessly played on a b-flat cornet by the best bill-poster who ever mismatched a twenty-four-sheet stand.

Occasionally in the old days what were called "Medicine Shows" would rent the theatre for one or two week stands. They had fanciful Indian names like the Katonka Comedy Company, the Kickapoo Dramatic Company, and the like, the Indian name being also the name of the medicine, and derived from the tribe which discovered the remedy. Admission was free. There would be several versatile, hard-working specialty people who could "*change their act nightly for one or two weeks if necessary*," a long-distance piano-player, and sometimes a small band and orchestra, in which case the most of the stage people would be expected to "double in brass" for the band concert on the four corners at noon and as the doors opened.

Sandwiched between the acts, Doctor Charlie, or Doctor Wankipoo, the long-haired manager of the outfit, would give a short lecture on health and medicine, particularly the nostrum the company had to sell. Sometimes he would draw a few teeth on the stage, free of charge. It was amazing how really expert some of these men became at this art. They had their reputations at this in the "profession" the same as a song-and-dance man or a "glass-eater." I have seen one of them draw as many as forty-five teeth in one evening—more than all the dentists in the village would have a chance at in a week. Then, for "exactly five minutes, no more, gentlemenly young men will pass through the audience" with the medicine, the doctor standing on the stage and holding the watch. It was amazing, at least after the first night, what gallons of the stuff would be sold.

I don't hear anything of these outfits of late years, at least in the East. A funny thing happened at one of these entertainments. I have printed this

once before, a good many years ago, in *Puck*, but it is funny enough to repeat, and true. One of the poor, hard-working specialty men had gotten pretty well out of gags by the latter part of the second week and he was grinding, frequently with water which had passed several times. One evening after springing some jokes which had become too familiar to the regular patrons, somebody hissed. The actor promptly stepped out of his part and down to the footlights. "When I come before this audience this evening, I supposed that it was composed of ladies and gentlemen—but I see there's *one man* here that ain't."

The thing, next to the orchestra and the free list, which caused us more annoyance than anything else was the "Property List." Now, there are two sorts of properties for stage productions, "perishable" and "imperishable." The "perishable properties" are such things as:

- 1 bottle sarsaparilla (for use as wine, Act III).
- Glass pitcher and three plates (to break).
- Loaf of bread (Scene I, Act II).
- Plate of crackers.

Possibly these last were for the refined comedian to fill his mouth with and then be seized with a spasm of coughing.

All of these should, properly, be furnished by the company, although sharp road managers in the old days used to have both sorts loaded on the local manager in the fine print of the contract, and it was before we learned to erase "perishable" that the stranded road company which walked in (of which I have also told in print a good many years ago) interpolated a modest banquet scene, in the first act, which called for crackers, cheese, pickles, sardines, "practical" milk, etc., all of which we furnished, the entire strength of the company appearing in the scene. It was the most realistic banquet I ever saw on the stage.

"Imperishable properties" are things like

- 2 old-fashioned muskets, Sc. 2, Act 4 (very important).
- 1 fancy centre-table with spread.
- Bundle of newspapers.

JOSHUA SIMPKINS

Companion Play to "The Old Homestead."

◆ **NO DULL MOMENTS!** ◆
Something Entertaining Going On All The While.



A fitting finish to four acts of Good, Clean, Comedy is the

FUNNY COUNTRY DANCE

Which brings the performance to an end and sends Big Laughing Crowds away Happy.

ENJOY YOURSELF WHILE ALIVE!
YOU WILL BE A LONG TIME DEAD.

OPERA HOUSE

MEDINA

ONE NIGHT

WEDNS.,

Prices 25, 35, 50cts.

JAN. 21

Cabinet organ, off stage (to imitate church organ, Act I, Sc. 3).

Several legal documents.

Pile of paper boxes.

2 prs. handcuffs (practical).

1 tinsmith's charcoal furnace (practical).

Bass drum and thunder sheet and glass crash. Last act.

It may be imagined that the property boy's day was a miserable one. We used to give regular passes to a furniture store,

a hardware and a second-hand shop for favors rendered, and even then the town had to be scoured for something unusual every show day.

Once, one of the property boys came to me and said: "I got most of the stuff. The heavy port-i-er-rias for the centre door fancy I'll have to get up to your house, and the liveryman wants three passes for the 'two buggy cushions and the three whips for musket-fire, Act II,' but I've hunted all over town for this here brickbrack and I can't find one. I don't believe there's one in the hull village. They'll have to get along with just a plain brick."

Early in our experience we were offered, for a flat fee of fifty dollars, a concert of chamber-music by the New York Philharmonic Club, a rather well-known quartet of high-class musicians. Already I had begun to know the possibilities in a business way of my town, and I couldn't see the chance for a profit. My partner, George Cooper, was very much interested in music. He played the flute pretty well and was always talking about opuses, and *allegros* and *andantes* and things like that, and he was for giving the town a treat and incidentally hearing the concert himself. So I had an inspiration and I said: "I'll tell you how to fix it. I don't take much interest in attractions of this sort, but I'll turn the house over to you for the night and you can have all that you can make for yourself, besides the prestige of bringing such a high-class thing here. Bill it 'Mr. George E. Cooper presents, etc.,' and make it an event."

So that was the way it happened. The gross receipts were \$48.50, and as the expenses of opening the house, advertising, etc., were \$25, Cooper's personal admission was costing him \$26.50, and he had to enjoy the concert quite a lot. And it was a good concert. One of those affairs with two violins, a cello, and a flute, where two artists sit facing two other artists, with their edges toward the audience, and sail into the classical stuff for about seventeen minutes at a time. Most of those who were in the audience knew what they went for and liked it, but one patron, who never missed a show at the

"opry-house," had picked in the dark. "Misery" Masury had paid his money willingly, had taken a front seat and desired amusement.

He lasted through the first number pretty well, a little dazed but game, but when the chamber-musicians had gotten about ninety bars into the next selection, a nocturne, or a second movement, or something, with a whole lot of *pizzicato* stuff and toddle-leedle, toddle-leedle, toddle-leedle—*twee*—and tremolos, etc., "Misery" decided that the joke was on him, and arose noisily and stamped down the centre aisle and out of the door right in the midst of an especially *pp* passage.

I never saw Cooper so really furious. I was acting as door-tender. Cooper followed "Misery" out into the lobby and shouted: "Don't, on any account, let that man back!"

"Misery" turned around and there was a look upon his face as of a man misjudged, misused, and then insulted. "Back!" he exclaimed. "Back!" And then he uttered, with heart-broken emphasis, a single word, the title of the Saviour of all mankind. Not profanely. There was no irreverence in his tone, simply the hopeless expression of a man of small vocabulary who knew that any language at his command would fail of the proper retort, and shaking his head sadly he went down the stairs.

One of our economic perplexities was the question of stage-hands. It was long before the days of the stage-mechanic's unions, and our plan was to pay one man one dollar per night, give him the title of stage-manager, and allow him to select his assistants from among those of his friends who were willing to work gratis, for the sense of importance it gave them being "back stage" and the privilege of seeing the show from the wings, or roosting in various locations in the fly-galleries, etc. Of course this plan was abused, and on nights of especially good shows it was somewhat difficult for the actors to crowd their way on and off the stage.

I remember once Hi Henry remarked, whimsically, that he supposed we did need a good many stage-hands for a show which had only three changes of scene, but we really oughtn't to have as many

helpers as he had minstrels, just for the looks of the thing.

It was the aspiration of many a village youngster to be taken on as a property boy, or something, and when he was, his superior airs were histrionic efforts of real merit. Once Denman Thompson put out a show, as a business venture, in which he did not appear, called "The Sunshine of Paradise Alley." It didn't have much plot, but was a series of interesting character sketches of metropolitan life most artistically done, but it was not very thrilling. At that time a village youngster of about ten or twelve years, very serious-minded, had just succeeded in being taken on as a prop runner. He had been at it about three weeks and of course was a hero among his fellows. The morning after the "Paradise Alley" show he stood, with folded arms, posing in front of the opera-house. Just as I came up behind him a little friend of his, who hadn't succeeded in getting into the show by any hook or crook, came up and asked: "Say, Henry, how was the show?" Henry thought deeply for a moment, and then replied slowly and gravely: "In all my experience on the American stage, it was the very worst I ever saw."

In some of those early years of the "one-night stand," money was not very plentiful, and we adopted many schemes to stir up interest. Occasionally we threw 500 envelopes from the opera-house roof at noon on the day of the opening of the advance sale, in ten of which were orders for free seats. At another time we discharged rockets in various parts of the village, each stick having passes attached. One attraction was advertised by sending up hot-air balloons daily, for a week ahead of the show, with passes enclosed in asbestos envelopes, and each ascension was followed by "chases" of youngsters that would have delighted the heart of an old-fashioned moving-picture director.

The "opry-house" was frequently leased for affairs of every sort, from the annual commencement exercises of the high school to political meetings and local-talent entertainments. Once it was rented for a wrestling-match which nicked the rolls of the sports of a neighboring

village shockingly. Bobby Reakes, and he was a mighty clever man on the mat, had taken up his residence as an athletic instructor in the neighboring town and

BENT'S OPERA HOUSE.

Tuesday Evening, March 8, '98.

STOWE'S BIG SPECTAGULAR.

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN COMPANY

Cast of Characters:

Uncle Tom	Geo. Dorsey
Marks, a Lawyer,	W. H. Davidson
Mr. St. Clair,	Joe Rith
George Harris,	Harry Howard
Simon Legree,	C. L. Jackson
Phineas Fletcher,	John Reeves
Haley,	James S. Barrett
George Shelby,	Will Parker
Skeggs,	W. B. Owen
Sambo,	Joe Jackson
Quimbo,	Dude Kelley
Adolph,	Joe Davis
Harry Harris,	Master Harry
Eliza,	Miss Emma Harrison
Marie St. Clair,	Miss May Johnson
Eva, the angel child,	Little May Dickson
Aunt Ophelia,	Kate Large Davidson
Cassy,	Miss Minnie Oliver
Aunt Chloe,	Mrs. M. Terry
Emeline,	Miss E. Davis
Topsy,	Miss Florence Ackerman

Synopsis:

ACT I—Scene 1. Eliza and Tom. Scene 2. "Good bye, my dear old home." Scene 3. Arrival of Phineas: Tableau. Scene 4. The bloodhounds on the trail. Escape of Eliza on the ice.

Between First and Second Acts "Lone Star Quartette"

ACT II—Scene 1. Phineas and George Harris. Scene 2. Eliza and George united. Scene 3. The rocky pass.

Between Second and Third Acts "Grand Cake Walk"

ACT III—Arrival of St. Clair. Eva, Aunt Ophelia and Tom. Scene 2. Topsy and Eva. Scene 3—Eva and Tom. St. Clair and Eva. Scene 4. Tom waiting for the bridegroom. Scene 5. Death of Eva.

Overture.

ACT IV—Auction sale of St. Clair's slaves. Scene 2. Farewell chorus of slaves. Scene 3. Home of Simon Legree. Whipping of Uncle Tom. Cassy defends Emeline. Marks on Legree's track. Scene 4. George Shelby in search of Uncle Tom. Scene 5. Meeting of Legree and Shelby. Death of Legree by Marks. Scene 7. Grand transformation, Eva in Heaven.

MARCH 11--EDWARD H. FRYE

...IN...

Rip Van Winkle

built up a large following. He had thrown every man he had met and the local sports were backing him to a finish. Finally a match was made with an "unknown," and the bout was pulled off at our theatre as a neutral town. Reakes lost on a foul, or something like that, and his backers lost a lot of money, all of which is a separate story, and is only incidentally connected with this one.

Early in the afternoon Reakes, himself, came up to my insurance office to pay the rental of the opera-house in advance and stayed for a little chat. He was a rather interesting fellow with a million dollars' worth of picturesque language, and I was enjoying it, when who should drop in but the Reverend Mr. Macfarlane, the rector of my church, a most godly man and one of the most punctilious gentlemen I ever knew. I was a little at a loss for a moment, as I didn't want anything awkward, so I hastened to introduce Bobby as a wrestling champion and Doctor Macfarlane as the rector of St. John's Church, so as to have everybody posted right at the start. The doctor spoke gracefully of his admiration for physical training, and the like, chatted for a few moments, finally stating his errand, which was for a slight contribution toward the expense of some Sunday-school affair. I needn't have worried about Bobby. He sat as quiet as a mouse during the call, and rose with much dignity when the rector took his departure. I was curious as to what his comment would be. After the doctor had gone, he stretched himself, as though he had been under something of a strain, yawned slightly, and remarked: "Well, we're all out for the stuff." That was all, and we passed to further discussion of sporting matters.

The funniest performance I ever saw on any stage was a presentation of "Rip Van Winkle" by the Larsen Stock Company, which once played a week stand of rep. at our house. There was a *matinée* for ladies and children on Saturday. The play was "Rip." Just before curtain time the manager, W. H. Wright, came to me and said: "We can't have 'Rip' played to that house." I looked in and saw nearly 400 children, mostly under ten years of age, and a very, very few ladies.

No men at all. It was too late to change the bill, so Wright simply gave orders to change the immortal comedy into a farce. And the actors did it. They surely played horse with it. "Rip" did a song and dance with the gnomes, substituted a pop-gun for the decayed shotgun, and the whole company lost no opportunity to burlesque every line and situation, including the forcing of "Rip" to really eat a "cold potato." Specialties of the most incongruous sort were introduced at every opportunity. The children went into ecstasies of merriment. I remember that in the scene of Rip's return he had pasted his whiskers under his chin, Rube fashion. They seated the old man in a patent rocker, which was in itself a little out of character, and the other actors sought every occasion to tip him suddenly backward in the midst of his most effective speeches with his heels flying in the air, and before that act was over the entire cast joined with Rip in a wild Virginia reel. I have often wondered if, later, when some of those children saw Jefferson, they did not feel that, some way, Joe's version lacked something.

The "opry-house" piano was a tradition in most one-night stands, but I confess that ours was even a little worse than the average. I recall that it was rented, at first, for one dollar and two passes for each performance in which it was used. This ran into so much money at the end of the second season that we bought it outright for twenty-five dollars. So, you see, that was the sort of piano it was, an instrument of some individuality, and was criticised, picturesquely, by some of the best "piano leaders" who visited our town.

One season Marshall P. Wilder and Companion Entertainers toured the country for one of the Lyceum bureaus, and our village was on the route. The advance instructions said, "Piano on the stage," so we combined eight men and eight passes, and got the old box out of the orchestra pit and landed up where the stars shine. Among the "companion entertainers" was John Gilder, quite a wonderful pianist. I believe he was a brother of Richard Watson Gilder. Early in the evening little Wilder came to me

and said: "What are we going to do? When Gilder sees that piano he'll go right up in the air. I'm sure he'll refuse to play on it." "Well," I said, "it's too late to do anything about it now. I think I'll see him before he sees the piano."

When Mr. Gilder arrived at the theatre, I sought him out at once. "Mr. Gilder," I said, with all the horror I could pack into my voice, "I had not noticed early enough that it was a soloist of your prominence who was to play here to-night, and I feel very much cut up about the piano we have to offer for your use, and it is too late now to secure another. Everybody in town is very anxious to hear you play, I find, but I don't know how we can ask you to use such a poor instrument, although I suppose an artist of your skill can do things with instruments which would be impossible to a musician of less ability."

"Let me see the piano," he said.

I led him out behind the curtain to where the veteran was placed on the stage, and he struck one chord on the old box. If you have ever seen the picture called "The False Note," in which an old music-master is giving a piano lesson to an earnest little girl, the expression upon the music-master's face is exactly the same as was the expression shown by Mr. Gilder.

"I don't suppose," I remarked sadly, "that even *you* can do anything with *that*." He was a game sport. I've got to give it to him. "I'll have to play mostly with my fists," he said; "*but we'll not disappoint your people*." And he didn't. "In all my experience on the American stage," I never listened to a more wonderful demonstration of what a real artist can do, even under handicaps, and I remembered the old story of Ole Bull taking the cheap fiddle out of the blind street-musician's hands and performing miracles with it.

The advance agents were not the least of the compensations for running a "one-night stand." They were of every sort and grade of intelligence, education, and ability, but there was hardly one of them who did not furnish us with a little entertainment in our dull and prosy "one-night-stand" lives. I remember the court-

ly gentleman who was in advance of one of the "Alabama" companies who had never heard of the Keeley Cure, then a new thing, and when I explained that it was to take away a person's appetite for liquor, he raised his hands, aghast. "Horrible! Horrible!" he exclaimed. "When there is so little joy in the world, anyway. Why, I wouldn't have my appetite and appreciation of good liquor taken away from me, for— Why! Shocking! Horrible!" And the funny thing about it was that he wasn't joking. He really *was* in earnest, and he really *was* aghast. I have often wondered how he is doing under the 18th Commandment.

Another little agent, a mere youth, the "second man" ahead of a rep. company, was one of the brightest and yet most ignorant little fellows that I ever met. He was a Boston boy and had been brought up in the streets, and into the theatrical business by the way of the "bill rooms" of Boston theatres. There was little about one-night-stand advance work that anybody could tell him, but beyond that his ignorance was sublime. As a little diversion I took him along with me to a *matinée* of one of the earlier picture shows which was featuring the life of Christ, and, do you know, that lad was absolutely ignorant of every item of Bible history. *Every item!* All that he knew of the Bible was a few expletives which have been culled from it from time to time, and his comments as the picture proceeded were terrifying.

I did my best to explain things as well as I could. In the first reel was a series of allegorical pictures intended to typify the Immaculate Conception, and he asked what they meant. "The Saviour," I tried to explain, in the simplest language I knew, "was born of Mary; but he had no earthly father."

"Go on!! Go on!!" was his only comment. He was deeply interested in the miracle of the changing of water into wine. "I knew a fellow in Boston, once, who could do that." I did my best to be a missionary, but I am afraid I made no impression.

As advance agent of a negro musical show which afterward became quite famous was a dapper little colored man who had been educated at Tuskegee. He

was a bright mulatto, but he hadn't a particle of the usual negro humor in his make-up. Born and brought up in Charleston, he was such a contrast to the average Northern nigger that we enjoyed drawing him out.

He took himself very seriously. "One thing," he said, "has been a handicap to me all mah life, and that is the way ah hold a grudge. It makes me uncomfortable and unhappy, but I can't help it. Now, down in Cha'l'ston when ah was a youngstah, there was a boy I grew up with that was the meanest fellow I evah knew. He was always doing dirty things to me, and when ah resented it (he was biggah than ah was) he'd lick me, best ah could do, an' rub mah nose in the di't, an' humiliate me in ev'y way he could. I kept a ex'cising, an' practising with mah fists, an' then I'd try him again, but he'd always get the best of me, an' lick me worse'n he needed to, yes, sah, an' especially before girls, an' like that. Then I moved away and I didn't go back for quite a good many years, but I never forgot my grudge, an' I hated that man worse'n evah, until aftah the great Cha'l'ston earthquake, I went back there visitin' for a few days, and I heard that my old enemy, 'Rastus, had got te'bly injured when his house fell on him in the earthquake.

"Well, I walked down there where he lived—he hadn't got ve'y fur, as you'd know he wouldn't, a nigger like that, and there was 'Rastus sittin' out on the po'ch in front of his cottage, in a armchair, all wrapped up, an' bandaged up, an' he had a li'l table, like, for his ahms to rest on,

an' they was all fixed up with splints an' things, an' so I opened the gate an' went up the walk, an' I said, 'Hello, 'Rastus,' an' he replied, 'Hello, Earnest,' kind of faint-like an' sick, an' I says: 'I hear you got pretty bad bunged up in the earthquake.'

"'Yes,' he says, 'Earnest, I did.'

"'Legs broke?'

"'Yes. One of 'em twice.'

"'Ahms hu't?'

"'One broke an' the othah fraxioned wrist.'

"'Perfec'ly helpless, ain't you, 'Rastus?'

"'Yes, Earnest, I is. Perfec'ly helpless.'

"'Cain't move hand or foot?'

"'No. Cain't move noway. An' worse'n that.'

"An' then it all come ovah me, how many years I'd held a grudge against that poor niggah, an' how many times he'd licked me 'cause he was biggah an' strongah an' I was, an' how he'd humiliated me, an' rubbed mah nose in the dust, an' ev'ythin', an' here he was all bunged up an' helpless, an' I tried to forget mah grudge an' be forgivin' an' ev'ythin', but even then it hung to me an' I hauled off an' I banged him *good*, on both sides the mouth, an' then I did it again an' bunged his nose, an' then I found my grudge was all gone, an' I'd forgiven 'Rastus, an' I nevah haven't had no ha'd feelings against him since.

"No, sah. I nevah ain't been back to Cha'l'ston. I came away that day. They won't be anything calling me theah for a long time."

Epitaph on a Sailor

BY ARTHUR GUITERMAN

To that wind-blown, salt-bitten soul of his,
All ports were merely ends for voyages,
The stars were set as guides for such as he
And Earth was but a cup to hold the sea.