

## ACTORS OFF THE STAGE

## THE CLUBS AND HOMES OF ENGLISH PLAYERS.

The Finery of the Stage Not Found in Private Life—How They Hide From the Public Gaze—Famous Clubs of London and Something About Them.

LONDON, May 9, 1892.—In nearly every great American city we have some particular locality constantly frequented during certain hours of the day by actors great and small. The casual passer lingers curiously within the region. Even one least accustomed to striking city phases, is instantly impressed with the unusual character of the neighborhood and with the manners and dress of its frequenters.

Public houses of a cozy rather than a sumptuous sort are characteristic of the place. Windows above it are filled with strange costumes. Little low windows and still tinier glass cases or receivers here and there display curious examples of the wig-maker's art. "Voice Training" can be secured up this dingy flight of stairs. "A School of Elocution" will be reached through another dark entryway. The legend "Fancy Steps," will appear where the stairs hint of serious stumbling instead. Next the roof of one building "Pupils" will be "Fitted for the Stage." "Banjo Taught" has broken out upon every doorway directory. And signs of "Dramatic Agency," where the first and perennially successive looting of actors is done, cluster like beacons of wreckers to entice the veteran as well as the youngest skipper upon the shoals of treacherous dramatic seas.

In general and particular everything needful to "the profession," and many things which its members could safely eschew, are gathered in and about this strange little city world within the great city. It is called "The Rialto." And upon these "Rialtos," by day, walk for pleasure or profit, in idleness or anxiety, in pompous plenitude or in pitiful poverty all those hundreds and thousands who by night charm and cheer us upon the mimic stage.

Our American "Rialtos" are more marked in concentration and character than those of European cities. This is particularly true in New York. In London, where are the haunts of probably more actors than exist in any other four or five of the greatest cities, there is no spot which exactly corresponds with the American actors' "Rialto," except one. That one is the greatest resort in the world for music-hall performers. It is just across the Waterloo bridge from the Strand, on the Surrey side of London; is called in local parlance, "Poverty Junction."

But between these folk, who are called "prossers" or "pros," in the vernacular, and the actors of London there is an ever impassable gulf. In our country there is considerable commingling and association of these elements or classes. This almost wholly accounts for the characteristic groupings of business and loungers forming our "Rialtos." Here the actor not only scorns the "pros" as he would a tramp, and will have none of him as a companion, but he will drink no liquor, eat no food, transact no business, and frequent no thoroughfare or haunt, where the "pros" are permitted to come.

There are reasons for this close drawing of professional lines. An important one is found in the fact that for a very long time London theatrical managers have sustained an absolute monopoly of all dramatic performances. By law the proprietors of music-halls are forbidden to present any exhibition of a dramatic nature. Their compensation is in being permitted to sell all manner of liquors by hands of bewitching barmaids, of itself a great source of attraction and profit. To the "legitimate" dramatic performer, any one who has appeared in "the halls," from his standpoint of ethics, can by no possibility ever become a genuine actor or attain to his social standing.

On the other hand, you will seldom find an English, Irish or Scotch actor who is not a gentleman born and bred. I do not mean that he is always of the so-called British "gentry" stock.

But I do mean that the stock from which he has sprung is his usually of the best quality; that he has had the advantage of being well bred; has been given excellent home and school, and very often university training; that he is a reader, a student and a traveler; and that the best regime and athletic sports have done for him, physically, what his education has done for him mentally, and his unavoidable culture, off and on the stage, has done for both his ethics and his manners.

This is universal rather than exceptional. He is therefore justly proud of his vocation. Such names as those of Shakespeare, Kemble, Garrick, Macready and Matthews, furnish endless pique and spur to his ambition.

This is why the haunts of London actors differ from the haunts of American actors; and why, also, their environment naturally produces the ablest delineators not of intense and exaggerated character and situations, as with the French, and somewhat with our American school, but of those fadeless good and mellow comedies, dramas and tragedies which appeal to the intellect and heart, rather than to sensation hunger, the nerves and the passions.

These changeless conditions naturally give London actors as a class but two places that may be regarded as their real haunts—their homes and their clubs. The first of these may seem to Americans an odd sort of actor's retreat.

They are seldom grand affairs. It is their great number and their sweet and good homeliness which make them remarkable. The exigencies of provincial professional travel and frequent American tours often render their continuous occupancy impossible. Frequently the husband goes in one direction and the wife, if she be an actress, in another. But the abiding-place is Mecca to both, and there is always some one to hold the belongings together, and train the little ones against the home-coming.

The English actor has a grand abhorrence of a big and showy home. I could print

the names of scores whose incomes would permit them to live, like many of our eminent theatrical people in approved West End luxury in winter and gorgeously swelter, in summer, in their own fashionable resort villas. The little home, little and snug and cheery, is his from choice. He hides himself in it, and is often almost ludicrous in his shifts to avoid knowledge of its coming to only sworn friends. This occasionally goes so far that aliases are assumed, that he may better protect himself from intrusion and espionage. In this time of a home he is as happy a man as there is in all the world.

Above all else there is a wonderful sort of all around housekeeping in these joyous little homes from participation in which no friend or guest is altogether excluded, and occasionally under no circumstances absolved. It is as though the effort, assumption and repression of the stage world found its exact antithesis in this most precious of haunts; and that all those things in home making and keeping which are regarded as irksome by ordinary folk, were to these people the acme of pleasure and delight.

"A perennial lark," one fitly described it to me. And so it is. With mingled feelings of amazement and delight, while enjoying the most genial entertainment I have elsewhere known, I have assisted a *Lady Teazel* at dusting; a *Juliet* at digging in the garden; a *Leopold* at leap-frog with his not ungrateful children; a *Portia* at shelling peas; an *Othello* at mending kites; a *Mrs. Malaprop* in washing the lunch dishes; a *Grave Digger* at mending his range; a *Cleopatra* at paring potatoes; a *Falstaff* at making gooseberry and damson jam, a *Bob Acres* at grilling chops or *Surface* at preparing salads—for English actors are peerless as cooks; a *Bill Sykes* at prayers; and a *Richelieu* at brewing such punches as, I have been told by those who sipped them, left, by comparison, the "nectar of the gods" mere eight-penny treacle.

The whole Covent Garden region, that "joyous region" as Thackeray called it, while not exactly a haunt of actors, has been a sort of actor-land for more than 250 years. It is now as of old, a region of fine inns, coffee-houses, theatres, clubs, printers, and publishers, booksellers and costumers. In these precincts, between Covent Garden and the Strand, that greatest roaring tide of humanity in all the world, and upon the Strand itself, more actors will be seen coming, going or loitering than in any other district of the great city. After his profession and his jolly little home, the strongest attachment of the London actor is given to his club. Everyone is a member of from one to a half dozen clubs; and these actors, as a class, more than all others of the liberal professions and arts, have inspired, developed and sustained that spirit of genial association of men of talent which has given London its vast numbers of most splendid clubs, around which cluster the most precious of historic and literary associations.

Since "Wills," "Buttons," "Toms" and other famous coffee-houses and clubs of the Queen Anne period, a history of the changes and habitues of famous London clubs to which actors have given the chief support, would almost be a history of English men of letters and literature. The actors' club haunts of today chiefly comprise the Garrick, Green Room, Savage, Arundel, Lyric and Beefsteak clubs.

The latter unique little club, which has its home over Toole's Theatre, sprang out of the Honorable Society of Beefsteaks, in the old beefsteak room of the Lyceum theatre, which still exists, and is used by Irving for his exquisite private dinner parties. The Beefsteak over Toole's is distinctive in being "one-room" club, and admitting no guests whatever.

The Arundel has 350 to 400 members. It was once exclusively literary and artistic. Ambitious solicitors and amateurs of all sorts are now admitted, and its percentage of legitimate actors is growing smaller.

The Lyric has a magnificent club-house in Piccadilly, and with its entire appointments, including a large theatre and concert hall, is among the finest buildings for this purpose in the world. It also has an annex called the Lyric club at Barnes-on-Thames, from which boat racing and other river fetes can be witnessed. The Lyric is a dramatic and musical club with nearly 3,000 members. Perhaps ten per cent. of these are actors. Lord Londesborough, Fred Cowen and Sir Arthur Sullivan are members.

The well-known Savage club, literary and artistic, which interchanges privileges with the Lyric club, of New York, has about 700 members. It had its origin 24 years ago in a public house near Drury Lane theatre. Since then it has wandered to Haxel's hotel, thence to the Savoy, and finally to the Adelphi Terrace, overlooking the Thames. About 80 of its members, who are also members of the Green Room club, are actors.

The Garrick, in Garrick street, Covent Garden, venerable rich, stately mellow and grand, has no membership limitation as to profession. While perhaps no more than 25 actors are at present among its members, although all London managers of any prominence are upon its rolls, it undoubtedly possesses the most valuable collection of souvenirs and paintings relating to the stage and its most famous representatives of any association or institution in the world.

But the Green Room club, in Bedford street, which had its origin about fourteen years ago from disagreements in the Junior Garrick and the Arundel clubs, is by all odds the real actor's club of London. It is already one of the wealthiest of its small clubs, and owes its great success to the administration of its honorary secretary, George Denacher, a gentleman of ample means, a genuine art lover with boundless sympathies for actors and their profession. Persons in all the liberal arts are admitted to membership; but no active manager can become a member unless he was formerly an actor of good standing. Pinerro and Lord Carton, dramatists, Farjeon, the author, and Charles Dickens, editor and author and son of the great novelist, are among its members.

"Saturday Nights" and "Saturday House Dinners," the latter, splendidly served at but three shillings and sixpence, are the kindest, brightest mellowest and most genial occasions of our time among men of heart and brains. Gathered here will be found such men as Pinerro, Sant Matthews, Irving, John Hare, Royce Carleton, Kendall, Paul Merritt, Wyndham, Charles Hantbury, Bancroft, Fernandez, Beerbohn Tree, Ted Gardiner, and Henry Howe, the oldest actor on the English stage. EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

## THE STORY OF KIPLING'S SUCCESS.

## How the Young English Writer's Stories First Gained Attention.

When Kipling left India with his collection of stories—in whose possibilities he had himself infinite faith, although, so his friend said, the editors of the Indian newspapers in which he published a number of them thought but slightly of them—and begrudged them the space they filled—his first idea was to publish them in America. So he made his way to New York with a letter of introduction in his pocket to a prominent publishing house. By some curious affinity in lack of insight this house thought no more of the stories than did the unappreciative editors out in India.

Kipling, in his disgust, made no further attempt to dispose of his stories on this side of the Atlantic. He tried his luck in London with better success, so far as finding a publisher is concerned. His stories were brought out, but, strange as it may appear in view of their subsequent popularity, they fell perfectly flat.

His stock of money was giving out. His lodgings and board were of the most economical. It looked as if he were intended to gain his living by some less agreeable occupation than story writing.

One evening, so Kipling's friend relates, Edmund Yates sat down to dinner at his club, wondering what would make a good, stirring article for his paper, the *London World*. He asked a friend at an adjoining table if he did not know of something that was going on. Replied the friend:

"Why on earth don't you print an interview with Rudyard Kipling?"

"Who in thunder is Rudyard Kipling?" asked Yates.

The friend, who was acquainted with India and with Kipling's career there, explained that he was a very brilliant young fellow, who knew India as few men know it, for he had a remarkable faculty of observation; that he had just come, home bringing with him a volume of stories which he had published; that he must have with him, also, a large stock of interesting memorabilia; that in his (the friend's) opinion Kipling was the coming man in story telling; that it was the coming man in the credit of Yates' paper to anticipate the public in discovering him; that he would at any rate have much to say that was fresh and interesting.

The idea struck Mr. Yates as a good one, and he detailed one of his reporters immediately to interview Kipling. The reporter had some difficulty in finding Kipling, for his lodgings were obscure and his disgusted publishers had not kept close track of his address. But found he was at last, and when found, he had all the haughtiness of confident genius when most prosperous in being on the whole rather unwilling to submit to the un-English advertisement of an interview. The reporter prevailed upon him to do the favor (Kipling's friend said that he understood as well as any one the help the publicity would be to him, and was simply playing a game of bluff). So the interview appeared, some two columns in a much read paper. It created no little talk. Among others who read it with interest was the reviewer of the *London Times*. He remembered in an indistinct way that Kipling's stories had come to his desk and that he had let them lie there. He hunted them up, and in the light of what we now know about the man was greatly impressed by them. He gave them a half column review or more, and that with a great many Englishmen was enough. To find Kipling indorsed in the *Times* immediately set them to reading him. The stories no longer lay, dust covered, on the publishers' shelves. The stock on hand was not sufficient to meet the sudden demand.—*Independent*.

## Birds as Surgeons.

Some interesting observations relating to the surgical treatment of wounds by birds were recently brought by Monsieur Fatio before the Physical Society of Geneva. He quotes the case of a snipe that he has often observed engaged in repairing damages. With its beak and feathers it makes a very creditable dressing, applying plasters to the bleeding wounds, and even securing a broken limb by means of a stout ligature.

On one occasion he killed a snipe which had on the chest a large dressing composed of down taken from other parts of the body and securely fixed to the wound by coagulated blood. Twice he had brought home snipe with interwoven feathers strapped on the side of a fracture of one or other limb.

The most interesting example was that of a snipe, both of whose legs he had unfortunately broken by a misdirected shot. He recovered the snipe on the day following, and he then found that the poor bird had contrived to apply dressing and a sort of splint to both limbs. In carrying out this operation some feathers had become entangled around the beak, and not being able to use its claws to get rid of them, it was almost dead when discovered.

In a case recorded by Monsieur Magnin, a snipe, which was observed to fly away with a broken leg, was subsequently found to have forced the fragments into a parallel position, the upper fragments reaching to the knee, securing them there by means of a strong band of feathers and moss intermingled. The observers were particularly struck by the application of a ligature of a kind of flat leaf grass wound round the limb in a spiral form and fixed by means of a sort of glue.

## Ensign Epps, the Color-Bearer.

Ensign Epps, at the battle of Flanders, Sowed a seed of glory and duty That flowers and flames in height and beauty, Like a crimson lily with her heart of gold, To-day, when the wars of Ghent are old And buried as deep as their dead commanders.

Ensign Epps was the color-bearer—No matter on which side, Philip or Earl; Their cause was the shell—their deed was the pearl. Scarce more than a lad, he had been a sharer That day in the wildest work of the field. He was wounded and spent, and the fight was lost; His comrades were slain, or a scattered host.

But stainless and scatheless, out of the strife, He had carried his colors safer than life. By the river's brink, without weapon or shield, He faced the victors. The thick heart-mist He dashed from his eyes, and the silk he kissed Ere he held it aloft in the setting sun. As proudly as if the fight were won, And he smiled when they ordered him to yield.

Ensign Epps, with his broken blade, Cut the silk from the gilded staff, Which he poised like a spear till the charge was made. And hurled at the leader with a laugh. Then around his breast, like the scarf of his love, He tied the colors he had saved above. And plunged in his armour into the tide, And there, in his dress of honor, died.

What are the lessons your kinglings teach? And what is the text of your proud commanders? Out of the centuries heroes reach With the scroll of a deed, with the word of a story Of one man's truth and of all men's glory. Like Ensign Epps at the battle of Flanders. —John Boyle O'Reilly.

## HAD SEEN THAT LETTER BEFORE.

## A Story Showing the Advantages of Looking at the Signature.

Some people readily forget that they were ever young, and never recognize the fact that history is apt to repeat itself in individual humanity as well as in wider senses.

The parents stood gazing with frowning brows at their daughter, while she was trembling and weeping. Their frowns deepened as the mother wiped her glasses preparatory to reading a letter found in the girl's pocket. It began:—

"Angel of my existence—

"What!" cried the old man, "you don't mean to say it begins like that? Oh, that a child of mine should correspond with— But pray proceed, my dear."

"Existence" spelled with an 'a,' too," added the mother.

"Why, the lunatic can't spell," said the old man.

"It is impossible for me to describe the joy with which your presence has filled me."

"Then why does he attempt it, the donkey? But pray don't let me interrupt you. Go on, go on; let joy be unconfined."

"I have spent the whole night in thinking of you—"

"That's picturesque, anyhow."

"And in bitterly deriding the obstinate, disagreeable old buffer, who will not consent to our union."

"Great Scott! So I'm obstinate, disagreeable, and an old buffer, eh? Oh, let me get at him!"

"But, Theodorus, my dear," interrupted the old lady.

"Yes, yes—one moment. I was about to observe that the hand that could pen such words would not hesitate to poison the most cherished relative."

"Theodorus, I didn't see this over the leaf."

"Eh? Let me see. Hum—"

"Yours, with all the love of my heart, 10th May, 1860. Theodorus."

"Why, bless my eyes, it's one of my letters."

(Sensation.)

"Yes, pa," explained the olive branch; "I found it yesterday—only you wouldn't let me speak."

"You may go into the garden, dear. Hem! we've made a nice mess of it."

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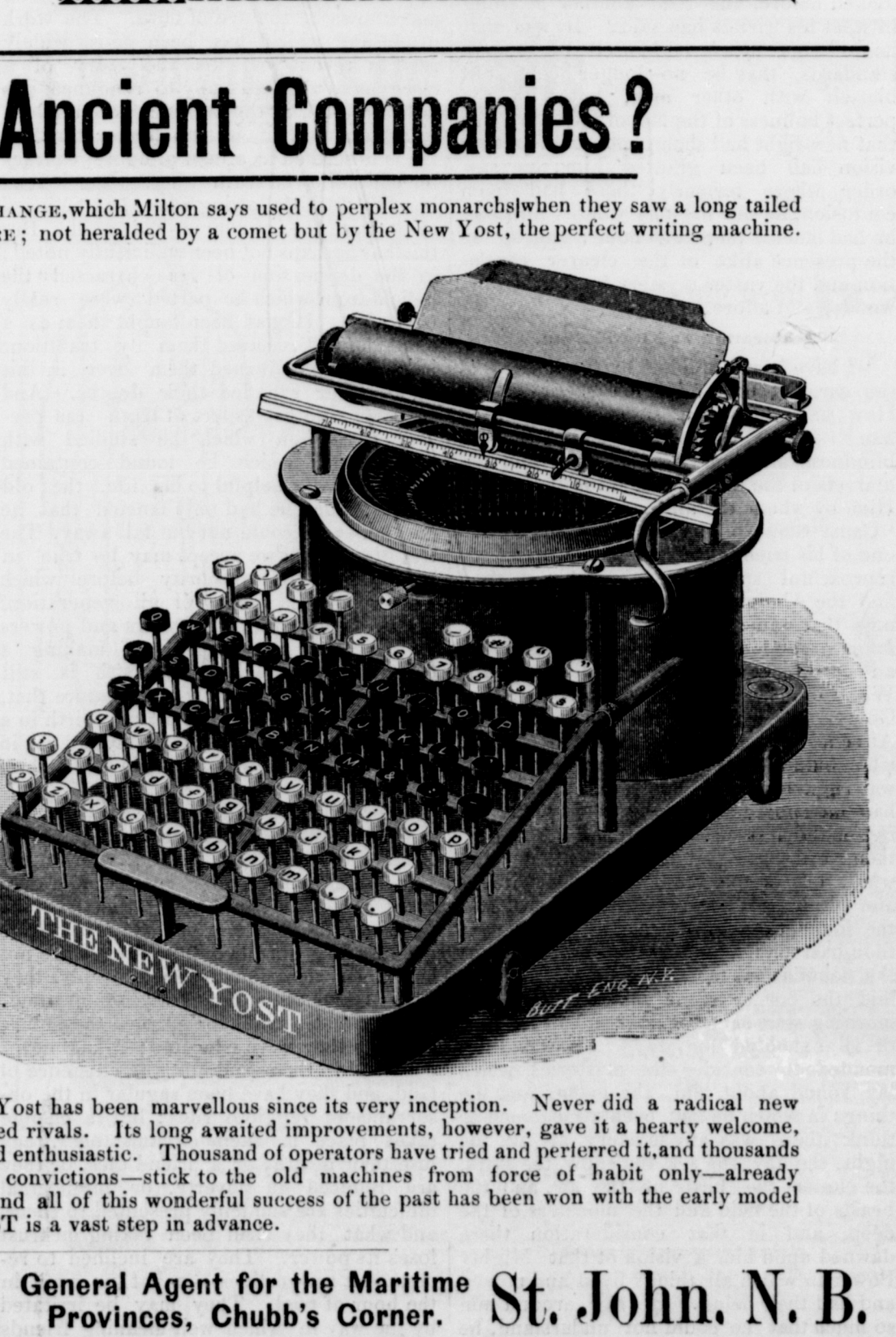
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