

WAS A VERY FREE SHOW.

THE ARABIAN NIGHTS ON THE
BOARDS IN ILLINOIS.

There Was No Relation Between the Performance and Its Title—How the Population Managed to Secure Admission on their Privilege as Dead heads.

I had just asked the waiter if he gave bread with clam chowder when two gentlemen seated themselves at the table next mine. One of them ordered three absinthe cocktails served hot, and the other took a new drink, very popular in Paris, and said to be the identical thing with which the Ameer of Afghanistan removes his political enemies.

"Paresis is played out," said this gentleman, tapping his glass. "We have something new."

This evidence of reckless striving after novelty gave me an inkling of the profession which these gentlemen adorned, and my surmise was quickly proven to the correct.

"Pretty hard luck," said one, evidently referring to a story which the other had told. "It reminds me of the Arabian Nights at Mendota."

"Guess that's a new one on me. Never heard about it."

"You know Wemy's Henderson?"

"Sure; brother of Dave."

"Well this happened to Wemy's in the early days, when he was just beginning to take hold of the business. He started out of Chicago in charge of his brothers big spectacular troupe, playing 'The Arabian Nights.' Hundred and fifty people in the cast; half a dozen horses and three camels, two of them alive and the other stuffed and rigged to run on castors. In stead of going ahead of his show he stayed right with it at first, and after a week or two of fair business he found himself in Northern Illinois, with an open date just ahead of him."

"So he took a map and looked around for a town where he could give a performance at short notice. Didn't expect to make much, thought he might pay expenses and clear up a ton or two of hay for the camels. He ran his eye over the map, and right on his route he struck Mendota. It looked like a big place. Any quantity of railroads centred there, so that a casual observer would have said that Chicago and Springfield were scarcely in it with Mendota."

"So Wemy's telegraphed the manager of the Opera House in Mendota, asking if the date was open. If it was he'd take it. Well, it was, I should say so. There hadn't been anything but open dates in Mendota since the strawberry festival in the preceding summer. Wemy's telegraphed to engage an orchestra and have the town billed in great shape. They had splendid paper. Nothing could be more attractive. It was calculated to draw the frost out of the ground in the middle of December."

"Well, the show arrived in Mendota one forenoon, and just about doubled the population of the place. Wemy's asked the first man he met where the Opera House was, and the man smiled sadly and said he'd never heard of any such place. There was a hall over somebody's grocery store where entertainments were sometimes held, but that was the extent of the theatrical accommodations. Wemy's took his company to the hotel, and as many of them as there was room for went inside while the others sat on the steps."

"Then he viewed the hall. The auditorium was just about big enough to suit the company, exclusive of the animals. The stage was 18x10 feet, and there was a wooden pillar running through the middle of it. Wemy's had three car loads of scenery, but there wasn't a piece of it that could be got inside the hall. But his blood was up and he was determined to give a show. He turned to the proprietor of the hall:

"Did you engage an orchestra?" he asked.

"Well, I did the best I could. The melodeon."

"What?"

"Yes, sir; the melodeon. That's what we generally use for church entertainments. I thought I'd take a wheelbarrow this afternoon and go 'round and get it. Miss Nutter usually plays for us, and we give her from 75 cents to \$1 as a general thing. I told her I guessed you wouldn't haggle about the price. She can play 'most any hymn tune."

"Wemy's interrupted him with a groan. 'Isn't there a man in town who can play the violin?' he asked.

"There used to be a feller who could fiddle a little, but I believe he's dead. He lived two or three miles out of town, so I ain't heard positive, but I was told."

"Send a boy to his house and get his fiddle. I don't care anything about the man."

"Wemy's had just remembered that there was a man in his company who had scraped the violin when nobody was present with authority to prevent him. By request this performer had not taken his instrument on the road. However, his despised accomplishment promised at this juncture to be the salvation of the whole show. The violin of the deceased Mendotan was obtained and the melodeon arrived without accident. During the afternoon Miss Nutter, who was a pillar of the church, and Wemy's violinist, who usually did the turn with the trained camel, practiced together, but they did not produce first-class ballet music, according to the accounts which I have heard."

"There were no dressing rooms in the hall, but that didn't matter, for the show was to consist of a few specialties, and such changes of costume as were absolutely necessary could be made in the grocery store below."

About 7 o'clock Wemy's came over from the hotel to open the doors. There was nobody outside, but within were ten men seated on a bench behind the rusty iron stove which heated the hall."

"Well, gentlemen," said Wemy's, "you'll have to step outside and get your tickets, the show is going to begin."

"The first man looked up into Wemy's face and said: 'I'm all right. I'm the feller that got the violin.'"

"Wemy's allowed that that was good for a pass. Then the next man said: 'I'm all right. I carried one end of the melodeon.'"

"And the third man said: 'I'm all right, too.' What in thunder did you do?" asked Wemy's. "I carried the other end."

"The fourth man had carried the middle and the fifth had carried the stool. And so it went on to number ten. Each man unhesitatingly pronounced himself to be 'all right.'"

"But the tenth man looked up with a vacant stare, and said: 'I ain't right.' 'Well, I'm glad to find somebody who isn't,' said Wemy's. 'What's the matter with you?'"

"I ain't right here," said the man touching his forehead.

"That's so," said the other nine. "He ain't got any brains. He always gets into shows."

"Wemy's passed the one man who wasn't right, as he had passed the nine who were, and they all took places on the benches near the stage. As the clatter of their boots subsided there came the sound of footsteps on the stairs. Wemy's hastened to the door. He found himself confronted by eight men."

"These are all friends of mine," said the leader, indicating the other seven. "Pass right in, gentlemen."

"Hold on, there!" exclaimed Wemy's. "You'll have to get tickets first."

"With a majestic sweep of the arm the leader drew aside his coat and showed a large tin star hanging on a button of his vest by a wolen string."

"I guess you don't know me," he said. "I'm the chief of police."

"I don't care who you are; you can't get in here without buying a ticket."

"Can't I? Well, now, we'll just talk that over. Have ye got a license to give this show? No, ye haven't. Then ye don't give it."

"Walk in, gentlemen," said Wemy's. "I'm glad to see you."

"The chief and his seven friends filed in. The other officials followed in short order, and they all worked the door. The situation became too painful to Wemy's. He relinquished his post to an assistant, and went behind the curtain to see how things were working. He found that the ladies had pinned up some shawls on one side of the stage so as to conceal those who were not actively engaged in their specialties, while the men had arranged to make their exits and entrances by means of a window and a ladder."

"The performance began. Of courses, it bore no relation whatever to 'The Arabian Nights.' But it was a better variety than had ever been seen in Mendota before. A member of the corps de ballet (taking the place of the premier, who positively refused to appear on such a stage) had just saluted the audience with a graceful wave of her right lower extremity, when a horrible yell was heard arising from the front benches. Wemy's traced it to the man who 'wasn't right.' He was having a fit. Miss Nutter and the camel driver had not noticed it. They had been too much occupied with their own troubles. The melodeon and violin continued to execute 'Pull for the shore,' in waltz time. But a grave and clerical-looking gentleman arose from the foremost bench and waved his hand slowly up and down, extended toward the stage."

"Pause a moment my young friend," he said to the faded coryphæe. "If you keep perfectly still I am sure that this unhappy young man will speedily recover."

"Well, the show stopped while the man who wasn't right was having his fit. When he was all through the performance continued. Four times during the evening this cheerful interlude added to the regular programme. Just after the third fit Wemy's had a talk with the man whom he had put in charge of the door. The man was sitting on the bannister rail in a trance. Wemy's touched him on the shoulder.

"Eh! certainly, certainly," said the man, "pass right in."

"What are you talking about?"

"That you, Mr. Henderson? I thought it was another deadhead. Say, this beats the world. What do you think? Just after you left there was a feller came along with tears in his eyes. He handed up seven nickels and three pennies. Said it was all he had in the world. I took the stuff and let him in. Say, it was lucky I did or we'd have been skunked. All the rest of them are deadheads. They got by me somehow. There's the 38 cents. It's the total cash receipts."

"Wemy's took it and counted it carefully in the light that struggled out from the door of the hall. As he stood there the man who wasn't right fell out of his chair in another fit."

"Go it!" yelled Wemy's. "I don't blame you. This place would give anybody a fit. I feel one coming on me now."

"With a howl much louder and more harrowing than the epileptic's. Wemy's bounded down the stairs and vanished in the direction of the hotel."—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

A New Kind of Captain.

James Payn tells in the Independent of an amusing incident which took place the other day on board an Australian liner. A sly Australian Major, after spending the first evening very late with his friends in the saloon, suddenly returned to them after saying good night, and requested an interview with the purser. He was very white.

"There is a lady," he said, "in my cabin, No. 42."

"Rubbish!" exclaimed the purser. "Here's the list. Your companion is Capt. Higginson."

"Nothing will induce me to go into the cabin again," said the major.

"Well, I'll go," returned the other. He returned with great celerity, and with as white a face as the major's. "Upon my life you are right. We'll put you somewhere else for the night, and see about it in the morning."

With the earliest dawn they sought the steward and demanded an explanation.

"It's all a mistake, gentlemen," he said; "it's Capt. Higginson, all right. Here's his luggage."

"We must have this explained," said the purser. "This portmanteau is unlocked; let us see what is in it."

It was a lady's wearing apparel.

"By jingo," cries the steward, "that's what comes of taking names as don't belong to us. She said she was Capt. Higginson; but she didn't say it was only in the Salvation Army!"

The Prince of Wales, by eating toast at dinner instead of bread, has set a fashion which is becoming the rule in society and at leading clubs.

IN THE QUEER CITY OF BIRDS.

The Singular Story of the Cruises Left on Inaccessible Island.

A few years ago a man-of-war dropped anchor off one of a group of three very small islands in the South Atlantic, lying between Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope. The island was so desolate, out of the way, and forbidding, that it had been named Inaccessible. Before the boats could be lowered, the officers saw through their glasses two men upon the cliffs, making signs for them to come ashore. A boat was accordingly sent in, and the two men were rescued.

Two years before they had been left upon this island to capture fur-seals; but the animals had deserted the place, and until now no vessel had been seen in all that dreary time. The strangest part of their story was that they had been living on the outskirts of a great city, with a population much larger than that of London—a city of birds, the queerest of their kind—the penguins.

The Cruises were taken aboard the ship, and the following day accompanied some of the officers ashore, and showed them about the strange settlement in which they had wearily lived so long, and whose noisy inhabitants they knew so well.

The approach to Inaccessible Island was forbidding indeed. Abrupt cliffs rose from the sea one thousand feet or more.

On some sides a low beach had formed, almost concealed by a dense growth of tussock grass five or six feet high. In this grassy forest was the city of birds; not a lot of nests laid here and there, but a regular city laid out in streets and roads, and at night the noise from the millions of its inhabitants could be heard for miles away.

As the boat neared the shore, under the guidance of the two islanders, numbers of strange objects like small porpoises were seen darting along on the water, in schools of some hundreds or more. They took successive leaps, moving with great rapidity, describing short curves in the air, taking dives and headers in and out, exactly as porpoises do; but to the astonishment of the visitors, they made for the shore, and were soon seen clambering upon the rocks. They were penguins.

They had all made for one landing, which, the two Cruises said, led to the city. Here the boat was beached. Penguins were hopping up and down the well-worn pathway in twos and threes, while many laid about within reach, taking sunbaths and gazing at the sailors in idle curiosity, remaining so quiet that an artist among the party photographed a group with the men standing among them.

Following the bird path, the men from the ship went at once into the city. Every spot was crowded with a motley, jostling mass of bird citizens, whose nests, containing the young and eggs, were on all sides.

On each nest sat an angry mother, who would open her mouth and scream some terrible threat in the penguin language, and as the greenish white eggs were broken by the onward charge of the men, the birds seemed to be driven to desperation. A valuable dog that had started with the exploring party, was lost in this bedlam of a city, and, although repeated endeavors were made to find him, he was never heard of, and the poor fellow was probably killed by the outraged inhabitants.

Not many miles from here was another small island with an area of hardly a square mile, yet on it was another city of over a million inhabitants.

As on Inaccessible, the penguins had a general roadway leading up from the sea into the tussock grass, the hard rock actually being polished by the millions of feet that had passed over it. As the voyagers appeared hundreds of the birds were passing up and down, hopping along in their ludicrous manner.

One remarkable fact concerning these strange creatures, ascertained from the two sailors, was that in the middle of April after moulting, the cities were deserted, not a single inhabitant remaining. Where they went, how far, or what they went for was inexplicable.

They could not go to the Cape of Good Hope, the mainland, and how they could swim back to the islands without landmarks was remarkably strange. Perhaps this is their vacation season, which they spend at sea. In the last days of July the males return, and the females return about the middle of August, remaining at home until the following April.

HOW TO COOK EASTER EGGS.

Seasonable Suggestions as to the Best Ways of Doing So.

From time immemorial eggs have been given to the children on Easter, and served in various ways at the table. Many and varied are the souvenirs exchanged at this season. Some of them are in the form of young chickens just escaping from the shell, others are fancy bags made in the shape of eggs, while others are attractive cards with numerous chickens and eggs scattered all over them. Below are given some ways of preparing eggs for the table.

Baked Eggs—Break as many eggs as you desire to use, one at a time, and drop into a buttered dish (being careful that they do not encroach on each other), sprinkle with salt and put a bit of butter on each, put this into the oven and bake until the whites are set.

Stuffed Eggs—Boil a dozen very hard, remove the shell and cut them in halves; remove the yolks and mash with a spoon, add to them a little chopped parsley, salt and some melted butter and refill the whites; cut the point off, and serve on hot toast or simply on a platter which is garnished with parsley.

Poached Eggs—Break your eggs and drop one at a time into a spider of boiling water; when the whites are well set slip a spoon under each and remove to a slice of buttered toast; put a little butter on each one and season with salt; serve at once.

Escalloped Eggs—Boil six eggs hard, chop them up thoroughly, make a white sauce and mix all well together; butter a pudding dish and put in a layer of bread crumbs and butter, then a layer of egg, and so on till the dish is full, having bread crumbs on top; bake a light brown and serve immediately.

Egg Salad—Boil six eggs 15 minutes, remove the shell and cut them in two lengthwise, remove the yolks and mash fine, add salt, pepper and vinegar to the taste, return to the whites and smooth the tops; serve in lettuce leaves or fresh water cresses, with a mayonnaise dressing.

Eggs in a Nest—Boil six eggs 20 minutes, remove the shells, separate the yolks with-

out breaking, rub them to a smooth paste with a little melted butter to moisten and shape into balls; cut the whites in thin, narrow slices, and mix with them an equal quantity of fine shredded chicken and a tablespoonful of chopped parsley; pile this mixture which should be dry and light, on a platter or salad dish in an oval ring, and place the yolk balls in the centre; set the dish in a steamer to heat through, around the edge pour a rich cream sauce, and serve more sauce in the gravy dish.

Omelet—Four eggs, beaten separately, one tablespoonful of flour, two tablespoonfuls of milk and a little salt; melt a tablespoonful of butter in a spider and, pour in the mixture; let it cook on top until the bottom begins to brown, then place it in the oven until it is light brown on top; try with a broom splint; remove carefully, and serve at once.

Easter in Olden Times.

In ancient Persia, many years before the birth of Christ, the people were all worshippers of fire. According to their religion, as communicated to them by their prophet, Zoroaster, there was first a great spirit who existed from all eternity. From this came the first light; and from this light sprang two brothers, Ormuzd and Ahriman. Ahriman grew jealous of his elder brother, who was condemned by the Eternal One to pass 3,000 years in utter darkness.

On his release he created a number of bad spirits to oppose the good spirits created by Ormuzd; when the latter made an egg containing good geni, Ahriman produced another full of evil spirits, and broke the two together, so that good and evil became mixed in the new creation. In memory of this legend the Persians of the present day, when they keep the festival of the solar new year in March, present one with colored eggs, and it is supposed that from this we get our similar Easter custom. Eggs have always been held as symbols of the bringing forth of life, and are therefore very naturally associated with the rising of the Lord from the tomb. In olden times the festival of Easter was celebrated with many ceremonies, sports and observances. Chief among them, as now, was the giving of colored eggs, called "pasch" or "pace" eggs, which the boys and girls rolled down some grassy hillside until they broke, the one whose egg held out the longest being the winner.

A Gentleman

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