

AMONG THEATRICAL PEOPLE.

BY HERBERT GIBSON

New York City, N. Y., Special—The "White Rats" claim that the managers of vaudeville theatres engage colored talent for about one half the money that they pay white performers, and they also claim that the colored performers have never spoke against the five per cent interest, and as long as the managers can get this cheap class of performers they will continue to do so each week. Let me say that this statement of the "Rats" is absolutely false as one half of the managers have discovered since the rag-time craze made its appearance that the audiences demanded "real coons" with their rag-time melodies and cake-walking specialties. A good sketch team such as Smart and Williams or Johnson and Dean puts new life in a long continuous performance such as the vaudeville houses have. This can be more plainly demonstrated by going to Keith's Theatre, New York City, this week where Johnson and Dean are playing. They sang a real Negro song, the kind one hears on the Southern plantations and quite unlike the lively rag-time so popular of late. This team has been so popular in New York during the winter that they have been unable to stay away only a week or so before they had to return either to Proctor's, Koster and Bial's or Keith's. Don't this show that the public is demanding "real coons." The "White Rats" just wants the whole field to themselves and what the colored performers should do is to organize a "Black Cat" society, you know the "Black Cats" wouldn't do a thing to the "White Rats." For the benefit of those who believe that colored talent is dirt cheap here is a correct statement of what some of our people have been getting when they played in vaudeville: "Black Patti, five to six hundred per week; Bill Davis, one hundred and twenty five a week; Bob Cole, one hundred and fifty per week; Wilson Trio, one hundred and fifty per week; Ernest Hogan, one hundred and twenty five per week; Williams and Walker five hundred per week; Billy McCain, eighty-five per week; Freeman Sisters, one hundred per week. Of course these performers have to pay all of their own traveling and hotel expenses while playing in vaudeville, but after signing with road companies it, the company, pays nearly all.

NO. ES.

Miss Flora Batonsang at Providence R. I., February 26th.

"Hottest Coon in Dixie" is also playing in Iowa to packed houses.

Grant and Grant formerly with Irving Jones are at Koster and Bial's Theatre this city this week.

"Big Sensation" played last week at Philadelphia, Pa. Some clever Washingtonians are members of this company.

The very latest success in coon songs is out in the name of "You Must be Up-to-Date." It is being sung all over the city.

Mr. Joe Walcott's club has been closed for some time. Professionals regret this very much as this was one of their headquarters.

Ernest Hogan was to star this season under the management of Ruscoe and Holland in a "Country Coon" it will probably go on the road next season.

"Flick Carl," magician, who made such a hit with Williams and Walker's company in the season of 1900 is playing vaudeville dates. He is at the Brooklyn Music Hall this week.

Martin's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" company is also at the Star Theatre this week doing a rushing business in spite of W. A. Brady's gigantic production at the Academy of Music. This company numbers over sixty people.

"In Old Kentucky" is playing at the Bijou Theatre, Pittsburgh, Pa., this week and is making a great hit. This company had its first presentation on any stage eight years ago at the above named Theatre. It plays next week in Boston, Mass.

F. F. Proctor has added two more theatres to his collection during the past two weeks, one at Newark, N. J., and the other at Montreal, Canada. Mr. Proctor engaged more colored variety performers than any other vaudeville manager in this country.

Mr. Oscar Hammerstein's new theatre in New York City will be called the "Drury Lane." Ground will be broken for it next month. It will be the largest in this city when completed. Mr. Hammerstein employs a great many colored performers for his roof gardens.

Black Patti's Troubadors have just finished a one night stand tour of Missouri and are also playing in Iowa. They will be East in April and will play in Washington early in that month. Mame Patti is now wearing a new gown made in Paris which cost \$1,500. It is of white satin.

Mr. Henri Strange is using Mr. Paul Lawrence Dunbar's poems with great success, "When the Corn Pone's Hot" and "When Ma'indy Sings." He also using Mr. James Whitcomb Riley's "Old Man and Jim." He will give a concert at the Murray Hill Lyceum New York City shortly.

Cole and Johnson in a "Trip to Coontown" played at Cumberland, Maryland, March 5th and will play Frederick, Md., the eighth. Their manager Mr. Ed Lester reports business excellent. "A Trip to Coontown" has been making a tour of the South packing houses everywhere.

"A Lucky Coon" will be presented for the first time next week at the Brooklyn Music Hall, Brooklyn, New York. It will employ seventy-five colored performers and will be full of rag-time and cake walks. Mr. Williams is scouring the country for talent for this production and if it proves a success it will go on the road next season.

The Reese Brothers, the Freeman Sisters, the Golden Gate Quartette, Lottie Thompson and Jesse Shipp are all making a great success in Williams and Walker's "Sons of Ham." They played at the Grand Opera House Burlington, Iowa, a few nights ago, this is their last performance in that state this season. They open in Chicago this week and will then work their way East.

Madame Plato, late of Isham's Oriental America and Drury's Opera Company gave an excellent concert at St. Mark's M. E. church, New York City, February 19th. She was supported by Mr. George Allen, reader and elocutionist and many other noted people. The concert was a success from start to

finish. Mme. Plato is one of the most artistic singers the race has ever produced, she has won honors in all the leading cities of this country and Europe, her executive ability is second to none.

"Uncle Tom's Cabin" was produced at the Academy of Music, New York City last Monday. The production is the greatest ever produced, W. A. Brady has spent over \$25,000 for this production, it employs four hundred colored people; many excellent singers and dancers. The theatre was packed long before the curtain rose and a long and prosperous season is expected. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by Harriet Beecher Stowe has been presented more times than any other company in America and its still popular.

In olden times when a minstrel show came to town it took full possession of it, and every time a minstrel performer was seen on the street the people would point their fingers at him and say "Oh! here comes a minstrel man" and "I certainly must see his show this night," and the fair maidens would say "Yes, and I must have a minstrel beau this night." A performer in those days advertised their show very much just by being seen on the street. I heard of a minister in Georgia who had been having revival services announce that there would be no meetings the following week as the minstrels were coming to town and he wanted every one to go. But in these days all of this is done away with and every member has to sign a contract, this contract is filled with rules, subject to heavy fines for any disorders committed in cities. It compels all to be neat and appear on the street in good behavior and above all things no drunkenness or flirting. Messrs. Ruscoe and Holland have this rule also in the Georgia Minstrels.

Ruscoe and Holland's big minstrels played at Denver, Colorado last week. This is the finest colored minstrel company now on the road, every member was carefully selected. Minstrel shows are not like they used to be in years back. People who could dance a jig, play a tune on a banjo, sing a song or do any of these specialties were looked upon as great actors and had no trouble whatever in getting into a good minstrel show; but to get into a first class minstrel company these days you have got to be strictly up-to-date and have more than one specialty; you must dance, have a good voice to sing in the choruses, double in the brass band and above all have good clothes both on and off the stage. This rule does not apply to performers who play the leading parts, if they read their lines correctly and play their parts all right that is all that is expected of them. So when you go to see a minstrel performance these days you see a neat, refined performance by real up-to-date entertainers richly costumed and elaborate scenery.

HERBERT GIBSON.

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