TALK OF THE STAGE WORLD.

Matinees at All the Theatres This Afternoon.

Mansfield Gives Another Chance to Lovers of "Jekyll and Hyde."

There will be matinees everywhere to-day, but managers scarcely look forward to crowded houses. They reserve those pleasant anticipations for the big audiences they will capture to-night. The best matinee of the year is now said to be Washington's Birthday. Thanksgiving afternoon is a dreary affair, and Christmas is not what it used to be, except at some of the houses downtown. At the Casino toys will be distributed, and thus add largely to the receipts. The Casino tried the toy experiment last year and proved that it worked admirably. By the investment of—well, $50 will cover the investment amply, the size of the audience was double that of the preceding year. Tony Pastor's doll matinees are always largely attended. In fact, people will attend nearly any kind of performance as long as there are a few gifts thrown in with the price of the admission ticket. The actors will have rather a hard time of it this week, especially at those theatres where there are Wednesday matinees. At the Lyceum the Thursday matinee was not given yesterday. It was postponed until to-day. At Daly's Theatre there will be a matinee to-day. The members of Daly's company are indefatigable, and the matinee performances are as conscientiously given as the evening entertainments, a statement that will not apply to the matinees at several other houses.

• • •

H. Gloster Armstrong, formerly connected with the Comedy Theatre, London, has arrived in this city. He is to arrange for a model of the Tower of London, to be perfect as to exterior and interior, for the World's Fair in Chicago. Mr. Armstrong has brought over with him a number of English plays, of which he hopes to dispose.

• • •

Miss Eastlake's "Impressions" of America will be very interesting. According to an English paper, "She was glad to get her board and washing, and is now content to read novels and drink tea."

• • •

Mlle. Clara Qualitz, who was engaged to appear in "A Trip to Chinatown," at the Madison Square Theatre, appeared there for one consecutive night, and will be seen no more in Mr. Hoyt's farce. There are reasons for this, of course. Guess what they are. One guess will be sufficient.

• • •

Sarah Bernhardt did a very big business in Philadelphia, although according to the *Music a la Bonne* of that city, "there were eight fire-escape-doors in opposition." Sarah's business, by the bye, has been extremely profitable. Even her last weeks at the Standard Theatre here, when plenty of red velvet was on view, the profits were big, owing to the advanced prices of seats. Abbey has made a small fortune with the tragedienne.

• • •

Nellie McHenry's extraordinary vitality surprises even her managers. The real truth is that the fair Nellie enjoys acting. She is happiest when on the stage. She knows just as conscientiously when the audience is small as when she is greeted by a packed house. Miss McHenry has lost a great deal of her superfluous avoirdupois that caused her so much anguish. She is as slim and fresome as she used to be years ago.

• • •

"Cavalleria Rusticana" is nearly as dead as a doornail, as far as America is concerned. It will be sung in Italian at the Metropolitan Opera-House by Mr. Abbey's company next Wednesday, in conjunction with "Orfeo." This will probably be the only time that Mascagni's opera will be given in a way that would please the young composer.

• • •

The Thalia Theatre, which has been closed since the beginning of the week, will reopen to-night, when "Around the World in Eighty Days" will be revived.

• • •

Richard Mansfield has several times announced his intention of shelving "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." While at the Garden Theatre his manager declared that the play would "positively"—that good old theatrical word—be given there for the last time. "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" pays, however. The public want it. Mansfield gives a wonderful transitic performance, and so it is not permitted to die. It was presented at the Grand Opera-House last night.

• • •

The managers of the circus plays are looking at each other very suspiciously. "A Night at the Circus" is now at the New Park; "The County Circus" opens at the Academy Tuesday, and "The Lion Tamer" at the Broadway Theatre Wednesday. The managers are all very much interested in each other just at present.

TO COOK A STEAK.

The Process in Detail as Practised by the Best Cooks.

The steak should be purchased from a good butcher. It should be the sirloin cut, with the bone removed. It should be an inch or an inch and a quarter in thickness, and should weigh from a pound and a half to two pounds, says an exchange.

Two or three hours before cooking the steak mix a tablespoonful of olive oil with a teaspoonful of salt and a quarter-teaspoonful of pepper. Rub this mixture thoroughly over both sides of the steak and let it lie on a plate until time to cook it.

Two objects are attained by this process—the steak is thoroughly seasoned through, without waste of the juices, which are prevented from passing out by the oil, and the oil passes into the fibre of the meat, making it tender and rich.

Put the steak in a broiler and place the broiler over a fire of bright coals, cook each side of the steak briskly for one minute, then sprinkle a little ashes over the fire to let the steak broil for ten or fifteen minutes.

Finally, serve promptly on a hot platter with water-cress; put no butter, salt or pepper on the steak. This is the way steaks are prepared by the best cooks.

WOMEN COON-HUNTERS.

They Proved a Flat Failure and Had to Be Hunted.

It is said that the claim that women are the equals of men in all sorts of occupations should occasionally be disproved, says an exchange. But perhaps hunting doesn't count. The story, at any rate, is a good one.

A party of young women of Fulton, Mo., got up a coon-hunting party a few days ago. The boys were rigorously excluded. The party started out with four dogs, two guns, two axes and a big basket of lunch.

Early next morning the whole neighborhood sallied forth to hunt the hunters and found them deep in the woods, all sitting in a row on a log crying dreadfully. They admitted that they got hopelessly lost within a couple of hours after the start.

WEAKNESS OF MEN

QUICKLY, THOROUGHLY, FOREVER CURED

by a new perfected scientific method that cannot fail unless the case is beyond human aid. You feel improved the first day, feel a better fit every day; soon know yourself a king among men in body, mind and heart. Drains and losses ended. Every obstacle to happy married life removed. Nerve force, will, energy, brain power, when failing or lost, are restored by this treatment. All small and weak portions of the body enlarged and strengthened. Victims of excesses, reclaim your strength! Sufferers from overwork, early errors, ill health, regain your strength. Don't despair, even if in the last stages. Don't be disheartened if quacks have robbed you. Let us show you that medical science and business honor still exist; here go hand in hand. Write for our books with explanations & proofs. 2,000 references to cured patients.

ERIE MEDICAL CO., BUFFALO, N.Y.

MRS. WINSLOW'S SOOTHING SYRUP for children teething relieves the child from pain, 25c. "."

FROM THE WORLD OF LABOR.

Mayor Weir, of Lincoln, Neb., has joined the Knights of Labor. He was initiated last week.

One boy by machinery in turning woodwork and materials for musical instruments performs the work of twenty-five men by the old methods.

Louis Reichert, a member of the United Wood-Carvers' Association, has died. His body will be cremated at Fresh Pond to-morrow afternoon.

Carpenters' Union No. 8 has elected Robert Beck President, William Rush, Vice-President, Thomas McIlorkie, Recording Secretary, J. Maguire, Financial Secretary, James Troy, Treasurer.

Bakers' Union No. 6 has elected Gustave Koch, President; C. Kessler, Vice-President; R. Stumpf, Recording Secretary; Joseph Aaman, Financial Secretary; Michael Dobmeier, Treasurer.

Grand chess tournament this evening at the New York Labor Lyceum, 25 East Fourth street, arranged by the Workingmen's Progress Chess Club.

The agitation of the labor question will no more cause anarchy than the defeat of Jackson caused it. On the contrary, it will cause the abolition of the present anarchistic-capitalistic system.

Union upholsterers should not go to Chicago, Ill., as the Hebert & Schoen Furniture Company have located out their workmen for refusing to submit to a reduction of wages.

The street-car conductors of Berlin receive only fifty cents for a day's wages of eighteen hours, with a holiday's holiday once in every two weeks. Nothing but the most absolute economy enables them to live.

A federation of labor has been organized at Elizabeth, N. J. Represented are the Carpenters', Bricklayers', Screwmakers', Polishers and Buffers', Painters' and Tinners' unions, and Typographical Union No. 34.

Miss Mary A. O'Reilly, the well-known K. of L. organizer and Deputy Factory Inspector of Pennsylvania, has been appointed a member of the Women's Branch of the Pennsylvania Commission for the World's Fair.

"The labor movement will abolish child labor—will take the hands and cherubs from the whirling wheels and clattering belts of factories, and the mines, dark prison-cells, and let them out to play in the sunlight, on the green of the heaven at hand."—*Stephen Stoghell.*

H. E. Rogers, one of the labor candidates for the London School Board, polled 12,000 votes and spent only $20 during the campaign. His opponent, who did not poll as large a vote, spent about $1,000.

The Musicians' Protective Union, Branch 22, has elected J. R. Jackson, President; S. C. Tibbie, Vice-President; John Kuhn, Recording Secretary; William Borghoff, Financial Secretary; Max Lenz, Treasurer; Messrs. Schunke, Morden and Darvin, Trustees.

The election of officers of the Wasters' Alliance has resulted as follows: Peter Murphy, President; S. B. Govern, Vice-President; Percy Vandeford, Financial Secretary; Thomas Bonner, Recording Secretary; John Moy, Treasurer; Elijah Hodges, Inspector; Samuel Manning, Sergeant-at-Arms. The Alliance has at present over 500 members.

The Massey Harris Company, agricultural implement manufacturers, of Toronto, Ontario, are treating their employees in a disgraceful manner. For many seasons past there has been a continual reduction in prices, and these are to be cut 30 per cent. during the present season. The men are now working for starvation wages.

Henry Miller, National President of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, is returning from the Birmingham Convention of the Federation of Labor to making a tour of the Southern States for the purpose of organizing local unions of his craft. In New Orleans he succeeded in forming a union with 135 members.

A National conference of the Hebrew Sections of the Socialist Labor party will take place at the New York Labor Lyceum, 25 East Fourth street, next Sunday to discuss means and ways of extending the work of agitation and organization. On Jan. 1 the new organ *Zeitgeist* will make its appearance. Steps have also been taken to establish a Hebrew Socialistic Library in this city.

Wm. F. Hanson, Secretary of National Trade Assembly 216, K. of L., announces that the label of the K. of L. Shoemakers is being counterfeited by manufacturers in Lynn, Mass. The counterfeit label is as large as a half-dollar, and contains within the circle the inscription, "K. of L. Union Made." The genuine label is the size of a small penny, and has upon it a representation of the eagle and "United We Stand Shoe Workers, trade mark registered."

Fifteen branches of the building trades in this country reduced their hours of labor from ten to nine per day since Dec. 1, 1890, and in twenty-five trades wages have afterwards been advanced from 10 to 100 per cent. These trades are the carpenters, marble-cutters, painters, stonemasons, blacksmiths, boiler-makers, plumbers, tinners, steamfitters, marble-polishers, bricklayers, molders, brass-finishers, brass-molders and bed-corners. The lowest amount of wages in these trades was $1.50 received by the tinners and marble-polishers, the former advancing to $2.50 and the latter to $3. The highest wages are received by the bricklayers, $4.50.

Sam Gompers has returned from Birmingham, and it appears that he is well satisfied with the result of the proceedings. He thinks that, if the Knights of Labor do not accept the proposition to harmonize with the American Federation of Labor, there need be no longer any antagonism between both of the great organizations, whose aims and objects are identical. The abolition of wage-slavery. Mr. Gompers also says that he is in no way opposed to the Socialists, and does not object to their political action as a party, but he does object to their entering the Federation as a political body.

Christmas entertainments and distribution of presents among the children of members of labor organizations will take place as follows: Singing Society of the International Furniture Workers' Union, at 251 Second avenue, to-morrow evening; Local Union No. 2, of the United Machinists, at 386 Bowery, to-morrow; Carl Sahm Quartet Club, at 64 East Fourth street, to-morrow. Workmen's Free School of the West Side, at 342 West Forty-second street, this evening; Workmen's Free School of Yorkville, at Forrester's Hall, 162 East Fifty-fifth street, to-morrow evening; Urania Club of Waiters, at 64 East Fourth street, next Monday; Twenty-first Section, of New York, at Clarendon Hall, this evening; Social Democratic Turners' Society, at 533 Fifth street, to-morrow; Brooklyn Labor Lyceum Association, at 949 Willoughby avenue, Brooklyn, this evening; Workmen's Free School, of Greenpoint, at Eckford Hall, Eckford and Calyer streets, Greenpoint, to-morrow evening; Workmen's Singing Society, of Union Hill, N. J., at the Union Hill Turn Hall, this evening.

In his Christmas greeting Alexander W. Wright, the editor of the official journal of the Knights of Labor, says: "If the bright anticipations of a reign of universal peace and happiness which heralded the advent of earth's greatest Social Reformer are ever to be realized in practice it can only be by the substitution of industrial co-operation for the soul and body destroying competition, accompanied by monopoly of the means of production, which renders the toiler dependent on the favor of a few for the means of life, and, while professing justice, does not an inadequate and cold-hearted charity. If there is no hope of such a social transformation in the future then the proclamation of 'peace on earth and good will towards men' is a meaningless and hollow formula."

NO ENOCH ARDEN FOR HIM.

His Wife's First Husband Turned Up and He Wanted a Gun.

"Say, Secretary," said a wild-eyed individual as he entered the Mayor's office, "kin I git a permit to carry a pistol?"

"Is your life in jeopardy?" asked the genial Secretary, according to the Detroit *Free Press*.

"In where?"

"Are you in fear of danger?" said the Secretary.

"Well," said the wild-eyed man, "I'm not 'zactly feared, as you call it, but yo' see I married a woman who thought her first husband was d'ead. See? Well, now it 'pears as how he's turned up out 'n Dakota. A'ter hearin' all about her a marryin' me he jist sits down an' writes my ol' 'oowman as how he's on his way here to trim my eyebrows, jist to show me that he's no sleeky Enoch Arden, whe'ever that means. Now, considerin' all things, hadn't you better gi' me a permit to carry a musket, eh?"

DICKENS'S SECOND SON.

He Is Buried in a Little Churchyard in Illinois.

Frank Dickens, the novelist's second son, is buried in the little city of Moline, in Illinois. He was the restless and wandering member of the family, says the Oswego *Times*, and after a career of adventure under Louis Riel, the Canadian rebel, and a prodigal life in Chicago, he died.

His grave is in a quiet little church yard, and the small monument that marks it bears the inscription: "Frank Geoffrey Dickens, this second son of mine."

SPECIAL NOTICES.

WHEATENA—THE BEST BREAKFAST FOOD; delicious, cooks in one minute. 25 cents; all grocers. Health Food Co., 61 5th ave.

AMUSEMENTS.

HARLEM OPERA-HOUSE, 125th st. & 7th ave. TO-DAY, SPECIAL MATINEE AT 2. CHAS. FROHMAN'S PRODUCTION. THERMIDOR. NEXT WEEK, SPECIAL. THE ELININGER. MAT. NEW YEAR'S DAY, JULIUS CÆSAR.

HARRIGAN'S THEATRE. M. W. Hanlon's Theatre ..... Manager. Mr. Edward Harrigan's New Local Play. "THE LAST OF THE HOGANS." Wednesday. Matinees Saturday.

CASINO. BROADWAY AND 39TH ST. THE TYROLEAN. AT 8.15. NIGHTLY. Matinees Saturday at 2. Admission 50 cents. EXTRA MATINEE CHRISTMAS DAY.

H. R. JACOBS' THEATRE, Cor. 31st st. and 3d ave. MATINEE TO-DAY. MASTER AND MAN. Next Week—"One of the Bravest."

COLUMBUS THEATRE, 125th st. & Park ave. 8.15. WED. & SAT. MAT. 2. TO-DAY, SPECIAL CHRISTMAS MATINEE. A DARK SECRET. NEXT WEEK—THE HUSTLER.

WINDSOR THEATRE, 45 and 47 Bowery. GREAT XMAS FACUS SPECIALE. BANLON'S FANTASMA. Gorgeous Scenery. New Music. New Tricks.

LYCEUM THEATRE. Begins at 8.15. Mats. Xmas and Sat. LADY BOUNTIFUL.

AT 8.30 MUNCZI LAJOS Hungary's Greatest Musician. EDEN MUSEE.

14TH ST. MUSIC HALL AND ALHAMBRA Court, 134 and 136 East 14th st. Orchestrion plays every afternoon and evening.

AMUSEMENTS.

UNION SQUARE THEATRE. R. D. MacLean. Marie Prescott. Friday Night and Saturday Matinee, "SPARTACUS." Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday Nights and Christmas Matinee, "CLEOPATRA."

BROADWAY THEATRE. Corner 41st st. LAST WEEK. Matinees Christmas Day and Saturday. FRANCIS WILSON AND COMPANY IN THE MERRY WIDOW. Dec. 30—THE LION TAMER. Seats now on sale.

STAR THEATRE. Eve., 8.15. Sat. Mat. at 2. MISS HELYETT. OPERATIC COMEDY SUCCESS. Mat. Christmas—AUDRAN'S MUSIC. CROWDED HOUSES.

NEW PARK THEATRE, Broadway and 35th st. NELLIE McHENRY IN A NIGHT AT THE CIRCUS. Evening, 8.15. Mat. Christmas, Tuesday and Saturday.

PALMER'S. EVENINGS, 8.15. SATURDAY MATINEE, 2. MR. PALMER'S CO. in Aug. Thomas's Great American Play. ALABAMA.

THALIA THEATRE. Evenings at 8.15. COMMENCING TO-NIGHT. "AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS." Grand Ballets. Splendid Production. Seats now on sale. Matinee Saturday.

WORTH'S, 6TH AVE. AND 30TH ST. Open 11 A. M. Admission, 10 cents. "GADDAH," THE WONDER. A Splendid Stage Show This Week.

STANDARD THEATRE, J. M. Hill, Manager. MR. and MRS. SIDNEY DREW IN THE GREAT FROM MEXICO. Extra Matinee Christmas and Saturday.

HERRMANN'S THEATRE, Broadway & 29th st. Evenings, 8.30. Matinees, Saturdays at 2.15. ROARS! JUNIOR PARTNER. EXTRA MATINEE CHRISTMAS.

AMUSEMENTS.

ACADEMY. LAST MATINEE SATURDAY. ONE DAY MORE OF "CINDERELLA." Ballet and Pantomime. TUESDAY EVENING, Dec. 29. "COLUMBIA CIRCUS." Seats now on sale.

XTRA BILL TO-DAY. KOSTER & BIAL'S PAULUS MAT. SEE THE BRAATZ SISTERS TO DAY. 3 hours performances Bonnie Kate Harvey, Monday Sunday, Last Night, PAULUS.

HOYT'S MADISON SQUARE THEATRE. EVENINGS at 8.30. XMAS and SAT MATS at 2. 43D TO 50TH PERFORMANCE OF HOYT'S A TRIP TO CHINATOWN. SEATS NOW SELLING FOR NEXT YEAR.

GARDEN THEATRE. Evenings at 8. Xmas & Sat. Mats. at 2. LILLIAN RUSSELL in Opera Comique in LA CIGALE. EXTRA MATINEE TO-DAY.

PEOPLE'S THEATRE. Mr. Henry C. Miner, Pro'p. EXTRA MAT. THE POWER OF THE PRESS. Next Week—AFTER DARK.

GRAND OPERA-HOUSE. Reserved Seats, Circle of Circle and Balcony, 50c. Sat. MR. RICHARD MANSFIELD. TO-NIGHT. Mat. MANSFIELD. A Parisian Romance. Next Week—THE POWER OF THE PRESS. Next Sunday Prof. Cromwell will illustrate and describe a Merry Christmas in all Lands.

NIBLO'S. PRICES, 25, 35, 50, 75c. TO-NIGHT. SADIE SCANLAN in EILY. Mats. Wed., Fri. & Sat. Next week—A Dark Secret.

DALY'S THEATRE. Evenings at 8.15. SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDY. "AS YOU LIKE IT." Matinee Christmas Day at 2. Matinee Saturday. Matinee New Year's.

AMUSEMENTS.

BIJOU THEATRE. Broadway, Near 30th St. Nights, 8.15. Matinees Wed. and Sat. Holiday Matinees Christmas and New Years. PRESENTING AND FEATURING THE RUSSELL'S COMEDIANS. And America's Greatest Dancer, Amelia Glover, IN THE NEW CITY DIRECTORY. "A Laugh from Start to Finish."

14TH STREET THEATRE. Near 6th Ave. Matinee To-Day (Xmas) and Saturday. Positively Last Week but One of W. J. SCANLAN In His Greatest Success. MAVOURNEEN.

METROPOLITAN OPERA-HOUSE. GRAND OPERA SEASON. Under the direction of MESSRS. ABBEY AND GRAU. To-night, Fri., Dec. 25, Gounod's Opera, FAUST. Saturday Mat., Dec. 26, MIGNON. Monday, Dec. 28, AIDA. Wed., Dec. 30, Orfeo and Cavalleria Rusticana. Friday, Jan. 1, LE PROPHETE. Sat. Mat. Jan. 2, MARTHA.

EDEN MUSEE. WORLD DEKOLTA Hungarian Wax Works. Second WIZARD. Concerts. MUSEE.

PROCTOR'S THEATRE. Begins 8.15. SPECIAL PRICES AT THE LOST PARADISE. Children half price at Mats. To-morrow & Wed. at 2. EXTRA MATINEE TO-DAY, CHRISTMAS.

TONY PASTOR'S THEATRE. 14th st., between 3d and 4th aves. MATINEE TO-DAY. GRAND HOLIDAY SHOW. MAGGIE CLINE, JUNIORI VALAREZ, AT 9.30 THE GREAT DEKOLTA Master Magician of the World. EDEN MUSEE.

ROOSTER ORCHESTRA; WALLACE ROSS, swordsman; Lamar, mind reader; George, the turtle boy. Educated Goats, &c. HUBER'S 14TH ST. MUSEUM.

UPTOWN ASSEMBLY ROOMS. 162 E. 55th st.—Large hall for balls, concerts, lectures, meetings, &c. also elegant new lodge and meeting rooms to let.

BROOKLYN AMUSEMENTS.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC. TO-NIGHT. Appearance of the WORLD FAMOUS DRAMATIC COMPANY, THE MEININGER, With the original scenery and property of the Court Theatre of the Duke of Saxon-Meiningen. JULIUS CÆSAR. SATURDAY MATINEE AT 2 P. M. 300 people appear in this production. Prices $1.50, $1, 75c., 50c. and 25c., according to location. Sale of seats at Chandler's, 309 Fulton st.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC. NEW YEAR'S WEEK. DE WOLF HOPPER PRESENTING WANG. Seats now on sale at Chandler's.

NEW BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC. THIS WEEK—BIG NEW SCENERY—"THE DAILIES." MATS. WED. CHRISTMAS and SATURDAY. Full of bright dialogue, catchy music. HEN, THE PRODIGAL SON. Next week—CHAS. DICKSON in "INCOG."

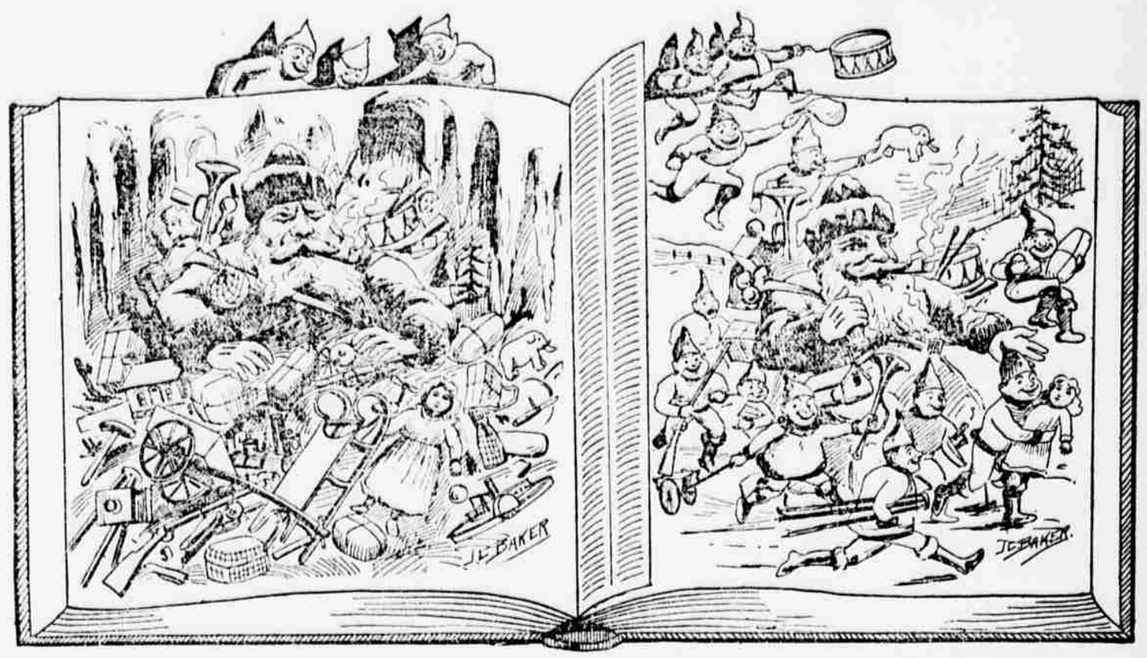
BEDFORD AVE. THEATRE, Brooklyn, E. D. Xmas Week. Mats. Xmas Day, Wed. and Sat. Popular Prices—25, 35, 50, 75 and $1. Chas. Bowser, Marie Saller, Frank McNish & 41 others. BIRDS OF A FEATHER. A new melodramatic Comedy. Elegant Scenery, Cotton Gin in full operation, The Burning Warehouse. New Year's Week—THE STOWAWAY.

AMPHION. EDWIN KNOWLES, Proprietor and Manager. Every Evening. Mats. Wed., Xmas Day and Sat. THE COUNTY FAIR.

COL. SINN'S NEW PARK THEATRE. EVERY NIGHT. MATINEES. Wed. and Sat. Christmas Day. REED & COLLIER'S CO. in HOSS AND HOSS.

Turn Over a New Leaf Series.

SCENE I. SCENE II.



Santa Claus swamped cries for help. | *A "World" "Want" brings the brownies to his aid.*

THE POPULAR RATES FOR "WORLD" WANTS ARE:

5c. a Line for "Situations Wanted," Male and Female.
15c. a Line for "Help Wanted," Male and Female.
20c. a Line for "Houses, Rooms and Apartments to Let."
20c. a Line for "Board Wanted" and "Boarders Wanted."

NO EXTRA CHARGE ON SUNDAY.

You can repeat any "Want" Advertisement costing 20 cents a line or more for THREE CENTS a line Less on the Second Insertion and FIVE CENTS a line LESS on the Third and Subsequent Insertions.

ONE MERRY CHRISTMAS.

The Story of a False Charge and Grief Changed to Joy.

It was nearly eighteen years before my retirement from the active duties of my profession that I occupied a set of dingy and gloomy chambers in Old Square, Lincoln's Inn.

In those old chambers, though, many an important consultation took place, and I passed many a long hour, both by day and night poring over acts of Parliament and legal volumes.

It was one evening just before Christmas I had an appointment at 9 o'clock with a solicitor of the name of Johnson, who had written to me to say that a deed of gift of rather a peculiar nature was required in favor of a client of his, and that he would be glad to have a conference, accompanied by the client, on the subject.

I had agreed, and at 9 o'clock precisely my clerk, who was remarkably steady and sober on that evening, since he had only, I suppose, been twice or thrice to Bell Yard, or to the public house in Cursitor street, announced the visitors.

"Mr. Johnson, sir; and Capt. Meath!"

Johnson I knew quite well; but who or what Capt. Meath could be I was rather at a loss to conjecture, as the first sight of the "Captain" did not bring him up to my notions of what a captain should be in either branch of the service.

Imagine a big, bloated-looking man, about fifty years of age, as dirty and disreputable as he could very well look, and yet with some of the most costly jewelry about him that I ever saw publicly worn.

The Captain had a beard of some three or four days' growth. His hands and soap had not formed the slightest intimacy apparently for as long a period of time, and he brought with him into my chambers a most serious and to me detestable odor of stale tobacco.

His dress was something between that of a hanger-on at a gaming-house and a horse-jockey.

But his jewels!

They startled me!

On his dirty, thick fingers, he must have had at least five hundred pounds worth of diamonds in rings of massive gold! A pin held together his cravat, from which flashed a ruby of great value, and a gold chain, with a slide in which glittered some half dozen brilliants, was round his neck, and connected with a watch, I presumed, which no doubt came up to the general grade of his appointments.

Such, then, was Capt. Meath, as he sat down on one of my rather old and rickety chamber chairs and put his hat on the floor between his feet.

I looked at Johnson with an air which no doubt said pretty plainly, "What sort of an animal is this you have brought me?" Johnson looked a little red in the face.

"This is—a—Capt. Meath," he said. "A gentleman of means!"

"I believe you!" said the Captain, in a husky voice, as if his throat were scarred and seamed by alcoholic drinks. "I believe you! Make anything, sir, on the Derby this year, eh?"

"Sir?" said I.

"You look as if you ought to know a 'oss when you sees him!"

"Mr. Johnson," said I, in a cold, wiry sort of tone, "I am much surprised! Let us proceed to business, if you please!"

"Certainly! certainly!"

"Oh, yes!" chimed in the Captain. "Business is business! I say, though, sir, don't it strike you, eh? that business always goes better if it's *wetted!*"

"If it's what, sir?" said I.

"*Wetted!* Don't you know?"

Mr. Johnson, upon this, tried to get up a little insane sort of laugh, as he said: "The Captain is only joking, sir. He means *refreshed.* He—he—is thirsty, perhaps."

"Dry as dust!" exclaimed the Captain.

"Oh!" said I.

"Perhaps you haven't something in the drinkable way here, Mr. ——," added the Captain then.

"Oh, yes, I have."

"No?—you don't say so?"

"Certainly I have."

I rang my little bell, and my clerk popped in his head at the door of the room.

"Brooks, the water-jug," I said.

"Yes, sir."

"The what?" roared the Captain, with a look of the most intense disgust. "The what? The—water—jug? sir, do you wish to insult me? Do you mean to offer a man like me the water-jug? I can tell you, Mr. Lawyer what's-your-name, that I know nothing of water!"

"Nor soap, either!" said I, rising; "and the sooner you leave my chambers the better, in order that I may get them properly fumigated!"

"Captain! Captain!—gentlemen!" said Johnson. "Really, now—I hope—I beg—Oh, dear me!"

"What's the row, then?" said the Captain. "What does he go on at me for, eh?"

"Look you here, Mr. Johnson," I said; "if you are disposed to go on with the professional business which brings you here, pray do so, and I will attend to it. If you do not, let me be, and leave me, with your client."

"Certainly—certainly! My dear Captain, pray be quiet!"

"The water-jug, sir!" said my clerk, at this moment coming into the room with a large blue article of that description.

The Captain sprang at him with a roar, and, wrenching the jug from his hands, flung the whole contents over him; and as the jug held about four quarts of pump water, my clerk, for once in a way, might be said to have gone through the hydropathic treatment.

Could I help laughing for the life of me. Mr. Johnson looked alarmed, but the Captain only then gave a nod to the clerk, and slammed the door shut in his face, and came back to his chair as if nothing had happened.

"Now, gents," he said, "your servant! I'm ready!"

I nodded to Mr. Johnson to go on; for, to tell the truth, I was getting curious to know what the case could be about.

Mr. Johnson then spoke.

"My client, Captain Meath, is about to accept, as a gift from Mr. Timothy Grigson, of the estate called The Elms, at Richmond, of the whole of that freehold property, with all its hereditaments and appurtenances; and as the estate was the subject of a marriage settlement at the time of the union of Mr. Timothy Grigson with his wife, Mrs. Placbia Grigson, formerly Marrow; and as the Captain is to give no valuable consideration for the gift, we are anxious that the deed should be perfectly valid."

I looked all the surprise I felt.

"Pray," said I, rather for the purpose of saying something than for the sake of the information—"pray, what is the estate worth, Mr. Johnson?"

"Eighteen thousand pounds."

"That's about it!" said the Captain.

"And do the Grigsons reside there?"

"Oh, yes!" added Johnson. "But they are going abroad!"

"Where to, may I ask?"

"I don't know."

"Well, I suppose a man may give away his property if he likes. But there were, of course, trustees to the marriage settlement on Mr. Grigson! What do they say?"

"They oppose."

"Yes," said Capt. Meath, "and be"—

"My dear sir, don't, don't! Yes, Mr.—the trustees object, but Mrs. Grigson and all her children agree; so we think that a deed may be drawn which will oust the trustees—since, if all parties for whom a trust is held, choose to absolve it, I thought, you see, sir, that it might be set aside."

I shook my head.

"Why, you don't mean to say," roared Capt. Meath, "that if old Grigson chooses, he can't give me his property, and go to New Zealand with all his family, eh? He will have enough to begin the world there with again, I fancy, eh?"

"There's another little matter, too," said Johnson. "The deed must not be in the name of Meath as the person gifted with the estate. The Captain's real name is Amos Briggs."

"Then why does he call himself Capt. Meath?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed the Captain. "A good travelling name, you see, sir! But when you come to law parchments and those sort of things let it be Briggs! What's the odds so long as you are happy?"

"Then," said I, "as I comprehend you, Mr. Johnson, you want such a deed of gift settled as shall bestow an estate without consideration upon a person to be there named, such estate, at the same time, being part of a marriage settlement, the trustees to such settlement objecting, although the parties in whose interests the settlement was made agree."

"That's it, sir!"

"I must consider."

"Very great, sir."

"Can't you do it?" roared Capt. Meath.

"I don't know!" said I, in a voice an octave higher than his.

"Then you are a muff!"

"But now I know," added I.

"Oh, dear!" said Johnson.

"Now I know, Mr. Johnson, and you, Capt. Meath, alias Amos Briggs; and I tell you at once that I will have nothing whatever to do with the transaction!"

Capt. Meath turned white with rage and he took two steps towards me.

"I'm half a mind," he said, "to smash you!"

"If you come one inch nearer me," I said, "I will thrash you within a hair's breadth of your life! You are a bully and a scoundrel!"

Capt. Meath took no notice of these words, but abruptly left my room. Another moment, and he was lying sprawling in the outer office.

My clerk, in revenge for the water-jug affair, had placed the coal-scuttle just in the doorway, and the Captain had gone over it with a great crash.

And so I got rid of my visitors, and the "consultation" came to an end.

But the affair somehow hung heavily upon my mind.

I had a friend at Hampton Court, and it struck me that he might know something of the Grigson family, at Richmond, since the estate they there held was so important as to be worth £18,000. My friend's name was Allerton, and I knew that he came to the city on business almost every day, although he was an independent man. I wrote to him.

"MY DEAR ALLERTON: Will you give me a call at my chambers, any day soon, before 4 o'clock?"

The next day produced my friend, and after a little chat about other matters, I said: "Is there an estate at Richmond called 'The Elms,' and is there a family of the name of Grigson in possession of it?"

"What, Timothy Grigson do you mean, who used to have his offices in Throgmorton street?"

"Timothy is the name."

"To be sure, there! Why, I know him as well as I know you! He is one of the best and kindest-hearted little old fellows that ever lived!"

"Has he a family?"

"Yes, four as good, amiable girls as ever you saw; and Mrs. Grigson is, as a wife and mother, the best of women! My dear fellow, I must take you to the Grigsons. You will like them—a quiet, unassuming, nice family, and all of them as single-hearted and simple as babes!"

"Do you know a Capt. Meath?"

"No."

"Do you think the Grigson family are the sort of people to break up their home and settle in New Zealand?"

"New where?"

"Zealand!"

Allerton sat down and laughed till the tears came into his eyes.

"Oh, oh, oh! Poor old Griggy! Oh! He go to New Zealand!—old Grig! Why, the little fellow is too fat to do more than waddle round his garden! What put such a thing into your head? As for Mrs. Grigson, I fancy she would expect to be shipwrecked and cast away on some desert island, if she were to venture as far as the Nore. No, no! They are a quiet, rich, domesticated, happy, contented, English family!"

"You amaze me!"

"Why?—why?"

"My dear Allerton, I will tell you in strict confidence that I have been professionally applied to to draw up a deed of gift of The Elms estate from Mr. Grigson to a man named Amos Briggs, alias Capt. Meath, for no consideration whatever; and I am at the same time informed that Grigson and all his family are about to emigrate."

My friend Allerton looked at me as if he thought I had overworked myself a little, and was beginning to live in a fantastic realm of my own creation.

"No," I added, "I am perfectly sane. The deed of gift was offered to me to settle to that effect."

"Some other Grigson?" said Mr. Allerton.

"The Elms, Richmond," said I, "and the wife's name Placbia Marrow, before her marriage."

"The same, by heaven! I wonder if Michael Angelo has anything to do with it?"

Upon this I began to think that Allerton had gone suddenly mad, and I cried: "Michael Angelo? What on earth can Michael Angelo have to do with it?"

"The son."

"The what? The who?"

"Michael Angelo Grigson—old Grigson's son—one of the handsomest, but one of the most hair brained and wildest young scamps. Well, no—I will not call him a scamp, since he one day jumped into the Thames to save a poor child and nearly got drowned himself!"

"Then Grigson has a son?"

"That's one!"

"His age?"

"About eighteen."

"And the four girls?"

"One, twenty; one, about sixteen, and the other two younger still."

"And all the family are at home?"

"All but Michael; he is the one care and grief of the family, and nobody ever knows whether he is at home or not. His extravagance—his escapades—his thoughtless actions—all make up, as I say, the one evil of poor old Grigson and his family, and I verily believe that father, mother, sisters, servants, dogs, cats and every living thing at The Elms would do anything in the world for him, bad as he is, with all his faults, he is the most generous, noble fellow that ever lived."

I drew a long breath.

"My dear Allerton, I will go to-day with you to the Grigsons. If you will take me. There is some villainy afoot—some strange, inexplicable circumstance at the bottom of all this, which it will be a pleasure to you to find out."

"A pleasure? Indeed it will! I would not have anything go wrong with the Grigsons for I don't know what! When will you go?"

"Now."

We were at Richmond in two hours.

The Elms was one of those pleasant family estates only to be found in England—the home which, with all its associations, all its endearments, all its associations, was proposed to be given to dirty, odorous, brutal Captain Meath, and for nothing, too!

There was nothing about the house to indicate preparations for the proper celebration of Christmas—nothing unusual in that section of the country.

We approached the house, and then Allerton called out, "Why they are all there—all in the drawing-room, I declare! Come on!"

From the drawing-room, then, there came forth the whole of the Grigson family—the family—the four daughters—pleasant English-looking girls all—and the mother; but instead of coming towards us, they all fled as if we had been an advance guard of a hostile force, and disappeared in the hall.

I could see that Allerton had their handkerchiefs to their eyes, too, as they went; and I heard Allerton saying, "What can this mean?"

Before he could answer me, however, an old-looking little fat man came out of the drawing-room, and called out, "Hilloa! boy! Why, there you are, Allerton! Glad to see you! oh, very! Brought a friend with you, too! Well, that is jolly—oh, very! Hem!"

"That's Grigson," said Allerton.

The face of Grigson was the picture of good nature, but about his eyes were two circles, red and omens of grief and recent tears.

"Well, this has been a day, Allerton, with a forced hilarity. "Introduce me to your friend! Glad to see you, too, sir! Hurrah! All right! Very!"

Poor Grigson was a shocking bad actor. He tried to be jocose—"very," as he would himself have said; but his voice cracked at times and came out with a tone that was enough to break one's heart to hear it.

"Come on! Ha! ha!" he cried. "I wonder where Mrs. G. and the girls are, to be sure? Just as you came in sight something here—my eye—in fact in my eyes! Jolly, that—very! Come on!"

Grigson struck his chest with his fist and then ran on before us; and from the action of his little fine-like arms and the waving about of an enormous handkerchief, we could see that he was crying fit to break his heart.

"Good heaven!" said Allerton, "I shall go mad!"

"No, Allerton, no! There is evidently something terrible hanging over this house; something heavy on the hearts of all these kindly good people. Let us try to do ourselves the happiness to save them."

"I will, indeed! What is it? What can it be? Way, they are all hearse-stricken! H