The Stage Reporter vs. the Real Thing,

As John Barrymore Portrays Them

(DRAWN FOR THE EVENING WORLD BY JOHN BARRYMORE.)

Once a Part of Park Row Life, He Finds It a Mistake in Acting Role to Flash Notebook and Call Himself a Journalist.

Written for The Evening World
By John Barrymore.

What is the difference between a "stage" reporter and the real variety? some one asked, and the obvious answer was "a red leather note book." Although, to tell the truth, with most dramatists not to mention stage directors, that particular "prop." in the equipment of the character has grown obsolete. But there was a time when an actor who was cast for a "journalist" (they are always journalists on the stage) sallied forth and purchased a beautiful, well-groomed notebook, bound in scarlet leather—gilt-edged and pencil-equipped. Thus fortified, he was prepared to do his worst with the part. But actors should not be altogether blamed for the fact that they have so often failed to realize a faithful portraiture of the newspaper man. Some times the dramatist is responsible for the dehumanized stage reporter, and sometimes the audience demands an adherence to convention, which is an added handicap. Often just one line in a part may render impossible his "getting over" with the audience.

When "The Yellow Ticket" went into rehearsal, for instance, Michael Morton, the author, had given me several speeches as "Julian Rolfe," which I begged him to change before the opening performance. It was merely a matter of idiom, and yet for me to read the lines, as originally written, would have called forth unflattering comment from the press, for with perfectly proper English authority Mr. Morton had caused his American newspaper man to allude to himself as a journalist, an unpardonable offense in American newspaper ethics. Not only did "Rolfe" speak of himself as a journalist, but he insisted upon the title throughout three acts.

"But if I have you call yourself a newspaper man," objected Mr. Morton, "the public will think that I mean a man who sells newspapers."

"Not in America," I told him, "for I have been a newspaper man myself, and the only "journalists" that I have met on Park Row have always been out of a job." Just why this opprobrium should attach itself to the term "journalist" probably is thus explained. Speaking of my experience in newspaper life—I was once an illustrator on a New York evening paper—a friend of mine on the staff of one of the papers stopped in to see me after the performance of "The Yellow Ticket," a few nights ago. "I have been watching your performance," he told me, "and have been wondering why you don't go back to newspaper work."

"That's a doubtful compliment," I winced.

"Oh, I didn't mean it that way," he protested, "but I thought you enjoyed illustrating. How did you happen to quit?"

"I didn't," I assured him. "I was fired." That's true. It was a row with the chief about a cartoon, and I lost my job.

I consider the greatest portrayer of a newspaper man on the American stage today is Richard Bennett, to whose discretion as well as talent I pay tribute herewith. Dick was cast for the role of a newspaper man in "The Other Girl." He entered by one door, remained in sight ten seconds and made his exit speedily through the other door. And there is the secret of success for any actor when he is cast for a "journalist."

To get down to cases, a newspaper man is really a difficult role to play. If he doesn't carry conviction into the minds of his audience he is lost. This is true of any part, to be sure, but it is peculiarly true of a part such as I am playing at present. An actor can count upon one advantage in being cast for a newspaper man. His audience is predisposed to like him. It is true that an audience has its conventional idea of what the character should be like, and the more sops he can throw to convention in this regard the more popular he is sure to be. It is a known fact, however, that few actors have succeeded in pleasing the newspaper fraternity in their rendition of these roles.

A notable instance is that of a newspaper man named Ernest Joy, who came to New York direct from a Minneapolis paper, and not being able to connect with any of the New York dailies, accepted a job as an actor, to play a newspaper man in a piece at the Grand Opera House. He opened on Monday, and the following day four of our daily papers agreed that he gave a satisfactory performance in every way except that he was not at all like a real newspaper man.

For dramatic purposes unwonted dignity is lent to the "journalist" who is invariably backed up by a great government, in most instances the United States. You remember the story of O. Henry in which a newspaper man finds himself in difficulties in a South American city. He is driven to the expedient of declaring himself to be backed up by the Goverment of "the Confederate States of America," and is released when he pulls a lot of bombast about having his government rescue him with a battleship in twenty-four hours. Far be it from me to call attention to the fact that your average newspaper man is not backed up by anything. In some sorry instances, alas, not even by his own paper. But let that pass.

The best that an actor can do with the role of a newspaper man is to make him a human being, and a regular fellow. If he succeeds in making the audience believe that he's on the level they are sure to like him, and the rest is easy. Come to think of it, as I said before, that applies almost equally well to any part for which an actor may be cast.

GREEN WIGS BARRED FROM THE PARADE ST. PATRICK'S DAY

"Any attempt to exploit militant suffragism through the agency of the St. Patrick's Day parade next Tuesday will be blocked at the start," said Grand Marshal Eugene J. Flood today. "I have heard that a committee of suffragists wearing green wigs are to try to butt their way into the ranks of the marchers. If they do they will get the gate in short order. My aides will see to it that there will be no outside influence to disturb the marchers."

Roderick J. Kennedy, Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements of the big turnout, says that acceptances have been received from more than ninety Irish patriotic, fraternal and social organizations and that the marchers will be between 30,000 and 35,000.

On the reviewing stand at the Fifth Avenue Cathedral will be Gov. Glynn, Cardinal Farley, Mayor Mitchel, Commissioner of Police McKay, Commissioner of Street Cleaning Fetherston, Gen. George R. Dwyer, United States Senator O'Gorman and Supreme Court Justices Dowling, Giegerich and Goff.

Col. Lewis J. Conley with the Sixty-ninth Regiment will head the procession, followed by the first brigade of the Irish Volunteers under Col. Charles J. Crowley. The Mount Loretto Cadets of Staten Island, the St. Paul Cadets of Harlem and the Catholic Cadets of Paterson, N. J., will be among the military features of the parade. There will be a big contingent from the Bronx.

The parade will be reviewed by Grand Marshal Flood and his aides as they pass between Third and Second avenues in One Hundred and Twenty-sixth street.

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