FOLKS WITH LECTURES ON TAP

PROBLEMS THE LYCEUM BUREAU MANAGERS FACE.

Robert Erskine Ely Confronts an English Woman Who Is Prepared to Speak on Any Subject—Some Travel Hardships Printer's Slip Helped J. K. Bangs.

Probably the most serious place on earth is a lyceum bureau, where lecturers are received and schedules of tours are mapped out. Of course there are humorous lecturers, but the proportion of lecturers to seriousness in this line of work is infinitesimal. The demand for humor seems to be just as great as ever, but its supply is falling very short, according to the heads of several of these establishments. And the funny part of the whole thing is that according to these reports while it is a serious matter enough to prepare any lecture tour nothing comes up to touring one humorous lecturer 'cross country.

A deep gloom thick as a London black fog falls on the inner sanctum of the Civic Forum bureau when you ask chirpily if anything amusing has happened there recently. Dr. Robert E. Ely looks quite horrified at the idea and begins to tell you immediately that his experience has taught him that there are an enormous number of would-be lecturers, roughly divided into two classes, the Britisher who having failed in his own country believes that he can come over here and read aloud a page from some stale *Blackwood* or *Edinburgh Review* by virtue of a prestige fondly fostered by clever advertising and the clever Yankee who does not seemingly think that it is at all necessary to prepare a lecture but who is willing to speak on any subject. Of both of these classes the Civic Forum bureau is a focus.

At the moment of your inquiry the office of the Civic Forum is deluged with inquiries concerning the health of Miss Ellen Terry, whose lecture tour is conducted from this headquarters and whose death had been reported. Miss Terry, finally reached by long distance wire somewhere in the far West, responds by saying that she is not dead a little bit and quite willing to stand by that assertion. It takes about one busy morning to clear up this misinformation.

While you are waiting to get your inquiry in again a bustling man comes in and inquires of Mr. Feakins, the acting secretary, what the standard fee for a lecture is. Mr. Feakins tells him that there is no such thing as a standard fee in the lecture field; that the value of personality and the choice of subject have to be taken into account. He enlarges politely on this topic, as if it had never been mentioned to him before, although it is learned afterward that this is a stock inquiry of the lecture bureau bores. This particular one with a disappointed expression explains that he has no lecture ready, but thought if it was going to be worth his while he could get one up in a few days on almost any topic that would "go."

An English woman who has come to this country moved by a perfectly altruistic desire to let us know right away all about when the first school baths were taken in England and has some facts concerning that wonderfully interesting subject is encountered at the office of the Civic Forum and tells you that she has become tired of trying to interest the British audience in anything. "It is this great, new, fresh, alluring country of yours that we must teach," she explains enthusiastically. "What do our people, old in civilization and born fatigued, know or care about when the first school baths were taken?"

You feel sorry that you cannot inform her in regard to this, and while you are hesitant she says:

"British society is so blighting. But here in this wonderful new country, so open to impressions, so ready to receive, so——"

The courteous secretary at this point informs the would-be English lecturer that he does not think he has any dates open for the subject of the "First School Baths in Britain," although he does not deny its aptness. The British importation hearing this is quite willing to lend her aid as a solvent to our crude ore of ignorance as to "The Effect of Educating Adults on the Child Imagination," or "The Value of a Sane Psychotherapy in our Social Organizations."

As she goes out she looks pityingly at the officials of the Civic Forum bureau, who have shown themselves blind to the opportunity she has offered, and you don't wonder, when you repeat your interrogation regarding amusing happenings, that Dr. Ely again asserts that during the lecture season his point of view is not the humorous one.

Mr. Feakins, the acting secretary, admits that if he should tell all the funny things he knows he would probably lose his position. "For instance," you inquire; and raking his memory for an innocuous episode, the secretary cites the example of Alexander Irvine, who was scheduled to lecture out West before a club on a certain night, and standing at a railway junction, saw the only train he could take that day which would land him at the desired point pulling out of the station. Mr. Irvine, who has lived for a time under the reproach of being a parlor socialist, undoubtedly forgot what was expected of him at this point and executing a Ruth St. Denis dance and a Battling Nelson clutch, managed to hang on to the rear of the last car, and in a dislocated, dishevelled and disarrayed condition was dragged on board.

That there is always an outlet for lecturing talent in the many women's clubs of the suburbs is one of the bits of information that keep alive the flagging spirits of several lyceum managers. An artistic young woman dragged from the shelter of a private life where her sayso is received by the circle of friends as a final word was induced to address a woman's club in Hackensack recently on "The Progress of Art," by one of these feverishly active persons who had promised to fill that date.

The young woman described her experiences after she returned in a sadly depressed manner. She had tried to practise on her family, who refused to listen to the few ideas she had thrown together, but buoyed by hope and the latent belief that lecturing is a natural function of the human being she reached Hackensack. She discovered that facing an audience of the critical kind that flourishes in the New Jersey suburbs without notes or previous preparation was not so easy as she had imagined.

However, whenever soul stuff flagged and vocabulary weakened she always managed to encounter the piercing black eyes of a dear old lady near the front of the well filled room who invariably nodded in such an optimistic manner that spurred afresh she got not only a second wind but a third, fourth and even a dozen and finished to loud applause. Afterward when she was being fed with cakes and tea an automobile called to take her to the station and, the generous check diplomatically handed her, the chairman of the committee on progressive pabulums hoped that the old lady with the shaking palsy had not seriously embarrassed her and received her negative with effusion, saying that several other lecturers had been temporarily left wordless by encountering this unexpected breck.

At a lecture in Flatbush recently a well known poet who has a very keen sense of locality addressed an assemblage of the platform sex in regard to the doings of several "dear, dead women," following this with revelations of a poetic nature quite in keeping with his reputation for delicate appreciation. Afterward a young girl with mystic eyes and a Pre-Raphaelite profile handed him some hot chocolate. The poet, finding something charming in her naive adoration, talked to her in a half fanciful manner and finally with the air of majesty conferring a favor told her that she might ask him any question she wished and he would tell her the truth.

She hesitated but a moment, the rapt expression deepening in the opal eyes, then whispered:

"I do want to know—and I didn't dare ask before—Oh, is that your own hair or a wig?"

Mme. Bell-Ranske, who has a lecture room, a subway theatre and various interesting equipments for lecture courses which have now become a part of New York's platform season at the Berkeley Lyceum Building, admits that the subjects of her choice are not those that lend themselves readily to humorous descriptions. Whatever Ibsen's good points may be, no one has ever dared accuse him of an overweening sense of the absurd, and Mme. Bell-Ranske as an Ibsen interpreter may be a little eclipsed by the serious shadow of the Norwegian playwright.

"A great deal of sympathy is given to the actors and actresses who have in the course of their professional career," says Mme. Bell-Ranske, "to go through the phase of the 'one night stand' circuit, but little is ever thought of the lecturers who have to jump across wide spaces of territory to get to other places on schedule time. The annals of those trips are filled with adventures and misadventures and there is more heroism displayed in making good oftentimes than would be called for on a battlefield. Sickness is ignored, weather conditions not taken into account; delays, accidents, broken promises have to be met with and answered as seems best to the victim.

"Little help is received from home audiences. One tearful lecturer finding herself stranded in a Western town, the train stalled in a snowdrift, managed to get a telegraph despatch through in which she described her direful condition and asked for instructions. She received one word in return, 'shovel,' and supposing that was intended to convey abstrusely that she must depend on her own cleverness she dried her tears and met the situation properly.

A lecturer scheduled to appear every Tuesday afternoon at a certain philanthropic institution where education is absorbed by this method had for a single auditor week after week a man who always came in shortly after the lecturer appeared and stayed until a few minutes of the hour limitation.

Buoyed up by the knowledge that popular or not the institution having engaged him for the entire course would have to pay, the lecturer expended his oratorical powers on his lone hearer, but not until the course was completed did he get a chance to inquire why this person should feel such a deep interest in what was after all a subject only appealing to the specialized mind.

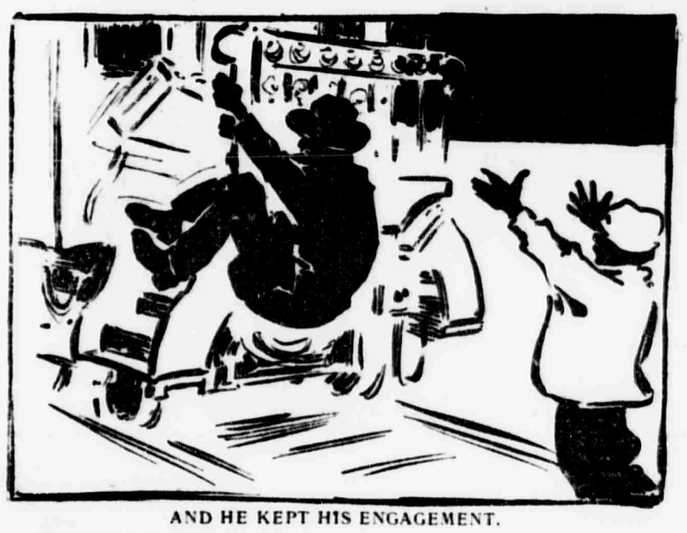
The auditor was a bit embarrassed, and not having a ready lie admitted that the place was warm and comfortable. Before the course was opened he had to wait in the station for his outgoing train, his business in the city being over at the time of the lecture, so he had kind of got the habit of sitting there and waiting, but should feel very sorry if he had incommoded the lecturer.

The happiest translation of present day humor which Mr. Glass, the present representative, can recall at the Pond bureau, situated now in the Metropolitan Tower Building, is to explain that the popular lecture of John Kendrick Bangs, "Salubrities I Have Met," was originally written "Celebrities I Have Met," but that a printer had been responsible for the error, which had proved the contention of many lecture managers that a happy title is more than half the battle.

"YOUR OWN OR A WIG?"

"SHE'D BE HANGED IF SHE WOULD."

THE AUDIENCE.



AND HE KEPT HIS ENGAGEMENT.

DEEP IN THE SUBJECT.

DUPLICATE AUCTION BRIDGE

A NOTABLE GAME PLAYED AT THE LOTOS CLUB.

First Attempt to Play Auction Bridge in Duplicate—Interesting Results Shown—The Bidding the Important Thing—Details of Some of the Hands.

On Thursday, December 15, between thirty and forty members if the Lotos Club played a game which will probably be of as much interest to future generations of card players as the evergreen game of duplicate whist that Cavendish played in London, described in *Bell's Life* March 6, 1857. The game at the Lotos Club was the first attempt to play auction bridge in duplicate.

Those who arranged the affair had in view the settlement of several interesting questions connected with the tactics of the game. They wanted to know about how closely players of the same calibre would agree as to the proper declaration on the same cards under the same conditions.

They hoped to discover the average proportion between the number of points made in tricks that count toward game and those made in penalties, which increase the value of the rubber only. They also wished to discover if possible some reasonable bonus which might be added to the trick score in playing duplicate so as to prevent the players from devoting their entire energies to getting penalties.

The experience gathered from several years of bridge in duplicate has shown that the average value of a game won is about 50 points if no rubbers are played, and that if the game is unfinished when the adversaries are changed the higher score may equitably add that number of points to their total score. This bonus of 50 points for winning a game effectually put a stop to the old practice of declaring in favor of the honors.

In straight bridge tricks and honors are the only things to be considered. In auction there is a very large factor the penalties to deal with, as they often run up to 500 or 600 points on a single hand. In bridge there is probably not more than one hand in twenty that would present any difficulty about the make at the table, so that the same cards are constantly played under the same conditions and should yield the same results if handled by players of equal ability.

In the last duplicate bridge tournament played at the New York Bridge Whist Club the difference between the eight or ten leading pairs was not more than 20 points in 640. In bridge results depend on good play just as much as on good makes.

The results of the first experiment with auction bridge would seem to show that there cannot be any such reliance placed upon the similarity of the declarations. In not a single case was the same declaration the winning one at each table at which the hand was played.

Another point which makes the two games entirely dissimilar is that a difference in the declaration means a variation in the position of the first lead, a different hand exposed for the dummy and an entirely different result in the score.

From the hands played at the Lotos Club tournament a dozen have been selected as a fair sample of the whole just to show the variations in the winning declarations upon each. The top line is the number of the hand for reference, and the figures in the vertical column under it represent the winning declarations, 2H being two in hearts and 1N standing for one in no trumps.

An asterisk over the declaration shows that it was doubled, and the heavy line under the declaration shows that the declarer failed to fulfil his contract.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
3N	3N	2H	2N	4D	3D	4D	2H	2H	3H	2H	2N
3H	1N	1N	1N	3D	2N	4D	3H	2N	2D	2N	3H
5H	1N	2N	2N	4D	2N	4D	3H	2H	2N	1N	2N
4D	2D	1N	1N	2N	2H	3H	3N	2H	3D	1N	2H
3H	1N	1N	1N	4D	3N	4D	2H	2H	2N	2N	1N
4D	4D	2H	1N	3H	3D	4D	2N	1N	2N	2H	2H
3H	2N	2N	2H	1N	2N	4D	2N	2N	2N	1N	2N

It will be found that out of the eighty-four declarations tabulated thirty-four failed, or nearly one-half. In examining the individual scores it was found that only two partnerships succeeded in making seven winning declarations and fulfilling their contract, the average being four fulfilled contracts out of fourteen deals.

Counting both sides, this gives us about 60 per cent. of fulfilled contracts, of which in this particular case it so happened that the extra strength of the hands dealt N and S gave that point of the compass 66 per cent.

A very instructive result is that of the trick, and honor and penalty scores in detail, showing the points made by the players who sat N and S with the strong hands:

Tricks.	Honors.	Penalties.	Total.	Games Won.	Games Lost.
234	220	1050	1504	4	1
292	324	750	1366	5	2
282	296	600	1178	5	4
240	288	600	1128	4	5
246	256	400	902	4	6
50	108	1100	1258	1	3
100	200	700	900	3	7
1534	1712	4650	7896	26	28

The column of finished games shows the number that were won on the deal, 30 points or more in one hand. The unfinished games are those in which the declarer fulfilled his contract but failed to reach 30 points on the deal.

This table shows that the average of the tricks is 219, for honors 244 and for penalties 664. Here are the weaker scores:

Tricks.	Honors.	Penalties.	Total.	Games Won.	Games Lost.
174	122	750	644	4	2
162	54	600	756	2	1
92	118	250	460	2	5
54	86	400	540	1	3
84		550	634	2	6
60	122	350	532	1	4
78	138	50	266	2	7
664	640	2350	3634	14	28

If we take the grand average for the hands running both ways we get 155 for tricks, 168 for honors and 500 for penalties. In order to get at the average value of a single hand, although this is a small number from which to draw any definite conclusion, we shall find that in fourteen deals played over at seven tables, making ninety-eight distinct plays, we get this:

	Tricks.	Honors.	Penalties.
	1534	1712	4650
	644	640	2350
Totals	2178 + 98	2352 + 98	7000 + 98
Average	22	24	71

The trick and honor scores are a little better than the averages that have been found by investigators of straight bridge, probably on account of the selection of the stronger suit in auction, regardless of the deal. The average of the penalties will doubtless come as a surprise to many, the general belief being that it is not more than half a trick a hand, whereas this shows it to be nearly a trick and a half.

The details of some of the hands upon which such widely differing declarations were made may be interesting. The greatest loss in the way of penalties was in a hand in which the dealer started with one no trump, and the second player, holding nothing in his hand but five hearts to the king, jack and four to a queen in another suit, with two weak two card suits, bid two in hearts, which against a no trumper looks a little like gambling on the partner to pull one through.

At two tables he was doubled and lost 616 points, but at all the others the no trump player, having the hearts stopped, went back to two no trumps and although they made five by cards and 40 aces they lost a great chance for penalties.

In hand No. 1, as shown in the first table given, it will be seen that three of the pairs declared to make three in hearts and that the only one to succeed was the one that was doubled. The warning as to where the strength in the trump suit lay, given to the declarer by the double, saved him two tricks. Without the double the declaration lost 50 penalty points. Against the double it won 64 trick points and 100 penalty.

An excellent example of the value of refusing to double turned up in No. 4, in which the original call was no trump at every table, the only weakness being four small spades, but three honors in every other suit. At all the tables the second player passed, having seven solid spade tricks and the ace of clubs in his hand.

The dealer's partner, holding five hearts to two honors, but otherwise a bust, overcalled his partner's no trumper at three tables with two hearts. At two of these tables the dealer went back to the no trumper and the second hand sat still and said nothing, getting 150 penalty.

At the other table the dealer wisely took the hint that his partner's hearts might be better with a no trumper to help them than as a help to the no trumper itself, so he let it go at two hearts, winning 48 in tricks and 40 in honors, a difference of 238 points.

No. 9 was another instance of the third player pulling his partner out of an original no trump bid by calling two hearts. When the third hand failed to do this they lost heavily on the hand.

In hand No. 5 there were three different winning declarations at various tables, diamonds, hearts and no trumps, and all of them succeeded. The dealer had the no trumper, but his partner held six diamonds to two honors and persisted in it in four cases, in three of which he had to overcall three hearts on his left with four in diamonds.

In the single instance in which the player with the six diamonds assisted by his partner's no trumper was afraid to overcall the three hearts the heart call won 32 and 52, while the diamond would have been good for a little slam, 36 and 44.

This same hand furnished a striking example of the advantage of shutting out informatory bids which the adversaries may avail themselves of the opportunity to make. The player who pulled off the no trumper on this deal got the winning declaration by starting right out with two in no trumps, which shut out the diamond and heart calls.

The wisdom of his bid was shown by the fact that the leader, not knowing his partner had such great strength in the heart suit, led a club right up to the dealer's guarded king. Had he known to lead a heart, he would have caught dummy's king and his partner would have made six hearts tricks, and the leader would then have caught the dealer's club king and made five club tricks.

By shutting out these two informatory calls the dealer made a little slam on his diamonds and spades, 72 and 20. Had the adversaries known what to lead, they would have put him down for 200 penalty without doubling.

In hand No. 6 the loss in the red declarations arose from overlooking the importance of getting to the no trump stage as quickly as possible in auction. The original bid was one spade. After the second player called diamonds, with five of them to the three top honors, the third player bid two in clubs and the fourth man said two hearts.

Instead of shifting at once to no trumps, as he should have done with the clubs stopped, the second player went back to his diamonds and got beaten, the spade calling hand having six small ones. At the one table at which the fourth player went back to his hearts for two tricks he got beaten.

No. 7 afforded a good example of the wisdom of losing in order to save money. Nos. 5 and 7 were the only ones in which the contract was always fulfilled. In No. 7 it was simply a question of which side had the courage to go on to four tricks in the bidding.

Six pairs of partners lost on this hand by not going on to four hearts, which would have compelled their adversaries to go five diamonds, and the remarkable part of it is that even if they had to bid five diamonds and play it they would have saved money, because the declarer had four honors in one hand, and the penalty would have been only 50 points, leaving him 4 to the good. Why he did not see this when he was feeling quite safe in bidding four tricks is not clear. The heart declaration would have won 32 and 40.

Through some peculiar fatality every declaration made on No. 8 lost, and this hand illustrates another important point in the tactics of auction bridge, which is getting the play of the dummy into the proper hand so that the lead on the first trick shall come right.

The dealer started with one heart, holding six to three honors and an outside ace. Second player bid two clubs and the third man passed. Now, the fourth player having the hearts stopped, and knowing hearts would be led should have bid no trumps on his partner's club invitation, so as to get the first lead from his left. Instead of that he passed, and when the dealer went two hearts the second player bid two no trumps and got killed, because the heart lead came through his partner instead of up to him.

Apart from his six trumps and his outside ace the dealer could not have made another trick in hearts, so that a declaration of even two in hearts went down. Had the fourth player at any table made the no trump bid he could have made three by cards on the hand instead of losing 100 penalty. Every table in the room missed this chance.

In hand No. 10 there were three different declarations, and the reason the two no trumps succeeded in one case and lost in another was due to the third hand's blocking or unblocking his partner's suit. The three in diamonds failed through bad play in exhausting the trumps with no suit to make after they were gone, instead of separating them on a cross ruff, which was easily possible.

No. 11 was a peculiar example of want of judgment on both sides. The dealer started with one no trump, holding a twice guarded king in one suit, ace, king in another, ace, queen, ten in another and ace, jack in the fourth. Second player bid three clubs, overlooking the fact that there is no necessity to show a suit when you have the lead yourself. Third player, holding six small hearts to a bust bid two in hearts.

When it got around to the dealer, who had three honors in hearts and two honors in clubs, he let his partner's heart bid stand instead of going back to no trumps. Although the heart declaration succeeded it made only 24 and 30, when the cards were good for 60 and 30 at no trumps.

This first tournament at auction bridge proved three things, apparently, which may have a large influence on the future of the game:

There should evidently be a large premium for winning the game in order to offset the temptation to play for penalties instead of for trick points. This is only another variation of the old trouble with the honors at straight bridge in duplicate, but if something is not done to equalize matters there should be two separate prizes, one for the players with the most trick points and one for those with the most penalties to their credit.

2. The losses of each partnership should be deducted from their winnings, in order to prevent reckless taking of chances to make something when there is nothing to lose on your own score. The modern method of playing bridge tournaments is for each player to keep what he or she gets, deducting nothing for the points made by the opponents. This is simple and attractive, but it is unsound.

3. The play of the hands has less to do with the result then in any other game of cards known. The outcome is practically settled by the bidding. That is to say, it does not appear to matter judging from the results of the tournament at the Lotos Club, whether you save two or three tricks in the hand or not, the important thing being to settle the basis on which it is to be played and by whom.

If you are playing to win three in diamonds, when the other side should be playing to win three in hearts, your trick or two extra are worth 6 points apiece. It is your bidding down the heart declaration that has saved you 32 in tricks and the game, which would have been scored against you, with 40 in honors. That is a difference of 150 points, entirely due to the bidding, which no play of the cards could approach.

There is just one more point that is interesting. In not a single hand is the winning declaration a black suit, and in no trump suit sid a single trick bid get the play. This leads to the interesting question of the proportion of red suits bids that fail, as compared to the same number of no trumps bids. Time will probably settle that.

ONE OF THE EIGHTH AVENUE HORSE CARS OLD NEW YORKERS ARE RECALLING.

Sealing a Mine.

From the Atlantic Monthly.

The brilliancy of the clear autumn night was dimming in the first faint light of the dawn when the work of sealing the shafts began. Up into the cloudless sky, through the tangled steel work of the tipple, a tall tower of black smoke 300 feet high poured up into the still air and faded into the dawn.

In two hours the black pits were covered, first with a layer of rails and then on this was laid a solid bed of concrete; and two hours later only a few thin wisps of smoke that poured up through cracks along the edges of the great seal, like steam beneath the lid of a tea kettle, told of the inferno that was seething in the mine 400 feet below. With the air cut off and the shaft sealed, the fire could live only so long as sufficient oxygen remained to feed the flames.

Old Glass in Fashion.

From the Gentlewoman.

Old glass seems coming into fashion by way of decoration for the dinner table. I dined the other night with some people of taste whose beautifully polished dinner table of old mahogany was entirely decorated with antique glass, even to the central candelabra and the four candlesticks, one at either corner.

The effect, with plenty of white flowers, was, I must say, charming. It is curious, though, that what was nothing accounted of in one generation becomes a craze in the next. Lady Dorothy Nevill in her latest book of reminiscences remarks on the modern craze for old glass and how some specimens formerly used in the most ordinary way at public houses are now eagerly sought after by collectors.