

BABBLERS' BUBBLES' FROM THE SURFACE OF BROADWAY

How Jokes Get That Way

PROBABLY many a theatergoer has wondered where the average vaudeville joke—and some of them are quite average—originated. It hardly seems possible that every variety comedian treated the slang and the josh phrases he uses; one human brain, let alone the variety brain, hardly seems capable of it. As a matter of fact, many of them started life as similes and were abstracted from "A Dictionary of Similes," compiled from many books by Frank J. Wlitsch, professor emeritus of the Winter Garden.

Wlitsch—who admits, by the way, the soft impeachment of having written the "review of reviews" quoted in a letter to THE NEW YORK HERALD last week—frankly confesses that he had thought vaudeville artists would be the last ones in the world to possess a copy of his work. Yet every wise cracker from the two a day whom he has met has told him he always had the book on his dressing table. Just by dipping into the dictionary he would find a joke to the surface almost any time.

Often at the book stores the players have asked for "that book of similes," which is what they were after in the end, anyhow. Appended are several job lots of similes from the volume. Look them over and perhaps you'll recognize some of the makings of several joshes which you heard at your neighborhood theater last week:

Naked as an egg.
Inquisitive as an X-ray.
Merry as an alimony bill.
Compelling as gunpowder.
Lean as a vegetarian's cat.
Even as a set of false teeth.
She has legs like an hour glass.
No more private than a wash.
Overloaded as a Ford on Sunday.
Painless as a cinder in a glass eye.
Hard to shake as an alimony wife.
Fogless as an iceberg at sea.
Useless as a glass eye at a keyhole.
Grave, but satisfied, like a widower.
A face like the abdomen of a ten pin.
Lonesome as a bachelor's tooth brush.
Malancholy as a hairpin on a tombstone.
Slippery as an eel in a kettle of hot soap.
Languid like the sweeping of car barns.
Impossible as to rivet a nail in a custard pie.
About as secluded as the Grand Central Station.
She looked like the third page of the Old Testament.
Mean enough to steal a lump of sugar from a blind beggar.
Noloy as a living skeleton having a fit on a hard wood floor.
No more chance than a bow legged girl in her home town.
About as important as a new flea in a Bowersy lodging house.
Impractical as a market garden on the Java streams.
Handsome as a like motor car; they are good for at least a year.
Absurd as to clap spurs into a wooden horse and expect it to gallop.
As fat as a woman as a tom cat has for a marriage license.
Matrimony, like motoring, is really traveling by means of a series of explosions.
Came down on him like a newly elected Republican President on a Democratic postmaster.

Still Another Shaw Preface

Continued from Preceding Page.

one of the books in his prohibition library.

Moreover, Louis Mann asked for a retaining fee of \$1,000 a week and 50 per cent. of the gross, after he journeyed down to Atlantic City to see if the show could make the grade with him. As Mann departed soon after making this proposition, it seemed to be received with a singular lack of cheers. Bernard is said to be under the doctor's orders, virtually waiting for a prescription to explode on the stage. So it is doubtful whether he will be in the piece, aside from the fact that it is reported that he will carry on with Fannie Brice in the new musical comedy in which Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr., will nominate her.

More Talk of Broadway

Continued from Preceding Page.

At his week at Pittsburgh recently "Bally" drew in gross receipts of \$50,000, probably the high water mark of musical comedy, which is bigger than many Presidents of South American republics play in a year, if they last a year. Marilyn Miller's salary is said to be \$3,500 weekly, plus 10 per cent. of the gross; as a star, so that during this week Miss Miller had about \$5,500 to think about as her personal property.

Harry Tierney and Joseph McCarthy, who wrote the music and lyrics for "Irene," as well as the current "Up She Goes," have a new musical show with which Ray Comstock will soon replenish the continual exhaustion of whirly-girly attractions. James Montgomery is not the librettist for this one, through some strange freak of fate. Comstock will start work on it soon, and may bar it to the temple in New York this season. "Glory," which this trio wrote and which advances upon the Vanderbilt Theater shortly, was tried out a season ago under the title of "Chickens" and hashed and reshaped to its present state.

Lillian Walker, one of the first of the early stars of the movies, who used to run races in the antediluvian film popularity contests with Mary Pickford and Mary Fuller, but gradually receded into the background on the screen, is to be not only seen again soon, but will let her vocal cords vibrate a bit. In other words, she is to come into bloom once more on the stage.

The play in which she will give voice will be "The Green Scarab," by John Stapleton, with which James Shegness, formerly connected with Wagshal's & Kemper as an advance agent, will take a bow as a producer. The title of the play, by the way, has nothing to do with the producer. It is even now in rehearsal, and if all goes well Shegness will disturb the silences of some theater with it in about a month.

"Her Temporary Husband," which was rather temporary in New York, has just been welcomed to the screen to the tune of \$5,000, with Figt National acting as the reception committee for the industry. "Welcome, Stranger," was also made at home in the films at a price of \$18,000. The deal for "Six Cylinder Love," another Sam H. Harris production, fell through with a dull thud because the owners of the rights asked the movie folk to stand and deliver \$50,000, and the movie folk felt they were talking as if they were film stars.

Another instance has just come to notice of the extreme care in mounting a production used by David Belasco, who is like an eagle for spying something wrong and pouncing upon it. In Pittsburgh, when David Warfield's—and Shakespeare's—"The Merchant of Venice" was presented there recently, some commentator in an idle, jesting moment said that the set for Portia's mansion at Belmont, which was done in somewhat Oriental vein, looked like the Casino Theater in New York in its early days.

It was evidently the most casual remark, but Mr. Belasco felt that drastic measures were called for. So last Thursday night, only a week before the opening at the Lyceum Theater, the whole Belmont set was torn out and a new one was installed. Other managers would probably have been terrified at the mere thought of making an elaborate change at such a late date, but Mr. Belasco was determined his set wouldn't suggest a place where a fortieth anniversary was about to be held.

Carroll McCormack in Max Marcin's production of "Mary Get Your Hair Cut," is slated to bounce into the Forty-ninth Street Theater on January 8. The piece received agreeably tolerant notices out of town, and several neighboring things were said by the reviewers about Miss McCormack's acting in particular. Since then the piece has gone through the customary flusterizing for a metropolitan debut.

"Lonely Wives" is still rehearsing vigorously. The latest sensational news from it is that the chorus has been completely changed. George McLellan, associated in the production, is all for voices, while Woods and Herrman are all for figures.

Allan Pollock in "A Bill of Divorcement" closed last night in Cincinnati.

MY DEAR SIR:

Continued from Preceding Page.

that are in the dictionary. It was not by any process known to men of learning, but by a definite meaning, even a method of absorption, that I managed at last to divine, infer, guess, and invent the story of *Gitta*, or *Jutta*, as I have had to spell her to avert having her name pronounced with a hard G. Trebitsch is amiable enough to say that I have succeeded wonderfully, but even a very bad translation may be a wonderful success if the translator who does not know the language.

However, when it comes to translating a play the mere translation is only the first fraction of the business. I soon found that translation would not do at all completely to convey the play to an Anglo-American audience. It was necessary to translate the audience as well as the play—that is, to translate Vienna into London and New York. And this involved translating one theatrical epoch into another.

Vienna is still romantic in the manner of the *Die Fledermaus* Gaudier. And as the conqueror always acquires some of the qualities of the conquered, even now that he no longer eats him, there is a touch of the East in Vienna, not only brought by the winds along the Danube, but left by Sobieski when he drove the Turk back from the gates. Add to this that Vienna has never been so much the sweetest, mildest, most eighteenth century art, when even wood was a luxury, and the heroine could not die in gloom too deep to please the audience. When natural history (sometimes ambiguously called realism) was banished from the theater, cruelty, horror and death became painless there and even luxurious, because nobody believes in the most frightful torments that may be heaped on the heroine until she dies of poison or of a broken heart; the villain may, like the wicked Count in "Il Trovatore," live only to *contemplare la morte* of the hero in *madre spasmi*, and the hero himself may secure a moment of happiness or security until misfortune does him to his death; yet no one will turn a hair; the more dreadful it all is the better it is liked because romance can never come home to reality. To preserve this delicious anesthesia there must be no bringing down to earth of the business by the disillusioning touch of comedy.

In England and America nowadays such romance is privileged only in Italian opera, and is not tolerated without the music. The Anglo-American audience wants a happy ending because it cannot bear an utterly unhappy one. It is true, as St. John Hankin has pointed out and illustrated by his "Pinks with Happy Endings," that the conventional happy ending is often as unhappy and disastrous as the marriages which foolish magistrates and police court pensioners force on young people who have been no better than they ought to be. But the fact remains that in producing a Hudson of real life it must gladden with the frantic agonies and despairs and poisonings and butcheries of the romantic theater. Consequently, if you take a play written under the type of a romantic audience and present it without modification to a comparatively matter of fact audience, it will miss its mark, and may even miss the mark altogether.

To avert this result in the case of "Frau Gitta Subine" I have taken advantage of the fortunate circumstances that in real life the consequences of congenial adultery are seldom either so serious as they are assumed to be in romantic tragedy or so trivial as in farcical comedy. I may as well confess at once that I have thought of the play as a play for a living miserably ever afterward, and her husband hardly escapes for a moment from the strictest Spanish tradition of jealousy cruel as the grave, I have permitted myself to suggest, by a few slight touches, that they may quite possibly settle down on reasonable human terms and find life quite bearable after all. Trebitsch goes so far as to say "You have made my last act almost a comedy," but he does not demur to the change, which is not in the story itself but only in the key in which it is played. Through the assumptions of the audience as to what will happen after the fall of the curtain will be more cheerful in England and America than they were in Vienna. The action of the play remains as in the original, as far as I have been able to do justice to it.

"Frau Gitta Subine" was first performed at the great Burgtheater of Vienna on February 17, 1920.



Pay Bainter in "The Lady Cristilinda" coming to the Broadhurst for Christmas.

MY DEAR SIR:

TO THE DRAMATIC EDITOR:

Will you kindly, for the love of the Twelve Apostles and the nine muses, inform the dear general public something about the title of the new Molnar comedy at the National, "Fashions for Men." A great many people object to it, declaring that it "means nothing." Another group in scanning the advertising columns seem to decide that it is not a play at all, but some sort of fashion bazaar presided over by Beau Nash or some other flossy gentleman who writes "Helpful Hints for Natty wearers."

"Fashions for Men" is a literal translation of the Hungarian title "Uri Diva," which is the legend on the signboards over shops in Budapest, and it means exactly like that shown in the first and last acts of the new play. I am informed by my private spies that there are no shops in Hungary where men's furnishings are sold exclusively. Such goods are always sold in stores where articles of women's apparel are also on sale.

Unquestionably there is a symbolic allusion in the title. It is certain that Molnar intended to present *Peter Juhasz* as setting a new "fashion for men" in his attitude toward the two women in the play, his wife and *Pasha*. This idea could be stretched to cover the attitude of all the men in the play toward the women concerned—the mild *Juhasz*, the debonaire and worldly wise count, the self centered *Oscar* and the faithful and loyal *Philip*.

At any rate please inform the world that it isn't a fashion show and the title has a definite meaning, even a "significance." JOHN PETER THORNTON, New York, Dec. 13, 1922.

AGE AND ART.

TO THE DRAMATIC EDITOR:

It is, no doubt, impertinence of me to write you at all, but you touch a subject near my heart when you write of the age of Shakespearean stars. In referring to Forbes-Robertson and his *Hamlet* you say he was in his fifties when he first acted the role in America. As a matter of fact, he was just 50. He was 44 years old when he played *Hamlet* for the first time at the Lyceum Theater in London, and he presented the tragedy for one hundred nights. It is true that he was 63 when he was seen for the last time on any stage in the part at Sanders Theater, Cambridge, Mass., and this performance was his greatest I ever saw him give. I presume that, during my association with him, lasting over four years, I must have seen Forbes-Robertson act *Hamlet* at least one hundred times.

I have it from that worthy woman and sterling actress, Madge Kendall, who saw Forbes-Robertson's *Hamlet* in 1897, when he was 44 years old, that he was a greater *Hamlet* in every respect when he bade farewell to the London stage at Drury Lane in 1913. Surely, he must have seen him in the play many times, and may even miss the mark in the following autumn during his farewell season at the Shubert Theater in New York city. Mrs. Kendall commented on the change of twenty years that had taken place in the actor's physical beauty—and Forbes-Robertson had this quality in its finest sense, if ever man did—was more than balanced by the greater usefulness of spirit and soul, while the maturity of his mind and art added a luster that no person under 50 could possibly bring to the role.

You seem to me there is something of a parallel to this in the case of Paderewski. The critics to-day agree that while he has lost something of the youthful poetic quality that characterized his early work, the maturity of his playing factors in his art to-day that more than compensate for his lack of the earlier charm. It is quite true that a pianist does not demand so much of his physical appearance as does an actor, but still personal attributes are far from being inessential, particularly in Paderewski's youth.

You seem to lay great stress on actors in the theater. Mr. Ziegfeld manages to show you each season fifty or a hundred blooming young beauties, adorable, fresh, with all the incomparable charm of youth. But who shows

Tales of the Two-a-Day

Vaudeville
PALACE—Elsie Janis, Trilixie Friganz, Vivienne Segal and Harry Carroll, Fradkin.
CENTRAL—"Say It With Laughs," with Roger Imhof, Marcelle Corene, Bob Nelson, the Barr Twins, Bobby Barry.
BROADWAY—Harry Stoddard and his Shantley Orchestra, Jimmy Lucas with Francone, Will Mahoney, Max Cooper and Irene Ricardo.
RIVERSIDE—Chic Sale, the Caninos.
COLONIAL—"Stars of the Future," "A Night in Spain."
EIGHTY-FIRST STREET—Ernest R. Ball, the photoplay, "The Bride of Palomar."
PROCTOR'S FIFTH AVENUE—Margaret Young, George Le Maire.
PROCTOR'S TWENTY-THIRD STREET—Greenwich Village Minstrels, Polly Moran.
PROCTOR'S FIFTY-EIGHT STREET—McGrath and Deeds, Brilcoe and Rauh.
PROCTOR'S 125TH STREET—Sarah Padden, Butler and Parker.

Reports were in circulation last week that the Shuberts had been dickered with Max Spiegel for a lease on the Strand Theater for a year, with the deliberate purpose of presenting vaudeville there. Motion pictures would be banished. So would Shubert vaudeville from the Central Theater. That house would return to its rightful sphere of influence in the legitimate. The aim of the Shuberts would be to present popular priced variety at their new rallying point. However, the deal is not considered likely to go through—but then, prophecy is a poorly paying trade in the theatrical district.

Arranging the opening bill of a new vaudeville theater is a hard problem from every angle. The booking man who takes it in hand has to have a 100 per cent. knowledge of vaudeville, of the entertainment resources of his circuit and of the likes and dislikes of the town he is booking for. He must provide a typically strong bill, yet not so strong that following programs will be an anti-climax. In other words, the first bill must not promise too much. The bill must represent the standard acts to good advantage, as out of the store of so-called standard acts comes the material for the average bill. Too much novelty would set a pace that could not be kept up. Local projects—and there are plenty of them—must be carefully reckoned with. A bill that would be a smashing hit in one city would "flop" in another town a few hundred miles away. The new B. F. Keith theaters are booked by Edward V. Darling, who is a practiced hand at selecting a series of acts that will play well, observe an artful variety and change of pace, satisfy to the limit and yet not make it impossible to follow with an equally pleasing bill the following week.

Who's Who

MAURICE S. REVNES, producer of "Fashions for Men," is another Philadelphia product, though born in New York 32 years ago. While he was a high school student there he began an association with Oscar Hammerstein, though at first in an unobtrusive way. Revnes was so devoted to music that when Hammerstein brought his operatic troupe to the Academy of Music in Philadelphia he used to work as a super. One night in 1907 he heard the impressive delivery of a speech from the stage revealing that he proposed to build an opera house there. If the citizens would respond properly, Hammerstein said, he would erect the house the following year.

Revnes became so fired with the idea that he went to the director and offered to handle the subscriptions. Though unknown to Hammerstein, he impressed the impresario so that he turned him over to his son, Arthur, to be engaged. After several weeks without any progress, Revnes told Hammerstein he believed the money would come in if he circulated leading citizens. Hammerstein rejected the idea as beneath his dignity. On his own responsibility however, Revnes sent out circulars and in four weeks \$180,000 had come in.

As a reward, when the opera house was opened, he was named assistant manager, staying with Hammerstein for two years till his interests were dissipated.

After doing some vaudeville producing he joined Comstock and Gent, managing companies at both the Comedy and Princess Theaters. Then he became general assistant to Elizabeth Matury in her play brokerage business. From the knowledge and training gained here he went into the brokerage business himself. He was one of the first to handle the sale of spoken plays to actors and producers of many dramas to Thomas H. Ince. He declares that if many plays had been snapped up then at \$1,000 apiece by the film makers who he urged to do so, instead of depending on original scenarios, many plays could have been purchased for \$25,000 which have since totaled \$750,000 in their sales.

He was in one of the first Plattsburg training groups, and after being commissioned a second lieutenant and being attached to the staff of Major-Gen. Bell of the Seventy-seventh Division at Camp Upton he was sent to the Second Army Corps abroad. There he organized the first theatrical unit for the entertainment of the soldiers, which later became known as the Army Players. When he was assigned to the 30th Machine Gun company he saw active service and was part of the Lost Battalion, being the first officer wounded in that adventure.

The First Nighter's Calendar

TUESDAY.
PROVINCETOWN THEATER—Rudolph Schildkraut, German-Yiddish actor, will make his debut in English in Sholom Ash's play, "The God of Vengeance," presented by the Players Company. Others in the cast will be Esther Stockton, Virginia MacFadyen, Lou Sorin and Mae Bestand. Cleon Throckmorton designed the sets.

WEDNESDAY.
APOLLO THEATER—Ben-Ami in "Johannes Kreisler," by Carl Meinhard and Rudolf Bernauer, will be presented by the Selwyns. It has forty-two scenes, presented in the length of the average play by means of a mechanical arrangement of six stages in one, invented by Sven Gade. The musical setting was done by E. N. von Reznick. The cast is said to number 100.

THURSDAY.
LYCEUM THEATER—David Warfield will be presented by David Belasco in "The Merchant of Venice." The supporting cast is to include Philip Morville as Bassanio, A. E. Anson as Duke of Venice, Ian McLaren as Antonio, W. I. Percival as Gratiano, Herbert Grimwood as Prince of Morocco, Albert Bruning as Tubal, Horace Braham as Lorenzo, Reginald Goode as Salanio, Herbert Ranson as Salario, Fuller Mellish as Old Gobbo, Charles Harbury as Balthazar, Percival Vivian as Launcelot Gobbo, Morris Straessberg as Chus, Edward H. Wever as Stephano, Edward Crandall as Leonardo, Warde de Wolfe as Jester, Nick Long as Clerk of the Court, H. Brown as a Duca Messenger, Miss Mary Servoss as Portia, Miss Mary Ellis as Nerissa, Miss Julia Adler as Jessica. The settings are by Ernest Gros. Norman O'Neill of London has composed the incidental music. The costumes are from designs by Percy McQuoid, R. I. The period art was supervised by Elmer Tafinger.

FRIDAY.
ELTINGE THEATER—Helen MacKellar will be presented by A. H. Woods in "The Masked Woman," a play by Kate Jordan, based on the French of Charles Mere. The scene is in Paris. Lowell Sherman will have an important role. Others will be Ian Keith, Ethel Jackson, Florence Flynn, Jane Houston, Gladys Frazin, Russell Fillmore and Albert Tavernier.

A BROAD HINT.

TO THE DRAMATIC EDITOR:

At this time, when the press is packed with talk about "the star" and "the starlet," I wish to contribute my noise to the discussion—from the viewpoint of an average Shakespeare enthusiast.

A few seasons ago I chanced to see Miss Bern Broad as Juliet in Walter Hampden's production at the Academy of Music, Brooklyn. Well, sir, the girl actually "stopped" the performance in the balcony scene and the potter scene. The following day I purchased a copy of every metropolitan newspaper, expecting to be greeted by big headlines on the dramatic pages, headlining the wonderful vital performance of Miss Broad. Not a line—nothing! Later I was informed that city critics seldom if ever travel to Brooklyn to witness performances, and the potter scene. Since that memorable night I had lost complete track of the young lady until in a recent issue of the *Theatre Magazine* I noticed her picture with the caption "A Born Juliet—on the Road to Stardom."

But that was all. Last week I met an older in Shakespeare productions, and in reply to my inquiry he stated he had heard from some one that Miss Broad had abandoned her "Shakespeare struggles" because managers, if at all interested in doing Shakespeare, wanted "name." Mr. Editor, I am not acquainted with Miss Broad, and don't know anybody who is, yet I would like to tell the world, loud enough for the aforesaid managers to hear me, that if any of them present Berna Broad as Juliet I'd guarantee an attendance of at least fifty persons—friends of mine. Here is a young girl who has proved that she can actually play Juliet. . . . and nobody is having her do it.

Furthermore, if any manager interested in the proposition will write me I will immediately send him a certified check for fifty cents, and he can charge me speculative prices.

CHARLES PHINEAS DAVIS, Brooklyn, December 8, 1922.

THE SUBWAY CIRCUIT.
MONTAUK THEATER (Brooklyn)—"Her Temporary Husband," with William Courtnay.
TELLER'S SHUBERT THEATER—"The Cat and the Canary."
MAJESTIC THEATER—"Glory."
SHUBERT - RIVIERA THEATER (Manhattan)—Grace George in "To Love," with Robert Warwick and Norman Trevor.



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"Where the Blazed Trail Crosses the Boulevard"

Lily Cahill, who plays the Spirit of Reconciliation in the Pageant of Anglo-American Friendship called "So This is London," which the critics spurned and the paying public took immediately to its bosom.