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**WASHINGTON LETTER**

Capitol Chosen as Battle Ground to Fight Theatre Trust.

**DEPARTMENT CLERK'S LIFE.**

Loath to Leave Salary and Start Out For Themselves. Bank Accounts few Among the Clerks.

WASHINGTON, D. C. Dec. 24, 1904  
Washington has long been recognized as the natural and legitimate arena for political struggles but it was not until a recent date that it assumed unusual importance as a scene for a war between opposing forces in the theatrical world. David Belasco, the versatile playwright and manager, has undertaken to defy the theatrical trust and he has selected as the field for one of his most decisive battles the city of Washington. Owing to the action of the trust in barring him from the theaters Mr Belasco has leased Convention Hall, a colossal meeting place on K and 5th Streets North West, and is refitting it preparatory to presenting "Adrea," a play written by himself and John Luther Long, the author of "The Darling of the Gods," a Japanese play which became popular some years ago. Mrs. Leslie Carter will play the role of star. Klav & Erlanger and Nixon & Waterman, derisively called "the Sheehey Theatrical Trust," of New York City, have practically controlled the American drama, and they have dragged the exalted art into the gutter of commercialism. Their criterion of a play has been the box office receipts, and they have attempted to dictate to what plays should be presented. They have secured control of most of the theatres of this country in the large cities, or by a threat of withdrawal of patronage have been able to close theatres to managers not in sympathy with their methods. It remains to be seen whether a champion of the art like David Belasco can succeed in his attitude of defiance toward the trust and against the spirit of commercialism and monopoly, and whether the people will lend their support to the commendable undertaking by showing a proper appreciation of art for its sake. The venality of certain dramatic critics have figured in this degradation of the American drama, as shown by their connection with the theatrical trust while ostensibly writing for certain newspapers.

One of the most interesting and convincing object lessons in sociology and psychology with which I have come in contact is afforded by the department service in Washington. Its variety and intricate ramifications make it an absorbing subject for investigation. Each department has its army of employees and its distinct and peculiar characteristics. It is only after one has met a great number of these people and after an acquaintance sufficiently intimate to enable one to realize their hopes and aspirations that the psychological value of the study inures. Many of the younger federal employees take up collegiate work at one or the other of the universities here, and the government service abounds in men possessing college degrees, ranging from A. B. to LL. D., doctors, dentists, lawyers, theologians and other professional men in considerable numbers hold positions in the departments. They are loth to surrender their salaries for the uncertainty of starting out upon an independent career in their chosen work. And so they sink into the hopeless, helpless and insurmountable sense of dependence upon salary which smothers genius and ambition and in the lethargy that follows and the decadence of aspiration which results from the sense of security engendered by the regular, unflinching monthly salary they often acquire habits of indulgence. These habits sometimes take the form of drunkenness and gambling, and other habits that can hardly be said to redound to the advantage of the clerk or official. The subtle process whereby men drift from a desertion of their ambition to a life of sensuality and indulgence is known if at all only by those who have traversed that sorry trail. Bank accounts among department people who have been in the service for a long time are scarce and trifling. I venture that there is more improvident people in the government service than among any other class of employees with an equal salary. This is manifest not only from the deplorable and humiliating habit of petty and promiscuous loans among clerks just before pay day, but also from the clamor of old clerks, whose entire lives almost have been spent in the service drawing good wages for a pension on retiring at a certain age. This age pension problem nowhere meets with much favor, except among aged civil service employees. It is quite generally regarded as vicious in principle, and it does not furnish an analogy or parallel with soldiers' pensions and in no way involves a duty or even a right on the part of the government to conduct a charitable institution.

The all-absorbing phase of Washington life which appeals to most of the people who are wealthy and many who are not wealthy is the social activity,

Society, that magic word which causes the debuts to flutter with excitement and ecstatic anticipations, and which seems to control the golden portal of desirable (?) marriages, is a word to conjure with in certain quarters. The extent to which a drawing room education and social standing have entered into the public life of today may have less to do with glamour, but it can hardly be said to have contributed to efficiency so far as actual duties and accomplishments are concerned. Only cynic would deprecate society and social gatherings as a factor in the complex instrumentalities which effect the evolution of human character and development. On the other hand making social success a sole aim, and entertainment a profession can hardly meet with the admiration or approval of the tolerant man, who recognizes many of the moral obligations imposed by tradition, religion and natural mentors upon the human race.

OLGER H. OLSON.

**PAINFULLY SEDATE.**

**A Professor's Evening Party in the Paris Latin Quarter.**

"It was difficult to imagine that I was in the heart of Paris, among people bred and born in the capital," says a writer telling of the section of the Latin quarter in which the professors of the University of Paris have their homes. "These men, these luminaries of science, how different they looked among their womankind! Since then I have visited many professors' homes and have found them all curiously alike. No matter whether the apartment be on a second, third or fourth floor, whether it be an expensive or cheap one, the inmates are all alike, talk alike, dress alike. If you have seen one home, you have seen them all. Follow me to a fourth floor in the Rue Gay-Lussac. We are ushered into the drawing room. The furniture is mahogany, always mahogany, and of a bad period. There are no flowers, but a dusty fern in a majestic pot; on the mantelpiece a clock and a candelabra, with framed photographs in the spaces between; over the cottage piano the portrait of M. le Professeur in the green embroidered uniform of a member of the Academy of Science, with his dress sword, over which he generally stumbles. But do not think that the professors' families are afflicted to beauty. They will admire and appreciate a work of art as well as you or I, but in their homes they consider beauty a negligible quantity. They also give very little attention to their bodies—to the inner or outer man. I have often wondered whether the same tailor supplies them all with their old fashioned coats.

"Nor does the inner man fare much better. The cooks in their establishments seem to be altogether different creatures from those we meet elsewhere. They eschew slang, their grammar is better, but their cooking is worse—very much worse—than in the homes of the less intellectual members of society. The women form a distinct type. They seem to belong to a past generation, and their dress is in keeping with the style of their hair. Living among themselves, they appear to have no notion of what is occurring in the worldly part of Paris. Their dress-makers are 'of the quarter,' and their milliners make their hats with the odds and ends brought to them. Such a thing as a fashion paper never crosses their path. I am certain these ladies are much more interested in the latest microbe than in the latest hat. They have little notion of comfort.

"An evening party at one of their houses is a never to be forgotten entertainment for the outsider. They still dance the schottish, but the greater part of the evening is devoted to what are called 'society games,' a gaping trap to the butterfly from across the Seine. I have forgotten the name of the fiendish game, but I recall that we were all seated in a ring—about thirty of us—old and young, and we had to answer questions and find out some antediluvian fact. To them it was child's play, but if it had not been for the six-year-old child of the house who prompted me I should have cut a poor figure. Imagine coming from the electric lights of the boulevards to the oil lamps of the professors' salon and being suddenly called upon to know that Dalmatia was conquered by Metellus in 118 B. C. Delightful evening!"

**Retelling a Joke.**

A west side man heard a joke, new to him, the other day, and the first thing he did upon reaching home for dinner was to tell it to his wife. "Mary," he said, "here's a new joke that's mighty good. One man says, 'The theater caught fire last night.' 'Did they save anything?' the second man asks. 'Yes,' says the first, 'they carried out the programme.' Isn't that a good one?' His wife said it was, and next day she tried it on her grocer. "Mr. Blank," she said, "here's a new joke for you. One man says, 'The theater caught fire last night.' Another asks, 'Did they save anything?' 'Yes,' replies the first, 'they went on with the programme and finished it.' Isn't that a fine joke?' The grocer said it was excellent, but confidentially he acknowledges that he hasn't yet seen the point.—Kansas City Times.

**Lacked the Lawyer's Facility.**

Lawyer (to witness)—Never mind what you think. We want facts here. Tell us where you first met this man. Woman Witness—Can't answer it. If the court doesn't care to hear what I think there's no use questioning me, for I am not a lawyer and can't talk without thinking.—Boston Commercial Bulletin.

**A MARRIAGE IN THE DARK**

(Original.)

Geoffry Curran was sleeping soundly in his bed when a neighbor rapped at the front door and asked if some one in the house would go for a clergyman to attend a dying man. Geoffry, being young and vigorous, was called, put on his clothes, yawning the while, and sallied forth into a stormy night. He had been up late for several nights and found it difficult to get himself thoroughly awake. However, he found his way to the residence of the nearest minister and rang the bell. A maid opened the door, let him into the hall, which was unlighted, and thence into a waiting room. There she scratched two or three matches, all of which failed to ignite. Then she went away. Geoffry sat down in an easy chair and in a few minutes was sound asleep. He was awakened by a voice saying:

"For heaven's sake! Asleep? Get up. There; take hold of her hand." Geoffry, only half awake, stood on his feet, felt a soft little hand grasp his and heard a man's voice rapidly speaking words which ended, "What God has joined together let no man put asunder."

The words restored Geoffry to his full consciousness. It was plain that something unusual had happened, and he was curious to know what would be the result. By a street light that shone dimly in at a window he saw several figures leaving the room, heard a carriage door shut without and the rumbling of wheels.

"You understand what to do, I suppose?" said a man's voice.

"Certainly," replied Geoffry, and walked out of the room and the house. It had come over him suddenly that through some mistake he had been married. There was only one woman in the world he wished for his wife and that was his cousin. He was much troubled. How the law would regard the matter he did not know, but he feared it would hold him to be a married man. For the time being the thing for him to do was nothing. He was the only one cognizant of the fact that he, Geoffry Curran, had gone through the marriage ceremony, and he resolved to keep the secret. He hunted up another minister, and took him to the house where he was expected. Then Geoffry went home.

Ten years passed. Geoffry, whose cousin had married another, was in middle life and was getting tired of living alone. He had fancied several women, but loved none. This he had considered fortunate, for the scene in which he had taken part in the minister's waiting room constantly came up before him like a dream, and he feared to marry unless his unknown bride might turn up.

One evening at a ball Geoffry met Eugenia Elmore. The acquaintance ripened into friendship and friendship into love. Miss Elmore was about ten years his junior, just the age a man nearing forty would prefer. For the first time since his cousin married he wished to take a wife. Miss Elmore gave every sign of response, and there seemed nothing in the way of their union except Geoffry's secret. He put a suppositious case to a lawyer, who told him that the intention of the law not being fulfilled perhaps he was not married, but the weak point was that either the man or woman in the case must prove that he or she had been married by mistake and either could make trouble for the other. Geoffry would not wed without making a clean breast of the affair to the lady he was to marry. One evening he sallied forth to see Miss Elmore, tell her the whole story and ask her if she loved him well enough to take the risk of a marriage that might be pronounced illegal by the courts. He skillfully led up to the subject, declared his love and without waiting for a response added:

"But I regret to say that there is an impediment to my marrying any one." "That is doubly unfortunate," replied the lady.

"How so?"

"I have a confession to make. I have loved before."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, when a very young girl—only sixteen—I was infatuated with a youth of eighteen. My father objected to my marriage on the ground that I was too young. In an evil hour I consented to a secret marriage. It was arranged that at midnight, after all were asleep, I should steal out, greet my lover at the rectory and be married. On arriving there the rector was just coming downstairs in the dark, and my fiancé was in the reception room. I was very much frightened and would not wait for lights. Indeed, I preferred to run no risk of being seen. The marriage took place at once, and we separated immediately after. The next day I was surprised to learn that my boy lover had weakened and had not gone to the rectory at all. His father got wind of his relations with me and sent him away. I have never seen him since."

Geoffry listened to this brief recital with astonishment, and when it was ended clasped his love to his breast, exclaiming:

"My wife!"

He was so delighted that it was some time before Miss Elmore could calm him and get his story. She would not, could not, believe that so singular a coincidence had come to pass and would not consent to another marriage which both considered necessary until Geoffry had procured affidavits of those who knew of his going out on the eventful night to secure a parson. This he did, and when the ceremony took place it was in broad daylight and in the presence of a large number of witnesses.

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