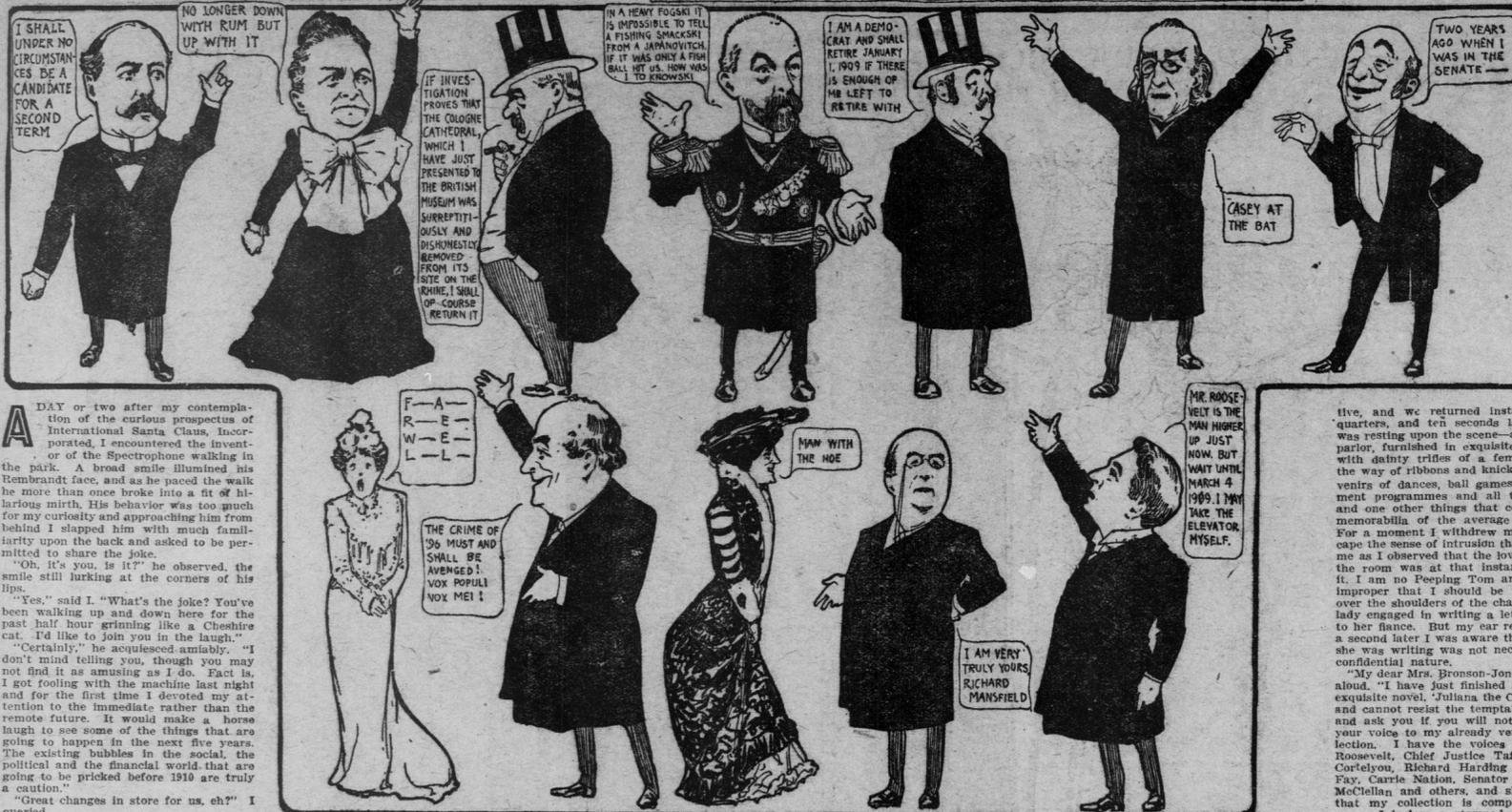


BEING SOME CONSIDERATION OF THINGS IN THE DAYS TO COME

SPECTROPHONE

THE VOICE COLLECTOR

by JOHN KENDRICK BANGS



A DAY or two after my contemplation of the curious prospectus of International Santa Claus, Incorporated, I encountered the inventor of the Spectrophone walking in the park. A crowd and the great Mrs. Rembrandt face, and as he paced the walk more than once broke into a fit of hilarious mirth. His behavior was too hilarious for my curiosity and approaching him from behind I slipped him a much familiarly upon the back and asked to be permitted to share the joke.

Oh, it's you, is it? he observed, the smile still lurking at the corners of his lips.

Yes, said I. What's the joke? You've been walking up and down here for the past half hour grinning like a Cheshire cat. I'd like to join you in the laugh.

Certainly, he acquiesced amiably. I don't mind telling you, though you may not find it as amusing as I do. Fact is, I got fooling with the machine last night and for the first time I devoted my attention to the immediate rather than the remote future. It would make a horse laugh to see some of the things that are going to happen in the next five years. The existing bubbles in the social, the political and the financial world that are going to be pricked before 1910 are truly a caution.

Great changes in store for us, eh? I queried.

I should say so, he laughed. You know Secretary Taft's speech.

Yes, I responded, eagerly.

The old gentleman, sobering up. What amused me was a glimpse I had last night of a new terror to distinguished men and women which will begin to be in just thirty-six months from date. I stumbled on it in my explorations of a Vassar dormitory last night.

A Vassar dormitory? I cried. Great heavens, man! Is nothing sacred to the invading eye of this machine of yours?

In my hands, yes, said he. The young ladies may rest well assured that as long as I possess the Spectrophone there will be no prying into their confidential affairs. Indeed, that is precisely one of the reasons why I fear I shall never be able to put the Spectrophone on the market. There are many improper and embarrassing uses to which such an instrument in unscrupulous hands might be put, and there are even times when I feel myself

strongly impelled to destroy the whole mechanism for fear that it may fall into the control of persons who would abuse its privileges. But, as I was saying, the famous people of the world have a new terror in store for them and it strikes me as being funny. You are aware, are you not, that seven out of ten school girls and boys in this land are autograph hunters?

Indeed, yes, said I. In fact, I added, I am personally acquainted with a matinee idol who is compelled to employ a private secretary to write his autograph for him. He told me last night that even with that he was seriously thinking of having a rubber stamp made to help the chap out. Autograph hunting, as a matter of fact, is the most popular sport in this country today, and seems

to be the only one that is not protected by the laws of the land. In season and out the autograph hunter pursues his prey and ruthlessly bags his game.

WHEN JUSTICE BREWER WAS MISTAKEN FOR A TRAIN ROBBER

Mr. Justice Brewer was a judge of a criminal court instead of a member of the supreme bench of the United States. I believe he would be merciful to a prisoner at the bar," said an Omaha man at the Fifth Avenue hotel the other night. The eminent justice could put himself in the place of the accused.

I suppose it is contempt of court to tell it, but the judge was once suspected of a grave crime, and it took the combined efforts of his friends and a four-gallon jug of whiskey to keep him from being dragged out to jail. The sheriff of Natrona county, Wyo., couldn't see it any other way than that the justice was a train robber.

We were hunting out in Medicine Bow Park. In the party were Justice Brewer and W. H. Munger, the last named now judge of the United States court for the District of Nebraska. Henry D. Eastwood, general attorney for the Western Union Telegraph company, and one or two others. Medicine Bow Park is one of the most beautiful parts of Wyoming, and in those days it was practically inaccessible to wagon travel. It was an excellent hunting ground for this reason, and, in fact, it was the refuge of the hunted, whether man or beast. If a cowboy got into trouble he was ever more likely to strike out for Medicine Bow Park than for the Hole in the Wall.

Game was plentiful, and we had a good time. We bagged several elk and a couple of grizzlies before we had been there a week. We enjoyed ourself in regular wild West fashion, and gave one another wild West names. Justice Brewer was known as 'Kansas Dave,' and they called me 'Broncho Jake.' Justice Brewer, in a straggling growth of chin whiskers, wearing high-topped boots, a blue flannel shirt, broad-brimmed hat and a cartridge belt, looked about as much like a judge as Dynamite Dick himself.

One day Justice Brewer and Judge Munger stayed at the hotel, and the rest of us went out hunting. I happened to return in advance of the others in the evening, and there seated before the fire were two strangers. The two judges were there, too, but they both looked rather uncomfortable.

Well, how is 'Kansas Dave?' I bawled out, addressing Justice Brewer.

All right, he replied with a sheepish grin. While one of the strangers gave a start and looked at him more closely.

I'm the sheriff of Natrona county," announced the newcomer, and he had his hand at his pistol belt as he said it.

WESTERN WOMEN WIN HONORS AT THE CHICAGO HORSE SHOW

There was a sharp contest between women from the East and West at the show. The leaders from the two sections were Mrs. Reginald Vanderbilt, whose picture is shown at the top, Mrs. J. H. Moon at the bottom, and Mrs. Jarvis Hunt at the left.



Different "And you went to that immoral play?" "But you saw it, too." "Yes—but I had a free ticket."—Flegende Blatter.

TSI AN IS NOW OVER SEVENTY YEARS OLD

THE most remarkable figure in all Asia since the death of that sturdy old Afghan, the Emperor Abdunaman Kahn, is the famous Empress Tsi An, who has been well called the 'Queen of China' and who has just celebrated her seventieth birthday.

Her origin wrapped in mystery, her position anomalous and illegal under the Salk constitution of China, her methods open to criticism, though never to investigation, this truly marvelous old woman has for thirty-three years played a winning game against mighty foreign powers, not to mention home opposition, for she has been in play, with the curtain not yet run down, and not once has she surrendered the part of leading lady.

She has risen from the picturesquely low to the picturesquely high. Born into abject poverty somewhere in the west of China in 1834, she was the daughter, some say, of a huxter; others, of an impoverished Manchou nobleman. He sold her in childhood to a rather ambitious general, and, part slave, part adopted daughter, acquiring patrician accomplishments with eagerness, this Becky Sharp of royalty began early to "be her own mamma."

The dramatic point of her career was when, in 1850, in company with 600 other young girls, she stood on her big feet, which had never been bound then or since, at the portals of the imperial palace when the Emperor Hsien Feng had issued a proclamation—in plain Americanese an advertisement—for secondary wives. An ambitious girl of sixteen, she had insisted on the adventure.

She was one of the ten aspirants chosen. Between the mere secondary wifehood and actual empressship a great gulch yawns. She bridged this with beauty, brains and the birth of a son, Emperor, empresses, superior and inferior nobles—all passed under her almost hypnotic influence, all under her compulsion taught her statecraft. Her first important interference was in the problems of national policy following the capture, in 1860, of Peking by the French and English.

Then Tsi An began to enjoy the intoxication of power. Coincident or not, the aged emperor died almost as soon as his young wife began to "find herself." Male regents were, of course, appointed by his will for their infant son, Tsi An having other plans, the court and country were stunned a few days after the imperial funeral by the appearance of an edict, supposed to represent the mature deliberations of the little four-year-old monarch, which appointed his mother and the imperial empress as regents. Upon their protesting the luckless male regents were graciously permitted to hang themselves, while the public executioner cut off the head of the secretary of state. Tsi An then openly took the reins of government.

Under her administration the empire was safely conducted through the Taiping rebellion, as well as a series of other insurrectionary crises, which included the Mohammedan rebellion in Yunnan, that of Yakub Beg, in Kashgar, all of them actual national dangers. The quarrel with Japan in 1874 was adroitly smoothed over without a rupture of relations. Tung-chih—a weak incapable—ascended the throne and manifested some absurd notions about doing his own ruling, his determined parent set aside his decrees. Soon the young emperor, Tung-chih, "mounted to heaven"—not, some have whispered, unassisted—and in January, 1875, the empress, calmly ignoring the laws of succession, had her baby nephew, Kwang-shi, snatched from his bed on a bitter winter night, carried to the palace and proclaimed emperor.

Nevertheless, Tsi An's kaleidoscopic character has its bright lights. Not long ago, when there was a famine in one part of her empire, she had it published in the Peking Gazette that she could not bear to eat expensive viands while her people were starving, and that she had cut out her allowance of fresh pork for a week. Recently she issued a most edifying proclamation denouncing that very "graft" by which she has amassed her personal fortune. It was either kindness or a grant, Gilbert says, as it happened, which met when in 1900 the embassies were besieged and the fate of the European inmates seemed sealed, make courteous inquiries after the health of the members of the diplomatic corps, and send them fresh vegetables and flour for their support in the intervals of the onslaughts.

One of her latest actions was the recognition of the venerated list of Wu Ting-fang, the well-remembered ex-minister to this country, by granting him permission to ride his horse within the palace precincts.

And now, in her seventies, this cleverest woman is becoming—no conservative, but progressive. She has given receptions to the ladies of the diplomatic corps, she has shattered precedent by holding audiences in the most sacred hall of the Forbidden City, which women are prohibited entering. Things foreign are being introduced to her court. She is making great favorites, and indeed counselors, of two charming girls, half American by birth, wholly Parisian by education—the Misses Nellie and Lillian Tu Kong, the pretty daughters of the late minister to Paris. One day, so the story goes, the suspicious-natured empress asked one of these girls, who, of course, are thoroughly conversant with French language, to translate a French state document whose alleged translation by a member of the Chinese foreign office had been handed her.

Needs to say, she found the two versions were different. Since then the Misses Tu Kong have been the pets of the palace, where they have taken up their residence—in an apartment, apparently, of their capricious royal mistress, of whom, after an interview, some one said: "People who have seen her eyes raised talk of the imperial kindness; people who have seen her smile talk of the smile's coldness, ladies who have conversed with her speak of the furious anger of her expression as she reprimands an attendant, succeeded in instantaneously by the utmost urbanity as she addresses a guest."

Artificial Gas Wells The Society of Mineral Industry has been presented by E. Beetz with a plan for the artificial production of natural gas, which is summarized in the current number of the Revue Industrielle. The extraction of coal each day grows more costly because of the increasing depth of the mines. Ronchamp has already mines of more than 2,000 feet, in the Sarre region in the east of France, mines of 4,000 feet are common, while in order to develop the beds between Pont-a-Mousson and Briey pits 4,500 and even 5,000 feet are contemplated. Even in case the bed of coal is found there is still the question whether or not the exploitation of the property will be profitable under the old system. According to M. Beetz, it would be possible to set up artificial, utilizing the gas which would thus be formed as in a great natural gas well. It would be necessary for this purpose to construct two wells for each mine, one serving for the entrance of the air, the other for the escape of the gas, which would be protected against the spread of the fire by carefully erected embankments. M. Beetz states also that it would be possible to descend into the mine for the purpose of inspecting portions of the pits and the position of the fire is unknown. The one under discussion the location is perfectly known. Further, the fire would not only attack the beds of coal, but also the timber and carters, which would thus add a considerable amount to the return of the well.—Public Opinion.