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## BOWSER AS AN ACTOR

Thinks He Can Take the Parts of Hamlet and Romeo.

WAS ALSO TO BE "ANGEL."

Theatrical Promoter, However, Touches Him on the Start For Too Great a Sum—As Usual, Mrs. B. Has Laugh on Him.

(Copyright, 1907, by Homer Sprague.)

Mrs. Bowser was puzzled and perturbed. Mr. Bowser was going about striking strange attitudes and muttering to himself, and he had cried out in his midnight sleep:

"Lay on, Macduff, and damned be he who first cries, Hold, enough!"

Something was up, but just what it was Mr. Bowser was keeping to himself. She made cautious inquiries as to whether he was looking for a farm, investing in a flying machine or experimenting with a new hair dye, but he only smiled in a knowing way in answer. When the cook was asked in a casual way if she had noticed anything queer about him of late she promptly answered:

"Yes, ma'am, I have, and I was thinking of giving notice before he broke out and set the house on fire or killed us with the ax. He acts just as my sister's husband did before he blew up the house with a bomb and jumped into the river."

"What have you noticed about him?" "Well, ma'am, he got out into the back yard the other evening and threw his arms around and muttered. He jumped ahead, and then sideways and backward, and all the time he was muttering to himself. I went to a



HE DIDN'T LOOK TO BE WORTH OVER 15 CENTS.

theater on the Bowery once, and Mr. Bowser acted just like an actor I saw there. Did you ever hear of an actor called Mr. Hamlet, ma'am?"

"Hamlet is a character in one of Shakespeare's plays," replied Mrs. Bowser.

### Feared For Her Life.

"Then that's what he's trying to be, and if you can't stop him I must quit my job. I'm the sole support of an invalid mother, as you know, and I don't want to be suddenly blown high sky and leave her to go to the poor-house."

Mrs. Bowser felt that she now had the key of the mystery in her hands. That evening she was watching for Mr. Bowser's return from the office. She saw him drop off the street car at his usual hour and noticed that he stepped off with a one-two-three stride. As he entered the house he bowed ceremoniously to her, and during the dinner hour he was lofty and superior. When they had returned to the sitting room he began pacing up and down, and presently she said:

"Mr. Bowser, I want to talk with you for a few minutes. You have been acting rather strangely of late. Have you got some great trouble on your mind that you are keeping from me?"

"My mind was never more clear of trouble," he answered, with a bow and a smile.

"But you have got some plan on hand."

"If I have, oh, woman, thou must restrain thy curiosity till such time as I see fit to unfold."

"Are you thinking of acting on the stage?"

"Methinks thou hast hit it close."

"Then tell me about it. As a wife I am interested in your welfare."

States the Case.

"Well, here's the case," he said as he descended from his high horse. "About a week ago Mr. Horatio Blank, the celebrated actor and manager, happened in the office just as I was repeating Hamlet's soliloquy for the benefit of Green, and when I was through he was pleased to shake hands with me and ask if he could offer any inducement for me to go on the road with a company he is organizing to play Shakespeare's plays. I said nothing to you about the matter, knowing that you would treat it with your usual sarcasm, but I have had two or three talks with Mr. Blank since. He is satisfied that I will make the greatest Hamlet ever seen on the stage. I shall also play Romeo."

"You speak as if it was a settled thing," said Mrs. Bowser.

"It is about as good as settled. He is coming here this evening for a final talk. He thinks he can pay me a salary of \$400 per week, but is going to let me know. We intend to introduce a new feature in theatricals—play the whole year through. He believes, and I quite agree with him, that people

long for Shakespearean plays in summer more than in the winter. Thus it will be \$400 per week for fifty-two weeks in the year. Is there anything bad about that for an income?"

"Does Mr. Blank want you to put any money in the enterprise?" "Yes, a few dollars. I think he wants me to advance enough money to pay for the printing. He will pay me back double the amount when we get out on the road. He has had twenty-one companies, and all have made money. He is said to be worth \$1,000,000."

"Then why does he want you to advance anything?"

Might Leave Him In Lurch.

"Why? Why? I don't know exactly why, but to show that I am in earnest, I suppose. I might engage with him and then leave him in the lurch."

It was an explanation, but it didn't satisfy the explainer. He saw a smile on Mrs. Bowser's face and began to flush up as he said:

"That's always the way with you—doing your best to find some fault. I wish I hadn't said a word until the company was ready to start out on the road."

"I am not finding fault, Mr. Bowser. I am simply asking for information. There's a ring at the bell. It is probably your man Blank. Go ahead and make your arrangements with him. I shall expect a box all to myself on the first night you play 'Hamlet.'"

Mr. Bowser ushered his theatrical manager into the library and carefully closed the door, and they took seats at the table. The said manager didn't look to be worth \$1,000,000. In fact, he didn't look to be worth much over 15 cents. His silk hat had witnessed many ups and downs in the world, and his tightly buttoned frock coat was worn and shiny and showed that it had often stood before the free lunch counter and taken in the bean soup. His cuffs were frayed and his necktie faded, and the hand that had darned one knee of his trousers must have held a darning needle. He had his assurance with him, however, and that was the main thing.

Needed About \$7,000.

"Oh, this dress, this worldly dress!" he sighed as he sat down. "It should have nothing to do with our noble profession, but unfortunately we cannot escape it. I have been figuring this afternoon, and I find that it will take about seven thousand to put us on the road in good shape. Of course it will all come back to you sooner or later. There are ten or twelve parties who are anxious to furnish the money, but as none of them can play Hamlet I have turned them down."

"Um!" mused Mr. Bowser, who had an interesting twenty-five or thirty dollars at most would be wanted.

"As for the part of Hamlet, of course you couldn't expect to go right on and play it at the start. You must gradually work up to it. For the first two weeks you will bring the spade to Hamlet to dig the grave with."

"Um! Um!"

"I wish we could make you a foot taller somehow. You are rather short and chunky to play the part."

Mr. Bowser turned red and white.

"We must also get you a wig to hide your baldness. Do you think you could reduce your weight by sixty or seventy pounds? Hamlet has no bay window on him, you know."

"By thunder, man, what are you talking about?" shouted Mr. Bowser, as he rose up.

Hamlet Not a Bowser.

"Calm thyself, Horatio," replied Mr. Blank in soothing tones. "Hamlet must be Hamlet. Hamlet cannot be Bowser."

"Hamlet be darned! Sir, you have insulted me!"

"Tush, tush. I like thy spirit, but the tones of thy voice hath a clarion sound. Sit thee down and we will talk of the long green. Seven thousand—"

"Seven thousand nothings! I don't like your style. I don't want to deal with you. This interview is closed."

"And you haven't offered me a glass of wine nor a cigar. I was mistaken in you. You couldn't play Hamlet any more than a bull could play a church organ. Good night, sir. I can find my way out. If I hear of a brick-rod for sale I will put you next."

Mrs. Bowser was in the sitting room. As Mr. Bowser came out he was all a-bristle and ready for battle, but she simply looked up and smiled and said:

"Isn't it a rather cold night, dear, for this time of year?"

Mr. Bowser didn't answer, but he thought it was—for him.

M. QUAD.

### New Duties For the Police.



The aerial police at work—a vision of the near future.—Sketch.

The Cause and the Manner.

"How did he die?" "He died game. He was mistaken for a deer while hunting."—Harper's Weekly.

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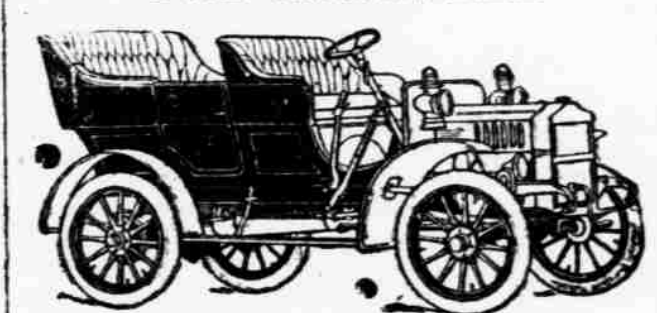
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