

ous wit of the playwright smart Alec and the cheap phrasemonger with a Broadview of life is a vendible article. Very often true wit is not. But it is identifiable, wherever and whenever it may flash. An author can not wish himself into possession of it; he has it, or he lacks it—little praise or blame to him. It can not be stolen; it can not be imitated. Nor can it be hidden; where it exists it will make itself known.

All of which, however little you may care for it, is a bit of prelude for the news of the arrival at the Princess recently of a comedy signed by Harvey J. O'Higgins and Harriet Ford, and bearing the allusive title of "Mr. Lazarus." It is a witty thing, in the rare and true sense, and one will go far, as time and distance are measured in the theatre, before coming upon a comedy with a more copious flow of happy and surprising speech, with more fitting play of jocularity, with a finer vein of waggishness, or with a more spirited and continuous exhibition of refreshing banter.

Different in plot from other comedies, refreshing in situation, bright and funny as to lines and altogether admirable in presentation, "Mr. Lazarus" ought, said the Chicago Daily News, to stay to comfort Chicago for the loss of verbal drama until frost comes to ripen the persimmons and restore the theaters to spoken plays.

Mr. Lazarus, the character from which the play takes its name, is one who has "risen from the dead." At least, his sudden return after a lapse of twenty years has that significance. His recrudescence is something of a mystery and so

many conflicting stories are told throughout the unfolding of the play that one hesitates to say that certain facts form the foundation, but on the surface it seems an ordinary middle aged man who walks into the New York rooming house kept by a downtrodden, "hen minded" woman and her pretty daughter. Whether or not the lodger is what he says he is, let the prospective playgoer discover for himself. A second husband of the lodging house keeper is a florid, bumptious Dr. Sylvester of ample girth and steady habits of extracting money from his cowed spouse. His own daughter in tawdry finery leads a life of idleness, while the landlady's child slaves over the lodgers' rooms—a veritable Cinderella, but named Patricia Malloy, her father, had been killed in a railroad wreck which had happened on his wedding journey and that Patricia was a posthumous child. "I never could get that right," said the mother, with a half giggle; "I always say 'postmortem.'" The new lodger takes possession of the third floor back and dispossesses the young artist, who whimsically protests against the injustice of turning out a roomer who owes three months' rent for one who doesn't owe anything at all. But he gracefully abdicates when the pretty daughter asks him to and seeks henceforth to get his "north" light from the south side of a gas jet. It wouldn't be fair, even if it were possible, to tell all the complications that these characters become involved in, but the ending is a happy one even if a bit mystifying, and the ways that lead to it are filled with joyous and thrilling moments.

The Windigo of Black Alex

(Concluded from page 10.)

"Where's the rifle?" whispered MacNish, feeling around on the ground.

"I have it."

"Here're the cartridges. Come on." We crept out together through the flaps. We stole round the sides of the tent and saw—a giant man of commanding presence, heavily yet gracefully built, dressed in the costume of a fur-trader of the old days. At his side he wore an empty dirk case and an old-fashioned holster for pistols, but no pistol. He turned his back toward us, apparently brooding over the fire.

"Call to him," I whispered to MacNish. "And wake the Indians?" he retorted, in whispered contempt. "They'd never go a step further with us. . . . It's the Windigo."

"Nonsense," I said.

"Watch!"

Suddenly, as though he had reached a desperate decision, the stranger lifted his hand to his brow and gazed inland toward a marsh we had noted below our camping ground. He swept off his hat, tossed it to the ground and strode toward the black marsh. For a moment he was lost to view, but as we followed we discovered him again, wading into the marsh and with his bare hands plucking out the water plants growing at the water's edge. He was in frantic haste.

"He's crazy," I whispered.

"He's starving," MacNish retorted.

As we watched—the stranger turned, struck toward us—and in the glow from our fire I saw as wicked and powerful a face as ever I may dread to see—and how thin! As he advanced his pace slackened. With a cry he clutched at his throat. He stumbled. He fell writhing to the ground. We ran to his side and bent over. There was nothing under our hands but a little heap of stones.

It was long before either MacNish or I would speak of what we had seen that night. In the first place, we felt as though we had made fools of ourselves. In the second place, we were afraid to laugh at what we had seen. But one night MacNish, whose uncle had been an old factor of the North-West Trading Company, brought a battered, hide-covered volume to me and said:

"Read the page I have marked."

This is what I read in the fine but faded chronography of the old factor:

"May 20th, 18—: Have discovered Black Alex and writ his wife in York. One of the Indians in the brigade I sent down the Maligne has confessed. He began by reciting Black Alex's sins toward the In-

dians, which are known well enough. He said Alex had shot two bucks in a mere temper that morning and uttered profanities against their women. So they stole his weapons and overpowered him and kept him without food that day. At night they camped by Maligne Falls, and in the morning left him there without weapons or food. He waited at the portage for another party to rescue him, but I had cancelled that party for another task. He was found this week. He must have eaten the sweet iris that grows in the marsh by the foot of the Fall. . . ."

MacNish was waiting as I looked up. "Do you remember those iris?" he asked.

"Yes," I said. "They were beautiful."

"The root is sweet but deadly," added MacNish.

The News in Rhyme.

The breath of spring is blowing
Across the continent—
The signs of spring are showing
And the landlord's raised the rent.

Lloyd-George has won his point at last
With his conscription views;
He's the only hyphenated chap
For whom we've any use.

Wide skirts and powdered faces,
Also the high-topped boots.
The Kaiser's edict chases—
List to the Hun girls' hoots!
How desperate his case is
When he must ban the beauts?


Lives and dollars in demand,
This big war is mangling millions.
Cost of it by sky, sea, and land
Steadily is busting billions.

Lord Northcliffe says Yank airmen
In France know how to fly—
Americans for many years
In Paris did "fly high."

A Daniel come to judgment,
Chicago judge decides
'Twas Bacon wrote Bill Shakespeare's
plays

And verses odd besides.
He timed his bold decision—
This Windy City judge—
For Shakespeare's tercentenary,
And the world said simply—"Fudge!"

Endurance Note.—In mentioning the fact that the Duke of Connaught just recently reached his 66th birthday, one writer mentions that he has visited Toronto twenty times. Well, His Royal Highness is still strong and healthy.




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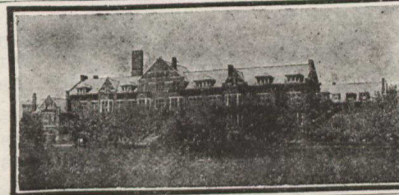
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