

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, JUNE 27, 1891.

THEIR IDEAS OF FUN.

ACTRESSES RELATE THEIR FUNNIEST STAGE EXPERIENCES.

Lillian Russell, Marie Tempest, Ellen Terry, Jennie Yeaman, Lillie Post, Margaret Mather and Helen Davray all have something interesting to say.

One evening during an intermission of one of my parts, a red snood, which I was to wear in the next act, got mislaid in some mysterious manner. My maid and myself both rushed about in haste to find something to serve the purpose of the scarlet ribbon, which was absolutely indispensable to my costume, but not a thing could we find excepting a red silk stocking. Quick as a flash my maid twisted it in my hair, deftly hiding the heel and toe as she did so. When the curtain rose my costume was complete, but during the following intermission, while I was standing in the wings, I was suddenly reminded with laughter half the time to think of the bit of fine hosiery figuring on my tragic head.

A half score of ad-dle pated Johnnies furnished the material for the most laughable incident of my stage career.

I was singing the principal role in a comic opera called *Fleur de Lys*, and as I had not been long on the stage I was convinced from the applause and flowers I received every night that I had actually made a hit. While never a sufferer from what is nowadays called big head, I am prone to confess that I was sufficiently inflated by the evident impression I had created, to feel that I was simply wasting my talents. We were making a tour of the provinces, and I felt certain that London "Was my spot," as your coal sellers used to say. I mention this merely as an explanation of a piece of heartlessness on my part towards the poor Johnnies above mentioned who deserved better treatment at the hands of one whom they daily declared, by post, to worship, to adore. But, to the incident. With the assistance of my maid, a shrewd young cockney, I had gotten a list of real names and addresses of about a dozen of my most persistent admirers and to each one I wrote a note in which I pretended to have become softened by his evident and delicately expressed affection for me, and declared that under certain conditions I would consent to an interview.

"I naturally desire to see what you are like," I wrote, "and if you will stand up at your seat in the front row just after my entrance on Friday night perfectly still for a moment or two with your overcoat closely buttoned up and your eyes cast carefully toward the ceiling, I can easily distinguish you and will promptly inform you of the verdict."

The night came and the theatre was packed. I could see through the peep holes in the curtain that my plot would be a success as every other man in the first row had his collar up about his ears and was looking woefully solemn and painfully nervous.

The curtain went up, about the middle of my act my cue came and I ran on the stage. Instantly, like so many Jacks in a box, ten men popped up in front of the orchestra



THE MEN STOOD STILL AS STATUES STARING INTENTLY.

rail and still as statues stood staring intently toward the flies.

I had let the other members of the company into my plot and they were so convulsed that the audience saw at once that something extraordinary was going on.

It dawned on them at last, and such shrieks of uncontrollable mirth I have never heard in all my life.

The poor victims looked at one another aghast for a moment and then fled sadly up the aisle with a demeanor that would have made their fortunes as assistants to an undertaker.

A harmless looking brass door key was the cause of a very unpleasant as well as amusing quarter of an hour for me one night. It was when I was playing the fast girl in *Judah* at Palmer's Theatre.

The key was used in locking and unlocking the door of the old tower in which I pretended faster, am confined during the test which is being made of my powers, and which is given me by my father who is a party to the deception which I am practising. In order to have the key convenient for use at a moment's notice, I slipped the bar of icy brass down the neck of my loose white crepe gown a minute before coming on the stage. At every step the key key would change its position and at last the agony became unbearable. I was also in mortal terror lest the key should

fall to the floor and tell its own story. So on a pretended pretext that I heard someone approaching, I slipped behind one of the wood wings and removed the offending "prop."

Ever since I went on the stage I have been bothered to death with love letters from strange men, who wrote they wished to meet me, and that if I would let him call for me after the theatre he would give me the best supper the city afforded. I approved of this plan I would please wear a bunch of violets on my dress during that evening's performance.

It was when I was playing in the *Grand Duchess* at the Casino and in the second act I came on attended by six young ladies. These girls I had previously taken into my confidence, so when we appeared on the scene we were all decked alike in violets. We also looked down immediately to where the fellow said he would be seated with a bunch of violets in his buttonhole, and sure enough there he was, a little insignificant looking good clerk—if ever there was one—as his whole appearance signified his



"ONE YARD, TWO YARDS, CASH!"

trade. The young ladies and myself glanced at each other with suppressed smiles, when one of them suddenly took a step forward and pulling out her arms as if she was measuring ribbon, said, just loud enough to be heard in the first row, where he sat, "one yard, two yards, cash!"

Convulsed with laughter I walked off

into one of the wings for a second, while the fellow picked up his hat and vanished.

LILLIAN RUSSELL.

A piece of ill-luck on the part of one of my company furnished the most intensely amusing situation I ever saw. And I laugh now at the remembrance of it.

I was playing *One of Our Girls* at the Lyceum at the time and Mr. Pigatt, who was in the company, found at the last moment that the stupid tailor had neglected



THREE TIMES HE TRIED TO SIT DOWN BESIDE ME.

to return his evening suit, which he had sent to be pressed.

A hurried canvas of his fellow actors' wardrobe disclosed the depressing fact that there was only one available swallow tail and that one was about four sizes too small.

There was no time to dally, however, for the "stage" was waiting, so he donned the suit and came on, looking like an overdone lobster. The trousers were not only miles too short, but were so tight that the white lining of the side pockets was plain to be seen.

In the scene it was necessary that he should sit beside me on a low sofa and when I invited him to do so the audience began to titter. Once, twice, three times he tried it, but it was no go. And then, after a look of plaintive appeal at me, who was absolutely convulsed, he stuck one leg out straight in front of him and simply fell back on to the divan. Something popped as he did so, and I don't believe that all the king's horses and all the king's men could have made him get up again until that curtain went down.

HELEN DAVRAY.

An embarrassing and yet irresistibly funny incident occurred to me when I was playing *Our Jennie* at the Windsor theatre several years ago. My old father sits on a stump whittling a stick and I, in a half torn dress and ragged hat, am standing

beside him talking. This particular evening just at the above point, I felt the fastenings on my dress give way and the skirt I endeavored to get across the stage into the wings to fix things up, but he not being used to seeing me move away in that part of the scene, suddenly looked up and said, "What's the matter, Jennie?"

Finding that the attention of the audience was by this time drawn to me, I resolved to put a bold front on the matter, so walking back, at the same time pulling my dress into place and pinning it, I answered, soberly, "My dress is coming off."

The applause and laughter, as you can imagine, was instantaneous.

JENNIE YEAMANS.

My first professional engagement was in San Francisco, where my home is. I was singing the part of Josephine in *Pinafore* and my two little brothers, aged 10 and 12, were exceedingly anxious to see me on the stage.

My mother had expressly forbidden them to come to the theatre, but one night, after being sent to bed, they let themselves out of the window and speedily made their way to where I was playing.

Between the first and second acts word was brought to me by one of the employees that two little boys were outside and demanded admittance by insisting that they were Miss Post's brothers. Much amused, I sent out word to admit them and charge the seats to me, which the manager did, and the delighted boys were sent up in the gallery.



GO IT, LIL, YOU'RE LOOKING GREAT.

In the rush and hurry of changing costumes I actually forgot all about their coming, and waited calmly for my cue to go on again. As I stepped on the stage from the left wing and walked toward the centre, imagine my horror when a chorus of two childish voices reached my astonished ears: "Go it, Lil; you're looking great; your dress is a beaut," they cried.

Chagrined and angry I went through with my solo some way, I shall never know how. Everybody on the stage was convulsed with laughter, the audience glanced up at the gallery with much amusement and curiosity and I felt as though I could have strangled the children with good grace.

When I came out of the theatre they had already gone, so I went home inwardly vowing vengeance, but when they came down to breakfast the next morning and rushed up to me saying, "We were awful proud of you last night, Lil," I hadn't the heart to demand punishment for the little offenders.

LILLIE POST.

I had just begun to get easy in the first good part I ever played, the princess, in Frank Mayo's *Nordeck*, when my "funniest thing" happened. There was no theatre in the town, Marlborough, Mass., I think it was, so we played in the rink which had just had a stage put in and everything was in a state of chaos.

At the end of the fourth act where I find that my favorite son Leo, who is brought in on a bier, has been killed instead of Waldemar, the one I hate, the curtain is supposed to come down.

Well, this night it didn't. Something had gone wrong with the pulleys, and there we all stood looking like a lot of Eden musee figures.

One of the supers finally broke the spell by giving vent to a very audible smile and then we all walked off the stage headed by Mr. Mayo and followed by the corpse, who was actually holding his sides to keep from roaring with laughter.

ALICE FISCHER.

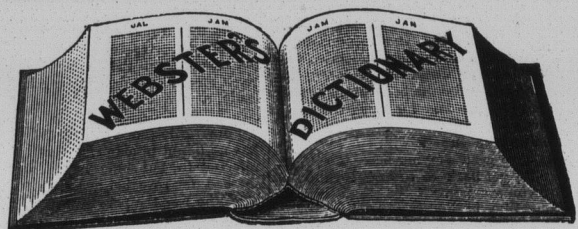
It was the first night of my production of *Joan of Arc*, and the music which was the same as given in the Port street Martin Version, was particularly long and tedious. Each act had been very much delayed, and I felt that the audience as well as myself, was becoming tired out.

In the last act, just as Joan is about to be carried to the stake, one of the villains in the play who had conspired from the first to ruin Joan, is suddenly smitten with remorse, comes staggering on to beg my forgiveness, and falls at my feet crying "I am damned." The chorus should here take up the cue and chant a dirge, but not being perfect in the part or else confused by the long waits, they failed to take the line, whereupon the leader of the orchestra, becoming very much excited, arose in his seat, and waving his baton frantically towards the girls and men on the stage, cried: "I am damned," I am damned."

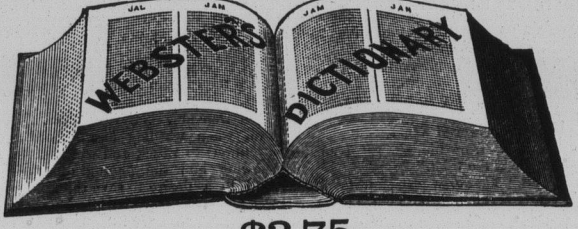
MARGARET MATHER.

Elihu Thomson, the electrician, whom Boston people believe in more than they do in Edison, is only a young man, but he is full of snap, vitality and talent and is as neat and dapper-looking in person as he is wonderful in inventive skill.

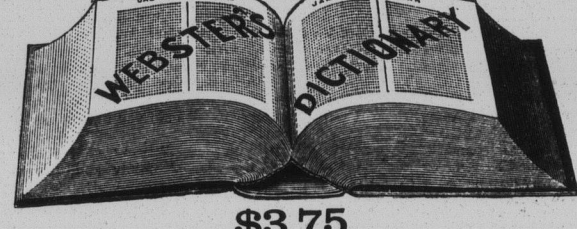
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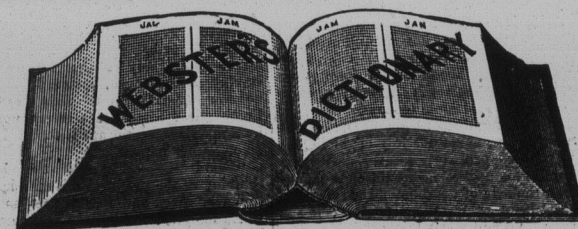


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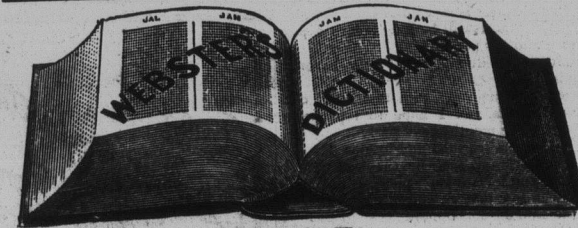


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