

BILLY BAXTER IN SOCIETY

He Has No Use for Duplicate Whist Parties.

Where Colonial Dames Trump Partners Aces—High-Class Opera Not to His Liking.

Pittsburg, Pa., Feb. 1, 1899.

Dear Jim—There is no new scandal worth mentioning. What I started to write you about was Hemingway's duplicate whist party which was pulled off last night. I had a bid, and as there was nothing else stirring, I put on that boy's size dress suit of mine, and blew out there. Jim, you know the signs you see on the dummies in front of these little Viadishner stores. "Take me home for \$10.98," or "I used to be \$6.21, now 'm yours for \$5.39." Well, that's your Uncle Billy in a dress suit. Every one takes me for a waiter.

I have just been thinking this society push over, and I have come to the conclusion that an active leader in society has more troubles than a man in the wheat pit, and a man in the wheat pit is long on troubles about as often as he is on wheat. If you don't believe it, ask Joe Leiter. He was long on both at the same time.

Take the woman who uses fair English and has coin, and let her display the same good, cold judgment that has made her husband successful in business, and some rainy Thursday morning the four hundred will wake up and find a new member has joined the order. While she is on her way she'll get many a frost, but after she lands she'll even up on the other candidates.

I have heard it said that locomotive engineers as a rule suffer from kidney troubles, caused by the jolting and bumping of the engine. If jolts and bumps go for anything, some of these people who are trying to break into society must have Bright's disease something grievous.

Jim, if you have never been to a duplicate party see some of those people play whist and then order your shroud. Last night for a partner I drew an old girl who was a colonial dame because her ancestors on both sides had worked on the Old Colony railroad. She must

have taken a foolish powder or something, just before she left home, as she was clean to the bad. She had to be called five minutes before each play, and the way she trumped my ace the first time around was enough to drive a person dippy. Once she mentioned her husband's diamond-studded airship. Poor old lady! Probably took a double dose by mistake. How careless!

Everybody was making a great fuss over some girl who is lecturing throughout the country on "Man as Woman Sees Him." Talk about lavish eyes. My boy! my boy! but this dame was there with the swell lamps. A hundred candle power easily. I tried to sit up to her, but there was nothing doing. I might have known I was a dead one. Because why? Because Mr. Percy Harold was talking to her, and he knows all about rare china, real old lace, and such things. When I came up the subject was Du Bois' Messe de Marriage. (Spelling not guaranteed.) I asked about it this morning, Jim. A Messe de Marriage seems to be some kind of a wedding march, and a bishop who is a real hot dog won't issue a certificate unless the band plays the Messe. Mr. Percy Harold kept right on talking about Jack Hayes being so desperately in love with Mrs. Hardy Steele, and how late they were getting home from the opera the other night, and what a shame it was, as Mr. Steele seemed like a nice fellow. There I stood like a Harlem goat. I couldn't put in, because I have so many troubles of my own getting home from any place at all that I haven't time to keep tab on other people. I must be as slow getting onto scandal as the injured husband. If 15,000 people know something about a woman, my number is 14,000, and the husband's number is 15,000. It seems strange, but the husband always seems to get wise last.

But to return to the girl with the electric eyes. I hung around in that sad dress suit like a big dub, hoping that the conversation would finally get switched to theaters or dogs or sparring, or something where I could make good; but Mr. Harold had the floor, and he certainly had me looking like a dirty deuce in a new deck. I stood for him till he suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, fudge!" because he had forgotten one of his rings, and there was where I took to the tall timbers. It I were a ring I wouldn't let a guy like that wear me. Now will you kindly tell me why it is that a girl will throw a good fellow down every time for one of those Lizzie boys? If I thought there were enough men in the country who feel as I do, I would start "The American

Union for the Suppression of Lizzie Boys."

Well, I decided to get into my class, so I started for the smoking room. I hadn't gone three feet till some woman held me up, and began telling me how she adored grand opera. I didn't even reply. I flew madly and remained hidden in the tall grasses of the smoking room—until it was time to go home. Jim, should any one ever tell you that grand opera is all right, he is either trying to even up, or he is not a true friend. I was over in New York with the family last winter, and they made me go with them to "Die Walkure" at the Metropolitan Opera House. When I got the tickets I asked the man's advice as to the best location. He said that all true lovers of music occupied the dress circle and balconies, and that he had some good center dress circle seats at three bones per. Here's a tip, Jim. If the box man ever hands you that true lover game, just reach in through the little hole and soak him in the solar for me. It's coming to him. I'll give my word of honor we were a quarter of a mile from the stage. We went up in an elevator, were shown to our seats, and who was right behind us but my old pal Bud Hathaway from Chicago. Bud had his two sisters with him, and he gave me one sad look which said plainer than words, "So you're up against it, too, eh?" We introduced all hands around, and about 9 o'clock the curtain went up. After we had waited fully ten minutes, out came a big, fat, greasy-looking Dago with nothing on but a bear robe. He went over to the side of the stage, and sat down on a bum rock. It was plainly to be seen, even from true lover's seat, that his barelets was softer than a dog about something. Presently in came a woman, and none of the true lovers seemed to know who she was. Some said it was Melba, others Nordica. Bud and I decided it was May Irwin. We were mistaken, though, as Irwin has this woman lashed to the mast at any time or place. As soon as Mike the Dago espied the dame, it was all off. He rushed, and drove a straight-arm jab, which had it reached would have given him the purse. But Shifty Sadie wasn't there. She ducked, side stepped, and landed a clever half arm hook which seemed to stun the big fellow. They clinched, and swayed back and forth, growling continually, while the orchestra played this trembly Eliza-crossing-the-ice music. Jim, I'm not swelling this a bit. On the level, it happened just as I write it. All of a sudden some one seemed to win. They broke away, and

ran wildly to the front of the stage with their arms outstretched, yelling to beat three of a kind. The band cut loose something fierce. The leader tore out about \$9.00 worth of hair, and acted generally as though he had bats in his belfry. I thought sure the place would be pinched. It reminded me of Thirsty Thornton's dance hall out in Merrill, Wisconsin, when the Silent Swede used to start a general survival of the fittest every time Mamie the Mink danced twice in succession with the young fellow from Albany, whose father owned the big mill up Rough river. Of course, this audience was perfectly orderly, and showed no intention whatever of cutting in, and there were no chairs or glasses in the air, but I am forced to admit that the opera had Thornton's faded for noise. I asked Bud what the trouble was, and he answered that I could search him. The audience apparently went wild. Everybody said "Simply sublime!" "Isn't it grand?" "Perfectly superb!" "Bravo!" etc., not because they really enjoyed it, but merely because they thought it was the proper thing to do. After that for three solid hours Rough House Mike and Shifty Sadie seemed to be apologizing to the audience for their disgraceful street brawl, which was honestly the only good thing in the show. Along about 12 o'clock I thought I would talk over old times with Bud, but when I turned his way I found my tried and trusty comrade "Asleep at the Switch."

At the finish the woman next to me, who seemed to be on, said that the main lady was dying. After it was too late, Mike seemed kind of sorry. He must have given her the knife, or the drops, because there wasn't a minute that he could look in on her according to the rules. He laid her out on the bum rock, they set off a lot of red fire for some unknown reason, and the curtain dropped at 12:25. Never again for the money. Far be it from me knocking, but any time I want noise I'll take to a boiler shop or a Union station where I can understand what's coming off. I'm for a good mother show. Do you remember "The White Slave," Jim? Well, that's me. Wasn't it immense where the main lady spurned the leering villain's gold, and exclaimed with flashing eye, "Rags are royal raiment, when worn for virtue's sake." Great!

"The White Slave" has "Die Walkure" beaten to a pulp, and they don't get to you for three cases gate money, either.

Say, Jim, if you ever happen to be hunting around for a real true old

sport, don't overlook Gen. Hemingway, last evening's host. When it comes to warm propositions he is certainly the bell cow. They all follow him. He is one of those fat, bald-headed old boys who at one time has had the smallpox so badly that he looks as though he had lost a lot of settings out of his face. He hustled for about twenty years, harnessed up a bunch of money, and now his life is one continual crimson sunset. Some people know when they have enough, but when the old general has enough he doesn't know anything. Smoke up, Jim! I didn't get that one myself the first time I heard it. Every time the general gets lit up, he places his arm around your shoulder, puts his face close to yours, blows ashes in your eyes, and tells you confidentially, so that every one in Texas can hear him, that he knew your father when the seat of his trousers was ragged, and he didn't have one dollar to rub against another. I don't mind that so much, but every time he comes to a word with the letter P in it, he spits all over a fellow. Why, the other night he was telling me about our newly acquired Possessions, the Philippines, being a land of Perpetual Plenty, and for a while I thought I was in the natorium. Under the circumstances I don't know which would be more desirable, a plumber for the general, or a mackintosh for myself. Yours as ever, BILLY.

P. S.—Jim, you know those little white checks they issue in some bars and you pay at the cashier's desk? Well, one of the boys just telephoned me that he saw Johnny Black a few minutes ago in a downtown place with a beautiful sash on, and that he was eating his checks because he was broke. He had swallowed five checks amounting to \$2.30 before the bartender tumbled. That's a new one on me, and it's all right. My! but that boy John is a sincere drinker.

BILLY BAXTER.
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SOCIETIES.

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LOST AND FOUND

Lost—Between Dawson and Grand Forks, one Eastman Kodak, size 11x13. Camera was in a case with a strap to go over the shoulder. Finder please return to Nugget office and receive reward.

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