



Through A Monocle

The Vaudevillains' Latest Outrage

I SEE that some high-power human dynamo proposes to run a vaudeville theatre on Atlantic "liners." I hope that the "brain-storm" experts will get him, and incarcerate him in a padded cell, before he has another paroxysm. It would be just like some of these nimble dollar-chasers who cannot bear to see an idle man with an idle dollar burning a hole in his pocket, without wanting to "get next" with a method of coaxing out that dollar, to spoil one of the last refuges from the maddening rush of modern life which is yet left to distracted mankind. To-day physicians recommend an ocean voyage as a form of compulsory rest. It meets the case of the man who will not and cannot rest when it is possible for him to be working or worrying, and who does not like the canned dinners and cramped beds which go with "roughing it" in the woods. This individual can be put aboard a steamship which proposes to go out to sea and stay there for a week.

BUT I have long suspected that they would find some means of bringing New York or London to him. They would never let him escape for a whole week—even if it was a matter of life and death for him to get a peaceful holiday. For some time, the rush has been encroaching on this solitary oasis. The shortening of the passage has meant an encroachment—though one we could hardly expect hurried mankind to forego. We must remember that the majority of people who use Atlantic "liners" are not weary souls seeking "a rest cure," but genuinely

active commercial couriers bent on doing business. They would cross the Atlantic in a night if it could be managed. And it is still possible for the weary soul to find a slow ship which will give him ten days' holiday between the two coasts.

"WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY" has not done as much to disturb the peace of the empty Atlantic as I feared it would. When they told me that they issued daily newspapers on board, I dreaded the worst. But experience soon reassured me. The daily paper on ship-board is not an alarming thing. It seldom has any news in it. I do not know who edits the despatches to the "wireless" contingent spread over the wandering ocean; but, whoever he is, I hope that he may live long to perform his duties. He has exactly seized the desire of the average traveller. He does not pester him with the happenings which would excite his interest if he were on land; and yet the passenger feels that if anything astounding did occur—such as an earthquake in Toronto—it would infallibly get a sentence in the "wireless."

BUT a vaudeville performance! Ye gods! One of the benefits held out for it, is that it will supersede the regular "ship's concert." You might as well tell the old traveller that they proposed to do away with the crude system of counting time by "bells" on ship-board; and that no longer would the weird sound of the bell-strokes come out of the fog which surrounds the foremast, and then the hoarse cry of the sailor—"Eight bells! And all's well!" The "ship's concert" is seldom a work of art. You do not feel that you have lost anything if you

decide to stay out on deck that night. There is nothing compelling about it, save its purpose. But it fits in perfectly with the slowed-down mental condition of the "rest-curer." It is just about the sort of mental pabulum he can take without disturbing his somnolence. There is a chairman's speech by a chairman who has had the speech in use for thirty years; and its two jokes and its closing bit of sentiment and its opening bit of politeness, are still in perfectly good condition. Two lady passengers, who cannot sing, oblige with a couple of "solos," nothing modern, but delightfully reminiscent.

POSSIBLY a little girl gives a recitation. But if the wind is high, you may not hear it. Probably, another lady passenger and a gentleman passenger assassinate a duet. Their conception of a duet is to give each duetist a chance. They do not sing together and so drown each other's voices. But the gentleman courteously sings a note just after the lady; and you get them both. Possibly not the same note, but an approximation. It is usually a long duet; and you get a nice rest. And no one cares whether it ever comes to an end or not; for who is in a hurry to do anything? We are only waiting until it is time to go to bed. But, after the duet, arrives a member of the crew who can sing two comic songs—London music hall songs—songs which are comic if you possess the Londoners' sense of humour. He does them rather well, being in practice; for he does them twice each voyage, once in the second-class and once in the saloon concert.

WHY will not the mad people who are driving on this world with whip and spur leave us some moments in which to know that we are alive? The old days of leisure, when we could sit and learn what the sky looks like as the breeze carries the clouds across it, and what the slow creak of a cart in the lane sounds like, and how long a half-hour can be, are wholly dead—"trampled beneath the mob's million feet." We must have a new excitement every minute. Vaudeville is a sample of it. Vaudeville is an atrocity anywhere. But on ship-board! The gods forefend.

THE MONOCLE MAN.



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