UNITED STATES SENATORS

Should They Be Elected by the Direct Vote of the People?

INTERESTING TALKS ON THE QUESTION

Messrs. Rosewater, Halligan, Fitzpatrick and Hopewell Present it in Its Various Phases—Arguing the Merits of a Living Issue.

The regular bi-monthly meeting of the Live-Issue club was held in the Lininger Art gallery with William F. Baxter, president of the club, in the chair. The subject discussed was: "Resolved, That the United States senators be elected by a direct vote of the people." Mr. Edward Rosewater, who opened the discussion in the affirmative, spoke substantially as follows:

"The primitive form of government for the United States of America were the articles of confederation, and the legislative power for the first twelve years was vested in a congress made up of delegates elected by the respective legislatures of the various states that were members of the union. The first congress then of the United States was not a representative body of the people, but a body chosen indirectly through the legislatures who had been chosen for the most part by planters, land holders and men who paid taxes. The delegates, or rather members of the first federal congress, were restricted to three years of service, that is, they could only serve during a consecutive term of three years and were barred from holding any office of profit or trust under the colonial or state governments while serving as members of congress, and they could be recalled at the pleasure of their respective states.

"After the adoption of the constitution of the United States, promulgated on March 4, 1789, the legislative power of the national government was vested in a congress composed of two separate bodies—the house of representatives elected directly by the people and apportioned according to population, and the senate of the United States elected by the legislatures of the respective states and apportioned in equal numbers to the states that constitute the union, each state having two members or that august body.

"It is a matter of history that the framers of the national constitution, in adopting that form of government, had in view the restriction of the people in their primitive capacity. There was a profound distrust manifested in the people, and an aristocratic disposition to fence out the people from the choice of representation in the upper house of the national legislature. Whether that was wise or unwise experience alone could demonstrate.

"While the American union had only a sparsely settled population and the settlers of the various states were nearly all land owners and free from the influences that now surround the American voter, there is no doubt that the senators chosen by the legislatures were in large part the ablest and the most trusted men that could have been chosen in the respective states, but as the country multiplied in population and wealth, there came a marked change and it became manifest that the senate was gradually being converted into a House of Lords; that it no longer represented the real popular democratic spirit, but that it represented unrepublican tendencies and in fact had become a source of corruption and menace to popular self-government.

Modern Results of the System.

"Those of us who have been at senatorial elections and are familiar with the practice as well as the theory of government have found that the legislative branch of our government deteriorates and becomes seriously demoralized by reason of these periodic senatorial elections. In theory, perhaps, it would be all right to say that the men who represent the people, deliberating coolly and conscientiously upon the claims of the men who aspired to seats in the senate, would be actuated only by one motive, that is, as far as possible to ascertain who among the aspirants was the most worthy and the most capable, who would best represent the state and who would contribute most to the glory and the reputation of the state and of the republic. But what is the practice?

"Whenever it is known that the term of a senator is about to expire and that a legislature is about to be chosen charged with the duty of electing a senator of the United States a class of men push to the front for places in the legislature who really ought to be always kept to the rear. They are a class of men not merely ambitious to have it said of them that they helped to make a senator, that they had contributed toward elevating the standard of national law makers, but they are a class of men venal and pliant and pliable. They go to the legislature with the deliberate design to better their own condition through bribes received in various forms or with pledges of appointment to federal offices that insure for them lucrative places for which they have bartered their votes.

"The greatest scandals that have ever smirched the pages of the history of Nebraska are to be found in the legislative proceedings pending the election of United States senator. I could cite several instances, but will refrain. Parties who were not thought of as candidates, parties who did not present themselves before the people for their suffrages, deliberately bought whole blocks of members, and by a combination of the corrupt with the ambitious, by promises of federal appointments, by parceling out the United States marshalships, land offices and postmasterships and attorneyships, were elected to seats in the upper branch of congress. It was this general prevailing belief that our legislatures had been debased and corruptly manipulated at every senatorial election that begat a sentiment among the people regardless of party, in favor of having the senators of the United States subjected to the crucial test of an election, and when the framers of the constitution under which we now live convened in 1875 that sentiment was so powerful that by an almost unanimous vote the convention had inserted into our constitution a provision that the people shall, at every election when a senatorial contest is pending, have the right to express their choice for senator through the ballot box and have their votes counted and recorded. This is as far as any state can go under the present constitution of the United States. That instrument must first be amended before we can hope for that reform which the great body of the people of the United States are now demanding on all hands. It scarcely needs to be pointed out that while the various states formulated their constitutions on the model of the United States constitution, not a single state in this union has ever undertaken or even attempted to place an intermediate body between the electors and the choice of the senate. Every state senate is elected by the direct vote of the people, and that fact alone affords striking proof that the people themselves since the formation of the constitution have reached the conclusion that the aristocratic features copied from or modeled after the English system of government, where they have a House of Commons chosen by the people and a House of Lords perpetually holding power, is an unrepublican part of our political machinery which sooner or later must be eliminated.

There Are Defects in Our System.

"It stands to reason that every attempt that so far has been made in the United States congress to submit to the people an amendment placing the election of senators within the direct reach of the people has met with very little favor at the hands of the body that is to be abolished as a 'House of Lords' and come down to the level of the commons. It stands to reason because a very large percentage of the men who for the last twenty-five years, I need not go further back, have held places in the United States senate would not have been in their seats had their election been submitted directly to the voters of the respective states.

"It is no discredit to the American people to point out the defects of the government. We know that the United States senate even at this time and at all times has had within its body some of the greatest, ablest and purest statesmen this country, or, perhaps, any other country, has produced, but we also know that quite a percentage of the members of the United States senate are there simply because they either were capable of manipulating the legislatures and paying for their seats or because they had been subservient to large corporations with great wealth and commanding influences in legislatures, and that their seats are really simply filled by the decree of these corporations, and not by the people.

"I know, for instance, that the great state of Pennsylvania has been represented in the senate for a number of years, for more than a generation by one family. The head of that family held that seat by sheer force of character and ability and by prominence in the councils of the republican party; the son holds it not because of any ability, but because of the vast wealth at his command and the corporations that are behind him. I could state numbers of other cases, but I will refrain, simply pointing out the fact that according to my belief the interest of the people of the United States demands a radical reform in the national legislature. I believe that ere long the sentiment will be overwhelmingly in favor of remodeling the senate and making it responsive to the popular pulse. It may be said—and I presume it will be said—that this is a body for which we should have reverence; that this part of the constitution has remained intact for more than 100 years; that we have gone through many trying ordeals under the present form and that a change should never be attempted unless there is some very grave wrong or grave abuse. But after all we must remember that even the constitution of the United States was a change. It was a change in the forms embodied in the articles of confederation and the articles of confederation were a change from the form under which the colonial government had existed. The declaration of independence points out clearly that the forms of government must necessarily change with the changed conditions and wants of the people. We cannot hope to continue in the straight jacket into which we were put before steam and electricity were utilized, before the steamboat and railway and telegraph brought the most distant sections close together, before telephones and electric lighting, even before the press, with its millions of papers kept our people informed about every movement in the social, commercial and political world. If we are to have any changes in our condition none are, in my opinion, more imperatively needed than a reconstruction of the senate upon the basis of self-government by the people and for the people." [Loud applause.]

Mr. Halligan's Reply.

Mr. C. P. Halligan, who took the negative side of the question, said: "The first proposition that Mr. Rosewater advanced was that the senate arose from a distrust in the people. Could they believe for a moment or could the honorable gentleman believe that the senate of the United States arose from a distrust of the people? Not by any means. The men who assembled in the colonial congress came from the people; they had the interest of the people at heart. What, then, did it arise from? They were about to construct a structure that was to extend over the whole people, and they wanted to do it in such a manner as would subserve the interests of the people and would perpetuate that structure to their posterity. They consulted the pages of history to discover what other governments had done and they came to the conclusion that they must have one legislative body to act as a restraint upon the other. They said that the great mass of the people should have a representative body, but as the great mass of the people are influenced by their passions, by zeal and by questions that momentarily arise, we must have something to check the action of the purely representative body of the mass of the people and they created the senate to act as a check upon the house of representatives.

"Then the question arose how should this senate be elected. If elected by the direct vote of the people then it would partake of the same elements that the house of representatives is composed of. They said if we do that it will be just about the same as if we divided up the house of representatives and they determined to make the senate as independent from the house of representatives as possible. They made the one to serve as a check upon the other. They also gave to the senate the power to reject bills passed by the house of representatives and they gave to the house of representatives power to reject bills introduced by the senate. This served as a balance wheel. They foresaw that and they constituted the senate because it did serve as a balance wheel and not because they had any distrust in the people.

"The next proposition the gentleman advanced was that the senate converted itself gradually into a House of Lords. Now, supposing the house has converted itself into a House of Lords, what does that signify? Does it mean that they would not convert themselves into a House of Lords if they were elected directly by the people? Does it certify that they would be any different from the House of Lords in England? Did we not take our legislature from the English house? Is it not a fact that the House of Lords has been hampered and controlled in its action from time immemorial by the house elected by the people? The House of Lords, or the upper house in England, is an hereditary affair, which is worse than the senate of the United States, and yet it has never controlled the legislative acts of England to the detriment of England, or perhaps it would be better to say very seldom has it done so.

Not the Fault of the System.

"Granting that it is true, as the gentleman says, that the representatives go there to better their condition; that is all right, providing they go there also to better the condition of the people. But he says that they go there to better their condition by accepting bribes when there is a senatorial election to take place in the legislature. Now, supposing they do, what does that prove? Does that detract from the senate? Is that an argument that the senate of the United States should be elected by the people? Let us see. Grant that every senator in the United States senate buys his seat in the senate through the legislative body, even in that case it is impossible for that senate sitting in a body at Washington to enact a law that is detrimental to the interests of the people until it also bribes the representatives of the people sitting in the house, and the sanction of the president of the United States would also have to be secured. True, they may pass a law by the aid of the lower house without the president's signature, but how do they do it? They do it by the concurrence of two-thirds of the members of both houses.

"How are the state legislatures elected? By a direct vote of the people. How is it that we can elect men by a direct vote of the people who are so corrupt as to accept bribes? What guarantee have we that if we elected United States senators by a direct vote of the people that they would not be equally corrupt? We have none.

"He says the people of the state do not constitute an intermediate body and that is a reason for electing the senators of the United States directly by the people. What is a state? It is only a portion of our country. At the present time the forty-fourth part of this union. It is a small body. Would it be advisable to elect state senators by an intermediate body? The smallness of the states in comparison with the union shows the difference between this comparison.

"The gentleman says the United States senators become subservient to corporate power. Supposing they do. Would they be any less so if elected by the people? The question is not whether the senators become subservient to corporate power, but whether in their capacity as senators they can enact laws detrimental to the interests of the people. Not how they are elected, but what laws they give us.

"The great trouble with the American people is that they have a great anxiety to enact new laws. Every legislature wants to modify, change, repeal or amend something, and our statute books are full of the amendments of such errors. Now the senate acts as a check upon that tendency, and that is what it is for. We can find in the pages of history examples of governments similar to ours, but without our salutary system of checks, in ancient Athens and Florence, but those governments went down, just as every one must go down that does not provide checks; that does not provide balance wheels for the government. It is an easy thing to say that we should have our laws changed and modified and new modes provided, but at the same time we should not overlook the evils that these changes often bring about." [Loud applause.]

Very Plainly Diagnosed.

Prof. Frank A. Fitzpatrick made a few remarks and among other things said: "I do not think there can be very much question in the minds of anyone who has listened to Mr. Rosewater in his presentation of the subject matter of his talk to us this evening, but that all he has said has proceeded from a perfect conviction on his part produced from a more perfect knowledge of the hidden wheels that move legislatures than any of us possess, and I could not help but think while listening to my able friend on the left that perhaps he has not been unfortunate enough to be very much on the inside in the workings of our legislative bodies. The diagnosis that Mr. Rosewater makes seems plain, that is, the corporations control the senators or the upper body because they can work by devious ways. It is a well known fact that legislators will resort to all sorts of devices to delay legislation. In order to effect their purpose they will make a motion to recommit a bill to a committee or to adjourn and avail themselves of a thousand parliamentary tactics to delay action upon a bill, well knowing that if it comes to a final vote they will have to vote for it. Undoubtedly we would be to a large extent saved from these kind of legislators if the senators were elected by a direct vote of the people. I think we need a check, but I fail to see how the check system would be any less than it is now if the senators were elected directly by the people. In my opinion it would remain just the same.

"It is also a matter of history, I think, that at the time of the framing of the constitution there was what might be termed a Hamilton party and a Jefferson party. Mr. Jefferson who had just returned from France, was filled with the doctrines of fraternity and equality and he desired that the people should have the fullest sway in self-government. Mr. Hamilton representing the other side had no confidence in the people. He had no confidence in the ability of the mass of the people to decide wisely on questions of vital importance to the country. These things were fought out backwards and forwards.

"As a country grows it changes its conditions and so we have made numerous amendments to our constitution from time to time. I imagine if we trace the history of the senate and inquire into the calibre of senators we shall find that we got the best senatorial timber in those states where the strength of the parties is pretty evenly divided, because in order to succeed the best men of both parties must be put forward. In states which are mostly democratic or mostly republican it is notorious that men who have comparatively no fitness for the office are elected to the United States senate, and they are elected by all kinds of peculiar methods. I think the remedy proposed is a good one. I believe that only men of character and standing in the party should be nominated as candidates for the important office of United States senators and the battle should be fought out in the conventions and if this were done I think it would result in our having a much better grade of men in the senate where now we have men whom everybody knows are objectionable."

The meeting was also briefly addressed by J. L. Wootson, Frank L. Weaver, John Wilson Battin and Dr. A. F. Jonas.

Fixing the Responsibility.

Judge Melvin R. Hopewell rose in response to calls and said: "I will not undertake to make a speech on this question, but I may state a thought or two which the remarks that have been made have called to my mind. I was very much interested in the opening remarks and the speech of Mr. Rosewater. He has stated very succinctly and clearly the history and the manner in which the election of our senators came about, and his principal reason for desiring a change in the method of electing senators is the idea that now our senators are elected by improper influences, by bribes. Now, I am unwilling to concede that the majority of our members of our state legislatures are men who are susceptible to those corrupt influences. I am not willing to say that the majority, or a large proportion of the members of an ordinary legislature, would be controlled by such influences. If, however, it were true who is responsible for it? If corrupt men are sent to the legislature the people who nominate and elect them are directly responsible. But how would the evil be remedied by electing the United States senators directly by the people. If this system was adopted it seems to me that instead of doing away with these improper methods it would simply relegate them from the legislature to the nominating conventions.

"When we look back over the history of our country we see, I think, that some of the greatest minds of our country have been in the senate of the United States. We all agree to that. Such men as Clay, Sumner, Webster and many others that we readily call to mind, have been the very ablest men that our country has produced, and they have been elected by the legislatures as provided by our constitution, and after having worked so well so far where is there a good reason for making the change now unless there would be greater freedom from those improper methods that have been suggested? Now there is a difference between the senate of the United States and the house of representatives, and it is well that it is so. As a matter of fact, one is a dignified, deliberative body, the other is not so much so at least, and quite the reverse in many instances.

In Favor of the Existing System.

"Now, it seems to me that the only argument is a supposition or a fear, for which, perhaps, there are good reasons, that some senators have obtained their seats in these questionable ways; yet, as a matter of fact, if we bring it down to pure politics and have the senators nominated by our political conventions and elected directly by the people I fail to see how it would be better.

"There are political questions that must be met and dealt with and it is very difficult to say what is the best way to deal with them. Take an example. We have from this state two senators and three representatives. Are the representatives from this state so much superior in ability and wisdom to our senators that they could be offered as an argument? As it has been suggested by one speaker the very fact that the senate seems to occupy an exalted position, to be different, to be more deliberative, more in the nature of a House of Lords than the house of representatives, and that the position of senator is looked upon as much more honorable, makes it a matter of strife among our political parties to put forward before the legislature their very best men. As has been said, men of marked ability who have first gone to the state legislatures, and have shown themselves capable and worthy of the confidence of their respective parties, are the men usually that are put forward by their parties in the legislatures for senatorial positions.

"I think the history of our country shows that the elections made by the legislatures have in the main been from the very best men in the states. Instead of conducing to the election of abler men and less corrupt men it seems to me that the tendency would be rather the reverse and that an election by the people would gradually bring the two bodies more on an equality, more upon a par at least in the minds of the people than they are now or than they will be so long as the present method of electing senators is continued, because if the influences which are brought to bear in the primaries, in the county conventions, in the district conventions and state conventions for the nomination of congressmen, which are open to criticism of my friend, Mr. Rosewater, and which receive them, are not the nomination of senators equally open to the same criticism? Would the results be any better if the senators were elected by precisely the same people who elect the members of the state legislatures? I think you will find this bribery and corruption is confined principally to a very few persons.

"Most of the men who go to the senate of the United States are supposed to be the best men of the state, men who have reputations at stake, but by chance there are a few who go there for mercenary purposes. They, of course, do all they can to keep that from being known. It is almost impossible to prevent some undue influences from being exerted, yet as I have said I have faith enough in my fellowmen to believe that these matters are largely exaggerated. At any rate the actual facts never grow less by being carried from mouth to mouth and coming to the ears of the public through the medium of the newspapers they do not always get the exact facts. They always get them large enough and as they circulate they spread and grow." [Applause.]

Mr. Rosewater's Rejoinder.

Mr. Rosewater being requested to reply to the objections raised by those who had opposed the election of United States senators by a direct vote of the people, said:

"After a hundred years of government we have passed from the speculative and experimental era to the era of experience. The men who framed the constitution were simply grappling with a theory and they did what they thought best for perpetuating free government for themselves and their posterity, but after a hundred years we certainly ought to act for ourselves and the posterity that comes after us and provide the checks and safeguards which experience suggests are absolutely necessary. As to the denial that the framers of the constitution did not intend to put a barrier between the people and the choice of senators from distrust of the people, it is historic that not only was there a manifest distrust of the people but a contempt for the people by many of those who took part in framing the constitution, and not a few of them were believers in a sort of demi-aristocracy rather than a pure republican form of government. Now just look at the United States senate of today and the United States senate in which Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Benton, Douglas and Sumner had seats. It was composed of men who will be illustrious for all time. What have you got there today?

"When we had a population of something like 15,000,000 or 20,000,000 and still had representatives that came from the people, although, perhaps, through the filtration process of a legislature, we did get the ablest and best men. What do we get now? The filter is of a different kind. Now they are filtered through the murky waters of corruption and instead of being able to count our great statesmen by the score we have got only half a dozen on both sides of the house. Look at the senate today. What have you got outside of John Sherman, General Hawley, William E. Chandler and three or four republicans, and possibly Mills and Carlisle on the democratic side? You have got a lot of money bags, coal barons, lumber barons, silver kings and representatives of all the concentrated wealth of the country, but the common people have no representatives or very few, and when a man does dare to stand up and tell the truth as regards the methods used in throttling the legislation the people demand then he is treated as an outcast and ostracised; he does not belong to that charmed circle. If you were in Washington as often as I have been, and I was there in 1862 for the first time, you would be very much surprised at the marked change in the make up of the senate. You talk to me about sending back men who have made a record. Here was this man Payne, an oil baron, sent from Ohio instead of Pendleton. Look at Bryce and look at other senators that have been sent there by America's plutocracy.

Not for the People.

"A gentleman has stated it makes no difference how a senator gets his election, he is exalted and purified as soon as he gets into the senate. We are told that he is there as a check. Yes, he is there as a check upon legislation which is wholesome; a check upon every kind of legislation that is demanded by the common people, but when it comes to the legislation that the corporate interests demand then he is no check. I for myself feel that the time has come to make a change. I feel it because I am convinced that we are on the eve of a crisis. If we are to retain our form of government we must restore and infuse confidence in the minds of the people that it is a republican form of government and that it is going to stay that way, and not an aristocratic government, modeled after the pattern of England, in which wealth alone controls and brains and ability go for nothing.

"One thing this reform would do; it would save an immense amount of time that is now wasted by the legislatures of the various states wrestling over senatorial contests. Look at the state of Illinois. The whole session fritted away before the senator was elected. They fight and pull and tug and offer bribes and make promises of positions and there have been occasions when legislatures have adjourned without electing a senator at all.

"It is true that some bad men are elected to the legislatures by the people. This is due largely to the fact that they are chosen from little districts and very sparsely settled districts. They come because they are not known and just as soon as the public has got acquainted with them they do not come any more. [Laughter.] But that does not argue that the people should be deprived of their right to vote for United States senators for the checks will remain just the same as if they were elected by legislatures. A man to be a senator must be thirty years of age and have been a full citizen of the United States nine years; a member of the house needs to be only twenty-five years old, so we have provided for age and some experience. It is not true that men graduate from the house to the senate. You will find, as has been stated here tonight, that the sudden acquisition of wealth or subserviency to some big corporation sends a man leaping over the heads of others right into the senate. He lands there and assumes the dignity of one of the lords. The House of Lords is preferable. I have seen it in session and their appearance and decorum indicated a good deal more intelligence on the average than our lords, and this must be said that being born to the places and reared and educated to rule they are better fitted to do so. Our men are seldom educated to fill the places. They may have won a capital prize in the Louisiana lottery, or struck a bonanza, or struck oil or anything else that makes men suddenly rich and lands them in the senate to make laws or obstruct legislation the people want.

"I have been asked whether the hope of a senatorial position is not an incentive for keeping close to the people. Oh, yes, it is an incentive. Senator Stanford wants money lent out at 2 per cent to everybody who has land to mortgage. He has more land than anybody in California. We have been told that these dignified gentlemen never support any measure that has not been well weighed, and yet we have seen several schemes matured and weighed in the senate which finally did not materialize just because the checks came at the other end of the capitol.

What Would Be Gained.

"As a matter of fact there is a radical difference between the House of Lords and our senate. The House of Lords cannot originate a single bill; not a dollar can they vote out of the exchequer of Great Britain; whereas in the house of lords of America you can get all sorts of schemes introduced and attached as riders to appropriation bills.

"I consider that some of the objections are well founded. To a certain extent you would transfer the struggle of senatorial selection to the floor of the convention, but the floor of the convention is an open floor and usually the time given is about a day, and the little corridors and closets and side places in which legislators are seen and in which arrangements are made night after night; in which men bet money and lose it purposely, all these things are absent. Again, suppose after all it was discovered that a man was nominated by fraud, could the party dare stand up with him? If it did there is a free press ready to expose corruption. There would be no chance, in my opinion, or not one in a hundred, of buying the majority of the delegates of a convention, and then the buyer would have to get a majority of the votes at the ballot box. It is true that Mr. Hill was elected and re-elected in New York as governor, but Mr. Hill probably was elected because he was about as good a man as the democrats had to present for the office of governor. It is simply a struggle for the fittest or the "fightiest," and the man who has ability and a clean record would come to the front. Now it is the subtle, ingenious schemer that gets to the front or some soulless corporation that has no front or rear [Laughter] that gets in its work against any man that is not friendly to its interests.

Our senate is gradually and surely being filled with that class of men who represent only wealth, and not the middle and better class of the people. We must remove the chance for temptation which now surrounds our law makers. Legislators would not be bribed if there was no incentive for bribery. If you remove that temptation you would stop a great deal of jobbery which candidates for the senate and friends of the candidates countenance and support in tying up with bogus claimants and jobbers. You would have a better class of men in your legislatures who would legislate for the public good.

"In my judgment there is no need for reverence for the constitution on account of age. The constitution has been changed before. Almost every man in the constitutional convention from George Washington down was a slave holder, but we have changed the constitution, and abolished slavery. I would rather trust the great mass of the people than a few people. The safety of our government is in large numbers. The best governed states are the New England states where they have town representation. The Massachusetts legislature has more than 700 members. It is pretty difficult to manipulate such a large body. In this state we only have 133 members and sixty-eight votes make a senator. Twenty years ago we only had fifty-two members and twenty-seven votes was a majority and they were not very difficult to corral. But our most numerous legislatures are more easily manipulated and corrupted than the people of a whole state."

What a craze for circus entertainments! In New York at present three first class theaters have productions with a circus leaning, viz.: "A Night at the Circus" at the Bijou, "The Lion Tamer" at the Broadway and "The Country Circus" another attraction with the flavor of the sawdust ring, will enter the list of metropolitan amusements. And all this time Barnum's circus is rampant at Madison Square garden with "Columbus," a gigantic spectacle of no circus pretensions, as its chief exhibit.

SUMMER OPERA FOR OMAHA

The Season to Begin May 22 and to Run Twelve Weeks.

TWENTY-FIVE OPERAS WILL BE GIVEN

Contributions Invited for the Actors' Fund Fair—Stage Career of a Charming Nebraska Girl—Coming Attractions—Theatrical Chat.

A season of light opera has come to be a feature of summer entertainment in New York and Chicago, and Omaha is about to assume this modern air of metropolitanism. It is a rather venturesome undertaking, because it has been tried here before and proved a failure, but Manager Burgess of the Farnam Street theater is confident that, profiting by the experience of others, he can begin the enterprise with prospects and advantages never before enjoyed by an Omaha theater. He has a popular house and back of him is the Crawford circuit, a by no means undesirable ally at times. To secure a company on terms that will permit popular prices, which must prevail to make summer opera go, it is necessary to guarantee an engagement of four months. Manager Burgess will not have to depend solely upon Omaha in this venture, for if interest lags here he will fill out the season on the Crawford circuit.

He returned from Chicago the other day, and now announces the closing of a contract for a season of comic opera beginning May 22. The company will be furnished by Henry W. Dodd, who, besides managing concert companies in England, has been connected with the following organizations as a comedian and stage carpenter: The Carl Rosa, Royal English, Clara Louise Kellogg, Duff, Carleton, Morrissey and Gustav Hinrich opera companies. He is now organizing two companies, one for Chicago and the other for this city. The choruses and some of the principals are already at work in Chicago, and the companies will be filled out with singers who are now on the road with opera companies and are fitted to step into their places on short notice.

Manager Burgess is assured that the company will have good people because there are plenty of singers anxious for summer engagements, and its members will be thoroughly drilled before appearing in Omaha. The company will begin its season May 9, appearing in St. Joe. It will then make a tour of two and perhaps three weeks before opening in this city. The Omaha season will continue twelve weeks or longer if the patronage will warrant it, and then the company will go on tour. The manager of the Kansas City theaters is anxious for a four weeks' engagement, and the rest of the season will be put in on the Crawford circuit.

For the Omaha season the repertory will include from twenty-five to thirty light operas, and the bill will be changed twice a week, which will give an abundance of variety. The list will include such standard works as "Bohemian Girl," "Nanon," "Fra Diavolo," "Pinafore," "Three Black Cloaks," "Girofle-Girofla" and "Trebizon." To popularize the enterprize and give every inducement for a liberal patronage the prices of the Farnam will be reduced. They will range from 50 cents for the best seats down to the insignificant sum of 10 cents for the gallery.

* * *

A correspondent of THE BEE writes that the contributions to the Actors' Fund fair in New York, including cash and goods, amount to about $60,000. The actors of America have given benefits for other charities that have needed many hundreds of thousands of dollars, and now their appeal for help is receiving a generous response.

President Harrison has contributed a number of rare old medals once owned by his grandfather. With them are autograph letters to prove their genuineness.

Edwin Booth has given $1,500, and Joseph Jefferson a painting by himself. Mrs. W. J. Florence has presented a copy of "The Rivals," illustrated by her husband, the dead comedian, who worked upon it for several years. The expense of decorating Madison Square garden, which will cost many thousand dollars, will be borne by the theatrical managers of America.

These indicate the character of the contributions of members of the profession. The public has been invited to join in the good work by the donation either of cash or of rare or quaint articles to be placed on sale. The dry goods men of New York have signed checks for $5,000, and the brokers have done likewise. New York women have donated costly laces, curios and gems. Painters have given canvases, and other friends of the cause have donated curious pieces gathered in far countries.

The actors' fund is raised for the purpose of relieving sick and disabled actors, and for the care of the orphaned children of actors. Money has been raised heretofore by benefit performances at theaters, and the coming fair is the first general call upon the public for donations. Contributions, however small, will be gratefully received by the woman's executive committee, 29 West Thirtieth street, New York.

Miss Olive May, the lovely girl who plays the part of Bertie's sweetheart in "The Henrietta," is a Nebraska girl. Her parents moved from their home in Beatrice to Chicago, so that the daughter, who had been highly complimented and much encouraged by Mme. Modjeska, might have proper training and advantages.

She entered the Chicago Conservatory and in the dramatic department worked and studied persistently. Her manner and appearance were so much improved that she had the satisfaction of knowing after a short time that she was not only the beauty of the conservatory, but a most promising pupil. Three times did Stuart Robson offer her a place in his company before she accepted, for like most young and inexperienced artists she had visions of reaching the heights at once and would be a Lady Macbeth or nothing.

One afternoon, however, after a matinee at the Chicago opera house, where she created the role of Lois in Jerome K. Jerome's little play of "Sunset," and made a hit, Mr. Robson made his last offer. Miss May realized by that time that she was not formed by nature for a tragedienne, and, after a summer with the "Two Sisters" company, she joined Mr. Robson's company two seasons ago. It is said that she will leave the company at the close of the present season, the relations between her and Mr. Robson's wife, Miss May Waldron, not being entirely congenial. Miss May has youth, beauty, ability and the prestige of a charming part in one of the most successful comedies of the day, so there will be little difficulty in her securing another desirable engagement.

THE THEATERS.

At Boyd's new theater this evening Carroll Johnson, the Irish singing comedian, will begin a three nights engagement in his matchless scenic production of the romantic Irish play, "The Gossoon." Mr. Johnson, who was originally a famous minstrel, since he made his debut in white face in "The Fairies Well" three years ago has gradually forced his way to the front until now he stands without a rival in his particular line of work. He is a born Irishman, being a native of Carlingford, County Louth, and by very nature of his manner is particularly suited and refined with comedy work. The play, "The Gossoon," deals with the darker and lighter sides of life in the Green Isle. The scenes are all laid in that paradise of scenic beauty—Killarney. The play is handsomely staged and has a scenic mounting seldom seen in an Irish play.

The Farnam Street theater comes to the front again this week with a new company in a play unknown to this city opening with the usual matinee this afternoon. The "Devil's Mine" company has been seen in every city of any note, east of Omaha, at least once every year for the past three seasons and the business it invariably does, tells the tale of popularity, which speaks the merits of a dramatic attraction. It is on the melo-drama order. The story is one of western life, not as it is supposed to be, but as it is. For in the hills of Montana are found ladies and gentlemen, who can teach some of the inhabitants of eastern cities, what natural honor is. An old miner who having found a rich claim, endeavored to protect it from the human sharks, to be found in all mining settlements. His endeavors in this direction are aided by a Denver gambler. Of course the adventures of the three are thrilling. The romantic vein of the play are furnished by the gambler and the old miner's daughter, a character of the M'Liss type. In the whole play, there is not one thing to which an exception could be taken. The company promised is a strong one and is the original cast of this play as produced in Philadelphia three years ago.

Of Rhea, who will be at Boyd's theater on Monday night, May 2, the Critic says: "Rhea has made the hit of her life as Catharine I. in 'La Czarina, Empress of Russia' (her new play this season). Those of her admirers who have seen her as Adrienne Lecouvreur and Josephine will forget her beautiful rendition of those characters when they witness her masterly acting in this one."

"Blue Jeans" is the play to see now by all means. Improve the chance when it comes to Boyd's theater the last three evenings of next week. It is strong, original and deeply interesting. The play is unquestionably American, the most genuine so of any drama on the stage. There is nothing traditional in it. The characters are altogether new to the stage, and they have the merit, moreover, of being vigorous, picturesque and commanding. There is the typical, ignorant, blatant, yet withal general politician who is one of the forces in the machine, who has no notion of the use of politics aside from the spoils of office, and is already to make a speech or to coerce refractory voters. There is the Hoosier himself in the person of Ben Boone, big, awkward, comical, yet withal capable of furious passion. There is the old settler, impersonated in Jacob Tuterweiler, shoemaker, philosopher and politician in a mild way. The women, too, are extraordinary in their interest. There is June, a girl from the poorhouse, perhaps as original a type of American womanhood as the stage has ever seen. Another is Sue Eudaly, a waif from the south, beautiful but with a fiendish disposition, loving and hating with equal ardor. These are the principal characters in the play.

Among the many attractions at Wonderland this week may be found Hinman, the Couey Island Life Saver, the saver of forty-nine lives. He will give a lecture on the subject. Ruth, the Dancing Quakeress. The little lady will dance the Mantelete dance, the dance of the Spanish. Dr. A. A. Waite and Master Harry in their spiritual manifestations. Tierney, the Irish comedian, formerly of Tierney & Cronin. Lane & Verona, acrobats and skaters. Scott, the Frog Man, in contortions. Waxworks, panoramic views and many other attractions.

Duncan Clark and his Female Ministrels will give their second and closing performance at the People's theater this (Sunday) evening. Since their appearance here last season the company has undergone many changes and a first class bill will be presented.

Stage Gossip.

Dan Rice, the old circus manager, has undertaken to teach Nellie McHenry to ride bareback, and in the near future Miss McHenry will end her new play, "A Night at the Circus," by dancing on the back of her pretty white horse while he gallops around the stage.

The wife of J. H. Stoddard, the character actor of A. M. Palmer's company, died recently. Mr. Stoddard remained out of the cast in "The Broken Seal," and his part was played by James H. Hackett, a young amateur, who acquitted himself so well that he was permanently engaged by Mr. Palmer.

More than a half million dollars for a year and a half's presentations of a play presented by but two companies are astounding figures to be given out as the profits of a stage production, but those figures represent a claim which Managers Rosenquest and Arthur offer to substantiate by an exhibition of their books to anyone curious enough to investigate "Blue Jeans'" profits.

Judge Garber of California, has refused the application of Mrs. McKee Rankin for alimony in her suit for divorce, on the ground that she seems to be in a position to support herself. Mr. Rankin, in his answer to his wife's petition, denies that his income is large, and cites the fact that, in order to procure the necessaries of life, he is playing at a low-priced theater in San Francisco on a low salary.

Mme. Bernhardt gave several performances at the Metropolitan opera house in New York last week, which marks a new departure for Managers Abbey and Grau. They will attempt to put all their companies at various times into the Metropolitan until the completion of their new theater, nearly two years hence. The firm now has a theater of its own in Boston and is in negotiation for the purchase of McVicker's in Chicago. Their theater in New York is to occupy half the block extending from the Casino to Thirty-eighth street, and it is their purpose in the future to present their attractions mainly in their own theaters in the three principal cities.

"Polly Middles," Annie Pixley's new comic opera, was written by A. C. Gunter, the author of "Mr. Barnes of New York," eight years ago. Its production came about in a curious way. Mr. Gunter had written a play for Miss Pixley, the principal character of which was a mannish sort of woman, whom Miss Pixley did not care to impersonate. After considerable discussion of the matter Mr. Gunter agreed to take the play back if Miss Pixley would undertake to act in a comic opera which he would deliver to her. Mr. Gunter then turned the play into a book entitled "A Florida Enchantment."

The most expensive prize ever offered for the purpose of finding out the name of the most popular woman in the country will be on view at the Actors' Fund fair. This will be a diamond which is of the actual value of $8,000. It bears the name of the Cleveland diamond, and is known by every prominent jeweler in the world. It is tabulated and listed among the great diamonds of civilization. The word "gift" is used here in its usual significance in connection with charity fairs; that is, it will be "given away" after the owners have received $8,000 for it. Everybody can vote by paying $1 a vote for it and the woman who receives the greatest number of votes will have the diamond, providing 8,000 votes have been received.

The management of the Madison Square garden, New York, has arranged with Abbey, Schoeffel & Grau for a Patti musical and operatic festival on May 10, 12 and 14. Mme. Adelina Patti will be assisted by her own opera company, together with a chorus of 1,000 voices, and an orchestra of 100 musicians. Signor Arditi will be the conductor for Mme. Patti, and William R. Chapman will bring together an immense volume of male and female voices. The Metropolitan Musical society, the Rubenstein and the Melopia of Plainfield, the Kingston Philharmonic, the Rubinstein of Poughkeepsie, and other musical societies are numbered among those who will be heard at the festival.

Crane seems to have made another hit in New York in his new play, "The American Minister." Most of the personages of the play are Americans, but the scenes are foreign. Mr. Crane at the outset appears at the American embassy in Rome, where he represents the United States as minister made up to look very much as Henry Ward Beecher did at 50. The story told is that upon his arrival a cipher dispatch from Washington concerning the threat of war over the New Orleans massacre has been received by his predecessor in office, a man whom the stress of debt and embezzlement has induced to steal the message and so delay it as to make it affect the stock market. The new minister has, however, a son, sure to be convicted on circumstantial evidence should the matter become public, and so the father, in order to discover the dispatch, participates in the carnival, flirts with countesses, attends a state ball, and indulges in other foolery and considerable American buncombe.

A writer in The Theater asks: Have you ever noticed the Gale pout? It is the cutest thing out, and, like all good things of life it is worth a little extra exertion for the privilege of enjoying it. When things go wrong about the stage, or when there is a hitch in the workings of the mechanical accessories of the drama, Miss Gale does not flare up and get mad all over, froth at the mouth, or make the atmosphere around her blue by the use of vindictive adjectives, but she merely displays her displeasure by producing one of the cutest and sweetest little pouts that ever graced the feminine features. I caught on to it some time ago during one of the performance of "The Hunchback." Something happened to mar the effect of the scene, and at the end of the act Miss Gale walked off the stage with her face ornamented with one of the prettiest pouts that mortal man ever witnessed. Since that time I have studied every conceivable scheme to bring that pout into existence. I have caught the stage manager at an unguarded moment and caused him to prematurely ring down the curtain; I have started the noble army of "supers" on the stage at the wrong cue; I have caused the lime-light to spurt and die out at inauspicious moments, and I have persuaded the gas man to suddenly transform the brilliancy of the sunshine in pitchy darkness. It is impossible to renumerate the devilish devices I have studied and practiced solely for the pleasure of gazing on that bewitching little pout.

NO TRICK TO ROB A BANK

Omaha Banks That Have Suffered Losses at Their Employes' Hands.

ROBBERIES THAT ARE NOT MADE PUBLIC

Story of a Janitor Who Found Five Thousand on the Side but Had to Disgorge—Reminiscences of a Cashier.

They were seated vis-a-vis, and between them spread the expanse of a broad