

What Becomes of Old Actors

by EMMETT C. KING

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IN the winter of 1882 the theatrical managers of New York and Brooklyn decided that, in order to relieve the many cases of distress reported throughout the theatrical profession, it was necessary to create a permanent fund which would be immediately available for the purpose. This fund was to be known as the "Actors' Fund," but as it was to be raised by the efforts of all classes connected with the business of public amusements, it would be devoted, without reservation, to any and all persons who have been connected with said amusements, in any capacity whatsoever.

Benefit performances were given at the principal theaters in New York and Brooklyn on a certain day for the purpose of creating a foundation for the fund. The receipts from the sale of tickets and donations for these performances were \$39,335.80. Among the largest donations were: James Gordon Bennett, \$10,000; John Jacob Astor, \$2,500; Edwin Booth, \$1,000.

The fund was incorporated according to the laws of the state, June 8, 1882, and on July 15th a permanent organization was effected with the



THE OLD ACTOR'S HOME



DINNER PARTY AT ACTORS' HOME

following officers: President, Lester Wallack; vice-president, A. M. Palmer; secretary, Daniel Frohman; treasurer, Theodore Moss. The board of trustees was: Lester Wallack, Edwin Booth, Joseph Jefferson, M. H. Mallory, Lawrence Barrett, H. C. Miner, W. E. Sinn, A. M. Palmer, Edward Harrigan, William Henderson, John F. Poole, P. T. Barnum, W. J. Florence, William Birch, J. K. Emmett and J. H. Haverly. The counsel for the fund was A. J. Dittenhoefer.

The report of the secretary for the first year of the fund's existence showed a disbursement of \$12,349.07. Relief had been given to over four hundred actors in different parts of the Union, and thirty-two had been buried in California, Texas and other parts of the country. Thus the fund had prevented the sick and needy from seeking charity, and had given respectable interment to those who would otherwise have been buried in pauper's graves.

One day in the spring of 1900 Louis Aldrich, an actor, and Al. Hayman, a theatrical manager, sat in the latter's office in the Empire Theater, New York.

"The actors' fund has at last passed resolutions approving my plan to build a home for old actors," said Aldrich. "You know that I have been agitating this scheme for years, with little or no encouragement; nobody believes it feasible, on account of the expense. I believe now, as I always have, that I can make a success of it, if I can only get a substantial sum to start my subscription. You've made a good deal of money out of the theatrical business, Al; give me something tangible for a starter."

"How much will you require, altogether?" Hayman asked.

"It will take about one hundred thousand dollars," was the reply.

"How much do you think I ought to give?"

"Oh, about ten thousand dollars."

"Well," replied Hayman, "I'll give you ten thousand dollars, if the dramatic profession will raise ninety thousand."

"I'm afraid we can't raise that much right away," Aldrich said; "but I believe we could raise fifty thousand now, and the balance later."

"All right," said Hayman, "I'll give you ten thousand, if you'll raise fifty thousand."

"That's a bargain," exclaimed Aldrich. "Give me your check, and if I don't raise the fifty thousand, I'll return it."

The check for ten thousand dollars was given to Aldrich, and he took it to the editor of the New York Herald, who agreed to hold the money and receive further donations. The next day the Herald announced that it had ten thousand dollars as a nucleus for a fund to build a home for actors, and would receive subscriptions. The response was magic. Money poured in by mail, express, telegraph and cable. In twenty days the subscription reached fifty-five thousand dollars, besides the original ten thousand, and the books were closed for the time being.

The matter was allowed to rest until the spring of 1901, when a number of benefit performances were given in New York, Philadelphia and Chicago to raise additional money needed to complete the work so auspiciously begun.

The committee entrusted with the selection of a site for the home purchased "Beechlawn," the twenty-acre estate of Richard Penn Smith at West Brighton, Staten Island. The building was finished, and on May 8, 1902, the Actors' Fund Home was opened and dedicated with imposing ceremonies. The address of the day was made by Joseph Jefferson.

In reality, the dramatic profession owes to Louis Aldrich more than it does to any single person for the possession of this beautiful home. He talked of the scheme for years. No one else

believed it feasible, but Aldrich never lost faith in his ability to carry it to a successful conclusion.

In this ideal abode are assembled thirty-one former votaries of the sock and buskin. They are the Romeos, Meinharts, Rosalinds and Camilles of bygone days. They were the idols of your fathers and your grandfathers—yes, and some of your great-grandfathers; for none is admitted to the home under fifty-five, and many of the inmates are octogenarians.

On a winter's evening the silver-haired women are accustomed to gather in the parlor or library, and over their sewing or crocheting tell once more of the beauty and charm of Adelaide Neilson, the wonderful characterizations of Lucille Western, and sublime genius of Charlotte Cushman; while downstairs in the billiard or card room the men have gone back to play again with Davenport, McCullough, Warren, Owens, Burton and the peerless Forrest. Jefferson, Barrett and Edwin Booth are spoken of casually; they belong too much to the present.

"Ah! there are no tragedians like Forrest nowadays," one veteran sighs in a voice that suggests the ghost in Hamlet.

"And no comedians like Burton," deploras another.

"No, nor any pantomimists like George Fox; the art died with him," laments a third.

"There were giants in those days," if these veterans are to be believed; and who shall gainsay them? None can; and surely none would care to.

Two married couples grace the home, refuting the often heard remark, "There are no happy marriages in the profession." They are Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Chester and Mr. and Mrs. George Morton. Mr. and Mrs. Chester have been married forty-seven years, and have seldom been separated during their long connection with the stage. Mr. and Mrs. Morton have been married a somewhat shorter time than the Chesters.

The oft-repeated question, "Are they happy?" is well answered in the following incident. An old friend of one of the couples mentioned extended an invitation to them to visit him and his family at their country home. The pair replied, thanking him for his invitation and apologizing for not accepting, but stating that they were so happy in their new home that they could not bear the thought of leaving it, even for a short time.

One of the most interesting figures in the unique household is Harry Langdon—"Handsome Harry" they called him in the days when he played dashing parts opposite Adelaide Neilson, Charlotte Cushman and Eliza Logan. Though well into his eightieth year, Mr. Langdon was reading a book without glasses when I was introduced to him.

"No, I have never felt the need of glasses," he said in answer to my question regarding it. "I may have to get some later, but now I read by either daylight or artificial light without any inconvenience."

"Tell me something about Forrest, Mr. Langdon," I asked him; "some anecdotes, if you can think of any."

"There are so many," he replied, "that it is hard to think where to begin. One that has been told often, and sometimes attributed to other people, really occurred while I was present. A young actor was rehearsing a part, but did not seem to grasp the proper meaning of the lines. Forrest finally lost his patience, and after rehearsing the scene for the young man with all his tragic power, turned to him and exclaimed: 'There, that's the way it ought to be done—why don't you do it like that?'"

"If I could do it like that, Mr. Forrest," the

actor replied, "I wouldn't be working for six dollars a week."

"Forrest was a bad sailor, and once, when we were making a water trip between two coast towns, the sea became choppy and the governor had to go below, where he suffered all the misery of seasickness. Finally he sent for the captain to come to his state-room."

"How much is this old tub of yours worth?" he groaned as the skipper appeared.

"I don't know exactly, Mr. Forrest," was the reply; "why do you ask?"

"Because I want to buy it and chain it up to a rock where it can't move," roared Forrest.

"E. L. Davenport was one of the greatest actors this country ever produced," continued Mr. Langdon. "For versatility he has never had an equal; he could do a song and dance with as much grace as any specialist in that line, and turn round and play Hamlet and Brutus with almost any of them. Davenport was a great actor; his nature was sunny and he loved fun. Lawrence Barrett was the antithesis of Davenport; dignity and austerity were his most marked characteristics. Davenport was playing Brutus to Barrett's Cassius on one occasion. In the first act of the play Brutus says to Cassius:

"Till then, my noble friend, chew upon this." At this point Brutus and Cassius clasp hands. As their hands met, Cassius felt something soft and mushy being squeezed into his hand by the noble Brutus. A slimy substance oozed through his fingers and dropped off on the floor; it was a ripe tomato, which Brutus had given Cassius to 'chew upon.' Barrett could not resist the ridiculousness of the situation, and had to turn his back to the audience to hide his laughter."

Effe Germon—dashing, laughing, laughter-making Effe Germon, of the Wallack Stock Company, and many other metropolitan companies—is a recent guest of the home.

"They say I'm too short for grand dames," said Miss Germon; "and of course I know my time has passed for soubrettes, although I feel as young as I did at thirty, and would like to work, but they won't let me; so here I am, and it's a mighty fine place to be, under the circumstances. I'm only sixty (she doesn't look more than forty-five) and I come of a long-lived family. My mother, who died only a few weeks ago, was eighty-seven, and my aunt, Mrs. Elizabeth Saunders, is still living in San Francisco, at the age of ninety-one. She is probably the oldest player, male or female, alive."

One of the lively boys of the home is Charles Gonzales, who is a youngster of seventy-six. Mr. Gonzales had a Spanish father and an Irish mother, so he says he doesn't know whether he is an Irish Spaniard or a Spanish Irishman. Mr. Gonzales amuses himself with palette and brush, and his room contains many water colors done by his hand. Besides this, he is manager of the "Home Quartette," and with Meadames Morton, Brennan and Campbell contributes musical evenings for the pleasure of the other guests.

Since the home was opened there have been admitted altogether eighty-one guests.

Of this number thirty have died, and twenty have returned to their families or friends, but are still provided for by the fund. The fund does not demand that one should go to the home in order to receive assistance; it is purely a matter of choice, and aid is given the needy outside the home, as well as within. There are at present over seventy persons outside the home who are being cared for by the fund. Strange to say, the home has never been filled to its capacity, the thirty-one inmates now there being the largest number it has ever contained. There are accommodations for nineteen more, with no further applications.

Daniel in the Lion's Den

Sunday School Lesson for Sept. 24, 1911
Specially Arranged for This Paper

LESSON TEXT—Daniel 6.
MEMORY VERSE—21:23.
GOLDEN TEXT—"The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him and delivereth them."—Psa. 34:7.
TIME—Probably B. C. 539, very near the close of the seventy years' captivity, soon after Cyrus had conquered Babylon in B. C. 539.
PLACE—Probably in Babylon, as is shown by the close connection of Daniel 5 and 6.
PERSONS—Daniel was probably 80 years old, as this event was 66 years after his going to Babylon, in 604, and he must have been at least 14 years old at that time.
Cyrus the Persian had just conquered the Babylonians.
Darius the Mede, a viceroy of Cyrus, temporary king of the new province, but not in the line of emperor kings.

In our last lesson we stood by the golden image on the plains near Babylon. We saw the crowds bowing down before it while the heroic three stood up alone. We saw them cast into the fiery furnace and wonderfully delivered. This was just after the destruction of Jerusalem and greatest deportation of exiles and treasures to Babylon. They had reached Babylon. They were in the fiery furnace of affliction.

At this point the three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, were preaching a sermon to the captives, heard all over the empire—"Be true to your God, and your religion at any cost; yield to no reductions of idolatry, and God will deliver you from your burning fiery furnace, as he has delivered us." It was preached at the psychological moment.

It was heard by the Jews in Palestine four centuries later when they were persecuted by Antiochus; but it was needed even more by the exiles in Babylon; and would be worth an hundred times more to the Jews in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and was lived out by the deliverance of these captives a few years later.

The end of the exile was drawing nigh, as foretold by Jeremiah. The seventy years had nearly elapsed. The king who was to bring their deliverance was on the throne. The captives scattered all over the empire needed to know this and to be prepared. They had felt the horrors of the wars and rumors of wars, they had seen as it were the stars falling from the political sky, as Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar. They needed to know that the time of their redemption was drawing nigh, and to be prepared for it.

Here comes in the event of our lesson. Darius, Cyrus, Daniel, known all over the empire, were to present a resplendent light that would shine into every corner of the realm. Multitudes of the exiles must have suffered for their religion, and they might feel that God was not their friend and helper if Daniel's experience always resulted favorably while theirs did not. And they needed a visible object lesson of the delivering power of God to encourage their hope and faith for the deliverance of their nation from the 'den of lions' in which they had been living for almost seventy years.

Daniel must have been between eighty and ninety years old at this time. He had had many trials of his character and faithfulness. He was in exile from home and native land, among enemies to his race and to his God. His native land was desolate, his relatives scattered; his people were exiles amid many difficulties that must have tested their faith to the utmost. But on the whole Daniel had been eminently successful, as he was worthy of success. He had maintained his high character. His course had been one of almost unbroken prosperity. The severe trials to which he had been subjected had hitherto resulted only in raising him to higher honors and success.

Under Darius, Daniel was recognized as a man of great ability and integrity, and one who could be trusted implicitly. Accordingly, he made him one of the three presidents over the 120 governors of as many provinces into which the kingdom was subdivided. It was not long before the other officers determined that in some way or other, by fair means or foul, they would get rid of Daniel.

They brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. This was according to the Oriental custom on the evening of the same day. The story of the den of lions is strictly in keeping with Babylonian usages. Assyrian says in his annals, "The rest of the people I threw alive into the midst of the bulls and lions, as Sennacherib, my grandfather, used to do."

Daniel from the den of lions said, "My God hath sent his angel." He does not say whether the angel was visible or not. The winds and the lightning are God's angels according to the psalmist. But it is probable that he was visible to Daniel, as a manifest token of the favor and protection of God.

Daniel declares that he had been faithful to God and hence God had seen fit to deliver him. It was God's endorsement of his character. His faithfulness would have shown God's power and commended him to men, even if Daniel had died as a martyr. But the deliverance was an open declaration that God was on Daniel's side. Daniel had been as true to his king as he had been to his God. Faithfulness to God made him faithful to man. There are faithful Daniels in every town, crucified on unseen crosses, burned with invisible flames, shut up in spiritual dens of lions.

DEATH BEFORE 100 YEARS IS SUICIDE

Prof. Munyon Says Ignorance of Laws of Health Explains Early End of Life.

NOTED SCIENTIST HAS ENCOURAGING WORD FOR DESPONDENT MEN AND WOMEN

"Death before 100 years of age has been reached by nothing more or less than slow suicide. A man (or woman) who dies at an earlier age is simply ignorant of the laws of health."

Such was the original and rather startling statement made by Professor James M. Munyon, the famous Philadelphia health authority who is establishing health headquarters in all the large cities of the world for the purpose of getting in direct touch with his thousands of converts.

Professor Munyon is a living embodiment of the cheerful creed he preaches. Vigor, well founded, active and energetic, he looks as though he would easily attain the century age limit which he declares is the normal age for all people.

"I want the people of the world to know my opinions on the subject of health, which are the fruit of a life-time devoted to healing the sick, people of America. There isn't a building in this city big enough to house the people in this State alone who have found health through my methods. Before I get through there won't be a building big enough to house my cured patients in this city alone."

"I want, most of all, to talk to the sick people—the invalids, the discouraged ones, the victims of nerve-wrecking, body-racking diseases and ailments—for these are the ones to whom the message of hope which I bear will bring the greatest blessing."

"I want to talk to the rheumatics, the sufferers from stomach trouble, the ones afflicted with that noxious disease, catarrh. I want to tell my story to the women who have become chronic invalids as a result of nervous troubles. I want to talk to the men who are all run down, whose health has been broken by overwork, improper diet, late hours and other causes, and who feel the creeping clutch of serious, chronic illness."

"To these people I bring a story of hope. I can give them a promise of better things. I want to astonish them by showing the record of cures performed through my new system of treatment. I have taken the best of the ideas from all schools and embodied them in a new system of treatments individually adapted to each particular case. I have no 'cure alls,' but my present method of attacking disease is the very best thought of modern science. The success which I have had with these treatments in this city and all over America proves its efficacy. Old methods must give way to new medical science. I know what my remedies are doing for humanity everywhere. I know what they will do for the people of this city. Let me prove my statements—that's all I ask."

The continuous stream of callers and mail that comes to Professor James M. Munyon at his Laboratories, Fifty-third and Jefferson streets, Philadelphia, Pa., keeps Dr. Munyon and his enormous corps of expert physicians no charge for consultation or medical advice; not a penny to pay. Address Prof. J. M. Munyon, Munyon's Laboratories, Fifty-third and Jefferson streets, Philadelphia, Pa.

A Senate of Lawyers.

In the senate of the United States there are 61 lawyers, five bankers, eight business men, four farmers, three journalists, two mine operators, two manufacturers, one author, one doctor and four members whose callings are not given. Of the four farmers, two are from the same state, South Carolina. They are Tillman and Smith. The lawyers clearly outnumber all others.

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Genuine must bear Signature

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