

Richard Mansfield on the Life of a Strolling Player

BUMP an actor around all day on a rough railroad, put him through trying rehearsals, make him work most of the night and then if he happens to remark 'damn' when things go wrong, he is dubbed a crank. Other people have the permission of the public to say 'damn' and are even allowed to use stronger expletives without criticism, but the actor who gives vent to his feelings becomes an eccentric.

This is Richard Mansfield's defense of overworked actors and actresses. Mr. Mansfield doesn't mind being criticised himself—he says he's used to it—but he maintains that actors aren't the only people in the world who have nerves. He insists that all men who curse and all women who use little white swear words shall be called lunatics and classed with the actor folks who are reputed to have loose wheels.

"Why, just look at this," Mr. Mansfield exclaimed as he picked up a St. Joe paper and pointed to a scare head. (Mr. Mansfield played in St. Joe just before his recent engagement in Omaha.) "Here it says, 'Mr. Mansfield is not eccentric, but just a bit queer.' Then it adds that I wouldn't be interviewed and makes all sorts of unkind remarks about me.

"The truth of the matter is that a herd of St. Joe newspaper men came to my car while I was bathing. I couldn't run out without any clothes on and greet them. Consequently I am a 'bit queer' and a 'little odd.' I suppose they would have me run out on the back platform in a bath robe and make a speech. If I had done that they might have mistaken me for Mr. Bryan. By the way, I've been told that I resemble the famous Nebraskan.

Why He Loves St. Joe.

"But I must tell you of my experience in St. Joe several years ago. I played 'Richard III' on a guaranty. The man who took us there failed to pay us and we had to sue him for a balance of \$800. The jury brought in a verdict in his favor on the ground that the production wasn't up to St. Joe standards. Not up to St. Joe, Mo., standards! What do you think of that?

"For four years I haven't made a curtain speech, but the other night, when we were sweating our lives out in the little theater in St. Joe, I felt like stepping in front of the curtain and asking the audience if my production was up to the standards of the town. Since my unfortunate experience St. Joe standards have caused a good bit of merriment in theatrical circles. When Mrs. Kendall visited the town she wired me, 'I have seen St. Joe!'

"I think it was eight years ago that the Missouri jury found so much fault with my 'Richard III.' Since that time I have not revisited the town until the present season. But St. Joe looks just the same to me that it did years ago. I couldn't see any improvement in the old town at all."

In spite of the fact that he had just come from Missouri Mr. Mansfield was in the best of moods during his recent stay in Omaha. A visit to the actor in his private car would convince anyone that he is not the green-eyed monster who is supposed to be ready to berate audiences and assassinate members of his company. He prizes his nerve force too highly to allow himself to be disturbed by petty annoyances.

Lives by Himself.

Richard Mansfield's private car is for Richard Mansfield alone. He and his colored cook and valet live apart from the rest of the company. The supporting people and Mr. Mansfield seldom meet except upon the stage. The great actor leads a life of seclusion. Books are his companions. He walks for an hour or two every afternoon and the remainder of his leisure time is spent in the car.

A glance at the inside of Mr. Mansfield's car is sufficient to convince one that he is a man of artistic taste. The living room of the car is finished in oak and the draperies and rugs are oriental stuffs in subdued colors. In one corner of the room is a sideboard covered with brass kettles, tobacco boxes, ash trays, chafing dishes and other utensils which look as though they were for use and not for ornamentation alone.

"It looks more like a hardware store than a sideboard," Mr. Mansfield remarked as he straightened the articles around preparatory to having the interior of his car photographed. "I was pretty hard up when I bought this car. I had just recovered from the typhoid fever and was poor. Before long I expect to have a new car with more room in it."

In one corner of the room is an oak writ-

ing desk, above which stands a folio containing half a dozen pictures of Mr. Mansfield's son, George Gibbs, a robust little fellow, two and a half years of age. A photograph of Mrs. Mansfield (better known as Beatrice Cameron) as Hester in "The Scarlet Letter," also has a prominent place near the writing desk.

"My boy's in Rome now," Mr. Mansfield remarked as he picked up the folio containing the youngster's pictures. "Here's a picture of him taken on shipboard." The actor pointed to a photograph of the little fellow wrapped up in a rug and comfortably seated on his mother's lap.

Chair Has Bad Habits.

A deerhead, some buffalo horns and a mountain sheep's head show Mr. Mansfield's love of outdoor sports. Several large rattan chairs with comfortable cushions, a small chair with dangerously slender legs, a table brightened by a bouquet of carnations and several book racks complete the furnishings of the room. And the slender-legged chair has much the same history that

attaches to the touch-me-not chair to be found in nearly every reception room.

"I'd rather you wouldn't sit on that chair," the actor remarked as one of his visitors headed for the spindled-legged cripple. "It has a way of going to pieces when you least expect it. The other day a friend of mine carried it out on the rear platform. The first thing I knew he was sprawling on the platform. The chair's habits are bad."

Book racks extend around two sides of Mr. Mansfield's car and are filled with all that is late in fiction. "Like Another Helen," "Ralph Marlowe," "Sweepers of the Sea" and nearly every other popular book that is found in the up-to-date book store has a place in Mr. Mansfield's little library. A few volumes of history and essays are mixed among the novels.

Adjoining the actor's living room is a bedroom provided with a brass bedstead and a chiffonier, and next to the bedroom is a small room provided with a square bathtub. "It's not very large, but then it's large enough for a cold bath, don't you know?" Mr. Mansfield remarked. The affectionate glance he cast at the tub and his soft "don't you know" marked him as an Englishman, an English gentleman, and not the sort that handles the letter "h" indiscreetly.

The remainder of the car is given over to a kitchen and quarters for the cook and valet.

How He Acts and Talks.

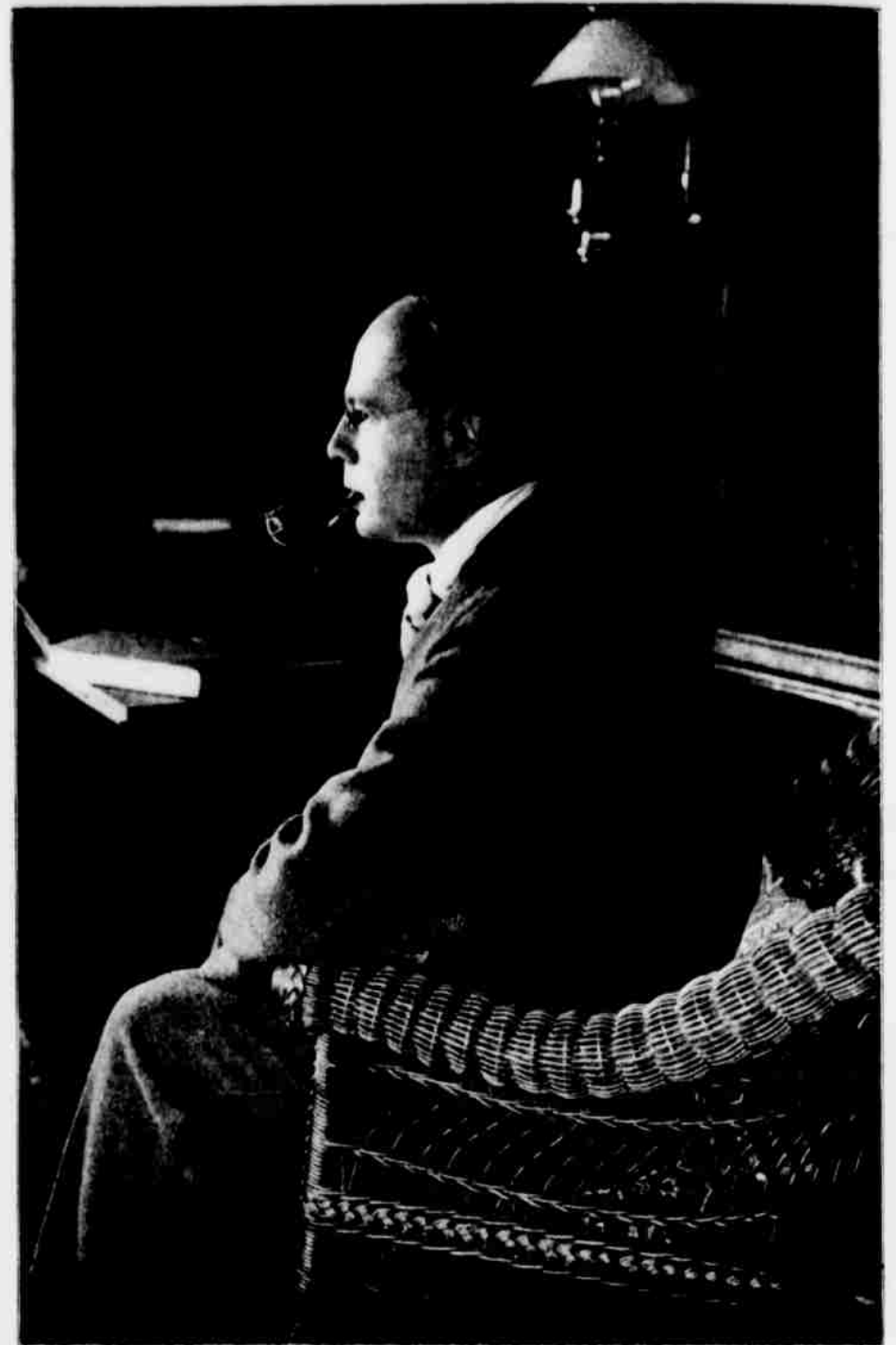
When Mansfield's train arrived in Omaha the actor was reading and enjoying his morning smoke. He wore a loose fitting brown suit and russet house slippers. A white silk handkerchief served as a collar. The nose glasses which he wears on the street were replaced by spectacles which had bows that encircled his ears. He held a short briar pipe between his teeth.

When he went for a walk in the afternoon he wore a double-breasted blue coat, gray striped trousers, patent leather shoes and a black derby hat. He carried a neatly rolled umbrella and wore dark-rimmed nose glasses. A heavy signet ring was the only jewelry he wore.

Mr. Mansfield is a born pedestrian. He walks with the swinging step so common among Englishmen and does not cast covetous glances at street cars after the fashion of Americans. Walking is his chief



SITTING ROOM IN MANSFIELD'S CAR—Photo for The Bee by Bostwick.



MR. RICHARD MANSFIELD—Photo for The Bee by Bostwick.

"Ah, these look something like it!" he exclaimed. "I'll take these. Now find me some more of this sort."

Mr. Mansfield ployed through volumes of fiction and asked the bookman concerning every cover that looked interesting. The man had read all of them and pronounced them excellent.

"Why, you're the most wonderful bookseller I ever saw. You must read all the time."

There was a merry twinkle in the actor's eye. He continued to ask for opinions concerning books and was amused at finding a number of volumes concerning which the bookseller would express no opinion. When Mr. Mansfield came upon books he had read and enjoyed he would exclaim "Bully book," with all the enthusiasm of a schoolboy.

Four books were selected by the actor. He ordered them sent to his car and left instructions to collect from his man.

"Publishers' prices, remember!" he remarked laughingly, as he left the store. "You know I'm an author."

"I don't find any time for serious work when I'm on the road. I must be amused, so I always keep a large supply of readable books on hand," Mr. Mansfield explained. "Nothing rests me as much as reading a good, exciting story."

Eats Like a Plain Person.

While Mr. Mansfield was walking through the business section of Omaha he decided that he must have something to eat. He entered several cafes before he found one where staring women did not look him out of countenance.

"Bring me anything simple which you have prepared," was his order.

The waiter returned with the announcement that fried frogs' legs and baked trout could be served at once. The actor decided upon trout.

He laughed heartily at the following motto on the wall of the cafe:

"There is no higher art than that which tends toward the improvement of human

food." "Sort of a slap at some of us folks who think we are in the high art business, don't you think? But I guess we'll have to grant that point. The trout is well cooked."

Mr. Mansfield ate the fish with a relish and drank a cup of cocoa. Meantime he expressed some of his ideas on dieting:

"I can't understand how some people eat as much as they do. I never eat but one thing at a time. If I have chicken for dinner I don't care for anything else. I never have what most people call a full meal. I don't care to eat a course dinner of soup, fish, ice cream and all that sort of stuff. Nobody can work on such a diet. I have known a good many people who ate and drank themselves to death."

Spectacular Is Hard Work.

The present season has been an unusually hard one on Mr. Mansfield. He complains of the great length of his production of 'Henry V' and says that at the end of a performance he is completely exhausted. The armor he wears is very heavy and makes his work even more arduous.

"I shall never have another such a production as this," Mr. Mansfield remarked. "It is too great a task to carry such a company and I can't afford it. The production cost between \$50,000 and \$60,000 and we will do well if we get our money back. It is impossible to get the prices such a production should command. People will pay extravagant prices to ticket brokers without a murmur, but they would complain terribly if the prices were advanced to a point which would make elaborate productions possible.

"Next season I shall have a double bill, Booth Tarkington's 'Monsieur Beaucaire' and Phillips' 'Herod.' I believe the two pieces will make a very acceptable combination. The first is light and pleasing and the other serious. One balances the other."

Colonel Joe Iler's Scheme for Bluffing a Bluffer

It was Colonel J. C. Iler of Omaha and Kansas City who described an acquaintance as a "smart man—yes, a very smart man—but lazy, very lazy; in fact, he's lazy enough to be a good judge." One evening last week, relates the New York Sun, a man who was with Colonel Iler in the south at the time of the great Pullman strike in Chicago told about the colonel's encounter with a man who didn't like George M. Pullman.

"This man was a southerner," said Colonel Iler's friend. "He was most offensive, and we all got pretty tired of hearing him repeat over and over the statement that he was born in Virginia, sah, and raised in

Kentucky.' We bore with him for a while, however, and I don't think that anything would have been said had he not begun an unnecessary attack on Pullman. Her stood it for a while, and then he turned on the man.

"Say," he said, 'do you know any man who was born in Virginia and raised in Kentucky that has ever done anything that will make his name remembered half so long as Pullman's will be? I mean a man who ever did any real good to any one except the distillers and undertakers. I mean a man of whom the country has real cause to be proud; a man who has been respectable and hard working and of some

real value to the community. Now, see if you can name him right off the reel. Don't stop to think, but name just one man of that kind.'

"Well, the man who was born in Virginia and raised in Kentucky was so mad that he couldn't think of anything, but he just sputtered for a time, and then, as he couldn't name a man that would meet the requirements of Iler's question, he began to boast of the resources of the states that he had been talking about. Among other things he said that the finest mules in the world were bred in these states, and that everything was as good as the mules.

"Well," said Iler to him, 'I understand that when men go down there to buy brains they invest in mules.'

"The southerner was so mad that he issued a challenge to Iler at once. Iler told him that he did not know much about the code, and asked what his rights as the challenged party were. He was told that he had a right to name the weapons. Iler at once said that he would make this proposition: The two were to be bound together by the left arms from the elbows down. Then each was to take a bowie knife in his right hand and begin to carve and they were to keep on carving until they were out. The southerner refused to listen

to any such proposition, and there was no duel between the two. I never could get Iler to tell whether he would have fought the man or not, but I think he would have, and won, too."

Bright

Detroit Journal: I entered the place trustfully, as is my wont.

"I should like to look over your collars," said I.

"Alas!" giggled the haberdasher, "I fear your neck is too short!"

For, in despite of our vast commercial expansion, there are still among us those who would rather be bright than succeed in business.