

# Joe Jefferson a Favorite in Omaha and Omaha a Favorite with Him

## His Last Visit to Omaha.

IT WAS October 21, 1904, that the great Joseph Jefferson last came to Omaha and presented here for the last time his famous impersonation of Rip Van Winkle and Hub Acres. The last Omaha men to meet him personally at that time were Rome Miller and George W. Lininger. They spent two hours with him in the art gallery of the latter and they treasure the memory of the jovial, hearty old fellow, more now than they did before the news of his death.

"I met Mr. Jefferson at the train when he came in," said Mr. Miller. "He was here two nights, I think, and that was the last any of us saw of him here. He was a fine old gentleman, and the best known and loved actor the country has ever had. It had been suggested that Mr. Jefferson was such an artist himself and so great a lover of painting, he would enjoy a visit to Mr. Lininger's gallery. I spoke of it to him as we drove to the hotel, and he seemed very much pleased at the idea. He had not known we had a fine collection in the city and Omaha evidently rose very much in his estimation. So we drove over to the Lininger and Mr. Jefferson spent, I think, two hours there. He was a great lover of art, you could see, the minute he got inside of the gallery. I don't know whether I've seen a man get so lost in looking at anything or looking so much pleasure. There is no doubt he loved nature and paintings and that sort of art more than he cared for anything else. He was very complimentary to Mr. Lininger and said such a collection was a great work for a man to have accomplished. He drank Mr. Lininger's health in some old Roman port wine he had.

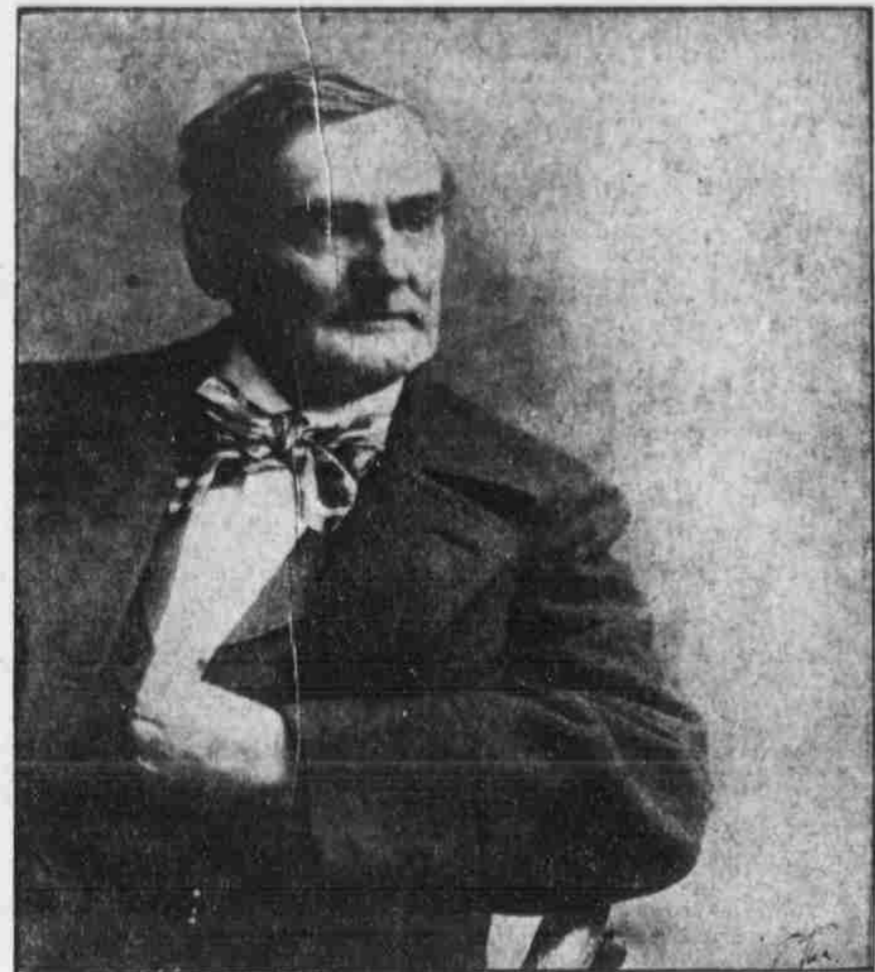
"After we came back to the hotel I asked Mr. Jefferson what he was going to have for dinner and he said he would have whatever I had. I insisted on his choosing something, and you know he had an oyster stew and a cup of tea. That was all—except, of course, he began with a highball. He took that, but he would not have a cigar. I said to him, 'Won't you smoke, Mr. Jefferson?' and he looked at me and shook his head and said: 'No. Tobacco and Jefferson had a little misunderstanding some years ago and I was referred. I thought more of Jefferson than I did of tobacco, so I never touch it.'

"The old gentleman would not take a ride before the performance. He said it was his habit to take a little sleep before he went on the stage each day. He certainly was a splendid old fellow. When he came to go away he went to the trouble to look for me through all the dining rooms to say goodbye."

"Mr. Lininger has rarely if ever had as appreciative a visitor to inspect his collection of pictures. The painting of Jefferson was his great hobby. It is probable that his work in this line never reached first rank, but in it he was very much more interested than in his acting, in which he was unparalleled. A tribute to his painting was of very much more account to him than enthusiasm for his Rip Van Winkle.

"The country has certainly lost one of its greatest men," said Mr. Lininger, in recalling the circumstances of Jefferson's last visit to Omaha. "A more kindly, genial, simple gentleman one cannot imagine. I had never met him personally until he came to see my pictures, but he made such an impression on me at the time that I have always considered him one of my warmest and best friends. He asked me to visit him when I went to the east next, and it has always been my regret that I was unable to arrange to do so."

Both Mr. Lininger and Mr. Miller cherish



AUTOGRAPHED PORTRAIT OF JOSEPH JEFFERSON GIVEN TO EDWARD ROSEWATER.

## Some Personal Recollections.

My recollections of Joseph Jefferson," says Edward Rosewater, "date back into the '70s, when I heard him at St. Louis in 'Rip Van Winkle,' the play that made him famous. I was introduced to him for the first time in 1891 by 'Billy' Florence, another of the popular and famous American actors, with whom I had become acquainted years before. Florence and Jefferson appeared in Omaha that winter for two successive nights in 'The Rivals' and in 'The Heir at Law.' On the last night, after the play was over, I entertained both in 'The Heir' building and spent a most enjoyable hour in their company. In talking with Jefferson about his impersonation of Dr. Pangloss I discovered that he had never heard that Voltaire had originated the name.

"About three months later I renewed my acquaintance with Jefferson and extended my acquaintance with Florence between acts on the stage of McVicker's theater in Chicago, and handed Jefferson Voltaire's novel entitled, 'Candide,' or the story of Eldorado, an imaginary country in South America, whose streets are paved with precious stones, in which Dr. Pangloss recites the identical dialogue that had been ground out by Frank Carpenter's graphophone. Jefferson was called before the curtain several times during the play, and at his conclusion, in response to vociferous calls, made a touching speech, reviewing his career as an actor and referring to his

that now adorns the walls of my sanctum. That was the last time I saw 'Billy' Florence, who was carried off after a few days' illness in Philadelphia three months later.

"In the early part of November, 1903, Jefferson played another engagement at the Boyd and received me in his dressing room between two acts. In the course of conversation he referred to our meeting in Omaha twelve years previously with 'Billy' Florence and expressed profound sorrow at his untimely death. Two weeks later, while on a visit to Washington, we met again by chance in the elevator of the Raleigh hotel, where we were both guests, and merely shook hands in passing. The next evening, while being royally entertained by Frank G. Carpenter at his elegant home on Vermont avenue, Jefferson's name came up during the conversation and Mrs. Carpenter asked whether I would like to hear Rip Van Winkle's dialogue with his wife, Gretchen, before his summary election from home. 'Most assuredly I would like to hear it,' said I. Presently the graphophone began to reproduce Rip's pathetic appeal to Gretchen in the inimitable and unmistakable voice of Jefferson.

"The evening following I accepted an after dinner invitation to attend Jefferson's peerless impersonation of Rip Van Winkle at the new National theater. We reached the theater rather late, and as I entered the dress circle I heard Jefferson recite the identical dialogue that had been ground out by Frank Carpenter's graphophone. Jefferson was called before the curtain several times during the play, and at his conclusion, in response to vociferous calls, made a touching speech, reviewing his career as an actor and referring to his

advancing age, expressed a doubt whether he would ever again be able to appear before a Washington audience. In this he seemed to be prophetic. It was his last appearance in Washington and the last time that I had an opportunity to hear him."

**Generous Traits.**

Not many years ago an aged resident of Washington, poor at the time, but previously prosperous, and even wealthy, yet through all vicissitudes of fortune universally respected, sat one winter evening by the light of a tallow candle in a small and somewhat cheerless room, examining and arranging the papers contained in his antique desk. A young friend kept him company. The old gentleman's old dog was also present sleeping on the hearth before the low wood fire. Paper after paper was drawn forth from the dusty pigeon-holes and quaint recesses of the desk, generally with some brief remark concerning each, and now and then some pleasant or pathetic little story. That



JOSEPH JEFFERSON TELLING THE DOG STORY TO G. W. LININGER AND ROME MILLER.

night the old man was living his past life over again, all its animation and color seeming to be restored by the magical notes and letters.

"Here's one from Joseph Jefferson! Dear old Joe! the best friend I ever had! Let me see!—taking up the candle to help his sight, and reading his spectacles—'yes—the money I lent him once, in his theatrical trouble—'

"Is that the actor of whom I have heard you speak?"

"The same."

"And the man equally famous in our day, bearing a like name?"

"Grandson of Old Joe."

"I have seen his 'Rip Van Winkle.' It is wonderful. Will you give me that letter?"

"Certainly. It is interesting and valuable as the writing of so great a genius— noble, too, and just, as well as great. His debt to me—I know he would have paid it, but misfortune overpowered him, and then came death. He died the very month in which this letter was written—forty-



JOSEPH JEFFERSON AS HE APPEARED ON THE OCCASION OF HIS LAST VISIT TO OMAHA.

seven years ago." A week later the young man was again with the old. He presented him a letter—a letter from the grandson of his ancient friend, warmly expressing gratitude and inclosing a check for the sum due, with interest. That amount, carefully employed, rendered the old man comfortable, at least, till the day he died. No deserving member of his calling wien in distress ever appealed to Mr. Jefferson in vain, and he has always been prompt to relieve suffering wherever found. Not long ago he kept from poverty a clergyman who had bitterly denounced him from the pulpit. When in poverty, sickness and want, this divine was found, fed and clothed by the man he had so unjustly attacked.

**How "Rip" Was Taken Up.**

In his "Autobiography" Mr. Jefferson has described how he came to take up the character of Rip Van Winkle. Here is his own story slightly condensed: The year 1820 found him in Paradise valley in Penn-

sylvania, where he occupied himself one idle day in reading the "Life and Letters of Washington Irving." Then came before his mind's eye the story of Rip Van Winkle—an American story by an American author. He immediately got the book and read the fable. His imagination was kindled; but how could the narrative be made a drama? Rip in the story had not ten dramatic words to utter. No matter; Mr. Jefferson went on to select a "make-up" before he had a line of the play. Old adaptations had been used by Charles Burke and others, but these were not satisfactory. Joseph Jefferson contemplated himself in a looking glass before he had a manuscript. He himself designed the weird scene on the mountain tops with the ghosts of Hendrick Hudson's crew and their unearthly silence.

"Rip Van Winkle" was first done at Caru's hall, Washington, under the management of John T. Raymond, and it started on its conquering tour of the Anglo-Saxon

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# How Japan Cares for the Families of Its Dead and Disabled Soldiers



JAPANESE WAR WIDOWS MAKING SHIRTS FOR THE SOLDIERS IN THE NEW YOKOHAMA INDUSTRIAL HOME.



SECTION OF THE NEW YOKOHAMA INDUSTRIAL HOME, SOLDIERS' WIDOWS AND ORPHANS.



CHILDREN DECORATING CHINA IN THE WIDOWS' AND ORPHANS' INDUSTRIAL HOME.

THE paternal Japanese government has assumed responsibility for the support of approximately 100,000 families of dead and disabled soldiers of the empire within the space of a single year and the methods employed in the discharge of this responsibility are interesting in the extreme and eloquent of the oneness of this people that is astonishing the world with its perfect peace in the midst of a crisis that could not but shake the strongest nation to its very foundation. Statistics are, as a rule, not as attractive to me as glittering generalities, but the statistics of this subject are so startling that they would catch and hold the attention of anybody.

It seems to me that the Japanese relief system is about the most practical and perfect thing of its kind ever organized by a government, and its greatest achievement is a combination of public and private interests, of governmental departments and people's institutions that could not be in any country where the heart of each is not as the heart of all.

The question which soonest presents itself to the foreigner traveling in Japan and observing the evidences of the national poverty is, "Where is the country getting all the money for defraying the expenses of this great war?" This question, far from being answered, resolves itself into an exclamation as proof of the nation's ability to meet every problem of the crisis daily present themselves. Its ability to meet and defeat what Emperor William once called "the strongest military power on earth" has been demonstrated to the world's everlasting astonishment, but its assuming and unappreciated position of home government, "for the people and by the people" a government that provides for each individual victim of the war a means of livelihood or direct support, is just as admirable in its way as any other demonstration of the nation's strength. That the nation is strong cannot be denied, but even in its most startling revelations it is a strength concealed, and the world's admiration must always resolve itself into an interrogation.

**No Evidence of Great Wealth.**

There are absolutely no evidences in Japan of great wealth. There is not a public building in the whole empire that is not more than equaled in every way by many of our ordinary public school buildings. There are no mansions of the wealthy that

are not to the American way of thinking quite like the average middle class residence. There are no great commercial enterprises as we estimate commercial greatness. There are no localities rich in minerals, whose streets are paved with gold, and this is because the heart of one is as the heart of all; because it is a nation in which brotherhood has reached its highest expression; because the "fatherhood of the imperial government" is not an empty phrase.

I am indebted to his excellency, Count Katsura, the prime minister, and to his secretary, Baron Nakashima, for introductions to officials in the Department of Home Affairs, who spared no pains to put me in possession of all possible facts in connection with the work of relief of soldiers' and sailors' families, in which the government and the people are so religiously engaged.

**Japan's Pension Bureau.**

There is a pension bureau in Japan which provides permanent assistance to aged or disabled soldiers of the empire, but it has no connection with the pension office under the supervision of the War department, which provides instant assistance to families found in pressing need. Whenever a soldier falls in battle this pension department sends an officer at once to investigate the condition of his family, and if assistance is necessary measures are taken to provide it, either directly or through a local institution, without a particle of delay. It is the intention of the government to find for each person a way to earn a livelihood rather than to give financial aid that would necessarily take the degrading form of alms, and for this purpose industrial homes have been started all over the country in which thousands of widows and orphans and bereaved destitute mothers find honorable lodgment and congenial employment in making clothes and preparing provisions for the soldiers in Manchuria.

It was taken by an officer of the home department in Tokyo to visit one of these institutions in Yokohama. We were met at the station by an escort with a "municipal carriage." At least that is what they

called it, with just a touch of youthful glow that reminded me of the small boy and his little red wagon. It looked to me very much like any other narrow gauge Japanese victoria and it bore no flaming coat-of-arms nor boasted any prancing thoroughbreds in silver-mounted harness. In fact the only unusual thing about the outfit were the betto's boots.

A betto is a Japanese coachman and I'm going to write a comic opera one of these days and have a betto chorus, somewhat on the order of George Colman's "Up in a hansom, up in a hansom, up in a hansom cab." They are such a solemnly important and ridiculously begrimed lot that I think they would make a prodigious hit. And the nagas they drive are as funny as they, with their narrow hindquarters and overgrown heads, their great shaggy manes and foretops, through which their wicked little eyes gleam for all the world like a syze terrier's. But those boots! They were cut up the smartest possible English pattern with broad yellow kid cuffs at the top, and they had an "air" that would have graced the finest turnout in Hyde park. But at the top of his boots this betto ceased to be a model and the rest of him looked as if he had suddenly fallen heir to the position and the livery of a man five sizes larger than himself, and as we drove merrily along the narrow streets the brass buttons that should have fitted snugly into the small of his back, flopped disconcertingly against the low top of the driver's seat upon which he was perched with dignity enough for two like him.

**One of the Assistance Societies.**

All this is merely by the way, but it serves to illustrate the Japanese idea of western magnificence, since this coachman and his accessories were designated a "municipal equipage." We drove first to a local government building in which the Yokohama sho-ho-gikai, "the society for the assistance of soldiers and sailors and their families," has its offices. Here was a huge room crowded with flat top desks at each of which a couple of men were busily

engaged examining applications or making out formidable looking documents. Beside each desk sat a little wooden box in which glowed a handful of charcoal in a bed of ashes and these were all the heating apparatus that the room could evidently boast, although it was March and very cold. The men were mostly dressed in hakama and kimonos and wore straw sandals on their feet and if it hadn't been for the modern office furniture I could have imagined that I had been suddenly dropped into a century gone. I was introduced to the general manager, who loved Japanese fashion two or three times and drew his breath sharply through his teeth in token of his pleasure in making my acquaintance and we then all sat down around a charcoal box and with Japanese deliberation went over many facts of large interest.

With all its unassuming air this society, through this office, has provided means for the support of 596 families throughout the entire winter, and the number is increasing daily with the daily increase of casualties at the front. This sho-ho-gikai is, I think, a unique institution. It has no immediate connection with the government and is yet under government supervision receiving instructions from the Home and War departments in regard to cases in its territory, and it has from time to time received large funds from the pension office in the small of its back, fopped disconcertingly against the low top of the driver's seat upon which he was perched with dignity enough for two like him.

**A People's Organization.**

The society, however, was far from needing such assistance since it is a people's organization and has its foundation upon the principle of giri-ninjo, which means to do good unto others without a thought of what others may do unto you. It is a local institution in Yokohama, but it was shown to me because it is just one of dozens of such throughout the country. It has male members who pay annual dues

of 1 yen 25 sen, or 6 1/2 cents in our money. When there is a woman's branch which maintains itself and does a noble work. The women members are assessed only 5 sen, or 2 1/2 cents, a year, but they are privileged to give whatever they wish, with the consequence that their department is on quite as solid footing as the main society since it pleases most women to make large sacrifices that they may give liberally to this great cause. In considering all this it is well to remember that this is a society which confers no benefits upon its members, a society which has no pay roll except for a few clerks whose entire time is required in its services. Every member gives a part of his or her time each week to visiting or committee work of some sort and dense as the population of this province there is not a woman nor child in it whose exact condition is not known to the society. And there is not a soldier in the army who does not owe to it or to one of its kind thanks for some little personal courtesy.

**Waiting on the Soldiers.**

Whenever soldiers are to pass through Yokohama station on their way to the front or to military stations in the south the sho-ho-gikai appoints a committee to meet them with banners and music, and the consequent crowd of well-wishers and shouters of "Banzai!" (a thousand lives), and very often this committee carries to each soldier some small present of tobacco or Japanese dainty to gladden his boyish heart. For they are boys, all these little Japanese soldiers, or at least they look so. And the tiny women whom I saw working in the industrial home were like children, too, some of them, and should have been making dolls' kimonos instead of those thousands of grim-looking uniform shirts that were to go to husbands and fathers and brothers on the firing line in Manchuria.

It is an interesting place, that industrial home. It looks as if it had been put up yesterday in a great hurry and promised a finishing touch later on when times are

not so pressing. It is a low, rambling building, without a vestige of paint on it, but it is put together with an eye to perfect sanitation and plenty of sunlight. In a long wing at one side dozens of women were sitting upon their feet, Japanese fashion, before low sewing machines that were operated by hand, making up mountains of coarse linen into soldiers' shirts. One hour in such a position would have put my feet so light "asleep" that they would never wake up, but since the same length of time on a chair before a sewing machine run by foot motion would have exactly the same effect upon a Japanese girl, the wisdom of the powers that be has provided for her the native kneeling cushion and the little hand sewing machine not twelve inches high.

**Nursery for the Babies.**

There is a day nursery, among other good and modern things, connected with this institution, and the women who come daily to work may bring their babies and leave them in charge of a competent caretaker, who straps them upon the backs of larger children and drives them all out into the sunshine to play battledores and shuttlecock while the mothers are gone. But there are some children who may not play all the time in the sunshine, because they happen to be smart little kiddies and are able to assume a part of the responsibility for the support of mothers and grandmothers and baby brothers and sisters. In a bamboo room under a flowering plum tree these little ones sat painting china. They were of the families of china decorators, and in this country the youth learn early to follow in ancestral footsteps. Three of the little group in the room were of one family, and their father had fallen at Liao Yang. It cannot be long, of course, before they are able to earn a good living for the family, since their work is good and there is much china decoration in Japan, but as yet they are mere infants, and so the paternal government provides china for them to work upon, which it afterward sells to buyers. And what is more, this paternal government provides an instructor for them in their dead father's place, that they may become proficient in their hereditary art. That was one of the things which made me glad in this model institution.

In another room were women and boys engaged in the manufacture of rice straw

"coria" or what we call telescopes for use in traveling. These are made in all sizes by thousands in different institutions of this sort all over the country and many of them find their way into the American market and may be bought for a dollar or such a matter in almost any department store. I trained my camera on these industrious little people, but every time I do that in this country everybody in sight always strikes an attitude as if it were Japanese instinct to "pose," so the results are usually more or less stiff.

There is another way of special interest in which the government helps needy families of slain soldiers and that is by granting to one family in a town or district a monopoly of the sale of some household commodity such as matches or soap and it is surprising with what good grace the small merchants drop these things out of stock and become themselves customers of these self-supporting women and children. That is brotherhood if you like and the golden rule improved upon.

**Subsidies of Monopolies.**

One thing more. There are in the Japanese army in active service today hundreds of farmers, upon which class the whole nation is dependent, since the country still reckons its income in koku of rice and the rice paddies must be cultivated. There have been many instances where the only man in a farmer family has been called to duty leaving all the arduous labor of the fields upon the shoulders of a couple of little women and their half grown children. In these cases, every time during the past seasons of sewing and reaping, the work has been done by neighboring men without a word, without a question as to whether they should or should not and without so much as a thought of applause or reward. This is giri-ninjo, the finest thing in the Japanese character, and it is always expressing itself in thousands of little ways. In consequence of these brotherly services the rice crop for the past season was the largest ever produced by the little island empire, and it is to be hoped that this year (ditto) the factored diet of the rice fields will look with increasing favor upon these little hands of cheerful laborers who must delve and dig in many acres of knee-deep swamp that will yield them no personal gain.

ELEANOR FRANKLIN.