

# Greenroom Memories at the Salt Lake Theater.

By A. A. Kiskadden

I AM asked to record some of my theatrical memories of the old days in and around the Salt Lake Theater for the benefit of the readers of the Christmas News. I comply with pleasure—the greater because the "News" was one of the first papers, if not the very first to which I was indebted for a notice, in my career as an actress.

My debut took place in this city on the Theater stage, July 25th, 1865, and while there were other newspapers here that made occasional appearances in those days, the "News" was the one "stand by," the authority to which the public looked for tidings and opinions of the day—theatrical as well as in most other things.

No one will wonder that the Salt Lake Theater should occupy a most affectionate place in my recollections. As a girl I watched its walls grow up from the ground, saw its doors open to the public on that memorable night in March, 1862, and with delight beheld the actors and actresses appear in their parts from time to time after the formal opening took place.

My father hailed timbers from the canyons to go into the great building, and with him I frequently visited it and became acquainted with the workmen employed on the structure. My sister and I went to school in the First and Tenth wards, and it was after a school exhibition at the latter place, where with Logan Paul we played a burlesque entitled "The Lady of the Lions" that I received an invitation to come up to the Salt Lake Theater and give a reading to the managers of the house, John T. Caine and H. B. Dawson.

No one can picture my agitation. I was hardly 17 and I remember urging my mother to let me wear my longest dress, in order that I might not be thought too girlish. My father took me on the stage, where I was introduced to John T. Caine, David McKenzie, and W. C. Dunbar. They gave me the play of "Ernest Maltravers" to read, and some of them went into the front of the house, while I stood on the stage reading the lines of the lady's part, while Mr. McKenzie took the book and read some of the leading man. Mr. Dunbar and Mr. Caine would frequently call out their comments and I judge the trial was satisfactory.

For three days afterward I was notified that I was expected to play the part of Grace Otis in the play of "The People's Lawyer," later known as "Solon Shingle." Mr. Dunbar played Shingle, Jos. Simmons was the lover, and David McKenzie was the lawyer. Sara Alexander danced between the acts.

What a wonderful night that was! Made my first acquaintance with the interior arrangements of the theater, its costuming rooms, a barber shop, and all the paraphernalia of its interior; the most complete, I believe of any in the land those days. Mrs. Bowring had charge of the ladies' costuming room, and Robert Neslen of the gentlemen's. George Ottinger made me up; Mr. Squires, the barber, curled my hair, and Mr. Neslen assisted in touching up my general appearance. Everything was furnished the actors from the supplies in the house, from jewels down to shoes. Just before the

curtain went up we would all assemble in the greenroom and each pass under the stage manager's eye to see if we fulfilled all the requirements of our parts.

And speaking of greenrooms—there never was such a one as that in the Salt Lake Theater. I never pass it nowadays without a pang, when I see it given over as a storage room for props and baggage; but in this it simply follows in the wake of all the other theaters in the land. The greenroom is a thing of the past. Even the Empire Theatre, New York, does not have one. The greenroom of the Salt Lake Theater is associated with some of my most interesting, tender and laughable memories.

It was there the company used to assemble to hear plays read, and there that we were assigned our parts in new plays. They were laid out for us on a circular table, each part with the name of the actor or actress written above the character, and what a scramble there used to be to see just what the management had served out to each one in the new play! I especially remember dear old Mrs. Grist, who used to do the small parts, and very often was given two or more roles in the same bill. When she saw her name on two parts, she would always exclaim: "There they go doubling me up again," and this came to be quite a by-word in the green room.

The night of my first appearance, July 25, 1865, was also the night when Julia Dean Hayne, the first great actress to visit Salt Lake, arrived in the city. She came with her leading man, Geo. B. Waldron, and the Potter Company by stage from Montana. The following week she began an engagement at the theater, and most of the stock company were privileged to sit in front and take pointers from one of the greatest actresses the American stage has known. How we all revelled in that experience! Mrs. Hayne's greatest work was in "Camille," and the terribly realistic manner in which she portrayed the consumptive girl, and the startlingly natural cough she employed, impressed themselves vividly on all our minds. I well remember the amusement that was created when an old lady who used to be employed about the stage, brought to Mrs. Hayne one evening with all the solicitude in the world, a mixture of herbs and drugs which she had prepared at home, saying that the poor girl's cough would kill her if she didn't take something for it.

For the next five or six years, life at the Salt Lake Theater was a busy one. The stock company played regularly from fall to spring and sometimes in the summer, often changing its bills three times a week. The actors and actresses of today who play one part through a whole season, have little conception of the work the old time stock companies used to have to undertake. Everyone must stand ready to learn a big part on the shortest notice, and very often the enormous tasks in committing to memory that I performed while young, stood me in good stead. Once when Amy Stone produced "The Sea of Ice" she was seized with illness and the doctor ordered her to rest. I was given her part at four o'clock one afternoon and told that I must be ready to go through it the next night. It was a prodigiously long part with six changes of costume, but I got through it when the night came without looking at the book once. Another time I took Mrs. Bowring's place in the bill at only a few minutes' notice, her child having died during the day, and such emergencies were not uncommon to all of us.

There were very few things in the line of tragedy, comedy, and even musical plays that we hesitated to attempt. My first essay at singing was made in the play of "Guy Mannering" when Tullidge, the musician, drilled me in the girl's part. I well remember the difficult duet with Bertram which I had to sing, but candor compels me to say that I do not recall having achieved any bewildering success.



Group of Pioneer Players at the Salt Lake Theater in the Sixties.

When the traveling stars came along we were especially busy. One of my earliest experiences was with T. A. Lyne with whom I played Lady Macbeth just after I was 17. I recall well the bashfulness with which I approached certain lines in the tragedy, and how Mr. Lyne stared when I declined to repeat them. Sometime later John McCullough came along and also played "Macbeth." I again resolutely declined to speak the lines as written by Shakespeare, and while he tried to urge me at rehearsals, he very kindly said nothing when the night came and I left them out. He had a wonderful memory, that man McCullough! Years later, after I was a married woman and had had much more experience, he came to Salt Lake and again "Macbeth" was put up as the bill. Almost the first thing he said at rehearsal was, "Well are you going to speak those lines tonight?"—and I laughingly answered that time had changed my views and I thought I would.

Speaking of John McCullough—one of the most memorable nights in the history of the Salt Lake Theater in those days, was the time when he and Edwin Adams met here by accident and joined in a production of "The Marble Heart," Adams playing

Raphael, and McCullough, Volage. Helen Tracy, McCullough's leading woman, played the role of Marco, and I had the part of the sweet little flower girl, Marie. It was an experience I shall never forget. Later Mr. Adams returned to Salt Lake and I had the pleasure of playing Marco to his Raphael.

Our first nights in those days were very interesting events. Though the city was small, we often played to audiences that filled every portion of the house, and sometimes our plays ran a week. Our audiences always included the noted Church leaders, with President Brigham Young at the head; the judges and the territorial officials sent out from Washington, and often the military from Ft. Douglas. The figure of President Young, seated at the end of a bench in a large arm chair, is as clearly before me while I write as though it were yesterday. He was a great critic of the drama, and was very particular as to the class of plays that the company presented. He often dropped in on us at rehearsals, and frequently went over the house from top to bottom to see whether it was kept in order.

I am often asked to name the actor or actress of those days, who left the most vivid impression on my mind. There were so many that I can hardly say, but yet if I were to pick out the one among the long list who most thrilled me by her tremendous work, it would be Charlotte Crampton, who played men's parts with the same vigor and strength that she did the female roles. I remember once being in front of the house when she played Shylock, and my feelings so carried me away that, before I knew it, I jumped upon a bench and led the applause standing there. But

to within a short distance of the stage. The modern houses are mostly built that way.

"What are the chief troubles of an amusement purveyor, did you ask? Well, they are too numerous to mention. They begin when the contracts are first signed and only end when the companies have gone beyond the borders of the city. But with all, the business is most interesting. First negotiations for the appearance of the attraction, then the correspondence concerning the appearance. In Salt Lake, next, the various forms of advertising and publicity; now the arrangements concerning prices, matinees, the stage facilities and properties to be used; the part taken by the orchestra; then comes the sale of tickets and the anxiety naturally connected with that important part of the business. Add to these a thousand little details and then close up the performance with the shivering fear that possibly after all the attraction might not suit the public, who have paid their shining dollars to witness it, and you have some of the troubles and the joys of the manager.

"If the attractions are successful, the pleasure is keen; if otherwise—well, sometimes we go into retirement for a few days until the disappointed public is appeased. The American public, however, is good natured, and overlooks a great many faults. For this, we theatrical managers are truly grateful."

VALUE OF A DIMPLE.

New York Herald.—Declaring that not only has her face been marred, but that she also has been robbed of a "dainty little dimple" which she prizes highly, Euphemia B. Koller, an author, who recently came to New York from Washington, has brought suit for \$15,000 damages against a dermatologist, who she declares guaranteed to remove wrinkles from her face and make her more beautiful.

Miss Koller says that often her friends would ask her why she constantly scowled. Her scowling was not intentional, she says, but was caused by wrinkles between her eyes and just above the nose. As Miss Koller did not want to have the appearance of being ill-natured, she decided to have the wrinkles removed. Instead of taking away the wrinkles, she alleges that the "beauty doctor" took away her dimples and left her face "a sight."

## SALT LAKE'S THEATRICAL MENU TILL The SEASON'S END

THE effect of the San Francisco disaster upon the theatrical business in the west has not been so bad as was at first feared by some of the local managers. Aid Manager George D. Pyper of the Salt Lake theater, in an informal talk yesterday, "in fact, as far as the Salt Lake theater is concerned, the bookings have been better, and there has been more of them than for several seasons past. And the quality of the attractions has not been lessened. The receipts, too, except during the conference season, were up to, and in some cases ahead of, the business of years gone by. The one exception was the case of the musicals, which appeared during the conference week. A number of beautiful operas were given, but were not appreciated. It is a peculiar thing that in a city of Salt Lake's musical importance, the "novel" must enter into its value. We absorb music for entertainment, not for educational purposes. To my own mind, it is just as necessary to get music for educational purposes as it is to read the highest works of literature. If we all altered to the worst there is in literature, what would an English speaking people be soon become? There is the

danger. A few have to be always urging the better class of music in order to uplift the popular sentiment and keep to a higher standard.

"But this was not what you asked me. You want to know something about the theater, and its attractions. Well, at the present time, I figure that the new rules of railroads, and the changing of rates for theatrical companies, will affect us more seriously than did the terrible calamity at Frisco, though there is a chance that the danger will be to those companies doing poor business, and not entitled to much better than they get. The railroad jumps in the west are something terrible, and few are able to meet the expenses. Salt Lake, however, is the key to the situation at present, and what goes in the northwest will reach us. Our bookings for the remainder of the season are varied and interesting. Christmas will bring us Maude Fealy, the Denver girl, starred by John Cort, and about the time you go to press, we will have the pleasure of witnessing "In the Bishop's Carriage." "Buster Brown," very appropriately, fills the nights and days, between Christmas and New Years. Then will follow on the 29th, "Sultan of Sulu," Dec. 31 and Jan. 1, Albert Gallatin. The dates following are these:

Jan. 2—"Babes in Toyland."  
3-4—"The Little Duchess."  
5-6—"Florence Roberts."  
7-8—"Melville and Heath in 'The Ham Tree'."  
9-10—"The Red Feather."  
11-12—"Under Southern Skies."  
13-14—"Jennie Kennard in 'The Toast of the Town'."  
15-16—"William H. Crane."  
17-18—"James O'Neil in 'Monte Cristo'."  
19-20—"Dolly Varden."  
21-22—"George M. Cohan's 'Porty-five Minutes from Broadway'."  
23-24—"Paul Gilmore in a delightful new play called 'At Yale'."  
25-26—"Dustin Farnum in 'The Virginian'."  
27-28—"Olga Nethersole in a great repertoire of plays."  
29-30—"Creston Clarke."  
31—"William Collier."  
March 4-5—"Primrose Minstrels."  
12-13—"Savage's English Grand Opera company in 'Mme. Butterfly'."  
14-15—"The Unholy." This is the great football play, scoring such a success in the east.  
16-17—"The Irrepressible Murray & Mack."  
April 8-9-10—"Last year's success, 'Little Johnny Jones'."

29-30-May 1—"Raymond Hitchcock."  
May 9-10-11—"Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch."  
12-13—"As Ye Sow."  
14-15—"Viola Allen."  
June 10 week—Maude Adams in "Peter Pan."  
"Unless something unforeseen happens, you will observe that the season will bring us some of the best attractions in the country."  
"What are our plans concerning the old house? Well, we can't say much at the present time, but at the close of the season, we will probably change the inside colors and try to please the eyes of our patrons by some new decorations. By the way, did you notice that old curtain of ours? That was painted some 30 years ago by the artist Tryon, who put up some of the best scenery ever used in the old theater. We dug it out of the old drops where it had been lying for several years, and had it re-lined by Mr. Minor, who, by the way, is a fine scenic artist, and it presents a handsome appearance. Few curtains in the country are equal to it today. We could make money by using an advertising curtain, but feel like we would be offending our patrons by so doing."  
"The old theater still continues to be one of the best in the country for

acoustics, and I remember well meeting William Gillette on the stage at his last appearance here. He was gazing out into the auditorium, and as I approached him, he said, 'Mr. Pyper, your President Brigham Young must have been a man of wonderful foresight. I notice that the buildings constructed in his time are still holding their own amongst the more modern structures. While this old theater bears antique ear marks, it still is a wonder. The old Roman tiers or galleries add much in its wonderful acoustics. I find it an easy building to act in.'"

"These words express the feeling of most of the artists who come to Salt Lake. At his last visit here, Denman Thompson said to me, 'Dear boy, there are only a few of them left, about five in America, and when I play in them, I almost shed tears. Don't let them tear it down. You might get more style, but you can't get a better theater.'"

"And so we hear from all the old veterans who are in the habit of touring the country. There is something about the front of the house, too, that makes our patrons comfortable, the special reason being that there is no gallery hanging out over their heads

few days until the disappointed public is appeased. The American public, however, is good natured, and overlooks a great many faults. For this, we theatrical managers are truly grateful."

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