



In Times Like These

The abestos curtain has lifted and an atmosphere of expectancy irritates the nerves of this poor sufferer. It is Bozo of the Burlesque. Twinkling thighs sooth and mellow the perspective and the rolling, diamond studded eyes command my spirit to become tranquil and cease its tumult. And even as I regard these half-naked non-essential laborers—essential only insofar as the capitalist system is essential, if it be admitted that the robbing of the working class is beneficial to civilization—I am reminded of the towel bath I had yesterday and the half-box of gold dust I used as counter-irritant and I am agreeably surprised to see that many of the partly nude toilers on the stage closely resemble myself in the bare spots. Many of them had a wealth of shank. Say editor, let me explain—I can explain this perfectly. I know the readers are aghast at my nerve. But let me explain. I'm not like the common run of hypocrites.

When I get caught in a compromising position (in a bedroom scene or something like that) I'm not going to haul out a flag and signal the orchestra to strike up the national anthem. No, sir, editor, when my bell bottoms are something other than the regulation distance from the floor I'm not going to ask the audience to rise and stand at attention. No. When I'm caught, I'm caught and right away I start explaining. You bet you, I can explain this.

For some time past it has been an impossibility for me to coax myself to the point of production. Repeatedly, as I lay me down to sleep, I have crossed my hands on my breast and murmured manana trabajo only to find myself still in bed nine o'clock next morning uttering terrible threats against the colored maid who had the supreme audacity to address our person with sundry epithets unbecoming a lady and wounding our self-esteem which happens to be very active.

We have started outdoors fully intending to labor, but somehow our nerve has failed us at the crucial moment. We have plead with ourself. We have held a mirror so that we could see the tears of genuine sorrow at our improvident way of living. We have spoken harshly to ourself—"fer Christ sake Slim," we have said, "go on the job; get into these camps; eat that rotten garbage and become somebody; make a man of yourself"—all to no avail. My heart has failed me.

But something had to be done. All of a sudden as I was passing a burlesque show an inspiration came to me. I will spend 15 cents of that two-bits and watch the slaves perform. You see I have known all along that leg shows are instituted for the purpose of bolstering waning "resolves of childhood" in us super annuated bald-headed creatures, I would go in and watch the grandmothers kick up their heels, in short skirts. I would watch them prance, wiggle and giggle and I would re-resolve to cut out my fast life of coffee and—I would re-resolve to go to work, save my money, marry and start that chicken ranch Grayson or some one in the Worker accuses me of entertaining these past thirty-five odd years.

Yes, sir, editor, when a man takes in one of these shows if he doesn't have visions of a chicken ranch, it is because his nature is thoroughly caloused. Such was my purpose, my purpose in entering this show and any fair minded man can see my purpose was pure—if not holy—intending to fool myself to go to work.

This particular show, I must say, has not degenerated to level of the capitalist system, but still it serves the aforesaid purpose admirably, entirely to the satisfaction of those who exploit labor, if not quite as effectively as the patriotic bedroom scenes of the movies, boycotted.

As long as I was up there, I proceeded to lay myself open to the invigorating kick—listened attentively to the song: "If I can get you away from somebody else; somebody else can get you away from me"—immediately I made up my mind to play safe and rent a farm instead of buying it outright. This sent me into a brown study, as to the adaptability of women folks to conditions; there flexibility under stress and probable reliability as a farmeress.

I lost all track of the efforts of the toilers on the stage and looked at it in a daze. In a languid dreamy way I gazed at nothing in particular. Suddenly I was electrified by a sight of a cage sitting in the middle of the stage in a cloud of some strangely light colored mist-marked "SAN QUINTIN".

And in the cage sat Jack Gaveel. His fist was clinched and his eye was a trifle greyer and steadier.

I fled like a cur that I am—taking in leg shows in times like these!