

# SCRIBE FRASER'S INTERVIEW WITH THE CIRCUS MAN AT BLYTH.

Since the arrival of the circus in Blyth, a few months ago, the question has come boldly to the front how far the attractions afforded by such an entertainment is supplemental to the legitimate drama, or how far the circus is regarded as coming in direct competition with the drama and drama. In Blyth, both the theatre and circus have had to contend for an existence. It is well known that when Mr. Fynes, the miners' historian, put forth his arm to rock the cradle of the Blyth Theatrical Temple, the Christian bigots of those "early days" were rampant with cutting enthusiasm in direct competition with the drama and drama. However, the "age of reason" conveniently outlived sectarian monopoly, intolerance, and to-day, under the able management of Mr. A. C. Moody, the old Zion Chapel now resounds the eloquent eloquence of Shakespeare's dramatic plays. Strange to say, the bigots endeavoured to accomplish in Blyth, some of the great technical representatives for Cowpen township have endeavoured to accomplish in the case of the circus. It may be as well to explain two distinctions. In the case of the theatre the opposition was composed of those whose sectarian belief led them to imagine that the morality of the town was at stake by permitting the exhibition of the dramatic authors. In the case of the circus the Cowpen Local Board members were under some superstitious adherence to their modern and half-forgotten bye-laws, and were on the point of acting as prosecutor, judge, and jury, in the expulsion of a party of performers who had been invited to the town by the local authorities. Some technical breach had been unintentionally committed. The people of Cowpen have within their township both a theatre and a circus, and it is now regarded as a fact that they are a public boon. An attempt was made to fust a music hall on the people, but died almost as soon as it was born. While the theatre is to the minister of the mature judgment of the dramatic admirers, the circus is to the young rising youths a certain amount of attraction where they can learn and appreciate the effects of kindness to dumb animals in the remarkable training they receive.

Mr. Fraser, of Wood Hut fame, being anxious to ascertain how circus life differed from the life of the "strolling players," took upon himself the responsibility of making Mr. Tudor, and his manager, Mr. Butler, his guests for an "afternoon tea" within his private sanctum at 23, Waterloo Road, and there interviewed Mr. Tudor respecting the uphill life and downhill grade of a circus manager. The proprietor, Mr. Tudor, is a jolly specimen of the type of the old-fashioned Englishman. He is a shrewd man of the world, full of generosity, and with no antipathy to any human mortal born of a woman. The dumb animals under his command are his constant study and care, and the perfection at which they have arrived are the most convincing testimony to his management and care for their material welfare. Mr. Tudor appeared calm at home, but Mr. Fraser, for whom he evinced a common feeling on the lines of good fellowship. Spiritualism appeared on the table to tempt Mr. Tudor's stomach. Perhaps the following interview between the Scribe and Mr. Tudor will be of some slight interest to the readers of the "Herald," to show that the life of a circus manager, with all its trials and tribulations, is not without its trials and tribulations.

Mr. Fraser: Now, Mr. Tudor, how do you like Blyth and its people?

Mr. Tudor: Oh, I like the place well, and never to the extent of your Cowpen Local Board as a criterion of the hostility to my circus erection. I really believe the Board's opposition was brought about by some technical misunderstanding.

Mr. Fraser: Are you aware that several of the Cowpen Board members and its chairman have been to the circus, and that the patronage on your circus, and the excellent performances with unbounded delight?

Mr. Tudor: I have learned that several of the members of the Cowpen Local Board have been frequent attenders, and delighted with the circus and the programme, and therefore I don't think they have any hostility to its management and performance, which is well guaranteed by the fact that they have been to the circus.

Mr. Fraser: Have you in the past been harassed by any other public body in connection with your circus erection?

Mr. Tudor: No, sir, and that's what puzzles me why a temporary wood erection should be singled out, not on sanitary grounds, for the production of plans, and that the erection of a circus is really much safer than the large canvas circus tents that have visited Blyth without any hostility from any one.

Mr. Fraser: Do you regard your delightful circus in any sense an opposing element to the theatre?

Mr. Tudor: Oh, dear, no nothing of the kind. We each have our different class of audience. The theatre as a rule ministers to one class of minds, while the circus provides for all classes.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Tudor, I am afraid there is too much of the American puzzle about that answer. Will you explain your position on that point?

Mr. Tudor: I shall explain it to you. The circus is always appreciated and patronised by all classes of the people with a taste for religion, and who adopt conscientious opinions on what is right and what is wrong. On the other hand the theatre is looked upon with a certain amount of indifference by those holding strong and deeply-grounded religious opinions.

Mr. Fraser: Is it your opinion that the theatre has a moral or elevating tendency?

Mr. Tudor: Most decidedly. The theatre may have had objectionable frivolities, but the press and public opinion have been the means of weeding out anything tending to offensiveness.

Mr. Fraser: What I want to get at is this point, whether you regard yourself as a rival in competing as circus manager against the directors and managers of the Blyth Theatre?

Mr. Tudor: Both I and my company are on the most friendly terms with Mr. Moody and the theatrical profession that visit the Blyth Octagon Theatre. I am always prepared to reciprocate any compliment or notice towards me by the local managers of the legitimate drama.

Mr. Fraser: What is the chief feature of a circus, as regards education?

Mr. Tudor: To commence with, the horse is a noble animal and susceptible of great kindness. By its training in the circus you bring out its capabilities and intelligence, and thus show to the world how a horse can be trained and developed in the faculties which it possesses.

Mr. Fraser: That is very good. But by putting the horse to one side, what other feature of an educational character have you?

Mr. Tudor: When the young men and women observe the agility with which our performers manipulate the horse, it has a tendency to a tendency of wishing them to acquire equestrian knowledge and practical ability in riding exercise. Moreover, as a health resource, they will improve their system by learning horse riding accomplishment.

Mr. Fraser: Now look here, as the horse does not constitute the whole of a circus performance, what other experiences and jesters, such as Sam and Bob Anderson?

Mr. Tudor: Ah, my dear Scribe, I can see by the merry twinkle in your eye, you are a jester and no fool, however clownish in appearance.

Mr. Fraser (laughing): I regret to say I can't resist blushing to your self-imposed task. Mr. Tudor, the experience of the fool dressed as a clown, sharpens the corresponding wit of the hundreds of listeners to his quips and jests, this also tends to sharpen the intellect of young and old.

Mr. Fraser: Quite so, I know all that already as a frequenter of all entertainments from the butternut to the pearly white to the higher grade of Tudor's cultivated circus. But in what other way does the circus educate?

Mr. Tudor: So far as the performance is concerned it sharpens up the performers. The athletic and acrobatic feats are educational, and young men are induced to imitate such performances, thus developing their muscles, exercising themselves in healthy manly exercises, in dissipating deformities of the human system.

Mr. Fraser: Perhaps you will not term me impertinent if I ask whether the religious section of the community are hostile of anything taking place in the circus performances?

Mr. Tudor: Of course not; quite the reverse. The ministers and readers of the Word of God are always present, and are always pleased with the educational programmes submitted.

Mr. Fraser: Perhaps you would have no objection to favour me with a few of your experiences in circus life and its management?

Mr. Tudor: I have not the slightest objection, for a lesson or two might even be learned from my own experiences, insignificant as it may perhaps appear to be.

Mr. Fraser: I dare say you won't remember when you were first cradled, but do you recollect your first appearance in the ring of a circus?

Mr. Tudor: I can just manage that. I was 4 years old when I first appeared on the stage. My mother, who was to get on to the horse's back, but she showed signs to get off. It was my uncle, Paddy Follitt, a remarkable clown, who mounted me first on the horse in Lambeth Bare Circus, London, since converted into swimming baths, I didn't care for my first ride, but got home, but a little later on I had another try

on my uncle's horse, but soon got home sick. When 14 years of age I went back to my uncle as an apprentice to circus life and to learn horse riding and athletic business. Still I got home sick, and went home to my father, who was a blacksmith at Blackfriars Bridge, but the blowing of the bellows, the clank of the anvil hammer, the clink of the coal, and the strains of the "Village Blacksmith" were not so fascinating enough for me, and I actually went back again to my uncle, who started a circus on his own account, under the name of Powell, Follitt, and Clark, which underwent a commercial change later on.

Mr. Fraser: Without going into the many details about your uncle's circus, where was your first engagement?

Mr. Tudor: At Hastings in a large wood building owned by Mr. Batty. I stayed the short season and was successful. I next joined Studley and Harston's wood circus, a very large one, and in the midst of my success I took ill and went home to London. I had a season at the Alexandria Palace, success again attending my efforts. I next went to Keith and Bradford's wood circus, and then to the "Village Blacksmith" where I was the patent circus on wheels, a marvellous erection.

Mr. Fraser: Has your circus life been confined to southern towns, or did you venture on the continent as a performer?

Mr. Tudor: My notions for travelling began to extend, and I joined the brothers Cooke for a tour on the continent. At Switzerland a Frenchman, a very large circus, large one indeed, the patent circus on wheels, a marvellous erection, "starring" was Mr. Hine, who was performing my circus a few weeks ago. Mr. Hine, who appeared as the man on the string, can speak no less than 9 languages exceedingly well. Success attended me at this part of the continent where I was starting in the same business as Mr. Clark. I was at the present with me. I started the business of English circus, and spent about five months in Switzerland.

Mr. Fraser: How does the people on the continent take the circus business? Do they go more in for horses, or merely the other departments of circus business?

Mr. Tudor: This Frenchman that I was with kept no less than 90 performing horses. The people on the continent go in for legitimate circus business, and you may rely that that is so, for a circus manager would not keep 90 performing horses unless they were appreciated.

I left Switzerland with the Frenchman and went to France to a place called Lyons, where there was a stone-built circus, a very large one indeed. I had a month among the Frenchmen, and I found them to be a splendid lot of people, but like other parts of the globe, they have their grievances. I next jumped to Germany, where I joined a circus with 105 performing horses, and only two of the horses had shoes. The boss of the circus had a tremendous large one, and I remember that I got on well, and the programme was confined to legitimate circus business. I paid a visit to Belgium, Strausburgh, and a lot of other towns. I noticed a lot of relics of the late war between Germany and France. In Gravetole 3,000 soldiers are buried in a space not half as large as my circus. I called this large circus for a small one, where there were 90 performing horses, and after a starring engagement went back to the south of France. Altogether I had more than three years on the continent.

Mr. Fraser: When did you commence as a circus proprietor? I suppose you will be like the experienced at times the entire circus, and at other times you will have rubbed your hands with gloom at the little piles of golden pieces?

Mr. Tudor: One would think you had been in the business from the peculiar and original way you have of putting it. Just before I came to the circus ownership business, I joined a circus. I joined one John Swallow's circus at Kidderminster. This old veteran had a good spread of canvas and an outside show, with 43 performing horses. I commenced a tour with old Swallow, and after travelling 2,000 miles by various routes landed at Ayrshire in Scotland, where the manager had called everything sold off. I then took a winter engagement at Cardiff with an American circus, when I was presented with a gold medal and several other presents. I had a tour into a number of other towns after I left Wales. I commenced some eight years ago as a circus proprietor in Worcestershire, a town noted for its elements took a spite at my venture, and the result was that after the first night my circus was snowed up in the month of February, and I lost financially. The people before I went away were very good, and I was made the recipient of a splendid gold medal. On that occasion I had a partner, who has since "gone aloft." I next took a starring engagement for a winter, and the result was that after the first night my circus was snowed up in the month of February, and I lost financially. The people before I went away were very good, and I was made the recipient of a splendid gold medal. On that occasion I had a partner, who has since "gone aloft." I next took a starring engagement for a winter, and the result was that after the first night my circus was snowed up in the month of February, and I lost financially. The people before I went away were very good, and I was made the recipient of a splendid gold medal. On that occasion I had a partner, who has since "gone aloft." I next took a starring engagement for a winter, and the result was that after the first night my circus was snowed up in the month of February, and I lost financially. 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