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The Decline of Vaudeville.

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CHAUTAUQUA

THE DECLINE OF VAUDEVILLE

There once lived in ^{W.H.H.} ~~Chillicothe~~ ^{Chautauqua}, a town that can be avoided by keeping straight on Route 6 to ^{OLEAN} Sandusky, a boy named Lum Peavy, who wanted to be an artist. Now he did not want to be such an artist as Phidias whose work will live forever, nor Rembrandt whose fame has endured for centuries. Peavy yearned to create art that would live but a moment.

So he became a chalk-talk artist.

He left ~~Chillicothe~~ ^{Chautauqua} and made good in the city and his act was known far and wide as "Peavy ~~and Fifi~~ ^{the Chautauqua Chalk Talker}" - ~~for~~ he had married early in his career and Fifi held the shak for him. Dressed in a Roman helmet, high laced golden sandals and white rhinestone tights she held out the blue chalk, the yellow, and the crimson. Ah, with what gusto Peavy applied the colors and how startlingly a view of the Swiss Alps came to life under his flying hands, ~~the~~ orchestra played the Blue Danube Waltz! Then would come a roll of the drums, Peavy would spin the easel upside down and lo and behold the Swiss Alps became a likeness of Woodrow Wilson, the orchestra played Taaa!! Daaa!!!!, ~~Fifi~~ ~~smiled in her rhinestones~~, Peavy swept off his velvet tam-o-shanter and down came the curtain to strains of "Columbia Gem of the Ocean!" These were happy years.

Then came a day....

Dressed in his best Peavy went to see his agent about bookings for the next season. When the agent, whose name was Sam, handed him a cigar and said: "Have a chair,"

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~~Peavy, Peavy, knew the worst.~~ Sam was a big hearted guy. He waited till Peavy lit his smoke and then he said:

"Peavy, I can't use you. Nobody wants to see chalk-talk anymore. It's out, it's old stuff." Spots appeared in front of Peavy's eyes and he put down his cigar. Sam picked up some papers and began to read.

"But Sam," said Peavy, and in desperation he had an idea. "Sam", he said, "I can tap dance. I could tap dance and chalk-talk at one and the same time!" And Sam looked up from his papers and said:

"Lemme see ya do it."

V.O.K. from Sam's desk

So with a blotting pad ~~for an easel~~ and

*Chewy
Schnitzler
is
going*

~~pieces~~ of chalk out of his pocket he began, humming his own accompaniment, tap-dancing and chalk-talking as though life depended on it. With a sob in his throat he said "Taaa! Daaa!!! ~~at the finish,~~ turned the picture over and waited for applause. O.K."

"It's not bad of the Alps," Sam said, "but it's lousy of Woodrow. You'll have to take a ten-per-cent cut."

And so ~~he~~ ^{he} worked another season and then one day Peavy went back to his agent and ~~Pifine came along.~~

"Cigar, Peavy?" said Sam and Peavy said ~~no~~.

no "They liked it, Sam," ~~Peavy said,~~ "The act always got a hand at the finish..."

"It wasn't the act," Sam said, "It was 'Columbia Gem of the Ocean'. It's out, it's old stuff. I can't use you."

"But Sam" Peavy said, "Sam! I can spin a rope! I

I can spin rope, tapdance and chalk talk all at one and the same time!"

And Sam said: "Lemme see ya do it". O.K.

*about
spoke*
This time he had the props. He set up the easel and took out his lariat^{sp} and some chalk. ^{or} He made a whirling circle of the rope and he tap-danced in it and he tapdanced out of it and he chalk-talked with red chalk and he chalk-talked with blue and he ~~was~~^{whistled} home, ~~Wade~~ on the range, and sweat ran into his eyes and he said, -
"Ta!!!!Da!!!", -and spun the board round on the easel..... and there was Wilson. *O.T.*

"I can use you", -Sam said, -"but I can't use Woodrow."

* "I can put a mustache on it and call it Buffalo Bill."

"You'll have to take a ten-percent-cut" said Sam.

So Peavy went out on the Pan-time for twenty weeks and twelve of them were in Tennessee and it was hot work.

When Peavy went back to see Sam again, he took Sam a Cigar, Sam didn't even stop reading, when he came in.

"Sam", Peavy said, -"I can spin three ropes. I can spin a rope on each hip, one in my left hand, tap dance, chalk talk and sing 'Get along little doggie' all at one and the same time!"

And Sam said: "Lemme see ya do it". O.K.

*Alps
Chico*
Peavy put a belt around his waist and started spinning with his right hip, then he started spinning with his left, then he threw out the big rope and jumped in. Singing, tapdancing, drawing Alps like mad with his right hand, wriggling his hips from side to side. When he said: "Ta!!!!Daa!!!!", Buffalo Bill had on a feather bon-

net and Peavy gave a war-whoop.

When he saw the look on Sam's face, Peavy said:

"O.K. I'll take the cut,- but for God's sake do'nt send us back to Tennessee!"

"This time it's fifteen percent" Sam said "and you close the bill through Georgia."

It was the closing spot that broke Peavy's spirit and when he came back next season, the iron had entered his soul.

"Sam" Peavy said",- "I've been working on the act. I've got a finish that's colossal. All I ask is that you come over to Brooklyn to-night and catch us..... the irelands. ~~HHHHHHHHHHHH~~

And Sam said "Lemme see ya do it". "O K"

That night Sam was in the first row. The curtain went up, the orchestra played "Pony Boy" and out came Peavy in a smock, a tamoshanter and cowboy chaps. He said..... (offen lassen!) "over the ground" (Natlurlaut). So he got the plate spinning/and his right hip going/and his left hip going/and the big rope spinning/and he drew the Alps in full colour/and yodeled as he tap-danced. And when the picture was finished, with Peavy still yodeling and the ropes still going and the drums still rolling, he did the double forward flip,-

and landed flat on his back.

The curtain came down and Sam, big-hearted, as he allways was, waited to applaud and then went back stage.

Peavy, quite conscious, lay there on a table, where stagehands had placed him, with a circle of performers around him and the house-physician kneeling by his side. Nobody said anything until the doctor finished his examination. ~~He spoke.~~

"This Man", the doctor said, "will never walk again."

Sam lit a cigar, knelt down by Peavy's side and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Peavy" he said gently, "I can't use you, - you're through."

But Peavy drew his knees up, until the soles of his feet were pointed to the ceiling and he began to paddle in the air.

He said "No, Sam, I am not through", - ~~he said~~, - "Toss me a Japanese."

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