

# MARKS FAMILY AS THESPIANS

Seven of This Ontario Family Followed Lure of Footlights.

## OVER THIRTY YEARS AGO

### THE FIRST BROTHER ADOPTED A STAGE CAREER

Now the Family Runs Four Theatrical Companies—Their Home Is at Christie's Lake Near Perth.

Robson Black, of Ottawa, formerly of Kingston, secretary of the Canadian Forestry Association, has contributed the following interesting sketch of the Marks Brothers, those purveyors of popular theatrical amusement to the Canada Monthly: The Marks brothers, seven of them, are all in the theatrical business, and for more than a score of years their repertoire companies have toured the small towns of Ontario to the delight of thousands of people whose chance for dramatic entertainment come but seldom. Perhaps many people are not aware that, as Mr. Black tells in his article the Marks brothers live, when they are at home, at Christie's Lake, near Perth. Here, during the summer months, they rest from their labors, rehearse new plays and plan their tours for the fall and winter season.

Down on the shores of Christie Lake, eleven miles from Perth, Ontario, lives Robert Marks, a six foot showman. Before his doorstep spread one of the rarest estates in all Ontario, an estate of flowing waters, of scattered islands and granite headlands, of long ghost-walks of silver birch where the rabbit plays his "comedy lead" and the hawk signs up for forty weeks of "heavies."

This is the place—this Christie Lake—where the Marks family of players and managers have grown from childhood, where their dramatic companies are assembled, at mid-summer, where the second edition of the Marks name, adding new patterns to the family heirloom, will probably pass along the enterprise to interminable generations. Around the lake shores the actors have their cottages, their motor boats race the waters in the early morning and the pitch of night. They fish together, work together—as pleasant a family as ever tanned and fattened under the summer sky. And now, since the railway came within catapult throw of the big Marks home, they are building a great rehearsal hall, warehouse, and painting studio, whence the entire Marks enterprise will be housed when the forty weeks of road tour are ended and another forty in process of planning.

The Marks' stock companies, which a large portion of Canadians and Americans have known at some time or other, are in many senses the foundation stones of theatrical effort in the Dominion. There have been more delectable efforts, as with the gifted and unfortunate Harold Nelson once an idol of Western Canada, but the dramatic companies organized by the Marks family have been the real genesis of Canadian theatrical enterprise. Although continuity of management in the theatrical business is tragically rare, the brand of "Marks" in the theatrical world has persisted for thirty-eight years, developing from the original single venture of Robert W., into the four companies of the present day, owned by four brothers, R. W., Tom, Joseph and Ernest. Stranger still, profits have flowed in until the family fortune represents probably half a million dollars invested, you may be sure, where the moth and rust of the theatrical gamble corrupts not even a penny.

What The Public Wants. In the commonplace designation of theatre-goers, three divisions are usually hit upon as sufficient to pigeon-hole universal taste for amusement. There is the high-brow crowd which attends only when the tickets equal a roast-of-lamb, the low-brows running largely to burlesque, where the

chief comedian smashes a pie against a Chinaman's face, and the browless or unprejudiced crowd which attends frankly and vaguely to "see a good clean drama." These divisions are sorely inaccurate, but upon such assumptions men build theatres, and companies rehearse their actors, and playwrights write plays. Theatrical there are but three spots giving ready access to the public's brains: in the head, in the feet and in the regions between the stomach and the heart. The latter I think, might roughly describe the target against which the average travelling repertoire company train their crossbows. "Lena Rivers," "Dora Thorne," "The Two Orphans," and all their thousand-and-one comrades, such as these companies are accustomed to play, represent a fairly close approximation to the actual ideals, aspirations, and notions of mortality lurking in the skull of the average man or woman. At least they are healthy and polite with a plain-savory plot, a Calvinistic denunciation of dark moustaches, and a halo of broken hearts and scolding tears pinned above the heroine's tiara. Virtue in rags never failed to make women cry—in the theatre—and the click of the duellist's sword resolves the humble carpenter to spend his next strike pay on fencing lessons. I have watched audiences bawl in undisguised grief at the picture of poor lean Lena Rivers, and men stuff handkerchiefs down their larynx when little Eva moans to Uncle Tom that she is "going there?" Let no one take away the notion that the impact of the visiting stock company leaves no permanent reminder on the life of a nation for I fancy I know a Canadian and an American election or two that were decided on the pattern of "Dora Thorne," "Parted At The Altar," or "The Devil's Auction."

A Humble Beginning. How those seven brothers of the Marks quit the festive life of their father's farm near Perth in an end of the story which must be dragged from the past. As often happens in big families of farm lads, Robert W., the eldest, struck out as a small trader, being up business for oranges and sewing machines. The other boys worked the farm, cut the roots, tended the circus, hoed turnips and jigger round on the hay rake, at in other ways experienced the glorious uplift that goes with farm life as we know it. One day, Robert W., still vending his five-octave harmonica, came to Maybrook and into that village that same day, came Kane Kennedy, magician, "Mysterious Hindu from the Bay of Bengal," as his name indicates, and Kane rented a hall and bade the tired-businesman of Maybrook, Ontario, to come right his way. Robert recognized the cleverness of the performer and fixed one conclusion in his mind, that Kane Kennedy, rightly managed, could make three times the gate receipts. After the audience left, Robert introduced himself and said: "I own a team of horses and wagon; I can have a tent and a lot of clever bunco. Let's hitch and take fifty-fifty on the profits."

The Wild West. The only way to get into the Dakotas from Manitoba was by taking the "fyer" or flat boat down the Red River, and Robert Marks with the entertainer and three or four additional people to help the show out, took chances on the southbound currents of fortune. Even in such times news travelled with surprising swiftness, so that when the flat boat swung into the dock at Grand Forks, N. Dakota, the sheriff of the place with a luxurious moustache hurling over his upper lip ordered Marks

## NEW STRENGTH FOR LAME BACK.

Letter Told of Long-looked-for Prescription.

Dear Mr. Editor—I suffered from lame back and a constant tired, worn-out feeling. At times I was unable to stand erect and scarcely able to get around. It would usually come on at first with crick in the muscles of my back. I took one box of Dr. Pierce's Anuric Tablets and my back commenced to get better soon after starting to take them. I did not have to walk doubled over as I did before using the "Anuric." It is the best remedy I have ever taken for what it is intended to relieve. I hope those who are in need of such a remedy will give the "Anuric Tablets" a trial. (Signed) A. G. DEANE.

NOTE: Up to this time, "Anuric" has not been on sale to the public, but by the persuasion of many patients and the increased demand for this wonderful healing tablet, Doctor Pierce has finally decided to put it into the drug stores of this country within immediate reach of all sufferers. Simply ask for Doctor Pierce's Anuric Tablets. There can be no imitation. Every package of "Anuric" is sure to be Doctor Pierce's. You will find the signature on the package just as you do on Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription, the ever-famous Tonic for Men, Women, and Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery, proven by years to be the greatest general tonic. Send 10 cents to Dr. W. M. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y., for large trial package. As any rate don't give up hope of being cured of your malady until you have tried a few doses of "Anuric" have proven that it will make you feel like a different person.

EDITOR—Please insert this letter in some conspicuous place in your paper, and his company ashore. Marks tried to talk the order.

"You have no hall," he protested, but the sheriff was equal to the challenge. "The townspeople say they won't let you by, if you give the word we'll fit up an opey house in half an hour." So Marks gave the word and half the men in Grand Forks carried tables and beer kegs into a half-finished store. The tables were stacked against one end to form a stage, while the kegs served as seats. Three shows were given that day—the first entertainment Grand Forks had ever seen.

When a showman struck his route through the north-western part of Alberta about 1880, he gambled desperately on a perforated hide. In the majority of these rare untamed towns, made its way, custom decreed that the travelling troupe should be the natural enemy of the drunk and well-armed cowboy. In the history of these towns no entertainment had been more than half finished before one or more "toughs" started potting at the lamp chimneys, reducing the house to darkness and chaos in a very few minutes. Marks saw he must nip such horseplay in the bud or lose his profits. Before reaching a town he'd secure the names of the five wildest characters known to local annals, and these men he'd seek out, coax into a good humor with drinks and then request them as an especial honor to act as policemen at the evening's entertainment. With solemn conscientiousness those men carried out their duty. Ugly, burly, ill-scarred cut-throats, they stalked up and down the aisles during the performance, swaggering from right to left and if a person in the audience dared even to laugh in the wrong place one of the gunmen was at his side with a significant slap on the shoulder and a grunted innuendo about "filling him full of lead." But Marks solved the showman's problem of keeping order in the bad lands, although, as he says himself, "the gunmen kind of spoiled the quiet scenes."

A Perforated Hat. Conville, Kansas, 3 a.m., and Marks was seated at a table in the only hotel, the "Silver Dollar." Then, as since he wore the high silk hat which distinguished the Marks brothers in their out-of-doors appearances. No one had ever dared to enter Conville in a plug top before, but Marks looked on it as a good advertising. Presently he detected a solemn footfall behind him and without an instant's warning a pistol was rammed within an inch of the hat and two

bullets ploughed their way into the wall opposite. Marks turned with all the calmness he could muster and said: "Pardner, please take better aim next time." For an instant the cowboy glowered at him, for he had mistaken him for a preacher.

"How'll ye trade hats?" he challenged. The showman heated a moment but caught sight of the gentlemanly bar-tender half hid behind a partition. "Done!" he declared, and they cemented the exchange with a drink. That had dealt proved opportune, for the cowboy was the largest ranch owner in the district and in honor of his plug-topped guest formed his out-fits into a guard-of-honor escort the Canadian about town. He also insisted that every employee should buy from Marks from one to five tickets for the performance.

The hair-raising period of mining towns and six-shooters came to an end about the time that Robert drew his brother Tom into a vaudeville partnership. Where previously they had been taking any trail that led to life at its fiercest and freshest, now they determined to quit buccannery and make the show business as normal as a hardware store. Robert and Tom worked the variety circuit throughout the Northwest until the fields were white with the stubble. That led them to organize a dramatic repertoire company and through the requirements for actors, vaudeville performers for the waits between acts, advance agents and managers, the other brothers of the Marks family were absorbed one by one and all came to live at Perth. In such manner seven boys who in the single household leagued themselves to a theatrical enterprise—a record quite unique in the world of amusement.

Now Four Companies. Four companies came into operation as the Marks' ambitions expanded. With popular gifts for comedy Tom and Ernest hoed out their own row in eastern and western Canada and in the United States. Robert W. established a goodly name in the Dominion through his own industry, and the talents of his wife and son, May and Bill Marks, and then struck south for ten years through New England. Joseph—another of the brethren—operates successfully in various parts of the country. And always the plans are made and executed under happy cooperation. Any special stroke of good fortune befalling one brother or son of daughter becomes a matter of general family rejoicing. Perhaps it is owing a little to the white-haired mother of the Marks' clan, still in vigor of body and mind, to whom the children rally once a year as to their common friend and leader.

From this fine old lady, far past eighty years, to the youngest Marks, Robert aged four, is a short interval as time is counted but it makes a long lane of travel and adventure. I reckon that the one parent company started by R. W. Marks has entertained nearly 5,000,000 people since it first took the road. Of this No. 1 company, Mrs. Marks has a share of over 200 long parts in which she is "super-perfect" and ready to appear on two hours' summons.

A Showman's Philosophy. We were spinning down Christie Lake one afternoon, Robert Marks was officer-of-the-watch, and I was second mate. He talked in the easy take-your-time-about-the-way-of-a-lazy-summer's-day, but to my ears it contained a pretty good precipitate of showman's philosophy. "The best time to go into a town with a show is immediately after the declaration of a strike. The average workman meets his chum, 'Bill,' says he, 'we're going to win this strike, 'Right you are says Bill, and in two weeks they'll be bragging at our feet.' Let's go to the show to-night.' About ten days after a strike begins, the first jubilation wears off and, as a show-manager, I prefer to be some place else."

"There are two kinds of people we try to draw and keep drawing the young man and his girl who want to see every show end with a marriage, and the middle-aged unromantic team of housekeepers who look on marriage as a chestnut and want to see some of the tragedy and clash of action. Then, of course, everybody loves a comedy. The comedians jest in the great universal tonic. Above everything else the world wants to laugh, and the man who can sell tickets to a laugh is on his way to fortune."

Melodrama Popular. "The great appetite of the masses of show-goers to-day is for melodrama. Despite what 'experts' say, melodrama is the one great perennial in the theatrical business. We have been playing melodramas for over twenty-five years and they never fail to draw except in the bigger towns where the public is more over-fastidious by frequent visits of the dollar-fifty companies. And of all shows the clean show is the winner. For the lifetime of the Marks' enterprise our people have absolutely refused to compromise to honest and orderly entertainment. Stock companies must depend upon family patronage and the vast majority of Canadian and American families are founded on wholesome standards. "Children travel with our companies. Children are great business getters especially at matinees for the mother and kiddies are usually fairly about on a mother's kiddies. Only stage children can break as easily as make the popularity of a show. Trot out the little actor once or twice with a note or a bouquet of flowers or a speech of five or six lines and all the women and children of the audience clap their hands and cheer. But give the youngster a long part, fetch him on the stage at one or eight times during the four acts and you will hear the same women fare up with indignation and exclaim: "The idea of submitting the little darlings to such long hours and all that excitement! Where are the police when these outrages are going on?"

The trunk which makes a pronounced accent in business is often called

## NEWEST NOTES OF SCIENCE

In twenty generations every person has had 131,076 direct ancestors. Japanese have built a factory in China to make paper from rice straw.

Among the coin-in-the-slot novelties is an electric fan for public places. Of Chili's 187,000,000 acres of land only about 23,000,000 can be cultivated. The anthracite mines of Pennsylvania contain more than 7,000 miles of tunnels.

Experts make a waterproof leather with many uses from the hides of sea lions. Easily detached casters have been patented to aid in moving washing machines.

Cocoa shells are being fed to cattle in a course of experiments by French dairymen. A skate strap with a pad for the top of the foot to relieve the pressure has been patented.

Manufacturers of that country are planning to establish the first paper plant in Argentina. Quickly adjustable forms have been invented for building concrete steps to save carpenter work.

Peru is steadily increasing its production of gold, which now amounts to about \$1,000,000 a year. A California engineer has patented a pan that can be attached to any broom to catch its sweepings.

Twenty-two implements can be constructed with the units of a combination tool of English invention. Experiments are being tried with an internal combustion engine that is driven by the explosion of dust.

The smallest known bird is a Central American humming bird that is about the size of a blue bottle fly. A new toy vehicle is driven by a standing rider applying his weight first to one lever and then to another.

Russia is the only country in which the production of flax fiber has increased consistently in recent years. Within the handle of a new jumping rope for children is a recording device to count the number of turns made.

South Africa has established a factory for the extraction of rubber from the roots and vines of rubber plants. A metal box into which an incandescent lamp can be inserted has been patented by an Idaho man for warming beds.

The greater part of 4,000,000 tons of herring caught yearly in Japanese waters are used to fertilize rice fields. A new electric water heater that takes current from a light socket can be used to make any faucet yield hot water.

A vest with lapels that turn up and button to form a throat and chest protector has been patented by an Englishman. The United States now has the greatest number of electric steel furnaces of any nation, 73, compared with Germany's 53.

The Congo River and its tributaries provide more than 9,000 miles of waterways that are navigable for flat-bottomed steamboats. Both an electric range and a refrigerator are included in a new kitchen cabinet, but are hidden from view by doors when not in use.

The seven principal engineering organizations of Germany have been combined into an association of technical scientific societies. An Illinois inventor dredging machines literally walks upon large feet and will travel over ground too soft for caterpillar wheels.

Glasgow provides its policemen with warm food and tea when on duty at night by the use of electrical heated plates in signal boxes. An additional diaphragm features a new telephone mouthpiece to absorb outside sounds that make telephoning difficult in noisy places.

An Australian is the inventor of a recording target which shows the course of bullets in relation to both stationary and moving objects. A French shoemaker has patented a machine that makes a plaster cast of a customer's foot and from it forms a last over which his shoes are made.

A machine invented by a Maine man digs potatoes, frees them from fines and earth and pours them into bags or barrels as it is driven over a field. The Tasmanian government has dammed a large lake and built a hydro-electric plant for light and power that will be distributed throughout the state.

Ribbons of paper pass over and cleanse the knives of a sanitary cigar cutter for public places that has been invented by a resident of Portland, Oregon. Government scientists have decided that there are thousands of tons of high-grade asphalt in deposits that have been discovered in the Philippines.

An Alabama inventor has patented a step ladder in which each leg is separately adjustable for length, so that it will stand firmly on uneven surfaces. By adding about twelve per cent, of chromium to mild carbon steel an English inventor has brought out a metal for table ware that is rust and tarnish proof.

A Michigan man claims to have invented a furnace that will heat a dwelling of ordinary size through a single register, thereby saving the cost of pipes. The teaching section of a French scientific society has recommended the slanting instead of the vertical system of handwriting in the schools of that land.

An electric knife for tailors has been invented that cuts only a few thicknesses of cloth instead of the twenty or more cut by machines used in clothing factories. Cylinders filled with oil serve as a brake in a new life preserver of Danish invention that is intended to drop a person seated in a belt from a burning building.

The gasoline contained in the United States this year has been estimated as equivalent to a stream six feet wide and a foot deep flowing at a speed of a mile an hour.

ers with aluminum paint will prevent the accumulation of deposits that often come from hard water. To replace the familiar steam roller a gasoline machine has been developed which, in addition to economizing on fuel gives its driver an unobstructed view of his work.

Swedish scientists are producing a new fertilizer by treating feldspar or another mineral base of potassium with a suitable amount of carbon and iron in an electric furnace. For softening wallpaper preparatory to removing it from walls an Indianapolis man has invented a steam jet that gets its steam from a heating radiator through a rubber tube.

The world's best cork comes from Spanish and Portuguese trees that are allowed to become 40 years old before the bark is cut, and then it is removed only every eight or ten years. After many experiments a Pittsburgh man has invented a musical instrument with which he can make vibrations radiated from the flame of a gas jet reproduce every note on a pipe organ.

To permit the miners to work longer shifts the owners of a German coal mine compress air at the surface of the ground and pipe it to the deepest workings to cool and dry the atmosphere the men breathe. In a new rear signal for automobiles pressing a button on the steering wheel lights a red light and lifts a semaphore, which is dropped and the light changed to green when the button is pressed a second time.

Experts have found that the hair of Japanese women is extremely long, elastic and durable, making it superior to all other human hair for commercial purposes, especially for weaving with silk into textiles. A powerful new electric lamp for photographers is enclosed in blue glass, which lessens its intensity as far as a person facing it is concerned without affecting the rays that do the work on photographic plates.

So that holes can be bored in under water rocks no matter how rough the water, a Hawaiian engineer has invented a drill standard with a heavily weighted bottom, power being supplied from a vessel through flexible connections. Motion pictures showing both front and back views of noted orchestras leaders at work, have been taken and combined so that other musical organizations can be led by them, while audiences can see them as usual at the same time.

BATHING IN YOUR TRUNK. Invention of Montana Couple Makes This Possible. The Popular Science Monthly.

A combination trunk, laundry basket and bathtub is the novel invention of Ole C. and Hanan L. E. Norman, Mont. The trunk is made of sheet metal, enamelled inside and outside to adapt it for use as a bathtub or laundry tub, and it is also provided with an outlet at the bottom, to which hose can readily be attached to draw off the water. This is a bathtub, the trunk is a clean storage place for laundry.

Save the Babies FOR THE EMPIRE'S SAKE USE ONLY PASTEURIZED MILK Our Milk is Thoroughly Pasteurized and sold in Sealed Bottles.

Phone 845 :: Price's

CONSIDER YOUR COMPLEXION If you have a proper regard for it you will insist upon the purity and antiseptic qualities of your talcum. CORSON'S ORCHID TALCUM will not clog the pores. Prepared from the most expensive talc, it is impalpably fine and smooth. It imparts a freshness and bloom that women everywhere find charming while its fragrance has a dainty appeal to the fastidious. 25c. For Sale at all Druggists. SOVEREIGN PERFUMES, LTD. 146 Brock Ave., Toronto.

Ladies Stylish Shoes In the Frank W. Slater Strider Shoe. \$4.00 and \$4.50. H. HENNING'S, King Street

The Sensible Way — for a tea or coffee drinker to rid himself of the headaches, biliousness, heart flutter and other ills that often come from tea or coffee drinking, is to quit both tea and coffee and use the delicious pure food-drink— INSTANT POSTUM "There's a Reason" At Grocers

