

# HOT SKIRMISH OVER 'MERRY WIDOW' HATS

New Amsterdam Theatre's Sou-  
venirs Start a Mad Rush at  
Close of Matinee.

1,300 WOMEN FOR 1,200 HATS

They Struggle Wildly for the Headgear  
and Precipitate an Incipi-  
ent Riot.

There was a wild time yesterday afternoon at the New Amsterdam Theatre, when "The Merry Widow" celebrated her 275th appearance. However, the "widow" really wasn't to blame. The management had promised "Merry Widow" hats as souvenirs to all the women occupying orchestra and balcony seats. It was expected that there would be some fun, but no one foresaw what would happen when an attempt was made to distribute 1,200 hats to 1,300 women. The management had not fathomed the ferocious bargain fever that burns in the heart of the New York matinee patron.

"The Battle of the Hats" began at about 5 o'clock and lasted about half an hour. There were no real casualties, but there were many wounded "feelings"; also many wounded hat boxes and hats. The specimens of headgear were of white, about two feet in diameter, and drooping like a mushroom. As long as the 1,200 hats lasted the 1,300 women fought violently for them. When they retired last night many of them doubtless devoted some time to nursing lame shoulders and hunting stray black-and-blue spots.

The field of battle was well chosen, but the defendants of the fort, consisting only of four negro maids, were unable to cope successfully with the onslaught of the army of the amazons.

Everybody who has seen "The Merry Widow" or any other production at the New Amsterdam will remember that in the rear of the auditorium on the street floor there is a room or a large alcove, the entrance to which is a wide arch. It was in this room that the hats were stored, piled up in imposing tiers of nice round boxes.

Across the front of this room, occupying all the floor space of the arch, were placed two light tables to form a sort of counter. The intention was that at the end of the performance the hats should be distributed across this counter, each woman getting her souvenir on the presentation of a check which she received on entering the theatre.

The only trouble was that the tables proved to be fragile breastworks. If they had been of solid mahogany and had been nailed to the floor with spikes they might have been more to the purpose.

There was a skirmish in the intermission between the second and third acts. While many women, with longing eyes, were standing in the rear of the orchestra gazing at the piles of hat boxes, one, more ingenious than the rest and more fearful of future developments, came up to the improvised counter. She put on her coat and hat to show that she really meant to leave the theatre, and asked for her souvenir, which was given to her. As she departed murmurs arose on all sides. A second woman followed the example of the first, but when this second woman got her hat she returned to her seat.

Then there was a small stampede, a mere hint of what was to follow. Women crowded up to the counter and demanded their souvenirs on the spot. However, the manager held his ground and proclaimed in a loud voice that no more hats would be distributed until after the performance. With hostile mutterings some of the women returned to their seats, but about 100 gathered in the rear with the evident determination of remaining there and leading the m le when the signal should be given.

The actual work of distributing began about five minutes before the end of the performance. In a moment word spread through the house and every one forgot the play. About 100 hats were given out in the orderly manner that had been planned. Then the curtain fell and the throng of women, pressing hard against the tables, declared mob rule and began the attack.

The defenders behind the counter braced themselves against the tables to prevent them from being pushed in. Hats were given out as fast as the attendants could accomplish the work. When the women in the front row got their boxes and tried to make their way out they found themselves hemmed in by the pushing, struggling throng.

At this juncture the women on the right flank succeeded in pushing one of the tables around almost at right angles. Then they assaulted the heap of hats. The defenders rushed to the breach and managed to keep the fort from being taken by forming a kind of human barrier.

In an instant the confusion was at its height. One woman, jammed tight against the one table that still stood in place, tackled the woman next to her with a vim that would have done credit to the world's champion female wrestler. Then the battle was on in earnest. The older women did themselves credit. The remarks which some of them exchanged and the ardor with which they threw themselves into the m le made their daughters look like the veriest molly-coddles.

Now that the barricade of tables was partially broken down the door on one side of the alcove room was opened as an exit to stem the crush, but it had small effect. The women would grab their hat boxes and then demand how on earth they were to fight their way to freedom. Some mounted the settees at one side and stood gazing at the scrimmage.

Some hugged their souvenirs tightly, others held them high over their heads. What did it matter if the hats they had on were knocked down over their eyes or if their clothes were pulled askew?

At last the final hatbox was given out and the crowd began to thin. "The Battle of the Hats" had dwindled to a mere skirmish among the hundred or more women for whose demands there was no supply. The house manager made a speech, explaining that they would receive hats if they came to the theatre next Thursday. But some of them waxed bitter. Several said they had come from out of town, and did not want to make another trip to New York. One husband took up the claim of his wife and threatened to invoke the aid of the law.

At 5:30 o'clock only the d bris and the memory of the struggle remained. Lieut. Sackett and Policeman Lemmon of the Traffic Squad, who had been called in during the excitement, then left the field.

## AMUSEMENT NOTES.

The Volpe Symphony Orchestra will offer a series of three Thursday evening subscription concerts at Carnegie Hall next season, the first on Nov. 19. Arnold Volpe, founder and conductor of the orchestra, is now abroad arranging for soloists.

The Shuberts announced yesterday that "The Witching Hour" will close its season at the Hackett Theatre on June 27. This will give the play a record of 258 times in New York. It will reopen at the Hackett Theatre, with John Mason and the same supporting company, on Aug. 17.

Frank Farrington, Robert Broderick, and Al Carlton have been engaged to support Lulu Glaser in "The Girl Who Dared," the new Viennese operetta in which she is to appear at Daly's.

Eva Tanguay and not Emma Carus, as announced earlier in the week, will be the headline attraction on Monday at Keith & Proctor's Fifth Avenue Theatre. Miss Tanguay has been unable to sing for a week.

John Murray has joined the Klaw & Erlanger forces, succeeding Wilbur M. Bates, who recently resigned.

Hermann Klein announces a series of Sunday afternoon popular concerts at the New German Theatre, which is to open in October. Among those engaged are the Olive Mead, Flonzaley, Altschuler, Herman, and Leken quartets, and the Gallico and Maud Powell trios. Arrangements with the new Hess-Schroeder Quartet are in progress.