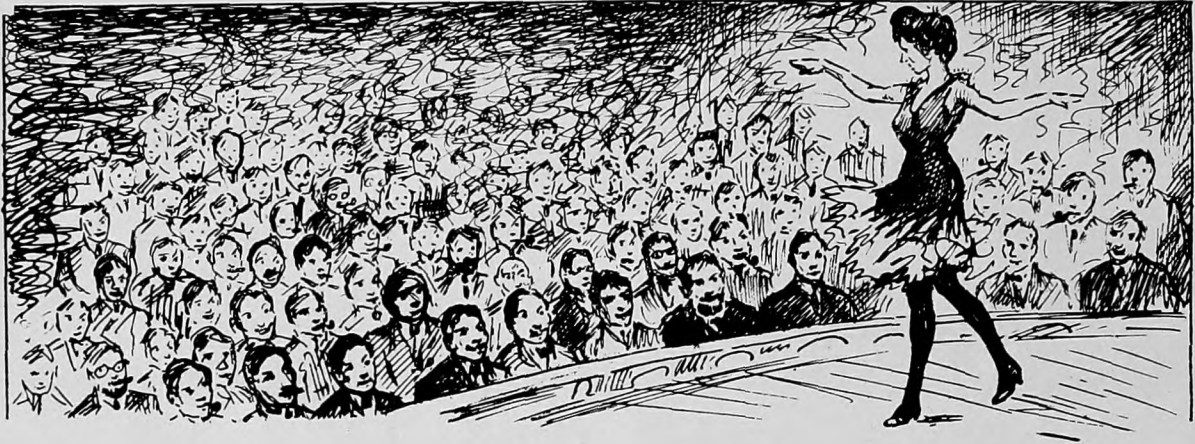




Another



When Zeba Wilson Wowed 'Em

Speaking of whispering campaigns, whispered Old Timer, there was one going full blast in this town in 1897. It concerned a buxom young siren with pleasing contours and flirtatious eyes who came out here with a vaudeville troupe from Hammerstein's Olympia to do a dance act at the annual spring smoker of the Westfield Club. Her name was Miss Zeba Wilson and her dance specialty was the Hoochi-Koochi. They say that when she answered the sixth encore, the old boys were holding on to their chairs and saying "ah!" The Doleful Deacon told me it was better than anything he'd ever seen at Coney Island, so I reckon it must have been pretty good.

Of course, there was a piece about it in the newspapers. The Union County Standard gave Zeba quite a boost: "Miss Zeba Wilson of Hammersteins was an instant success. It would hardly be correct to say that she was not so warm, for she—well, she furnished the hot tamales for that bill of fare and the audience seemed to appreciate the dish."

The wives insisted on full particulars. They asked such tantalizing questions as—Is that the important matter you had to talk over with Ed and Harry? What's a hot tamale like? Was she a dainty dish? What did she have on? Where did you sit? Have you asked the doctor what makes you so tired Sunday mornings?

The men proposed a cooling off period. They explained that the report was greatly exaggerated and nothing to get excited about—"just one of Kip Pearsall's jokes." A joke? This low female, at a smoker for men only, a joke? Did Editor Alfred Pearsall approve of such things? The women said they'd see about that. So, they held a meeting of their Social and Literary Circle, at which Brown-ing was scarcely mentioned, and appointed a

committee to call on the editor. He assured them that no joke was intended. "Zeba's case will be disposed of in our next issue," said he.

In his editorial, Uncle Alfred played no favorites: "The fact that some church members patronize smokers and prayer meetings must not be charged to depravity but rather set down to the credit of a broad and liberal mind. Westfield prayer meetings continue so monotonous as to attract but small numbers and the smokers continue to be vile." He advised the churches to get out of the rut and show some originality and he advocated the abolition or purification of the Westfield Club smoker.

That put a crimp in the arguments, and naturally the men were pleased as Punch. Then came the revival of out-door sports, including festivals and lawn parties, and the seductive wiles of Zeba were recalled only when father came home on the paper train and failed to make the spare room without banging his head on the chandelier.

Zeba turned out better than she was painted. She danced her way to stardom in musical comedy, turned down a batch of Broadway Cowboys and married a comedian, Silas Suggs, who played the part of a miracle worker in the show. They went to raising Herefords on the Kansas prairie, struck oil and made a fortune. There was an illustrated story about her in a Chicago paper recently. The picture which caught my fancy was the one taken when she was a headliner at Hammersteins. It was hard for me to believe that that demure-looking Miss was the vamp who wowed 'em at the club smoker. Why if she were to walk down Broad St. today, in that get-up, the Old Guards would go right on talking about the O.P.A. and where could they buy some shirts.