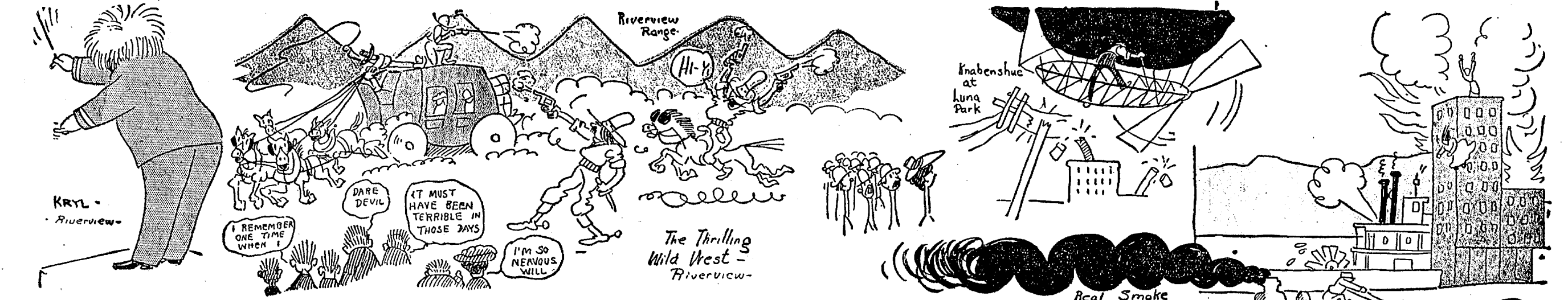


JUNE 2, 1907.



THERE was a man whose liver had gone rusty—he was a big, fat man, or he might have pretended that it was his soul that was out of working order—and he said: "Huh! I wish I could find something that would give me a good thrilling—something to shake me up and make me forget for a minute my aching liver."

And he looked about him and he saw many signs of many kinds, reading: "This way to the summer amusement parks." But the man shrugged his shoulders and said, "Huh!"

And a friend, beholding his predicament, said: "Why not go?" And the man made reply: "Nothing doing. There is nothing to thrill or excite me in any of them. A mob, a lot of old shows, a long haired ferisher up in a band shell; shoot the chutes; beer; babies. Bah!"

But the friend, being wiser in the ways of amusement park promoters, said: "Go to! Do you think they'd think of opening a season without something new and startling? You don't know 'em. Come on; get together some small change and come out with me, and be excited."

Whereat the man, having deposited his watch and other portable valuables with a near relative in order to come into possession of such wealth as is necessary to one who would partake of the inexpensive diversions of a 10 cent admission amusement park, went out to the summer parks of Chicago, and what he saw is related extensively below. But as to the man, it must suffice to say that when he was through he was not that he possessed such a thing as a liver. He has discovered what few Chicagoans know, and that is that Chicago is the greatest amusement center of the world this year, with more thrills to the square inch than any other city can boast.

If there is any one thing that leads in the thrilling race of the thrilling, exciting, exhilarating, and otherwise wise startling features of the summer parks for the season of 1907 it is the size of Riverview park, as it is at present. Riverview, so sayeth the obliging director of publicity, had 100,000 visitors upon its opening night of May 25. Close observation revealed the fact that 99,664 of them at one time or another during the evening said: "Gee! This sure is some park!" or words to that effect. The remaining 336 were from New York, and the envious gnashing of teeth prevented them from saying anything about the size of the park in which they were lost.

Riverview is just twice as big as it was last year. This makes it away and beyond the largest amusement enterprise in the city, and probably the largest in the country. Its size now is almost as startling as is the rapidity of its growth and expansion. A year ago the park occupied one-half of a quarter square mile of territory, lying within the boundaries of Belmont and Western avenues and Roscoe boulevard and the north branch of the Chicago river. Now it occupies all of it.

A year ago the eastern half of this space, and that part of it immediately adjacent to the river, was the home of the old shoe, and divers weeds of the city's virgin prairie. Today it is the home of scenic railways, auto coasters, rolling skating rinks, shoot the chutes, snake shows, train robbers, Chinese theaters, animal shows, and other things that go to make up three-fourths of the concessions of the park.

The river has become a boating annex, and the voice of the parker is lifted up where a short twelve-month ago the wind soughing through the tall and uncut grass was the only sound to be heard. When you walk once around the walks of Riverview you are thrilled at its "magnificent distances"; when you stop to remember that one-half of it was builded in a season you grow truly excited over the contemplation of what man can do when he sets out to corral the dimes of a city in a hurry.

But Riverview is not remarkable merely for its space, nor has its great space resulted in large areas void of attraction. It is full of attractions, most of them new and all thrilling to an extreme.

The thrilling begins right at the beginning. The first step within the portals and you are face to face with a feature that must thrill, exhilarate, depress, or demoralize even the least conscience stricken of mortals. It is right in front of you; you meet it face to face the first thing—a great, yawning arrangement that looks particularly anxious to receive you and your dime, and it is labeled Hell Gate. It is painted in the weird colors generally accepted as proper for the depicting of the nether regions.

In operation the advance is even more suggestive of the nature of the place from which it is named. You get into a little green boat. Instinctively you look around for Charon, but the old gentleman is missing. The boat goes around and around again, Willie, and all of a sudden it disappears in a hole in the bottom of the sea—to come out behind the canvas and navigate between painted walls representative of the nether regions.

After Hell Gate you may recover your quantity by strolling the full length of the park to "the greatest of all great outdoor thrillers, the leading sensation of amusement promotion of the year, the great, the real, the leto train robbery." The barbers call it a lot of other similar names, but this is enough. The thing is to see it. Once seen, and the visitor discovers that for once he has found an occasion where the barbers actually do not exaggerate. It is a big show, put on in a big way, and it draws big crowds.

There are, according to the management, 150 performers, twenty-five horses, fifty tons of locomotive, etc., etc. If these are not the exact figures they are near enough for all practical purposes. Certain it is that there are enough performers, cars, locomotives, horses, gunpowder, dust, noise, whoops, and realism to satisfy even the most satiated searcher for a thriller.

The robbery occurs in a mountainous part of Arizona, New Mexico, or some other territory where the mountains are a delicate, blushing pink in color. The robbers are the real wide haired, black masked, quick shooting, hard riding train robbers; the robbery is as real as a show robbery can be, and the audience comes away white and blinking from viewing a spectacle that contains in itself the excitement of Buffalo Bill and "The Bowery After Dark" combined.

After sustaining the shock of seeing a train robbed the visitor is ready for any and all of the other thrills. Next door to the robbery is the snake show. Carping persons not gifted with a serpentine taste might say that the snake show should be included as a real adjunct to the fictional robbery, but that is another story. "Bosco, half human, half snake, eats 'em alive, eats 'em alive," is one of the established institutions of outdoor shows, and shows are blessed with strong stomachs, and the spectacle is exciting, there can be no question of that.

The new auto coasters, in which various new dips-the-dips and other new features of this form of entertainment are incorporated, vie with the established scenic railway and shoot the chutes in popularity with people who want to whizz through the air. Each year sees these affairs a little more exciting than before, and Riverview has the latest of them. The roller skating rink, the dancing pavilion, the jirickishas, drawn by

perspiring Caucasians, Big Otto's animals, the Dance of the Seven Veils, the Chinese theater, the Turkish theater, and a dozen other new shows complete the list of thrillers to be found within the generous bounds of the park.

But stay! A list of thrillers is not complete without a mention of Bohumir Kryl and his band. It is not the music of his band, his gyrations while leading, or his wonderful work on the cornet that is so exciting. No, O, no. But on the back of his head Bohumir has got a mass of yellow hair that everybody knows how Paderewski's hair thrilled the maidens of this country—and Kryl has got Paderewski beaten by at least a pillowful.

Altogether one hardly can go to Riverview without being thrilled to the limit. White City, as far away from Riverview as it will be and remain within the city, is more dependent upon its well known and established attractions than upon any great changes, improvements, and new features, though of the latter there is no dearth either in number or variety. But the management here would have to hunt far and wide before it could improve upon the attractions of last year. White City thrills from a long way off; its electric tower, jutting into the black night like a white hot iron, is an attraction the counterpart of which is hard to find anywhere in the country.

When it comes to picking the thrillers here, conservative conduct prompts the selection of three leaders and let it go at that, for the question of supremacy among these three is merely one of personal taste and judgment, though it must be noted that if the matter were put to a vote of the male element there would be no question as to the answer.

Miss Annette Kellerman, the Venus of the swimming tank; the flea circus, an infinitesimal exhibition of trained fleas; and the burning of the steamer Robert E. Lee, which is the fire show of last year with a steamboat added, vie with one another in the matter of excitement.

Miss Kellerman's concession is near the entrance of the park. To this is due many visitors—mainly of male persuasion and bald headed—never see the greater part of White City, Miss Kellerman catching them at the outset. A man must be pretty far gone who does not thrill at the sight of Annette, for Annette, freshly risen from the waves, like Aphrodite, in a skin tight swimming suit, is a sight to please the eyes of critical gods, let alone common, 10-cent-a-head mortals. Miss Kellerman dives into a tankful of water half a dozen times. This is a mere incident to her exhibition. The important part is Miss Kellerman, as most of Chicago's population will have seen before the summer is over.

"Der Flea Circus," which is the Flea Circus, is next on the bright boat. Here Prof. Aufrechtig has done the flea in its lair and dragged it forth to do stunts for the amusement of summer pleasure seekers. His fleas he has gathered from all the flea bitting corners of the world. German, French, Japanese, Chinese, Italian, and west side fleas he has mastered under his direction, and he has hitched them to wagons and carriages, which he makes them pull around an arena the size of a big wash-tub, has put swords in their claws and makes them fight duels; has put skirts upon them and makes them waltz, has—but the list is too long for such a small object. Mark Twain has said that a flea as big as a man could be president of the United States; Prof. Aufrechtig has gone along and proven Mark's theory.

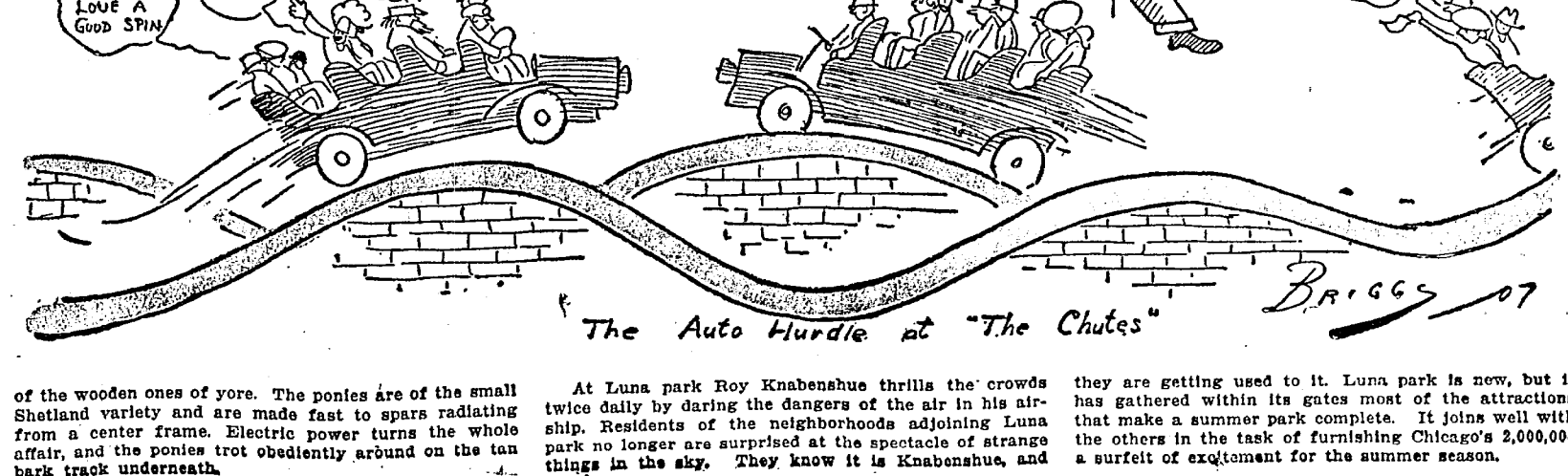
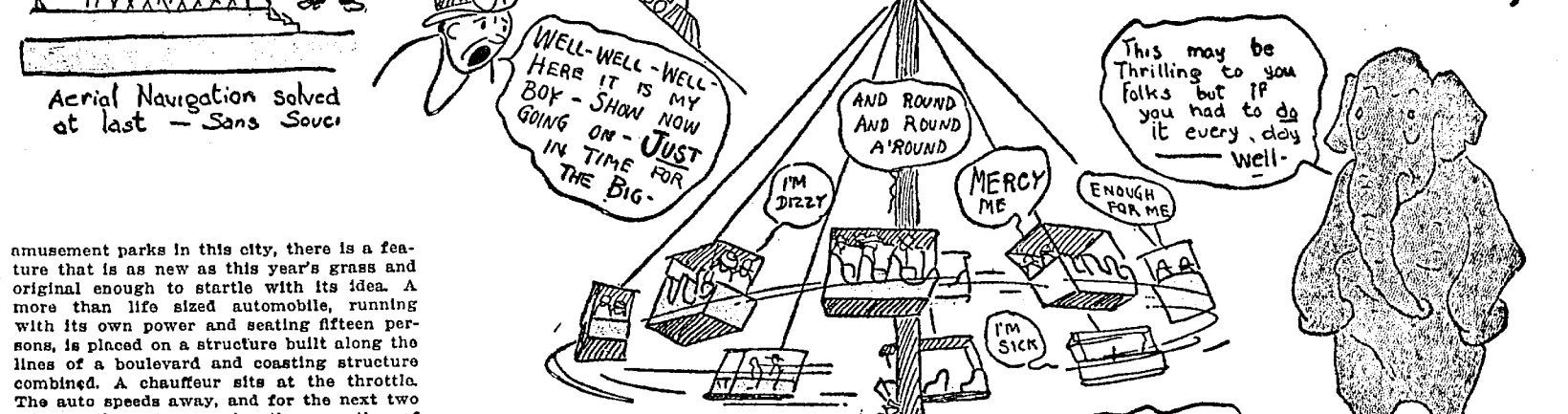
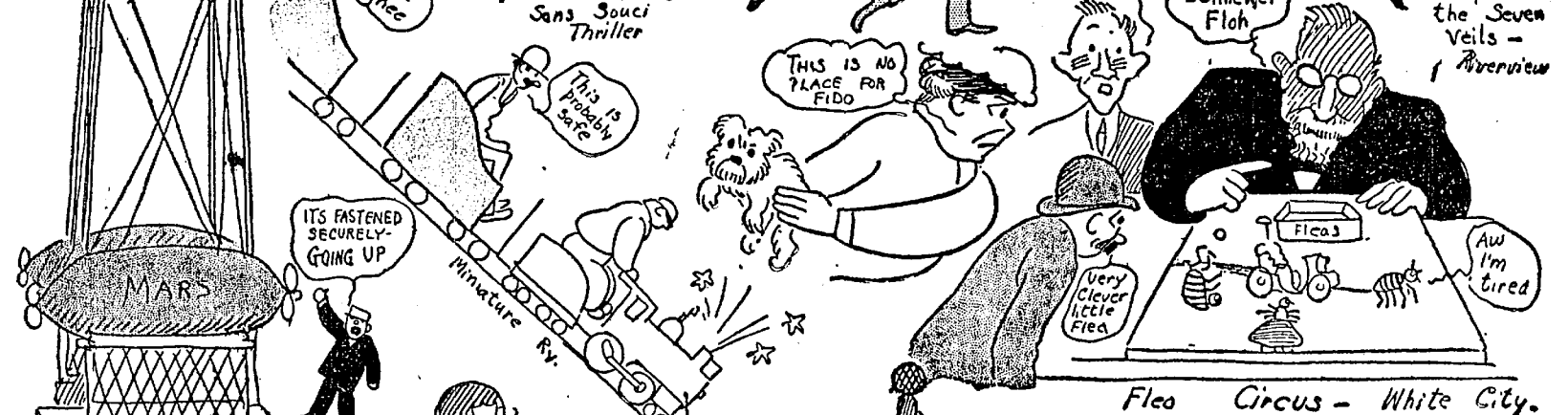
The Robert E. Lee burns at the dock at Memphis. The realism of this performance and the amount of local color that the management has managed to crowd into it makes it a marvel as a performance, aside from the barrels of excitement that is crowded into it. Negro roustabout, dance and sing upon the wharf; negro women wash clothes and hang them out from second story windows; mule drawn street cars roll sleepily past; the levee is doing, awaiting the great event of the day, the coming of the Robert E. Lee.

The boat comes in, passengers disembark, baggage and freight is taken out of the hold; the crowd proceeds to disperse, and then—then there is an explosion; one of the boilers blows up, and the next moment the proud Robert E. Lee is a mass of flames. From the boat the flames leap into the adjoining houses, and it is from the houses that the heroic rescues of night-clad maidens—who haven't shaved for a couple of days—at least—are made. It is all real, so real that the audience often rises and shouts encouragement to the noble rescuers.

Sans Souci has Ferullo and the Mountain Torrent to please the seeker of excitement. Ferullo is guaranteed to contain more thrills to the square inch than any band leader in the world, and he has perfected the art of imparting them to his audiences. Ferullo is the last word in emotional musical directors. His methods are the methods of C. S. Lewis. His left hand, with its long, supple and muscular. His left hand, with its long, half-long, black hair—caps the climax. Also, his hand makes sounds that are beautiful.

The Mountain Torrent is a combination of Chutes and the Old Mill, with a mountain stream rapids thrown in for good measure. The ride starts at the top of a chutes structure, plunges down into a miniature lake, rushes through the rapids, and continues into a grotto of "scenic wonders." It is guaranteed to shake one a little more than the ordinary chutes and a little less than the roller coaster. The thrillers of last season—scenic railway, coasters, miniature railway, and the great roller skating pavilion—are strong in the favor of visitors.

At the west side, Chutes park, the pioneer in big



of the wooden ones of yore. The ponies are of the small Shetland variety and are made fast to spars radiating from a center frame. Electric power turns the whole affair, and the ponies trot obediently around on the tan bark track underneath.

At Luna park Roy Knabenschue thrills the crowds twice daily by daring the dangers of the air in his airship. Residents of the neighborhoods adjoining Luna park no longer are surprised at the spectacle of strange things in the sky. They know it is Knabenschue, and they are getting used to it. Luna park is new, but it has gathered within its gates most of the attractions that make a summer park complete. It joins well with the others in the task of furnishing Chicago's 2,000,000 a surfeit of excitement for the summer season.

BRIGGS '07