

THE GREAT SNAZELLE

Mervyn Heard

Hearken ! He Comes !

The Great King Merrymaker.

The Laugh Doctor of the Whites.

The Man who makes Kings merry and Queens rejoice.

See, oh see this Fun Devil. Snazelle, the Rogo Rogo Vinaka who has appeared before the crowned heads of Europe and Asia, the potentates of Africa, and the titled gentry of Australia.

The great 'rib-tickler', the man who 'makes mountains laugh', whose jokes have made the blind to see and the lame to walk, and we will gladly take payment at the doors in coconuts where current coin of the realm is not on hand.



The "Snazelle" Musical & Dramatic Illustrated Recitals

Portrait of George Harry Snazelle. Snazelleparilla frontispiece

For some time now I have been pursuing the English magic lantern entertainer, notorious yarn-spinner and immaculately dressed gentleman who reputedly gave the word 'snazzy' to the English language – George Harry Snazelle. From 1885 until his demise in 1912 he toured extensively, delighting and lambasting audiences in Australia, America, Canada, South Africa and the islands of the Pacific (see the above notice which was nailed to a tree) with his popular dissolving view entertainment, *Music, Song and Story – Pictorially Illustrated*.

The often, quite literally, unbelievable information about him which exists in newspapers, periodicals and his own anecdotal autobiography *Snazelleparilla* (1898) would fill a thick book ... at least I hope it will. And when it does I hope you'll buy a copy.

Here's something to be going on with.

THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIGHT

Never yet have I revealed to mortal man where I was born, why I was born, or at what age I was born, for the simple reason that I never yet met mortal man – or woman – who was anxious to know.

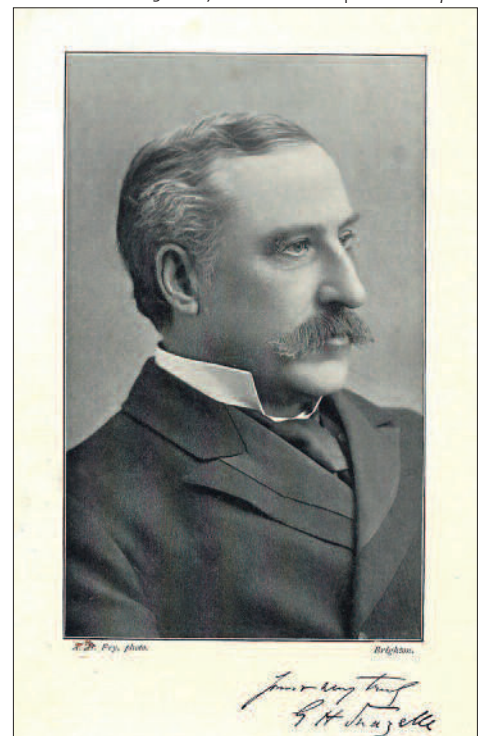
Snazelleparilla, decanted by G.S. Edwards,
Chatto & Windus, 1898

George Harry Snazel was born in Sydenham, south London, in 1848 and raised just a tempting stone's throw away from the relocated Crystal Palace. His father was a builder and a very prosperous one by all accounts – just like your builder – who made sufficient profits to enable his only son to attend a conservatoire in Paris, where he studied music. On his return to Sydenham the teenage George 'enjoyed' a career in banking although took care not to let this interfere with his primary interests performing in amateur operatic productions and playing cricket.

Eventually Snazel(le) appended two extra letters to his name, to make himself sound more exotic, and was invited to join the prestigious Carl Rosa Opera Company touring throughout Britain and mainland Europe. In the process he established a name for himself as the quintessential operatic villain, but surpassed himself in primo buffo roles, furthering his flair for comedy. Unfortunately though he was somewhat hot-headed and eventually became embroiled in a very public spat with his employer which resulted in fisticuffs. This was in 1884, and in the following year he severed his connections with the Carl Rosa Company entirely.

By now Snazelle was a very well-known operatic celebrity and someone who felt that his talents were such that he should let them fly. So he decided to create his

Carl Rosa, Will's Cigarette Card
from photograph by the London
Stereoscopic Company



Mr G. H. Snazelle, Sporting and Dramatic News, 16 May 1885



Amusements.
MECHANICS' HALL.
FAREWELL PERFORMANCES.
THREE NIGHTS ONLY
OF
MR. SNAZELLE'S
ENTERTAINMENT,
"MUSIC, SONG, AND STORY."
TO-NIGHT. TO-NIGHT.

PART 1.
Piano—"Zampa" ... **Mr Henry Hawkins**
Scenic Splendours—Some beautiful places
of the Earth.
Different from those shown before.
Song—"Deep in the Mine" ... **Mr Snazelle**
Recital—"And I to Myself" ... **Mr Snazelle**
With scenery and Music.
Recital—"The Dream of Eugene Aram" ...
Mr Snazelle.
With music by Dr. A. C. Mackenzie.
SCENIC EFFECTS, STATUARY, NEW
SERIES.
Song—"The Light of the World" ...
Mr Snazelle and Chorus.
Written especially to display **Holman**
Hunt's grand picture of that name.

PART 2.
ORIGINAL, HUMOROUS, AND
EXCENTRIC.
Organ Solo—"Faust" ... **Mr Henry Hawkins**
Scenery—Picturesque Tasmania
Song—"The Village Blacksmith" ...
Mr Snazelle.
With vocal, bells, chim., organ, choral, and
scenic effects.
Re-introduced by general desire.
Humorous Recital—"A Triplet" ...
Mr Snazelle.
Song—"Daddy" ... **Miss Snazelle**
Organ and Piano Solo—"Maritana" ...
Arranged and played by **Mr Henry Hawkins**
Scene—"The Garden Scene from Faust" ...
Painted by **Gustave Doré.**
Marguerite—Mysterious Entry of Mephis-
tophiles—sings the Mocking Sere-
nade—and vanishes—Where?
Mr Snazelle was the solo exponent of
the role of Mephistophiles in the **Carl Rosa**
Opera Company for 10 years.
Humorous Recital—I am the man who
writes the penny dreadfuls. "My terms
explained," and how I work out the
plots.
Serious Scenes—
"The Elephant's Terrible Revenge."
Illustrated by the worst pictures ever seen,
and accompanied by the most inappro-
priate music. Arranged by **Mr Henry**
Hawkins.
General Jumps on the Screen—Chromo-
tropes—Spiders—on a scale of splen-
dour (the chromotopes, not the
spiders) never before attempted.
Government House—"The Queen."

Looking at Messrs. **Witch Bros. and**
Birchall's.

Mr Snazelle's Entertainment, Mechanics' Hall

Last Night and Farewell to Mr. Snazelle,
Opera House

O P E R A H O U S E
Leicester ... **Mr. H. N. Abbott.**
LAST NIGHT AND FAREWELL
TO
SNAZELLE.
A SPECIAL AND UNIQUE PRO-
GRAMME.
READ:
Overture—"Faust." Scenery—The beauties
of Scotland, with Scotch music.
Duet—"When the Wind Blows in from the
Sea."
Recital—"The Leper," with choral effects.
Scenes—"The Beauties of England," with
English music.
Carol—"Christmas Night," with English
village scenes.
Scenes—"The Beauties of Ireland," with
Irish music.
Song—"Mr. Jones' Awful Dream," illus-
trated by twelve of the worst pictures
ever seen.
Humorous yarn—"My Wicked Brothers."
Scenes—Beautiful statuary and show places
of the world.
Scene—Silent fireworks and the fairy foun-
tain.
The garden scene from "Faust," painted
by **Gustave Doré.** Mysterious ap-
pearance of **Marguerite** and **Mephis-**
tophiles, who sing the Mocking
Serenade and vanishes, where??
Burns' portrait and "Auld Lang Syne."
God Save the Queen.
Mr. John Maginnity has kindly consented
to sing "The Dear Little Shamrock" during
the Irish scenes.
THE WELLINGTON PRESS says—
No person in the community should miss
seeing, or let his children miss seeing this
beautiful entertainment.
The Last opportunity TO-NIGHT.
Prices—4s, 3s, 2s, and 1s. Booking at
Holliday's. Carriages, 10 20.

own touring entertainment to showcase his many talents. He had also become fascinated by the magic lantern as a result of various visits to the Regent Street Polytechnic. He was particularly taken with the triunal system, which he considered might enhance his intended programme of songs and recitation with illustrations and, possibly, special effects.

His show received its debut in Liverpool, where, for a season it was honed and given the title by which it would be known, not always, but in most cases: *Music, Song and Story – Pictorially Illustrated*.

During the Christmas season of 1885 he was invited to present his show close to home, at the Crystal Palace. There were myriad other attractions, but Snazelle's show was of sufficient prominence for the weekly stage newspaper, *The Era*, to review it in detail (Monday 28 November).

This is how the stage setting was described:

The stage is divided by a 'flat' into two portions. One of these represents a small apartment and the other is filled by a large sheet. Mr Snazelle appears in the room and recites or sings; and, meanwhile, appropriate magic lantern views appear and disappear on the linen.

The idea of 'the apartment' was clearly designed to mimic a domestic lantern entertainment of the period and to suit his own intimate and confidential style of presentation.

Unfortunately, the newspaper account does not always tell us which items had accompanying slides, although I've cited them here, when known for certain. We learn that the programme commenced with some 'excellent dissolving views', prior to the appearance of Snazelle, who recited the poem 'I am poor and quite unknown' by Charles Mackay with slides. He then sang 'Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep' while the lantern offered a storm at sea sequence with thunder and lightning effects. Next there was a humorous number – 'Gemini and Virgo' (Calverley). 'Unfortunately', according to the reviewer, 'Mr Snazelle was not in very good voice on this occasion' and went on to say that his next item, his rendering of the Mocking Serenade from *Faust* 'suffered accordingly'. As to Snazelle's rendition of 'The Dream of Eugene Aram' the reviewer says 'The piece is one which demands great imaginative intensity in its recite, and, though, Mr Snazelle has a fine speaking voice and a picturesque appearance he apparently has not the magnetic power necessary to retain the attention of an audience through the delivery of this long and gloomy poem'.

More (unitemised) dissolving views were then shown, followed by a humorous recitation of B. Kingston's 'Triplet' and the illustrated song 'The Brook', which the reviewer found the 'most acceptable item of the performance'. While the following piece, Longfellow's 'Clock on the Stairs' left a 'less entirely satisfactory impression'. Snazelle closed with Gounod's 'Nazareth' – which the reviewer found 'unimpeachable'.

Overall the reviewer feared that Mr Snazelle had 'set himself rather too hard a task in undertaking by himself to delight an audience during an hour and a half', suggesting that the programme might be better received with the addition of some assistance, 'female if possible'. Further commenting, somewhat patronisingly, 'We live in an age when the public is extremely exacting and bent on getting "a lot for its money". We make this remark in an entirely kindly spirit, basing it on certain indications observable on Monday at the Crystal Palace, the audience at which place of amusement we have never observed to be unduly critical'.

Snazelle seems to have taken on board the point made about including a second voice, preferably female. Well-known lady soloists were often featured in his performances including, when she was old enough, his own daughter Mabel, who had studied under the eminent English baritone, Sir Charles Santley.

As you can see, overall the Crystal Palace selection was largely designed to portray the entertainer as a serious artist. But the tenor of the shows would soon change. Humour would become an increasingly major part of the general programme, not least the inclusion of a little yarn entitled 'How Bill Adams Won the Battle of Waterloo', the story of a braggart and a liar, which would eventual characterise Snazelle's own persona and style of comedy.

However, he still managed to convince audiences that he could be more thoughtful, giving 'sacred recitals' on Sundays. Not that he was particularly religious. In fact his attitude towards the church and its clergy was at times decidedly hostile. On one occasion he took a priest in Tasmania to court for conspiring with God to invoke an earthquake, the effect of which was to shut down his show and cause him to lose money. On another occasion he was

Title slide How Bill Adams Won the Battle of Waterloo





Tennyson's Enoch Arden slide 15
Tennyson's Enoch Arden slide 12



Gray's Elegy slide 15
Title slide, Longfellow The Village Blacksmith



Longfellow The Village Blacksmith
Title slide Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep

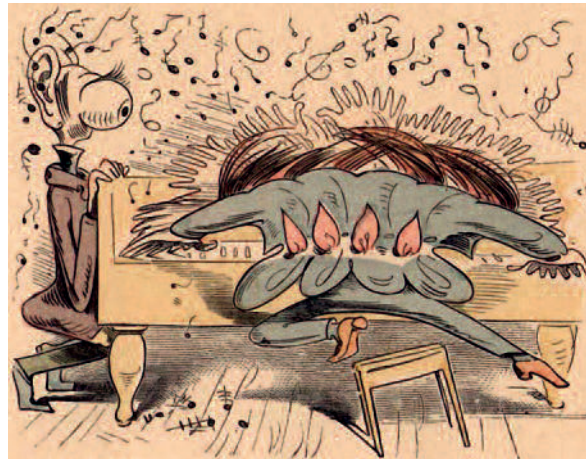


hauled up before the magistrates in Hastings for threatening to throw a beach-preacher into the sea.

The magic lantern, which was the main focus of most of his shows and had been acquired 'at enormous expense', he referred to as his 'scenographic apparatus' – a term which does not seem to crop up in any catalogue or technical reference book ... but made the machine sound – as was no doubt the desired effect – unique. One of the earliest operators was a certain Professor Huddlestone. There is little known of this particular 'Professor' although he is mentioned by name in a long article in the *Northampton Mercury* (4 June 1887) when Snazelle's show was featured as one of the events staged at the opening of the Pleasure Gardens. According to the report 20,000 people attended the opening, and as a part of Snazelle's performance Professor Huddlestone threw 30-ft diameter images of the Swiss Mountains and of the Thames onto the 'wooden screen', with, in conclusion, a message aimed at the originators of this grand enterprise: 'Cheers for J.C. Franklin and his manager W. Lawrence'. Musical sequences featuring the lantern alone were often included in Snazelle's programme.

When the show eventually settled down, Act One usually featured more serious operatic solos, recitative and dramatic material together with photographic views of the English countryside, such as the River Thames or foreign locations such as Palestine or the Paris Exhibition. The second part of the show was much lighter in tone. Here you would find the more humorous lantern items, such as the tale of Bill Adams and stories by Wilhelm Busch. Conversing with the audience in a confidential way he would also tell tales, relying on words not pictures, recalling supposed personal encounters with prospectors, billiard-markers, 'phonographic dogs' and a stammering whistler he'd supposedly encountered in Switzerland.

From Wilhelm Busch Der Virtuos. The lantern set often features as a finale



He stayed on long after the initial tour promoting and presenting his one-man shows in Tasmania and New Zealand, supplementing his income with spells as a guest artist in various comic operas in Melbourne, Sydney and elsewhere. Stories of his pranks and outrageous adventures often appeared in the newspaper. Some may even have been true. Not that it mattered too much to the majority of the readership, who no doubt with Snazelle shared Mark Twain's belief that one should 'never let the truth get in the way of a good story'.

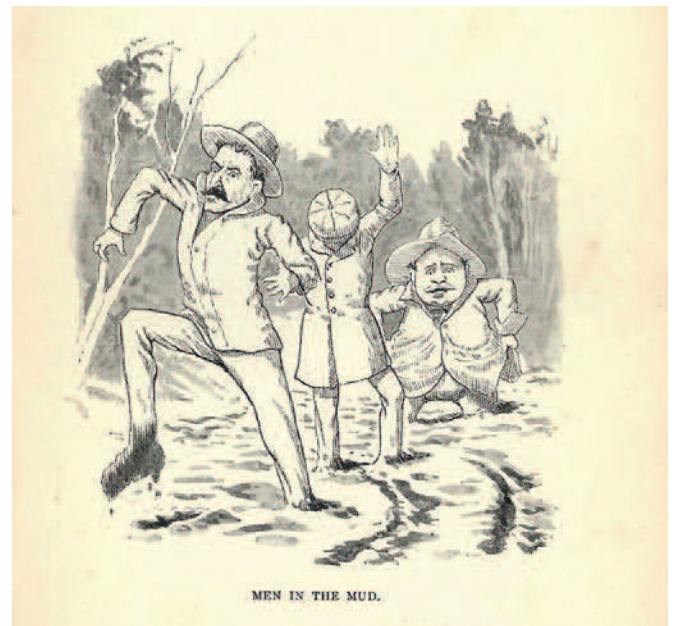
His popularity encouraged him to write his own fanciful articles, centred on himself and his newly acquired personal manager, the American, Robert Gourlay, aka 'Uncle Bob'. The first of these stories – 'Three Men in the Mud' – was serialised in the *Otago Witness* in the spring of 1892.



In 1889, he received an invitation from a concert promoter which was to lead to a major change in his fortunes and the direction of his career. He was offered the chance to perform in venues in Australia. So he packed up his entire extended family – his wife, daughter and two teenage sons, Professor Huddlestone and his regular pianist, Henry Hawkins, and set sail for the antipodes.

Here he was immediately clasped to the collective Australian bosom. They loved him. Ex-pats loved the fact that he brought with him scenes of the old country and large doses of Englishness. But, perhaps most of all, they admired his ability – one shared with many Australians – to spin a good yarn.

Men in the Mud



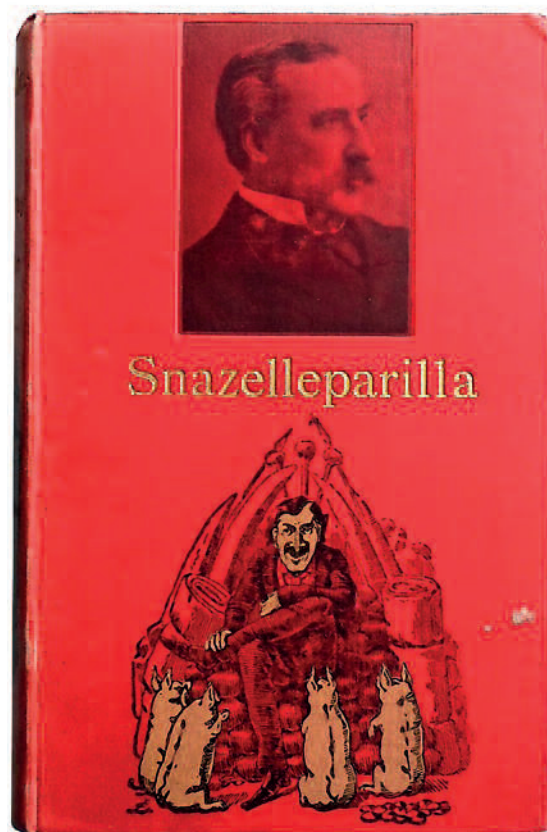
In July of the same year he visited the island of Fiji. Varying accounts of his deeds were reported in the papers in Australia, and also back home in England.

A year later Snazelle journeyed from Australia to South Africa, where he'd hoped to have met with the kind of welcome response he'd enjoyed in Melbourne. But here attitudes to the English and Englishness were mixed. This coupled with the dust storms and rampant disease led to his final conclusion that the Cape was 'a hellhole'.

Snazelle arrived back in England in March of 1894. He didn't stay long. Just long enough to see his daughter married off to the Captain of the steam ship *Woolamaloo* that had brought them home, and to stage a few shows here and there, including a brief season at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly.

After a stay in England of less than six months he was en route to America, where he was severely ripped-off, and thence to Canada, again receiving mixed reviews. A set of detailed programmes for various shows in London, Ontario, survives.

When he came home he was encouraged to write a book based on his career. This autobiography, *Snazelleparilla*, was written with the help of a friend G.S. Edwards (aka Gorgeous George), and published in 1898 with illustrations by another friend, Charles Lyall. In essence it's no more than a collection of loosely assembled anecdotes, many concerning his recent travel experiences and some of the scripts which formed the basis for his on-stage yarns. Lyall was also responsible for illustrating some of Snazelle's lantern material, although, with reference to other publications, it's difficult to ascribe provenance.



Cover of *Snazelleparilla*

THEATRE ROYAL
A STARTLING EVENT!
 The First Appearance here of the Gifted and Insoluble Artist
SNAZELLE! SNAZELLE!
 Grand Opening Night
TO-NIGHT (MONDAY) TO-NIGHT.
 The Management announces with much gratification that they have completed arrangements for a season here of that most fascinating and novel entertainment with which Mr. SNAZELLE has during the past several months excited unexampled wonder and admiration throughout Australasia.
Mr. A. J. W. ST'S Extraordinary Moving Exposition and Enchanting Living Reproduction of "OUR NAVY,"
 Manager for A. J. West, Captain F. EDWARDS, R.N.
 Which will be given with the exact completeness of detail as that which has characterised the 70 Performances in Melbourne; 80 performances at the Palace Theatre, Sydney; 25 Performances at the Theatre Royal, Adelaide; and 24 performances at His Majesty's Opera House, Brisbane. Also this is the same programme that was given by Mr. Snazelle at Government House, Sydney, by command, and in the presence of their R.H. the Duke and Duchess of York, the Governor-General and Lady Hopetoun, and Assembly, on the evening of the 3rd June.
OUR NAVY.
 The stirring pictures of the action and life and being of the Royal Navy can only be realised by witnessing this Extraordinary Unique and Fascinating Entertainment.
 PRICES—3s, 2s, and 1s. Box Plan at Munro and Co's.
 Chief Operator and Electrician, Mr. Herbert Wynnham; Musical Conductor, Mr. H. Rushworth; Manager for Mr. Snazelle, Mr. Charles MacMahon.

"Our Navy", Morning Bulletin 12 August 1901

with a special naval adviser, Captain F. Edwards RN, he organised a short tour. Except that, unlike West's original, Snazelle's was a modified version, including various stirring sea ballads and, it seems, quite a lot of unrelated bits of business.

We can't be clear whether there was an artistic falling out between Edwards and/or West and Snazelle. But for some unexplained reason, after a few short months the tour continued minus Snazelle.

Snazelle returned home and settled down, becoming a well-known Hastings resident. He undertook a few shows from time to time and a few roles in touring operatic productions, but his health was poor. Money was tight. In fact he ended up being sued by West for non-payment of an outstanding debt. However, eventually Snazelle was offered a financial lifeline through an engagement as part time Professor of Elocution at the Guildhall School of Music in London.

He did return once more to Australia in 1909 for a short tour, taking part in a series of ill-fated operatic productions. He died back in London in 1912, his entire estate worth just £42.

In the late 1890s Snazelle was clearly doing well. He bought a hop farm near Edenbridge in Kent and rented a town property in Hastings.

By now the cinematograph had been attracting some attention and Snazelle attended a show in Brighton given by the moving picture pioneer Alfred West, a photographer from Portsmouth.

West's *Our Navy* featured footage of naval matters and Snazelle could see that this film material had the potential to reinvigorate his own by now slightly tired format. Also, imbued with underlying messages of heroism and patriotism, he could see how it might appeal to his old, established fan-base in Australia. He spoke to West, who agreed to give Snazelle the rights to present an Australian version of the show. Together

George and Uncle Bob

