

APPENDIX I

HARRY CLAY: QUOTATIONS

MISCELLANEOUS QUOTATIONS BY AND ABOUT HARRY CLAY

The quotations included in this appendix mostly concern Harry Clay, both as an individual and as the head of his vaudeville company. Naturally the list is not an exhaustive one, but serves simply to allow one an impression of Clay as published through the various periodicals of the day, and the occasional references to him in later years. Quotations relating specifically to Clay's Queensland tours are included in Appendix C. The list has been compiled according to the year of publication.

1892

- Messrs. Clay and [Charles] Hudson won the approval of the house by their rendition of the duet "Pilot Brave." Mr Alf M. Hazlewood was the interlocutor, and Mr Frank Yorke and Mr Harry Clay were heartily applauded for their contributions (SMH: 6 Sept. 1892, 6).

1893

- The sentimental songs of Mr Henry Townley, Mr Henry Clay and Mr J.S. Porter were as effectively rendered as ever, and the vocalists were liberally applauded for their first class singing (SMH: 17 July 1893, 6).
- One of the best contributions in the first part of the programme was Mr Henry Clay's rendering of the tuneful ballad "Log Cabin in the Dell" (SMH: 7 Aug. 1893, 7).
- Among the items in [the first part] may be mentioned Miss Blanche Montague's "Kathleen Ashore," and Mr Harry Clay's "Sadie Ray," both of which were meritorious performances (SMH: 23 Oct. 1893, 6)

1898

- * In the first part, miscellaneous in character, the corner men (Messrs Wal Rockley, Tom Edwards, Frank Yorke, and Alf Rockley), with the interlocutor (Mr Harry Clay), filled in the intervals between the items with crispy jokes, all devoid of the "chestnut" hall mark, and in addition did turns in the special lines by which they have made their reputations (BC: 5 Dec. 1898, 4).

1900

- Mr Harry Clay, a tenor vocalist of no mean order, met with a splendid reception, and had to respond to encores (NM: 18 Sept. 1900, 2).

1901

- A Waxworks and Variety Show. - Elsewhere Mr Clay tells our readers he is visiting West Maitland, and brings with him a splendid waxworks collection.... The variety company is a strong cast as it includes the names of Mr Sam Wilson... the Smith Sisters... little Essie Clay (the child vocalist who is a great favourite here), Mr Will Bracey... and, of course, the redoubtable Harry himself.... The hall should be crowded nightly, Mr Clay's name being sufficient to guarantee that he is bringing along first-class entertainment (MDM: 14 Feb. 1901, 2).
- Mr Clay's dance and club swinging act deserved the well-merited encore it gained (QT: 19 Mar. 1901, 3)

1909

- In building up his City and Suburban Vaudeville Company into the success it is to-day, Harry Clay has succeeded where dozens before him failed. Harry takes the liveliest interest in every individual turn, reveling in it if it is at all good with the enthusiasm of a youth who is at an entertainment for the first time in his life; and on the other hand, sympathising with the performer, and trying to drop him a serviceable hint or two, if the item is not just what it ought to be. As for the performance itself, the stage-manager of a mammoth pantomime could not be more taken up with his first-night's production than Harry is with his show every night in the week all the year round. It is this ever-present geniality, this ever-present energy, and this ever-present

watchfulness on the part of Harry - for the men and women in his employ on the one hand, and for the servicing up of his entertainment in the best possible way on the other - that endears him at once to performers, and has likewise earned him the goodwill of the public by always ensuring them an excellently-run and excellently-presented show (TT: June 1909, 18).

- Mr Clay's position in the suburbs to-day is that of, say, the Tivoli in the city. His company is quite an accepted institution, and one that is here to stay - assuredly and permanently (TT: Sept. 1909, 18).
- It is a great throw-in for residents outside the city to have the opportunity of enjoying, once a week, a really excellent evening's amusement right at their very doors. This is what Mr Clay seeks to give them; and the success which is attending his efforts is becoming more pronounced every month - large and appreciative audiences being his reward nightly, and the limitations of the different buildings alone being responsible for the gatherings to hear his company not being even greater than they are. Mr Clay's position in the suburbs to-day is that of, say the Tivoli in the city. His company is quite an accepted institution, and one that is here to stay - assuredly and permanently (TT: Sept. 1909, 18).
- The weekly visits (to the suburbs) are anxiously awaited by many a family that could not possibly journey to Sydney City to see the sights and hear the latest music. What they did before Clay's Company brought the newest turns out to them one can only surmise (TT; Oct. 1909, 23).

1910

- His voice - a fine tenor - was heard to much advantage and the number ("Larboard Watch") was one of the most attractive items of the evening (DB: 1 July 1910, 4).
- Mr. Harry Clay delighted the audience with a fine rendition of "The Anvil Chorus" in which he was supported by the members of the company (DB: 5 July 1910, 4).
- "Yes," said Mr Harry Clay, speaking to the Theatre the other day. "For the present I have entirely given up my city and suburban vaudeville circuit. The picture shows, particularly in the suburbs, have proved too much for me. I have been playing in and around Sydney for the past five years. I think I have been the most successful man in Australia, so far as city and suburban vaudeville is concerned. I am leaving Sydney to join my Queensland show at Rockhampton on June 30. I shall be returning, to Sydney about the end of August, when I may give the city and suburbs another try in the matter of vaudeville. I was born at Singleton (N.S.W); I first appeared with amateurs; and it was really at Newcastle that I came to take to the stage as a profession. Yes; 'Underneath the Maple' was one of my favourites. I sang it for nearly 25 years. But I sang 'Essie Dear' even longer than that. It was after 'Essie Dear' I called my daughter - Essie. Perhaps there is no harm in my saying that often after singing the same song for 10 or 15 years I have been approached by an admirer with the remark, 'That is a fine song you have just got hold of.' Never mind how old I am. I have been on the stage since I was a boy." Mr Walter Whyte of the Sydney Amphitheatre said he is a regular white man. There are very few indeed who will dissent from this. Mr Whyte's estimate of Harry Clay (is) the highest tribute anyone could ask for (TT: July 1910, 25).

1911

- "I would not open in the suburbs in summer-time, if I had the best performers on earth. The biggest trouble is that the picture-shows charge three-pence and a penny. The result is that it is impossible to compete against them. The penny charge is supposed to apply to children; but they would pass you in for a penny, even id you were as big as Dick Barker, the Queensland giant, and could hand them down a star. People come in to the city from the suburbs to go to the theatre. It does not matter what they have to pay. They will go to that theatre - even if the programme is not half as good as the one might be giving them at their very door. The idea they get into their heads is that your company must necessarily be inferior in the suburbs. Consequently, this fact also tells against the vaudeville-man in catering for suburbanites." Speaking enthusiastically of Queensland, he further said, "Towns are springing up that you would never have dreamt of playing in a few years ago. Today you can take a good-sized company into them, with most payable results" (TT: Oct. 1911, 29).

1912

- J.C. Bain is getting a big following at the Princess Theatre and in the suburbs. As regards the suburbs, he has succeeded where even that favourite and experienced general, Harry Clay, failed. Mr Bain has 80 artistes on his salary-list (TT Apr. 1912, 18).

1914

- [Harry Clay's] solo singing in the first part is an object lesson in deportment for those younger singers who imagine they are of some account in the concert world. Mr Clay is also displaying his ability as a character actor in the farce, and scores well (AV: 29 Apr. 1914, 35).

- Harry Clay celebrated a birthday last Sunday. It wouldn't do to tell you just how old this well-known manager is, but suffice it to say that he is (apart from his gray hairs) as young looking as when the writer first heard him warbling "Elsie of the Glen," about twenty three years ago. A smart dresser, and of fine personality, Mr Clay is still a powerful factor as a vaudeville artist (AV: 13 May 1914, n. pag).
- "If Mr (Jimmy) Craydon and Harry Clay were clergymen, we would never miss Mass on Sundays." Remark by an old dame from the gallery at the Princess Theatre (AV: 29 July 1914, 8).
- In 1914 Harry proposed that Horace Bent was the greatest nigger comedian the world has had, and absolutely the funniest blank ever born. "If Beaumont Read were alive today," he added, "he would send them crazy. There are many alto voices, certainly; but his was the only also of the kind ever heard in Australia. And to think of the hardships such men suffered! Others with not a fraction of their gifts are today getting more for a week than they earned in three months. Except for a few comedians the performers of the present time - in minstrel-work and vaudeville, I mean - are not to be compared with the men of twenty years ago. Comparatively speaking the lot of the artist to-day is truly a bed of roses" (TT; Sept. 1914, 25).

1915

- Harry Clay's Bridge Theatre has discarded vaudeville in favour of drama. The change was inevitable, as audiences were tired of seeing the same old faces - week after week - for years. Said Mr Clay to the writer some time ago: "There's a fine crimson lot of cerise individuals around. They come begging for work, when most of them ought to be out on the railway deviation works with a ruddy pick in their hands. The blanky cows very seldom learn a new song or business, and then wonder why they don't get cardinal work. One of these days I'll cut all these adjectives out, and put in popular drama. Then I'll be rid of some of these flaming pests." And now the inevitable has happened. Mr Clay is ever forceful in his remarks, but there is every justification in this instance (AV: 6 Jan. 1915, 8).
- Harry Clay himself opened the bill, and proved that he is still to be classed with the front-rank of singers (AV: 7 Apr. 1915, n. pag).
- "If we could only get two nights like it," [Saturday nights] says Harry Clay to TT, "we would be satisfied. But except [on that night] there is nothing doing" (TT: June 1915, 47)
- Harry Clay has such an unlimited stock of after-dinner stories that he is thinking of publishing them in book form, as "Harry Clay's Winning Post Annual." He will be assisted in this work by Arthur Morley, who will write the preface to the edition. Some choice stories can be guaranteed (AV: 1 Sept. 1915, n. pag.).
- Harry Clay is synonymous with generosity; this is the reason he has for the time being, turned over his private dressing-room to Arthur Morley. Judging by the improvement in Arthur's beauty, he must have found out where his white-haired friend keeps his facial dressing, for no ordinary greasepaints can make Morley as beautiful as he looks in the present revue (AV: 17 Nov. 1915, n. pag.).
- In reference to Australian performers Harry Clay stated to the Theatre: "Why don't they get something fresh? For year after year they will do nothing but the same old thing, with the result that the public get sick of them, and it is impossible for any manager who relies wholly on them - as I have done - to make a do of his show. There are two course open to the Australian artist," said Clay - "either get out of Australia, when he has sufficiently worked the Australian field, or to get out of the business altogether." In reply the magazine wrote, "the Australian artist has never had in a small way two better friends than Harry Clay and Jimmy Bain" (TT: June 1915, 50).

1916

- Harry Clay wishes it known that he is not connected with any vaudeville show now playing the suburbs and using his name, or has he given anyone permission to use his name in connection with any show. The only theatre he is connected with at present is the Bridge Theatre, Newtown (AV: 26 Apr. 1916, 1).

1917

- Harry Clay says he would like to have all the bobs one prominent racing man is supposed to have got for tea money in the old days! Harry says the battlers nowadays are not to be compared to the old ones, and he is not losing any sleep over the Majestic (AV: 20 June 1917, 22).
- Harry Clay is still keeping the flag flying prosperously at the Newtown Bridge Theatre (Sydney). There isn't a more consistently hard-working vaudeville manager in Australia than the same Harry (TT: Nov. 1917, 33).

1918

- Harry Clay's company, consisting of Ted Stanley, Geo Walton, Phillip Sisters, Lalla Ward, Lulu Eugene, Ern Crawford, Jas Caldwell, the Lateens and George Sorlie, played to a capacity house at the "Bunyip's" [Andy Kerr's] Boomerang Theatre, Coogee Beach on Wednesday. Harry sends his Coogee Patrons the best artists to be obtained in Australia, and deserves the good patronage extended to him (AV: 25 Jan. 1918, 18).
- A Boost for Harry Clay - A pro writes:- "How many of us owe a debt of gratitude to Harry Clay? This manager is the real friend of the local performer, and those who support his shows assist Australian talent. Ever ready to advise an act, Mr Clay assists in getting best results from those who would otherwise find things very awkward but for him" (AV: 1 Feb. 1918, n. pag.).
- On the final night of Harry Sadler's season [22/3/18] at the Princess Theatre, Harry Clay's season [starting 23rd] was introduced by Mr Morley. "Said Morley, in a well-delivered little speech ... There has never been a more respected name than Mr Clay's in the vaudeville history of Australia." So, too, think the public - judging by the enthusiastic applause with which Mr Morley's statement respecting Mr Clay was received (TT: Apr. 1918, 33).
- Composed by Harry Clay was the successful duet sung by Caldwell and Crawford on Saturday night last entitled, "When the Leaves Came Drifting Down." A few more numbers such as this would not go amiss if Harry could let us have them. This one's certainly a winner in every way (AV: 30 Mar 1918, 13).
- "Oh Fair!" When you hear Harry Clay say this, when you ask him what sort of a house he has, you can bet your last sixpence he has a "good 'un." Last Saturday night he could not get another one into the Princess Theatre, and when asked what it was like he smiled and said, "Oh Fair," then he started to tell funny stories. If it had not been fair, there would have been no stories. When he was asked how his house was at Manly, he used to start and tell you about his beautiful tent (AV: 22 Mar. 1918, n. pag.).
- Harry Clay and George Sorlie made quite a hit at the Princess Theatre last Saturday, when they did a double dance. The handsome and ever-young Harry is in excellent singing voice at present, and is a big acquisition to the vocal side of the bill (AV: 10 May 1918, 3).
- One of the best programmes of all-vaudeville seen at this theatre [Bridge Theatre] for some time. Long before seven thirty, Saturday, the theatre was packed, and hundreds turned away (AV: 9 Aug. 1918, 7).

1919

- Harry Clay's face is all smiles, and it should be considering the packed houses he has nightly at his [Newtown] theatre. No doubt about it, he leaves nothing wanting in the way of amusements for the patrons of his theatres (AV: 25 Jan. 1919 n. pag.).
- Harry Clay says in the old vaudeville days, when Frank Clark used to take companies out to the country towns, and bad business came along, the artists never received a razoo, and those were the first to take their hats off to Frank when they landed back in Sydney (AV: 27 June 1919, 8).
- AV: review of On Deck by Arthur Morley. "The whole show is scintillating with animation, colour, and humour, and offerings of its kind should do much towards keeping the standard of Clay bravely in the fore-front of North Sydney patrons. With such productions brought to their door, suburbanites are going to have no trouble in seeing a metropolitan show, for the present class of entertainment is well up to the equal of a majority of the city shows." [Kitch] (AV: 6 Sept. 1919, n. pag.).
- Harry Clay has a fine show at Kerr's Gaiety Theatre this week, and it will be followed, from week to week, by another equally as good. Many of Australia's best performers are on this manager's par-roll, and he is ever on the look-out for the best available talent (AV: 27 Nov. 1919, 9).

1920

- Harry Clay attributes the sustained interest of packed houses nightly to the fact that frequent changes of programmes and companies is the rule and not the exception. Seeing the same faces, week after week, is apt to pall, but when there is a spell in between, there is no monotony. To see a Saturday night at both the Bridge and Princess Theatre is a treat for the vaudeville fan. On these occasions the houses are crammed to their utmost capacity. The same state of affairs is now observed at the Gaiety, where Mr Clay presents a brand-new bill every week (AV: 18 Mar. 1920, 3).
- Harry Clay is probably the oldest manager, in experience, in Australia. Although connected with theatrical business for about thirty-five years - if not more - there are those who will tell you that apart from his silvery hair, "Harry Clay is as young looking as when we first knew him, over thirty years ago; yes, sir!" There is nothing like feeling just as young as you can, but when a man looks a decade more youthful than he is then good luck to him. Mr Clay doesn't appear ten years younger than he actually is - he looks twenty! (AV: 29 Apr. 1920, n. pag.).

- Harry Clay is contemplating adding a couple more theatres to his circuit, just to make it the half-dozen. There is no greater battler in Sydney than the same Harry; he can still do a hard day's graft with the best of them, and he is in the happy position of being in Easy-Street for the rest of his life. His Watson's Bay tenants presented him with an address the other day, which was much appreciated (AV: 18 June 1920, 7).
- We hear Harry Clay is booking up some fine over the odds acts for his vaudeville circuit. This is as it should be. With the exception of Fullers and McIntosh, he should command all the best to be had, and the paying patrons want to see a few more faces with some new and original stuff badly (AV: 22 July 1920, 21).
- Outside of the Fullers, there is no vaudeville entrepreneurs of note, if except Mr Harry Clay, whose city and suburban circuit is limited to Sydney, and whose artistes are the best available. His programmes are very good indeed, but he, like other managers, would be much better pleased were he able to select from a wider range of artists. With business acumen he has signed up the best local talent, and also an occasional overseas act that has terminated its Fuller engagement, so that outside of Clay and Fuller acts there are very few artists available (AV: Sept. 1920, 4).
- Rozelle is one of the sites proposed to bump Ted Betts. What with Sir Rupert Clark's new place.... and now Rozelle, someone will fall with a wallop. Harry Clay may reap a rich harvest out of the new building scheme also. Harry is always ready to negotiate (AV: 1 Oct. 1920, 13).
- Mr Clay was associated with most of the old-time minstrel performers. As a quartette of endmen, he says Australia will never again see the equal of Horace Bent, Sam Keenan, Alf Moynham, and Alf Lawrence [sic - Lawton] (at his best). His opinion is that Bent never had a superior in the whole world (TT: Mar. 1920, 25).
- It says much for the popularity of Harry Clay's shows when after one of the hottest days on record - last Saturday - Ted Stanley's new company played to a full house. Popular artists, popular prices, is the Clay slogan. The orchestra, under the baton of J. T. Knibbs, the new conductor, showed a decided improvement (AV: 3 Dec. 1920, 16).

1922

- Remarkably fine entertainments are being provided by Harry Clay at his three Sydney theatres - the Princess, the Gaiety, and Newtown Bridge. Well-covered, too, are the suburbs by his touring companies, with the result that with theatre-goers generally Mr Clay's name has become more and more a household word. Australian talent owes a lot to Mr Clay. Any act with the least promise in it can always get a show with him. In this way he is responsible for bringing out some of the finest performers Australia has produced. But it is first and foremost as a stand-by to Australians - employing them by the hundred year in and year out - that he will ever be most gratefully remembered (TT: May 1922, 24).
- Australian material of any promise is always sure of getting a show with Mr Clay. Thus, with fresh performers coming on, the engagement of whatever meritorious acts that may be offering, and the transference from house to house of established favourites, the popular Harry has no difficulty in giving his patrons plenty of variety. And it is variety in vaudeville that tells! (TT: July 1922, 21).
- Excellent business was done everywhere during the holiday season. Of course Mr Clay is not in the game for the good of his health. At the same time the many thousands who are unable to visit the heart of the city for their entertainment have reason to be thankful to him for the opportunity of enjoying - the whole year round - a well-conducted, diversified show right at their very doors (TT: Jan 1923, 20).

1923

- With the advent of the Ada Reeve Co. to Fullers' Theatre (Sydney) vaudeville there for the present is off. George Marlow at the Grand Opera House is of course doing pantomime. The result is that in vaudeville Harry G. Musgrave (Tivoli) and Harry Clay (Princess, Gaiety and Newtown Bridge) have Sydney between them (TT: Jan. 1923, 20).
- Harry Clay reports a particularly good month at his Sydney shows - the Gaiety, Princess and Newtown Bridge. Quick changes are the order with Mr Clay. Artists are moved on from one theatre to the other, with the result that patrons are always sure of seeing a succession of fresh faces - except in the case of established favourites. Some of these have - and are justifying - what appears to be a life-long engagement (TT: Apr. 1923, 29).
- A great deal of the best in Australian talent is always on show at these theatres. But besides the merit in the acts themselves they are invariably presented by Mr Clay in such a manner as to get their full 100 per cent value (TT: May 1923, 17).
- Friends of Mr Clay throughout Australia will regret to hear that in health he is still far from being his old accustomed self. Still, he is well enough to take an active interest in his business; and the assurance of the doctor who has been attending him is that with care he has nothing to fear (TT: June 1923, 27).

- At any of his three theatres... there's always something to delight you - something to give you a laugh, however case-hardened you may be. Mr Clay is really the patron saint of the Australian performer. And how many hungry homes would there be, if it were not for the commercial-showman genius of Harry. For the simple, truthful fact is - the generous Sir Benjamin Fuller himself would be the first to admit it - that nobody in Australia has surpassed Mr Clay in the employment of Australian-born artists (TT: July 1923, 17).

- Harry Clay keeps up his standard of always giving patrons plenty for their money, and some of the turns are exceedingly good (TT: Sept. 1923, 29).

1925

- At the funeral, which took place at the South Head Cemetery last Thursday, a large and representative gathering was present. In fact, it can safely be said that no more fitting tribute to a deceased manager has ever been noted in this country, for old-timers, and those of today gathered round the graveside to pay their last respects to one who, had done so much to promote the well-being of the Australian performer (E: 25 Feb. 1925, 4).

- Many old time performers paid their last respects to a much-esteemed gentleman. As a matter of fact, the occasion probably saw more Australian performers congregated together than at any other period in the history of the business (E: 25 Feb 1925, 32).

1957

- One man destined to rank among the greatest of Australian comedians was summarily fired by Clay's manager. The comedian went to Harry Clay. "Give me another chance, Mr Clay," he said. "I'll prove I can make the grade." Clay thought it over. "No man challenges me that I don't take it up," he replied. "I'll give you another chance." Years later when the comedian was a top-liner, Clay took him by the hand and said: "I see you kept your promise" (MA: 3 July 1957, n. pag.).



Plate 20

The grave of Harry, Kate and Essie Clay
South Head Cemetery (Sydney)
(Clay Djubal)