

Earliest Use of “Gay” for a Homosexual Man



Will S. Hays

The Gay Young Clerk in the Dry Good Store

New York: John L. Peters (1868) \$850

Folio. [6]pp. Good with splitting to the spine fold, chipping to the corners of two pages and general wear. Sheet music written by the prolific songwriter Will S. Hays that has been credited with being one of the earliest popular uses of the term “gay” to refer to a homosexual man. While the lyrics stating, “he is nobody’s beau, but maybe you all knew that before,” can be interpreted as a man that doesn’t like women, we suspect it may be the lithographic cover by Ehrgott & Krebs of Cincinnati of a foppish, finely dressed man leaning on a street poles with a curious look on his face, that is far more suggestive. The image even elicited comment in the January 1869 issue of *Peter’s Musical Monthly*: “Speaking of the title page we are unable to tell whether the gay young clerk is trying to look sarcastic or simply killing.” Further contributing to the speculation is an often repeated reference to Hays being a female impersonator. While cross-dressing was not unheard of in American theatre of the time, so far it’s a detail that we could find no evident to support. Regardless, this sheet music appears to be rare with *OCLC* locating just other two copies, both with different pagination. [BTC#424869]

GAY YOUNG CLERK IN A DRY-GOODS STORE.

COMIC SONG WITH CHORUS.

Written and Composed by WILL. S. HAYS.

Allegretto

1. O
2. His
3. He
3. He

CHORUS. Unis. *SOLO a tempo.*
slower

1. lis - ten now and I'll sing a song, How are you la - dies, How - dy; I'll
2. eyes they are of a dark sky - blue, How are you la - dies, How - dy; His
3. wears side whis - kers on his jaws, How are you la - dies, How - dy; Wont
4. smiles at all the girls he meets, How are you la - dies, How - dy; And you

slower *a tempo.*

* 355-3

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4. smiles at all the girls he meets, How are you la - dies, How - dy;	And you

Price 10 cents

The Gay Young Clerk in the Dry Goods Store



As sung by Emerson, Allen
and
Manning's Minstrels

Written and Composed
BY
Will. S. Mays.

LEWIS & KRAUS, LITH. CINCINNATI.

Also by the same author: 'Nora O'Neil,' 'Deacon from Home,' 'No Name,' 'Jessie,' 'Jessie Dean,' 'Take me back Home,' 'Little Sam,' 'Shamus O'Brien,' 'The Moon is out to-night Love,' 'Good-bye, Old Home,' 'Darling Kate,' 'Kiss me good-bye, Darling,' 'Down by the deep sad Sea,' 'My Southern swing Home,' 'Beautiful Girl of the South,' 'We parted by the River Side,' 'Mrs. Jinks of Madison Square,' 'You've been a friend to me,' 'I'm still a friend to you,' 'Old Uncle Ben,' 'Coraline,' 'Gay young Clerk,' 'Kitty Roy,' 'Prettiest Girl I know,' 'Katy McPerran,' 'Oh! let us kiss the Baby,' 'My Father is growing old,' 'Lover Lee,' 'Why don't you write to me,' 'I'll remember you in my Prayers,' 'Oh! p'shaw Gal,' 'Nobody's Darling,' 'Angel of my Dreams,' 'Belle Bradley,' 'She's the sweetest of them all,' &c.

Plain  3 1/2

Picture  5

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