

THE STAGE STRUCK GIRL

By the People Who Know Best

JUST what would become of the stage struck girl if she were deprived of the advice she usually receives, is too dreadful to contemplate. No one has ever had the courage to advise the working girl *not* to work. No one has ever painted the dangers of work to her. The honest working girl is still an appealing heroine personifying the highest virtues of her sex.

But no one advises the stage struck girl, who is also one of the working girls of this enlightened century, to go to work on the stage. No halo of sociological sympathy adorns her crowning glory. She begins the profession of being an actress with every discouragement, usually with suspicions against her that are not what they should be.

Now, what's the reason for this?

An obliquity of vision, perhaps, which the artistic instincts of those related to the theatre have acquired through long observation of the ways of the theatre. When she succeeds, the glare of a spotlight may blind her, perhaps, to some sacrifices of the domestic hearth which her friends wilfully predicted—but her pocket-book is very much improved.

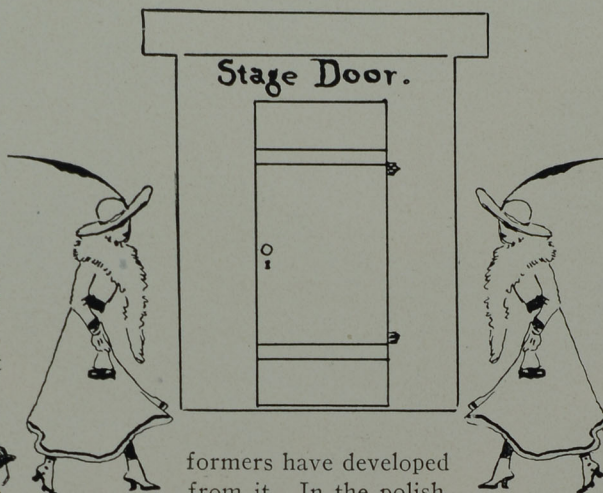
She ought to have known better, poor girl! She would have been so much happier if she had become like other working girls, a poorly paid efficient slave of the office or department store. That's what she would have been in many instances, if she had listened to the advice of those who objected to her stage career.

You can draw your own conclusions as to the good sense of the advice, and the better sense of the stage struck girl who has to find a job. Twenty-five dollars a week is a more sensible wage than \$15.00 or \$10.00 or \$8.00—yes, or even \$6.00, isn't it? That's why there are so many stage struck girls. The reason they fail, is material for a more romantic mood of writing than this, but in spite of it, they are stage struck because they are trying to get on in the world, which is always worth while.

Possibly, the early piety which causes premature baldness among so many of our most distinguished theatrical managers, came to them by giving long, careful, exhausting lectures to stage struck young women, not to go on the stage.

Daniel Frohman has undoubtedly done his share of this philanthropy. But Mr. Frohman's advice was always constructive, it was either helpful to the aspirant with promise, or it was stinging to the one without any.

"The actor and actress are the more or less haphazard development of chance," he said. "Hundreds of young men with rather good looks and hundreds of young women of rather attractive personality become actors and actresses—more or less good. Our way of producing actors is rough and ready, but many capable per-



formers have developed from it. In the polish, the finish of acting, we fail. We possess angularities. The last fine touch, the suavity, and the last, last word in the lexicon of polish has come to us through France—and sometimes from England."

He was urging a course of stage education in our universities. As the vast majority of stage struck girls are in moderate circumstances, and are equally of moderate education, this particular outlook would not meet the emergency of

Girls are caught by the glamor of the footlights. They try to get on the stage because it looks easy. The main fault with most of them is the wide difference between what they think of themselves and what they really are. This article tells beginners just what qualifications are needed for success before the footlights.

work needed which enlists so many aspirants.

The antithesis of Mr. Frohman's opinion, advice to the greatest number, is found in what Florenz Ziegfield, Jr., he of the "Ziegfield Follies," has to say of his experiences as a manager. It reveals the requirement of the average girl who wants to go on the stage. Having a vague idea of what she might or might not be able to do in the theatre, she feels tolerably hopeful in applying for a position in the chorus. Mr. Ziegfield says he receives thousands of letters from stage struck girls in the country, applying for positions in his chorus.

"The main fault with most girls that go on the stage, is the wide difference between what they think of themselves, and what they really are," he says.

"Many hopeless specimens present themselves. The thin girl or the fat girl are barred. The chorus girl must be medium, small, shapely. Those who have the figure and the dancing-sense should be hopeful. The prettiest girls come from Louisville, those with the most ginger from Philadelphia. New York presents the largest num-

ber. The average stage aspirant has rarely done any work before. She wants to work, though. Voice is not important from a modern chorus girl. There are plenty of plain girls who sing beautifully. Among girls between the ages of seventeen and twenty one finds the most promising material. After twenty-three, it is too late to begin in the chorus, the mind and the body are not plastic enough to teach. Once started in her work, however, with a level head, she may remain in the chorus twenty years, and be beautiful to look at, and to know. As the stepping stones to higher ambition, the chorus must not be despised. Such stars as Pauline Frederick, Elsie Ferguson, Lulu Glaser, Mae Murray, Anna Pennington and many others began in the chorus. Thirty-five dollars a week is the average wage. There are girls in my chorus who live like human beings, neither over eat, drink nothing but water or orange juice, go to bed after the theatre, and are up at eight A. M., getting fresh air and exercise. The work itself does not require inordinate strength. For the frivolous girl, her life in the chorus will last about three years, and the moral disaster that follows is often in the newspapers."

Irish-American blood is the best for stage purposes, says Mr. Ziegfield. There being no lack of it in the U. S. A., the outlook for the stage struck girl who wants to join the chorus is excellent.

But, most of the good-looking girls, most of the pretty women, for that matter, almost every woman I have met within the age zone of theatrical ambition, wanted to go on the stage. The desire to become an actress is universally feminine, it is the first desirable

job, a desirable young woman wants. Not that it looks easy, but because it pays in every way, in the pleasure of the work itself, in money, in social prospects. Hence, the stage attracts those refined young women who have been left without adequate funds to live on, in an unrefined world of sordid vulgarity. The chorus seems rather shocking to them, so they start out for the legitimate drama.

The girls enlist in the vast army of ingenues and the boys, well they usually aim at the romantic leads, the men-of-the-world parts—it is very difficult to get them to consider a juvenile rôle, at first. Young men in the theatre are like boys at play, they want to appear grown up in art before their time.

"The girls who are caught by the glamor of the footlights," says Julia Marlowe, "who try to get on the stage because it looks easy—these are the girls who are far better at home. Also, Broadway counts them by the thousands, too. That's the pitiful part of it all."

This sort of thing would be valuable because of its authoritative source, if the stage struck

girl could be found who really would be, "far better at home." Usually, she wouldn't. Generally speaking, her home is the makeshift abode of a widowed mother without means enough to support either of them comfortably, or it is a sort of severe domestic institution entirely out of sympathy with her. Or, she may have no home at all, just a society past, to stimulate her for a ladylike occupation.

"In common with almost every woman on the stage," says Frances Starr, "my first instinct is to steer away from the stage entrance the young girl who comes to me for advice."

But Miss Starr modifies the chill with a lukewarm suggestion that, "every girl should have her chance," to try and be an actress—if she dares.

This inclination, in giving good advice to the stage struck girl, to veil some mysterious secret blight in the profession of acting, defies the healthy reason, and the good sense of the average girl who wants a job on the stage. The trend of advice from actors and actresses of celebrity is singularly of one universal character. It varies only in

are not ready when the big opportunity comes."

Of course, you have heard all this before, and will continue to hear it as long as you ask advice of the famous and the celebrated. But here is a bit of crude fact, which you won't get.

The stage director, who comes into direct con-

chance of a job that turns up. Don't refuse any engagement from a theatre at first, whether you like the part or not. And don't expect to hold the job by flirting with the stage director. Make good in your work, all the rest follows. We are accused of being rough sometimes, but if we were not, we should be imposed upon by the most irresistible blandishments in the world—the pretty face and figure."

There was an old stage doorkeeper, Owen by name, who spent a great part of his life observing the ways of stage struck girls, who came in to see Mr. Augustin Daly.

"It's like this," he said to me once, "the female sex is always after something, and usually they are looking for the best of it. Those who get it, won't tell how they did, and those who don't, tell a lot of lies of why they didn't. That's all there is to this theatrical scandal as they call it. If I had a daughter and she was on the level



Photo Ira L. Hill
DAPHNE POLLARD
Seen in "The Passing Show of 1915" at the Winter Garden

tact with the stage struck girl, is usually a man of stage tradition. One of his oldest traditions is that all stage struck girls are merely youngsters, who without any ability, intrude upon the director.

"There are more actors and actresses looking for jobs, when there is one, than we can take care of, and we don't always see why the beginner should take their places," said a well-known stage director.

"My experience is that stage struck girls are a burden to me in directing a new play. They are slow to understand the business of rehearsals, and they increase my responsibility to give a good all-round performance on the opening night. We have all we can do at the beginning of a busy season, to handle the professionals, no time to break in new material. Of course, we

often have to, because the management insists on what they call 'new blood' and our troubles begin when this happens. We usually give the stage struck girl a small part, then we have to stand on our hind legs to keep her off the centre of the stage most of the time.

"What do I think of a stage struck girl?"

"Don't ask me. In any other business but the theatre, beginners are given piece work, and are paid accordingly. That's what should be done with the stage struck girl. Pay her according to her work, not according to her looks. I should advise the stage struck girl to leave home with an empty dinner pail, and try to fill it for a year by working in a stock-company-factory, then she will find out all about herself."

"How's a girl going to get on the stage?" he was asked.

"Hypnotism—or better still, take the first

with herself and other people, I'd give my consent, for actin' is as good a way to earn a livin' as any other. There's good and bad in every walk in life, there's no choice when it comes to that sort of thing."

A little mousey old man who had pushed scenery across a stage since he was a boy, always grew melancholy when he saw a beginner in the theatre.

"I've see'd 'em come and I've see'd 'em go, on, and on, and on till there wasn't a chance on earth for them—still they'd stick. It's queer, ain't it? Once one of them pretty young things gets paint on her face, and a new frock on, you can't drive her out of the theatre. Sure, some of them are cut out for it but them that ain't, what becomes of them, eh?"

Amusing side lights on the serious business of getting a job on the stage, aren't they?



White
Sam B. Hardy and Eleanor Painter

regard to the different forms of expression each uses. In brief it is this:

"You must have a natural equipment, good looks, youth, courage, industry. Mere beauty is not important, you must have personality, and beyond all, expressiveness of features. Your figure must be expressive, too, a fluent physique. Any fault of accent or awkward mannerisms must be overcome, and the carrying voice must be trained.

"As to influence?"

"That's all nonsense. The front ranks of the theatrical profession are not gained that way. A little influence at the start may make it a bit easier but hard work retains the foremost positions. Good looks you must have, because the box office commands it. Genius is merely another name for hard work with no let up. The tragedy of failure is usually brought about because girls



White
Al Shean and Eleanor Painter

SCENES IN THE "PRINCESS PAT" THE NEW OPERETTA AT THE CORT THEATRE