

# The Matinee Girl

By MARGARET BELL

## A Frank Confessionist.

WHEN Grace George brought her latest attempt to Toronto to try it out on the canine species of audience with which that city is credited, she brought with her a clever little girl, whose frankness of opinion is refreshing. Her name is Margaret Field, and her ambition to become leading lady for John Drew.

Now, we all know that every ingenue has that ambition tucked away in her sleeve of secrecy somewhere, but not everyone is brave enough to express it. Miss Field had the only part in the "Carnival" hotch-potch worth playing, besides Miss George's, that is—of the feminine parts. There were a few roaring, ranting masculine characterizations which were so ridiculous that the audience laughed itself happy in the midst of the most tragic dilemmas.

Miss Field sat breaking dainty bits of toast into daintier bits, with two or three even more dainty fingers. Between nibbles of the bits and sips of tea, she gave expression to a few truths and experiences of stage life.

"It is hard to keep Debussey as one's favourite composer of songs and Brownings of verse when one's livelihood depends on one's interpretation of George Cohan and Harry B. Smith, isn't it? The road to theatrical fame is bordered with briars of disappointment much more often than contentment and satisfaction. The greatest aid in getting a job on Broadway is the ability to lock one's conscience up carefully in the chest of forgetfulness before one leaves the attic



MARGARET FIELD

With Grace George in "Carnival."

room for the manager's office, and substitute a storehouse of nerve and flippancy. Nobody who has never tried it can imagine the humiliation of trudging from one manager's office to another, trying to make him believe you are the only one for a certain part."

Miss Field was among a number of players who were left in a Southern town one time without a cent, while the company manager sped quickly back to New York. In order to raise the necessary ticket of transportation to the same little village, the company were obliged to give an improvised vaudeville performance, Miss Field doing a singing and dancing act. They were overwhelmed to see, as a result of their efforts, a sufficient bunch of greenbacks to pay for a dozen tickets of transportation to the glamour of the Gay White Way. It is these little touches which give the zest to the life of the travelling player. One could never become great if one were denied the luxuries of a superlative night or moneyless pocket. The dreaming matinee girl who yearns for fame behind the footlights should never forget that fame without famine is a poor thing indeed.

## A Truly Effeminate One.

THEY seem to be abolishing the stellar system of things in the most successful plays. And those productions which are headed by satellites are beginning to follow up the leading star with secondary ones. I am thinking of that charming play, "At Versailles—1780," not so

charming in name since being changed to "The Paper Chase." But they gave a very good reason for the change—the public. Not being accustomed to the correct pronunciation of the proper noun which composed most of the original title, the dear, fickle public would not have known what to call the play they were going to see when they spoke of it that opening night to their friends, the would-like-to-be organization of first-nighters. So they—that is, the author and manager and producing manager and financial backer—decided on the change, the name which makes one think of a bevy of college girls rushing pell mell across an autumn campus.

Speaking of stellar lights and lesser stellar lights, we mention Pauline Fredericks, who appeared to excellent advantage in the powdered wig and elaborate gown of the period of such things. The only pity was that her own lovely halo of gold was completely lost under the covering of grey. But her classic nose and beautiful chin line were there, just the same as of old—rather of three years ago—when last she appeared behind the lights. And even if her usual twenty-eight inches of waist were reduced to twenty-three—actual measurements, told me by herself—by the necessary crinoline skirt, still she made a very excellent appearance, and one did not forget her for a while after she had made an angry exit, left upper entrance. Not that one thought only of her personal appearance. Far from it. She did all that could possibly be done with her part, a jealous, infuriated storm of femininity, who was mainly responsible for the discovery of the precious bit of paper.

In her hotel habits, Miss Fredericks is a luxurious sort of person. One thinks of all kinds of feminisms when one thinks of Pauline Fredericks. Bits of costly lace, extravagant jewels, Beauty roses, made solely for her pretty fingers to pull to pieces; expensive fruits, and lissome negliges. Not to forget a coquettish French maid, with black eyes and bobbing curls, the kind of very maid identical with so many heart-throb novels. Anna was her name.

As was hinted at above, Miss Fredericks played the role of domesticated housewife for three whole years. Just after we had seen her name and photograph in all the magazines as a probable soon-to-come great personage in the ranks of Thespianism. And just then she decided to quit the stage for a time and live as any ordinary married woman. And she has come back to the old life—thanks be! For her public was beginning to become lonesome.

## A Successful Vampire.

I HAD never seen Robert Hilliard's success, "A Fool There Was," so when it came along to the popular-priced house that seemed my only opportunity. One does not think of finding any particularly brilliant performer at the "second" houses, but one does not always know. It happens that the theatrical profession is overcrowded just now, and some conscientious members prefer to go out in the second companies rather than endeavour to exist on nothing but unpaid bills in New York.

The woman who played the Vampire that night of my first visit to a "second" house was one of these. She was an Australian by birth, and had just come to this country to try her luck at American theatricals. Before giving her an engagement, the managers wished to see what she could do, consequently she consented to appear in a second-rate company. With the result, that many of the stellar figures over at the "first" houses in the city could very well hide their mechanical heads. I congratulated myself on finding a really great actress on my first visit to a second-rate house. Such finish, such subdued emotion, are certainly hard to find in the modern tragedy-drama of today. She was the Vampire, in laugh and words and toss of head. And her name was Elsie Jane Wilson. We shall certainly hear more about her, if we listen, and watch out for next season.

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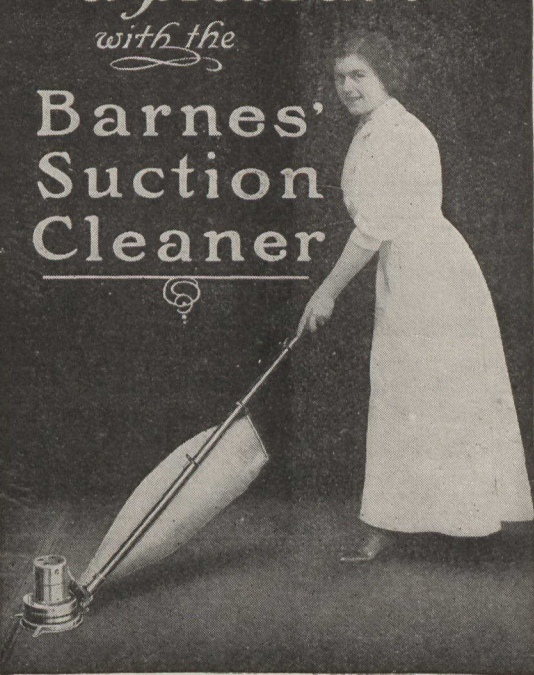
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