



Women's Press Club

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It was just then that my father discovered through my piano teacher that I possessed a soprano voice which appeared to justify cultivation, so he put me under Max Maretzek, the famous operatic impresario, to study for opera. While Mr. Maretzek was one of the finest musical directors imaginable and a clever composer, he was scarcely the right person to take an untrained voice and bring it out properly. He gave me exercises, but devoted his time chiefly to coaching me in various prima donna roles in such light operas as "The Chimes of Normandy," "Patience," "The Mascotte," "Olivette" and others of that type popular then. An operatic manager heard me sing one day at Maretzek's and promptly engaged me, so I made my debut in comic opera as "Fiametta" in "The Mascot" in the company in which Signor Tagliapietra, then a very famous baritone, was the star. By the way, he was the husband of Teresa Carreno, one of the world's greatest pianists. I was only seventeen at the time of my comic opera debut. The next season I was promoted to leading roles and for several seasons appeared in comic opera exclusively.

My first appearance in musical comedy was as the star of "The Bunch of Keys," when I played the role of the hoyden, "Teddy." In this and other similar plays I appeared for several seasons, touring both the United States and Canada.

In New York I had the pleasure of playing "Lady Angela" in "Patience," at the old Standard Theatre in a cast which included J. H. Ryley, James Barton, Fred. Frear, Marie Jansen and Helen Lowell. The latter lady is now a well-known character actress. She created the role of "Miss Hazy" in "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch," and is now scoring heavily as "Lizzie Roberts" with Cyril Scott in "The Lottery Man," one of New York's big hits last season. I also played "Talmecia" with Henry Dixey during a portion of his long run in "Adonis" at the Bijou Theatre, New York; and later appeared in opposite roles to Lillian Russell at the Boston Museum.

Hard work, the wear and tear of travelling and singing through colds wore on my voice and it became unreliable, so I decided to quit the stage. During my comic opera days I had frequently written verses for the comedians of my company for their topical songs, and this ability stood me in good stead when my voice failed, for I did song and sketch writing. M. Witmark & Sons, music publishers of New York City, engaged me to Americanize their English comic and topical songs, and published a number of songs which I wrote with Maurice Levy, now the well known band-master and composer, and others.

From song-writing I drifted into newspaper work and for twelve years or more have been press agent for the Winnipeg Theatre, and the Walker Theatre, Winnipeg, owned by my husband, Mr. C. P. Walker, having complete charge of all the advance press work, also writing dramatic and musical criticisms. I have also for ten years contributed "The Matinee Girl" letter to the Winnipeg "Town Topic," a paper devoted to Society and Music and the Drama.

I have literary ambitions—that is, like most people who are or have been connected with the stage, I have the play-writing bee in my bonnet—but whether I will ever have the stick-to-it-iveness and the ability to carry these ambitions to a successful conclusion remains to be seen.

My career is by no means a record-breaker in the way of actual accomplishment or fame. Indeed, the greatest honor that has come to me in it is the office of Honorary President of the Canadian Women's Press Club; and this honor, as you can realize, has been conferred by my sisters of the pen, more through their good feeling for my work as Corresponding Secretary during the four years they saw fit to keep me in that office, than for my literary achievements.

Editor's Note.

All contributions for this department should be addressed to Mrs. Fairbairn, 18 King Street west, Toronto, or to the CANADIAN HOME JOURNAL.

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