

AT THE SIGN OF THE MAPLE

A DEPARTMENT MAINLY FOR WOMEN

A Chat With Marie Dressler.

A Canadian Actress who is a great favourite on Broadway

By SYDNEY DALTON

IT was at the close of the first act that I was taken in hand and conducted through the intricacies of "behind the scenes" until we stopped before a door that admitted us to the "star" dressing room. Miss Marie Dressler was sitting on a couch, still with all her gorgeous war paint of the first act on.

"Yes," said she, after a few kindly words of greet-

ing and a hearty handshake, "I acknowledge the soft impeachment: I am a Canadian. I was born in Coburg, Ontario, and immediately thereafter the town became a summer resort." Miss Dressler's happy smile, which is always so near the surface, showed itself, and one could readily see that she had followed the line of least resistance in devoting her talents to comedy.

"It is a long journey from Coburg to the star position in the Herald Square Theatre, New York," I suggested.

"Indeed it is, and I am as much surprised as anybody. As a young girl I realised that it was necessary for me to turn my hand to something in order to earn a livelihood. After a careful survey of the situation I decided that the stage offered more inducements for a girl than most other things. So I adopted it as a profession, purely from necessity and in order to support myself. I had no idea that one day my name would be flashing in electric signs along Broadway." A reminiscent look was in Miss Dressler's eyes as she thought of those early beginnings.

"And doubtless fame has not been thrust upon you," I remarked.

Despite the make-up and the strange costume Miss Dressler had put aside the manner of the comedienne.

"Ah, fame is thrust upon few of us. This is the result of hard work and a most trying life. But at last the journey's end is in sight. There is a little place up in New England that I call home now, and I am looking forward to the time when I shall bid good-bye to the footlights and all the kind audiences that have made success possible. I shall retire within a few years."

I could not help congratulating Miss Dressler upon the fact that she is among that small minority of stage folk who have foresight enough to put aside the nest egg necessary to make retirement a possibility. Somehow the audience out in front always seem to think that actors are people who make a lot of money and have an unwritten law that they should spend it as expeditiously as possible, and it is surprising how many actors live up to that reputation.

"I expect that my present play, 'Tillie's Nightmare,' will be my last. I consider it the only play I have ever had that offered me just the opportunity that I have always wanted. The people seem to like it. It is the greatest success I have had, so why not end my stage days with it?"

All of which goes to prove that Miss Dressler's mirth provoking and irresponsible attitude on the stage does not always obtain when the footlights have been turned out.

"Was 'Tillie's Nightmare' an accidental find or was it written for you?" I asked, curious to know

how it was that a part so perfectly fitted to the star should have been created.

"Not only was it written for me," was the reply, "but it was entirely my own idea. For many seasons I had such a part in my mind. I thought out the situations, even many of the lines, and when it was completed and the play all written I taught almost every word to the company, in order that everything should be just as I wished it."

Now, one does not have to exert one's memory very much to recall the names of several comedians and comedienues who would, without hesitation select Lady Macbeth or Portia or Nora or Romeo or Hamlet as the role for which they consider themselves best suited; such things seem to be the irony of fate. But Miss Dressler is in no such predicament. She knows in what channels her talents run quite as well as anybody else, and, as I have remarked before, she has followed the line of least resistance and it has led her to success.

About at this point in our conversation the second act was on, and out in front the stately and handsome Miss Broske, as Maude Blobbs, sister of Tillie, was singing her song "Life is What We Make It, After All," and that seemed to be a suitable reflection of Miss Dressler's philosophy and career.

"Surely, Miss Dressler," I said, with a touch of anxiety in the question, doubtless, "surely you will appear in Canada before you unpack your make-up box for the last time?"

"I hope so," was the answer. "When we finish our New York run I wish to pretty thoroughly tour the country, and I should like to include at least Toronto and Montreal in the route. It is eight years since I have been in Canada. Needless to say I have a very soft spot for the land of my birth, and I have always received such a hearty welcome when I did go there that I do not like the idea of retiring before I see how they like me in my best play. . . . And now," said Miss Dressler, rising, "I hear it is time for me to go and put on my 'sick' make-up for the last act."

There is no doubt that in "Tillie's Nightmare" Miss Dressler has a musical play that shows her at her best. She could make a wooden Indian laugh with her droll grimaces, her very original shrug of the shoulders, her comical lines and fantastic costumes. In short, she is really funny, and never has

to resort to horse play, and the many cheap tricks of the average comedian, and she possesses the rare quality of being able to relapse into a serious vein for a few minutes without making a burlesque or "mushy" situation out of it. The stage will lose one of its funniest and cleverest laugh-makers when Miss Dressler retires to her New England fireplace.

She is supported by a company that is almost uniformly good. Miss Octavia Broske plays the part of the spoilt, ambitious and heartless sister of Tillie excellently, and sings well. Horace Newman as Harvey Tinker, an unappreciated inventor, and the vaudeville team of Frost and Snow, played by Miss May Montford and Mr. George Gorman, are among the others who are responsible for the undeniable success of "Tillie's Nightmare."

From a Far Country.

THE world is full o' wand'rin' roads, but I am sick for home:

My longin' is all for the low breen that runs by my mother's door.

I wish my feet was set on it, I wish that I was come

In sight o' home once more.

Och! there is sorrow on me, it sours my hard-worn bread,

It comes between me an' my rest, it burdens all my days,

I am grievin' for my kindred, for the livin' an' the dead

An' the old pleasant ways.

My eyes grow dim with cloudy dreams, the road drops from my sight,

I feel no more the bitter wind that raves, an' strikes, an' chills. . . .

I feel the breath of Irish air, I see the mellow light On the blue Wicklow hills.

I see no more the weary clouds, weighted with comin' snow,

Nor yet the rigid pine trees above the frozen steep. . . .

I see the silver Liffey, where the shinin' waters flow towards the foam'g leap.

The world is full o' wand'rin' roads, an' I must onward roam,

An' eat the bread o' grief upon the highways o' the earth,

But my longin' is all for the wee white road that leads to my boyhood's home,

In the green land of my birth.

—Helen Lanyon, in *American Magazine*.

The Great Poet's Son.

LORD TENNYSON, who completed his 57th year last week, is best known, of course, as the son of his father, from which accident, like many sons of great men, he has suffered in his turn.

Nevertheless, says a writer in M.A.P., as statesman and administrator, he has helped to shape the destiny of the Empire in the Antipodes. When his name was mentioned as Governor-General for Australia, outspoken Colonials who had never seen him, shook their heads and cried: "Won't he fancy himself!" But before Lord Tennyson had been in the Dominion a month he had created a totally different impression.

Although he has not inherited his father's astounding poetic genius, he possesses a pretty turn for verse himself; but, being the very essence of modesty, publishers have bombarded him in vain for samples of his poetry.

His lordship has much of the poet in his appearance: the high-domed forehead, the piercing eyes, and the expressive mouth are singularly suggestive of the first bearer of the title; but the son is smarter in appearance, more alert, and not without a certain gift of humour, which flashes out unexpectedly and in odd places. He once told a good story at an Australian banquet of a London youth he met one day in the vicinity of Park Lane.

"What is your name?" asked Lord Tennyson.

"Alfred Tennyson Hicks," replied the boy.

"Alfred Tennyson!" I presume you know after whom you were named?"

"Rayther. I was named after me uncle on me mother's side. 'E lives over the mews."

Base Ingratitude.

ENGAGEMENT rings, as every maiden knows, have been lost in many different ways, but a new way was added to the list in New York the other day, when an elephant stripped one from the finger of a young lady and swallowed it, together with the peanuts which she had held out to him



Miss Marie Dressler,
As she looks off the stage.



Miss Dressler,
As Tillie Blobbs in "Tillie's Nightmare."