

Canadian Chorus Girl In New York Relates Experiences on the Stage

Note.—The following is the first of a series of articles written specially for The Toronto Star, and reproduced in The Advertiser, by a bright young Canadian (a former Londoner), who is beginning musical comedy work at the bottom of the ladder of the show business. The articles will give her own personal observation and experiences, her viewpoint being that of a beginner, to whom all things are new and interesting. She is at present singing in the chorus of one of the leading theaters in New York. The relation of her actual experiences contained in this first article is not expected to develop many new cases of stage fever.

1.—THE DAYS OF REHEARSAL.

Special Correspondence of The Star.
New York, Sept. 13.—Do you remember your first day at the new school when you were a youngster? Do you remember just how shy and embarrassed and forlorn you felt? How you winced when the other scholars looked you up and down and audibly wondered who you were and where you lived?

That isn't anything to the way you'd feel at the first rehearsal of a big musical "show."

About forty chorus girls and possibly a dozen chorus men, to say nothing of the manager and the musical director, sit there and look you over with the cold, hard eyes of an appraising judge or prospective buyer.

From Toe to Crown.

From your hair to your feet, every "point" is an object of interest. You think to yourself that now you know what the unfortunate slave girls of other times used to feel when they were put up in the market—on exhibition.

Needless to say, your own eyes are busy, and you turn with relief from the aggressively-beautiful blonde type, which seem to be inevitable in every chorus, to the modest-looking little girl in the corner, whose sunny hair, big hazel eyes, and quiet dress make her a delightful contrast to the majority of her companions.

Later on you discover that the pretty little girl, who isn't a day over 20, has been unhappily married, is



"On These Unfortunates He Heaps Abuse."

separated from her husband, and is endeavoring to earn a living for herself and her two small children—in the chorus!

How Others Take It.

Just then, however, you interest yourself by watching all the different faces and trying to imagine something of the thoughts and circumstances which shape their lives and keep them in the chorus.

Suddenly, you are rudely interrupted by an anaemic tenor who warbles excitedly at the top of his shrill voice:—"Love me and the world is mine." Alas! his voice ignominiously cracks on the high note, and he is "down and out." A few minutes after—and the girl next me says: "Gee! Pipe the flossy soubrette!" I "piped," and the flossy one proceeded to do the most animated song and dance you ever saw. By

the time she got through I was gasping, out of sheer sympathy with her exertions. After a few more intervals of this character, we proceeded to get down to business and manuscript copies were handed out of the words and music of the "opening chorus of Act I."

For a week we did nothing but music, and during that week at least half a dozen girls were told, more or less gently, that they would have to go. And then, at the end of the first week, the "producer" came in. For the benefit of the uninitiated let me explain that the producer, or stage director, is the man who teaches all the "business"; that is, the gestures and dance which accompany the musical work of a chorus.

Sorrows Begin.

Then, and then only, began the really heart-rending part of rehearsals. A producer always selects about three girls he likes, and to these three he is amiable personified. All their mistakes are either ignored or else corrected very gently, with so much personal attention that the most ignorant could not fail to learn. As to contrast, he has at least two or three girls whom he apparently cordially detests, and on these unfortunates he heaps abuse and constant fault-finding until you positively burn with indignation.

If you are so fortunate as to be neither a favorite nor an object of hatred, you are allowed to learn your work in peace with no more attention from the producer in authority than is absolutely necessary.

There is a very pretty little blonde girl in our chorus whose complexion is so exquisite she has received the nickname of "Peaches." This small person was supreme chief favorite of the producer and in practically every chorus she stands next to me. She was particularly slow and stupid in learning the business, and every time she made a mistake this man would blame it on me and deliver a torrent of abuse at my unprotected head.

He knew, I knew, the girls knew, and so did everyone else, that "Peaches" was wrong and that I was suffering vicariously because he could not bear to reprimand her, and yet had to take some notice of the mistakes.

Never Talk Back.

There is one rule of stage work that is imperative, and that is—never talk back to the stage manager. If you do you'll lose your job. This is expressed in the chorus vernacular, but is nevertheless true.

I had a "pull" and couldn't "lose my job," but I had no intention of demonstrating that fact by "talking back" to the stage manager, so I used to suffer in silence and inwardly boil over.

One day "Peaches" herself was moved to wrath and exclaimed, after he had directed the usual maledictions to me, "But you know I was wrong." He stood in utmost surprise for a moment, and then he said softly, "Oh, it was you, little girl. Well, don't do it again." This, after the torrent of abuse that had descended on me! I inwardly thanked heaven, however, for the sense of humor that enabled me to see how funny it was.

The musical director and the stage manager have absolute control, and you are called to account for every smallest lapse in behavior. It is just like being at school again. You must not talk to each other while working. If you are late for rehearsal, you must explain the reason to the stage manager, and it must be a good explanation. Absence is inexcusable, unless through illness, and even then you should have been well enough to come!

Slightings and Insults.

You are expected to endure slights, even insults, from the stage manager, not only with equanimity, but with a smile. I have seen girls reduced to tears by some insulting remark or brutal reprimand, going through their work mechanically, with the tears streaming down their faces and the semblance of a wintry smile twisting their mouths.

One girl left the room one day in a passion of tears. I was asked to bring her back, and when I found her, I said: "Why do you give that brute the satisfaction of knowing that he has hurt you?"

She moaned. "I can't help it. I could kill myself for giving way like this, but it nearly kills me to be spoken to like that. I can't stand it. I can't!"

And so it went on all during rehearsals. For two weeks we were absolutely at the mercy of the stage manager, and during that period at least a dozen more of the chorus were given their dismissal by him.

When we began to rehearse with the principals it was much better, for both the real managers of the production were present, and our friend the stage manager didn't dare to say a word that wasn't perfectly justified by the exigencies of the case. Rehearsals, consequently, went much more smoothly, although our hours were longer because we had to sit around and do nothing while the principals went through their parts.

Measured for Costumes.

Often, after hours of rehearsal, we had to wend our weary ways to the costumers, where it was nothing unusual to sit around and wait for an hour, perhaps two hours, until it was your turn to be fitted. There you stood for another hour while you were pulled and pinned and jerked into "boned linings," or the "madame" tried the effects of various colors and drapings on your long-suffering form.

And so it went until it came to the all-important "dress rehearsal," when the flat went forth: "Every person must be in the theater at 12.30 noon, made up and on the stage at 1, wearing costumes for the first act."

We were there, and it is impossible to describe to you how different everything looked. Ordinary rehearsals had been gone through in our street clothes, with sticks for parasols, and piano for our only music, a big bare stage, with no scenery or stage accessories, and the flickering, uncertain lights of a few gas jets for our sole illumination.

Now, all the scenery was on and everyone was "made up" and in costume. All the properties were there, even to her shoes.

To add to our horrors, the costumers were present, and every girl had to come down to the footlights, quite alone, while costumers, managers, and press agents stood round and commented audibly on her make-up, her style, her appearance, and her clothes—even to her shoes.

Then came the order: "Into position for the end of the opening chorus," and away we went, to pose for a flashlight photograph. After several had been taken, we were sent upstairs to change for the second act, and the same performance was gone through with another composer, costumer, and photographer, during both this and the third act.

Unusual Consideration. Our managers, with what they tell me is unusual consideration, sent out for coffee, sandwiches, and cake, and there, behind the scenes, principal and chorus girls mingled in an unusual sociability as they all stood round a deal table, holding in one hand a thick white china coffee cup, and in the other a huge sandwich or a thick slice of cake. It was the only oasis in the dreary desert of dress-rehearsal, and when we emerged from the theater at 1 a.m., tired to death after nearly fourteen hours of the most nerve-racking, heartrending, soul-destroying work in the world, an unsympathetic soul who heard my sigh of exhaustion, turned to me with the remark: "Well, you know, you would be a actress!"

THE CHORUS GIRL.
Leon Morris' troupe of trained ponies will be at Bennett's soon.

"The Composer Nearly Tore Himself To Pieces."

the footlights were flaring, and best of all, a full orchestra was present.

We went over all the music of the show first—just one thing after another, so that the orchestra could finish their work and go. The composer was there, excited and dramatic, with all his foreign accent and gestures to the fore, and very funny he was.

Composer's Frenzy.

He raved and cursed, and nearly tore himself to pieces as some bit of work failed to meet with his approval. "Fools! Blockheads! Dolt!" he screamed. "Have you no heads? Are you nothing but sticks of wood?" and then came a stream of profanity which would have aroused the envy and admiration of a Bret Harte miner. After the musical numbers were finished we started in at the first act, with both music and dialogue. Then it was the author's turn, and a beautiful time we had. Between author, composer, and stage manager it wasn't long before the sweetest of dispositions became a trifle ragged at the edges.

OLD SITUATIONS FOR NEW PLAYS

When Ludwig Fulda, the German dramatist, was last in America he attended the theater frequently. He met actors and managers and dramatists, and he soaked himself in the affairs of the stage. Just before he sailed for home one of his friends said to him:

"Well, you'll have something to talk about when you get back to Berlin. You have seen an astonishing large number of fine plays during your stay here. Just about how many have you seen?"

"I have," answered Fulda, "seen one fine play."

"And what was that?"
"One of my own."
And so it was.

It was called "The Lost Paradise" in the American version, and it was accredited to David Belasco and H. C. De Mille. It is in that interesting place that occurs that oft-quoted line: "Back to the mill. There'll be no strike tonight."

When Fulda went to England he saw



SCENE FROM "A DESPERATE CHANCE."
The Famous Biddle Bros. Play at the Grand Monday Night.

there "The Admirable Crichton," and this was ascribed to J. M. Barrie of "Peter Pan" and "The Little Minister" fame. Barrie admitted as much after he had been charged with it. Until Fulda spoke Barrie was silent. Some adaptations of the lines and situations in the Fulda piece found their way to the stage of the La Salle theater, where they are part of "The Time, the Place, and the Girl."

The play ran with great success in both England and America. It finally dropped out of sight. Not many years ago David Belasco announced a new play called "The Girl I Left Behind Me." The main situation of that beleaguered forces waiting for reinforcements, the approach of which is first detected by a girl, was photographically like that in "Jessie Brown, or the Relief of Lucknow." But the idea was not yet through. Although "The Girl I Left Behind Me" ran with success, it could not, like Tennyson's brook, run on forever. It was finally withdrawn. This year the big Belasco piece is "The Rose of the Rancho." Its big scene is identically the big scene of the two preceding plays. Frances Starr, the new Belasco luminary, hears the rescuers coming just as Jessie Brown did, and just as the heroine of "The Girl I Left Behind Me" did.

A great many of the bricks and much of the mortar out of which the edifice of the drama is erected in this country and in England comes from the workshops in other countries. Much of the work does not bear the impress of the men who did it first. Still, conditions as they are now are bet-

ter than they used to be.

The French theater has always contributed liberally to the English and the American stage. Sardou, for example, wrote "Dora." Clement Scott and a prolific Mr. Stephenson crossed the channel at the solicitation of Squire Bancroft. They beheld the piece in the original French. They made it into English to suit themselves. It was called "Diplomacy," and Rose Coghlan made her reputation in it. Many well-known actors on this side of the water and many on the other—Mr. and Mrs. Kendal among the latter—played in the piece. It was only recently that the Sardou play was presented in its original version, and this was done at the New theater in Chicago.

Nobody can tell where a dramatic idea has been first used. Some of the situations that are now in every day use go back to Sophocles and Euripides. It is certain that it was in those dramas of the Greeks that Shakespeare and playwrights found their chorus, which they used in some of the plays. Chorus is notable in "Henry V.," for instance, when she recites events which are supposed to have occurred while the curtain was down. When Richard Mansfield played "Henry V." his chorus was Miss Florence Kahn, daughter of a United States congressman from California.

Many stage devices came from the earlier drama of the Italians. Many of the ideas that are used in farce come from that school. Much of the work that is called original work by the playwrights that give it to the world today was born in reality many years ago. Until quite recently it was safe to steal from any French or German or Italian playwright. The law of copyright had no international application. First it protected for no time at all. First for five years, and now its protection is identical with that extended to the native author. Which has caused a great diminution in the making of dramatic reputations quickly.

Bouffé and many other first rate dramatists were first rate adapters, but most men would prefer to be known by their own works rather than by the twisted versions that they made without authority of the works of other men. In the fair old, rare old, golden days that people sing about on the stage and look back to with regret in private, each high-class theater kept a tame dramatist, whose duty it was to steal from those other dramatists who could not catch him, or, who, having caught him, were powerless, because of the inadequacy of the law, to punish him. One of the best things about the passing of the fair old and the rare old is that, with the passing, there went this amiable custom of maintaining writers with letters of marque and reprisal authorizing them to swoop down on any unprotected idea, phrase, situation, or drama, and carry it off. While the theater may not be as full of good things as it once was—although this point is debatable and should only be admitted for argument's sake—the goods that are in the theater now do not consist in so large part of stolen property as they once did.

In all the daintiness and niceness of her "Marrying Mary" clever Marie Cahill has scored a signal triumph, and will be seen here at the Grand Opera House Tuesday night, Oct. 1. They who have called for more story and more plot in musical plays have been vindicated in this most interesting effort of Edwin Milton Royle, and the music by Silvio Hahn and lyrics by Benjamin Haggood Burt, have proved a most fitting decoration to the book.

"Marrying Mary" is really a great musical play, for it marks the creation of a new class of entertainment. The English musical comedies have already been characterized as nice, but



MISS ROSE COGHAN,
The Famous Star Who Will Be Seen at Bennett's Every Afternoon and Evening Next Week.

then they have invariably been too dull for Americans. But here we have a comedy free from horse play and vulgarity, and yet most lively and entertaining. "Comedy of the mind and not of the hands and feet," someone has said, and it seems fit, provided the phrase is not so interpreted as to exclude the graceful dancing of the "long-skirted" chorus, and even of Marie Cahill herself. For the first time since she suffered an accident to her hip a number of years ago, Miss Cahill has ventured to dance, and in "Mr. Cupid" she displays all the grace and art which made her known in Augustin Daly's "Runaway Girl" as the best dancer on the American stage.

A secret of Miss Cahill's success lies in the remarkable and strong cast she has gathered together. It is probably the highest-priced and most finished aggregation of players now appearing in a musical comedy. Eugene Cowles alone must command a salary which would stagger any manager.

In connection with the engagement of "A Desperate Chance," Theodore Kremer's latest success, in four acts, founded on the notorious Biddle Brothers' case to be seen here on next Monday at the Grand, it is hardly necessary to more than announce its appearance, as the story of the play has attracted such wide wide reputation. The first act opens with the murder of the Pittsburgh grocer by the Biddle boys, their sentence and conviction.

The second act shows the boys in jail, where they use their hypnotic power over the warden's wife, their sensational escape from jail, their thrilling fight in the snow with the detectives, their capture and finally their pathetic death in the Butler County jail.

Mr. Kremer considers this his greatest effort, which is saying a great deal, when one considers his recent successes, "The Fatal Wedding," "The Road to Ruin" and others, too numerous to mention. While the play abounds with many thrilling situations, the author has not forgotten to put plenty of heart interest in the piece. The child's love for the mother, who has unintentionally sinned, will send many away with tear-dimmed eyes. The comedy situations are also very strong.

A big scenic production is promised, with many new and startling mechanical effects, and with a cast of unusual excellence. A performance is promised to satisfy the most exacting critic.

"Happyland," De Wolf Hopper's new opera, is laid in the mythical kingdom of Elysia. The locality permits of romance, and the customs of delicious comedy situations. Musically, "Happyland," is one dainty, delicious, conceit, for the melodies that jingle in your ear and remain in the memory are numerous. It is said that a beautiful production has been pro-

vided and that an attraction of extraordinary merit will visit us when "Happyland" is presented at the Grand.

Miss Mary Lawton, a member of the New Theater Company last season, will head the cast which Harrison Grey Fluke is sending out to play "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." Her support will include Stella Guber, Mabel Wright, Emma Bolton, Ione Chamberlin, Helen Ormsbee, Violet Sewell, Frank P. Conway, and Hearn Collins. The tour opens late in September.

Richard Carle has completed the manuscript of a two act play with music for the Bank Officers' Association of Boston. The title chosen is "The Boy and the Girl," and it is to be presented at the Hollis Street Theater, Boston, for one week in February. The music will be written by H. I. Hartz, who worked with Mr. Carle on "The Tenderfoot," and "The Hurdy Gurdy Girl."

In Germany alone there have been sold over 3,000,000 copies of "The Merry Widow" waltz, which brings the second act of the wonderfully successful Viennese operetta to an effective climax. Henry W. Savage's production of "The Merry Widow," at present the musical sensation of Europe, will be seen in New York on Oct. 21.

The Week in the Local Theaters

THE GRAND.
Today, Matinee and Night
..... "Jessie Left the Village"
Monday "A Desperate Chance"

BENNETT'S.
All Week, Matinee and Night
..... First-Class Vaudeville

"Jessie Left the Village," a new and strictly original melodrama, will be the offering at the Grand today, matinee and evening. Langdon McCormick has written many clever and successful plays in the last few years, but his latest creation entitled "Jessie Left the Village," has eclipsed all past efforts in the melodramatic field, and without a doubt, will be one of the box-office record-breakers of the season. The plot of the piece is worked out in a natural manner, dealing with the careers of a peculiar class of people such as we find in the smaller country villages, unfolding a whole-some play, interpreted in four acts and seven scenes, with elaborate scenic effects and an exceptionally selected cast to portray the many characters. The Mittenhall Bros. Amusement Company has spared no expense in making Langdon McCormick's play, "Jessie Left the Village," a most perfect and complete production. The great boat explosion scene in the third act is a most wonderful piece of stage craft and realism.

Rose Coghlan, one of our most prominent and cleverest emotional actresses, is the extraordinary feature of the big act at Bennett's next week. Miss Coghlan is one of the most dignified and artistically exemplary artists now on the stage, and her advent into vaudeville is distinctly strengthening to this popular branch of the profession, and her engagement here, where she has appeared many times at the head of her own companies, and is a great favorite, will not doubt be one of the greatest events of the season.

"Wise Mike," offer a very novel act, which might be termed "a little bit of everything that is good in vaudeville." Wise Mike is really a marvelous specimen of canine intelligence. At times he holds the stage entirely alone, going through a routine of tricks never before attempted by a dog.

Bernier and Stella have a very pleasing singing and dancing act, and The DeVoe Trio of Roman ring experts, have an athletic offering which is indeed excellent, and has won them a big reputation throughout the States.

Alexander and Scott are two black-face comedians, who have honestly discovered something new for vaudeville patrons. Their act is a novel creation, and will be a big surprise at their opening.



"JESSIE LEFT THE VILLAGE."
At the Grand Today, Matinee and Night.