

The Passing of the "Supe"

This article might be entitled "The Passing of the Supe." For the supe is no more; his and her occupation is gone. Instead of "supes" we have today in the stock companies actors and actresses who would drive an indignant eye through your heart at the mere mention of "suping" in connection with their art.

"I 'suped' for a year and a half," said Fred Belasco of the Alcazar and Central as we talked the matter over "and now I'm a manager. My brother Dave 'suped' for nine months, and now he's a playwright. Dave and I were glad enough of the chance to our 'suping' days. But I wouldn't dare call 'supe' to any of the people who do the same work for me that I used to do for other managers. I address them respectfully as 'extra people.'"

Manager Belasco told me that the salaries of extra people ranged from \$3.50 a week down to nothing; that is, the \$3.50 per commenced after the actress had walked across the stage in three or four productions without injuring the scenery, and perhaps had spoken a line or two without consulting the cast. As soon as she attained to the dignity of a salary she was put on the list of regular extra people, and given a fair chance with the other regulars, whenever a play was produced that called for silent ballroom beauties, briefly spoken housemaids and other equally urgent characterizations.

"It must cost you a handsome penny for gowns when there's a ballroom scene!" said I.

"Not a cent more than for any other kind of a scene," said Belasco. "You don't seem to grasp the point. The girls furnish every stitch of their costumes, no matter what the character."

Belasco laughed at my ingenuousness. "Why, their salaries hardly keep them in gloves and car fare. They furnish their own gowns, even diamonds in some cases. Most of the girls have well-to-do parents and live at home. They don't mind the expense as long as they get the experience and the discipline."

"I am strict in my discipline," Belasco explained. "I make the girls attend rehearsals regularly, whether they are in the piece or not. And if they giggle at the audience or do anything to mar the harmony of the performance—"

"You don't fine them?" I gasped.

"No; they wouldn't mind that. I put them back in grade a few numbers, which usually means that they are not in a play for several weeks; and that's what hurts them where they live, because all my girls are ambitious."

"Are they hard to get in sufficient numbers for a big production?" said Charles Bryant, the stage manager of the Alcazar, echoing my question.

"Well, I should say not. They're here and waiting for the chance every week. When I put on 'Lady Windermere's Fan' I had sixteen extra ladies for the drawing-room scene. There wasn't a gown in the lot worth less than \$50, and some must have cost three and four times that amount. Why, some of the extras made our principals look positively cheap. They got the usual three fifty. Insurance on the costumes would have cost us more than we paid them."

So I set out to find at first hand what the extra lady thought of her job.

Belasco had shown me the photograph of a beautiful girl who had appeared at the Alcazar just once; who would appear soon again, and eventually command the \$3.50; for she had gone through a maid's part of considerable stage business and several lines with graceful success. He gave me her stage name, which is Eleanor Gordon, and an address out in a fashionable part of Bush street.

The number Belasco gave me I found on the door of one of the smartest flats in the Western Addition. A cunning little maid showed me to the living room and took my name and business to Miss Gordon. Presently the maid returned to say that Miss Gordon had been lying down and would be in as soon as she arranged a hasty toilette. I sat in the bay window and read several long chapters from "The History of Modern Music." I read until the light was out of the sky. The little maid came in and turned on the lights and then I read some more.

I had got as far as Wagner's trilogy, when a dream in pale blue lifted my eyes from the book. It was Miss Gordon, and the picture she made was worth the waiting. Her low-cut gown fell from chiseled debutante-like shoulders in a single, sweep to the rugs at her feet. The lights above made a coppery glow in her warm brown hair. Her eyes might have

been gray or blue or brown or of all these blended, in that mixture of sunset and gaslight. They looked reposefully out of a face cut into sensitively beautiful features.

And all this, with frocks fit for a duchess, for \$3.50 a week! Fifty cents a performance, with matinees and rehearsal thrown in for nothing! No wonder managers get rich.

Miss Gordon spoke first. "I thought it would be years and years before you interviewed me," she said, with an emphasis on the "you" that did my poor heart good. "I can't quite make it out. I'm not a star, hardly a beginner even. I've had just one tiny part to play, the maid in 'The Wife'—surely, you don't want to hear about that?"

Surely, I did. And Miss Gordon told me of her first appearance.

"One line in the third act was supposed to be my great opportunity. It opened the act. I was supposed to yawn with realistic sleepiness and say, 'I've been reading Bunyon's Pilgrim's Progress, and I fell asleep.' I yawned and rubbed my eyes and read the line as sleepily as I could, and I didn't say 'Bunyon's Pilgrim's Progress.' But somebody out in front started an applause, and I'm wondering yet whether that applause was serious, for I have very few friends in San Francisco. My home is in Spokane. I'm staying in San Francisco to learn acting."

"How do you like it as far as you have gone?" I asked.

"How do I like it? I love it. I haven't a great deal of self-confidence but I've determined to stick to it until I get a part, a real part that I may be judged by. Not until such a part comes my way and the critics say I cannot act, will I give up trying."

"But the expense in the meantime?"

"Is something awful," said Miss Gordon. "But I knew that before I started. Salary is no object at present. I haven't asked for any money yet, nor shall I until I feel that I am earning it. I consider that I am going to school — to an expensive school, but to a practical one, the only kind in which one really learns."

"Could I play other parts as easily as I played the maid? That depends. It is not so easy to be a maid on the stage when one has never been a maid anywhere else. I found that it required some skill even to carry on a dish of fruit without spilling it all over the stage. Of course, other parts depend on costumes; but I am fairly prepared."

Miss Gordon showed me a dozen photographs of herself, taken at a local gallery, with no two costumes alike. They may not have come from Worth, but to the plain masculine eye they were as handsome as any millionaires would care to wear.

"Not an actress, remember, but only a student, if you really do write anything about me," said Miss Gordon as we parted.

I find no students at the Central Theatre. They are all actresses; and I wouldn't say "supe" in the building for the gross receipts of the night.

I sit in the dressing-room of George Webster, actor and stage director of the Central, and also professor-in-chief of a private school of acting. Many of the budding Bernharts brought into the dressing-room were graduated from Mr. Webster's school. I talk only with those who draw down their \$3.50 for every week that finds places for them. Dozens of dozens of others there are, says Webster, who wait around the rehearsals every day from 10 to 2 for the parts that never come. They have been tried out and found wanting. But hope still burns, and they wait for the accident or sickness, or maybe epidemic, that shall be the means of giving them another try.

"You missed two great ones for interviewing," says Webster, as he rubs in the grease paint. "We had a minister's daughter who was divorced from her minister husband, but she's doing plain sewing now. And one of our finest dressers is off on a vacation. Her mother's the society dressmaker of Marysville. What gowns that girl wears! Three new ones for a single piece, if the part needs that many. She earns her three-fifty all right."

Mr. Webster sticks his head out the dressing-room door and shouts "Dorothy!" Enters a smiling girl in a pink evening gown, with hair tossed up and back like an inverted Niagara. I am presented to Miss Dorothy Davis, who exclaims: "I knew it. You can't surprise me!"

I wondered if I had been discovered by a long-lost relative.

"I knew it because the clairvoyant who manicores me—she's a clairvoyant by nature and manicores by force

of circumstances," explains Dorothy, "told me today while she was doing my nails and getting my magnetism through her hands that tonight I was going to meet important people who would advance me in my ambition."

I protest that the artist and I are not theatrical managers, but merely newspaper folk.

"That's just it; you will write about me, and he (pointing to the artist) will put my picture in the paper. Say, do I remind you of Anna Held?"

"Before I can gather breath for a reply Dorothy tells me she's always taken for Anna when she wears her hair this way. She stands where a good light falls that the artist may see, and asks me if I think her tall enough for the stage."

"The ideal height," I blush rather than say.

"That's good; put that in. And tell the public how ambitious I am and all that's before me—you can say it better than I can. That clairvoyant is a wonder. She's the one who predicted the success of Nance O'Neill. Is my sketch finished? All right; thank you, I'm off for the scene."

I reflect that if Dorothy ever gets a part that fits her the way this little impromptu burst does her \$3.50 will have the decimal point after the cipher instead of after the 3.

It's almost like a barber shop where they are shouting "next." Webster's head goes out the door again and in comes Zora Irwin, extra lady No. 1. She is in a fair way to become a regular member of the company with speaking parts every week and an advance in salary. But Zora doesn't care about the salary. The opportunity is what she languishes for. She feels it in her to be a leading lady. Feels it so hard sometimes she says, that it burns. Once she went back as far as No. 4 for smiling where she ought not to have smiled. But a few weeks of good conduct put her up to the front again.

I ask Zora how she manages to wear such gorgeous gowns. "Well, I've got to do it," she answers, "to keep up with the others and save my good reputation."

Blanche Cotting is the next. She is very ambitious to get to the front, and she is the first to mention the expense.

"Even with generous help from home," she says, "it is hard to make a showing on our salaries. I've been here seven weeks and haven't had a speaking part yet. Sometimes I get discouraged, but I cheer myself by saying, 'What's the use of being discouraged until you've had your opportunity and failed in it?' I watch the rehearsals every day and imagine I am learning something. One thing I have learned for sure—that is where the best bargains are to be had in the gowns we have to wear."

Gowns do not bother the next girl. Her plump little shoulders stick out of a Paris bodice that is rich with jewels. I have faith in the jewels, especially in a big one shaped not unlike a wishbone and evidently placed with some knowledge of anatomy — when Webster whispers to me that she had a maid to do nothing but dress her and take her to and from the theatre. Mae Mason is the name of this opulent young extra lady.

"Please get it M-a-e," she says.

"I risk the first dizziness of the night by observing that it must require a neat financial management to keep a maid and wear Parisian frocks on \$3.50 a week, not to mention household expenses."

Mae regards me curiously. I can see that she is not crediting me with a great mind.

"My frocks are not Parisian," she says. "I find very competent dressmakers and tailors in San Francisco. And as for my maid and the expenses of dressing, they have nothing to do with my salary. I spend in a month twenty times more than my salary would come to in six months. I'm here to become an actress. Did you see me play Aunt Cloe in Uncle Tom's Cabin?"

Sorrowfully I say that I did not.

"You must have done it very well," I add in an endeavor to gain favor; "you have just the May Irwin build for the part."

Mae gives me one withering glance. "No one can discourage me," she says firmly. "I'm on the stage to stay. I'll wait for my part if it takes forty years."

"Their patience is something wonderful," I remark to Webster after Mae has left us.

"More than that," responds Webster, "it is tragic."

I do not reply, for I have been trying to keep away from that side of it all the evening. Not only from the tragedy of those who wait, and of those who used to "supe," and are now God knows where; but away from the easily conceivable tragedy of some girl who has entered the lists to dress as well as the best of them on that \$3.50 a week. The folks at

home help her at the start; but time wings it and they see no headway being made by their little stage moth. They try to discourage her, but the dream is as vivid as ever, the ambition as burning. Finally the old folk say: "Not another cent for gowns and grease paint; come home and help in the housework and the sewing or else live on what you make."

Sometimes the old folks do talk that way, and sometimes little Mary or Jenny or Mollie takes them at their word, thinking, perhaps, to come home rich and great, as Magda came. Three dollars and fifty cents a week opens the way to all of Magda's weakness. That road is easy. But where is the talent to lift them to Magda's strength?

All this is not pretty thinking, so I trail back to the Alcazar to see if Bryant cannot give me some cheerful statistics of \$3.50 extras who have become great. He has quite a comfortable list of those who started at that salary and now earn more than they can sensibly spend. Among the names are Laura Crews, now leading woman at the Murray Hill Stock Company, in New York; Marion Barney, the beautiful blonde of the Frawley Company; Madue Reindollar, ingenue in Brady's "Lover's Lane" production, and Jean Patricin, playing prominent parts with Olga Nethersole.

I ask him about the men who work for the same \$3.50. They are as plentiful as the girls. They even offer money to get on, in some instances.

Speaking of money reminds Bryant of William Deane, who toiled along at three fifty per in smartly tailored suits that were the envy of the leading man. Deane had a new suit for every part he played, a new suit for every act when the play wanted them. But one day Deane was among the missing; and so was a Miss Whalley (3.50) of the company. They had married and were on their bridal trip to New York by way of Panama and the isthmus. Deane had \$85,000 in cold cash with him and greater prospects awaiting.

"And," says Bryant, "who should drop in on us the other day but Mr. and Mrs. Deane with \$80 Panama hats and other trifling souvenirs for their friends in the company. They are living at the Palace Hotel. As soon as he got me alone Deane said, 'We would like to play again.' 'Come right along,' I said. The Deanes join us next week."

"If it isn't," I say, "breaking into business secrets, how much—"

"Not at all," interrupts Bryant; "they will get seven dollars, for two, and not be docked a cent for absence."

The next time the languid star of a road show tells me that her salary is \$500, not counting transportation for herself and Fido, I shall ask her to whisper confidentially just how much of that is stage money.—Examiner.

WOMEN AND DRINK

A Bishop Makes Charges That Are Astonishing.

New York, Jan. 27.—The Rt. Rev. Leighton Coleman, Episcopal Bishop of Delaware, who startled his hearers in a mission address at New Brunswick, N.J., by the statement that there is an alarming increase of intemperance among women along with a decrease of intemperance among men, has repeated the statement and assertions equally interesting. He says that his opinion has been formed only after exhaustive investigation and observation of conditions in this country and abroad.

Bishop Coleman said that a newspaper hostile to his views set on foot an inquiry in New York with a view of disproving his charge. Committees of impartial citizens went to the various fashionable hotels and women's restaurants, taking note of the orders of women patrons. They found that to take wine, cordials, even whisky with one meal was an almost invariable rule among the wealthy fashionable set. Not only this, but in so-called tea rooms intertincts were served to women who ordered them without even the pretense of ordering a meal.

"Intemperance among women, however," said the bishop, "is not confined to women of the wealthy and fashionable class. The use of stimulants, medicines, bracers, tonics and all similar devices as a mask for the liquor habit, is becoming more general among the middle classes. In England conditions are worse than here."

The Energy in Coal.

A writer in Cassiar's Magazine presents a new series of calculations showing the amount of energy represented in the coal output of the

world. This is a favorite field for mathematical recreation, but it possesses perennial interest, and each writer who discusses it seems to find a new way of presenting the facts.

The total quantity of coal taken in any given year from the mines of the whole world cannot be very accurately ascertained, but from the best available information it may be assumed to have been about 700,000,000 tons of 2,000 pounds each for the year 1900, the last of the nineteenth century. Assuming that the combustion of one pound of coal produces available energy equal to the work of one horse for one hour, and that a horse power is equal to the power of seven men, it is found that this represents in energy the equivalent of 9,800,000,000 hours of work for one man, and allowing ten hours to each day and 300 working days to the year, this is found to be equal to the work of 3,000,000,000 men during one year.

This is about double the entire population of the globe, and it follows that the utilization of the energy of combustion is equivalent to an increase of the working capacity of this population to the extent of an addition of two able-bodied men for every man, woman, and child; and practically it amounts to much more than this, for these additional 3,000,000,000 stalwart laborers make no demands upon the food products of the world; they need no clothing, no matter what the zone of their employment, and in faithfulness, loyalty, general docility and ease of management they are beyond compare.

BISHOP PROTESTS

Against Clause in King's Oath, Offensive to Catholics.

New York, Jan. 27.—According to the Albany, N. Y., correspondent of the Times Bishop Burke, in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at that place took occasion to refer to the oath which King Edward VII. will take at his coronation. The Bishop said he wished the world, and especially all Catholics, to know just what references the oath contained, and while the King of England was swearing that the doctrine of the divine presence in the most blessed Eucharist was false and the sacrifice of the mass a superstition, he wanted every Catholic to raise his heart to the Almighty and make a most devout act of faith. Unless parliament should change this oath, the bishop declared, King Edward would, as ruler of his kingdom, insult millions of Catholic subjects when he took it.

"We must throw aside all sentiment we must look at the facts as they are in cold reality," declared the bishop. "If King Edward were to take the oath now he would be obliged to swear that the Eucharist is not the body and blood, soul and divinity of our divine Lord under the appearance of bread and wine, and he would have to swear that this divine sacrifice of the mass which we are offering here is a superstition or a fable."

"On the day of the coronation of the king of England I want every Catholic to pray fervently to God, to repeat the apostles' creed, to make an act of faith, and if possible to spend some time in adoration before the most blessed sacrament."

To Move the Monument.

Laramie, Wyo., Jan. 27.—It has been decided by the Union Pacific Railroad that the Ames monument, which has been left isolated at the old Sherman station by the construction of the Sherman hill tunnel and the Laramie-Bufford cut-off, shall be moved to the new Sherman station, four miles south of the former site.

The proposition to rebuild it elsewhere than on the Sherman hill was decided to be wholly opposed to the spirit that originally led to its erection. The time was too short, however, to admit of making the transfer before winter set in, and the work was postponed until spring.

The Ames monument, which was built in 1883 and paid for by relatives of Oakes and Oliver Ames, to whom the Union Pacific owes more than to any other men for its existence, is of solid native granite and cost \$100,000.

New Party Launched.

Cincinnati, Jan. 26.—The National Liberal party was organized here today by representatives from all parts of the country. The preamble to the new constitution that was adopted declared for the separation of the church and state to the extent of abolishing chaplains in the army and navy, legislative bodies and all public institutions, the taxation of church property and abandonment of Sabbath observance. The National Liberal party is the amalgamation for political purposes of free thinkers and it is more distinctly in politics than the American Secular Union.

The free love element was not admitted into the new organization, as the women suffragists were admitted. At the Thomas Paine memorial night addresses were made by C. Darrow of Chicago and others. Officers will be elected tomorrow.

Telegraphers' Test

Atlanta, Ga., Jan. 27.—The telegraphers of Atlanta have decided that the tournament which they are arranging for March 1 shall be national in scope instead of being limited to the country south of the Ohio river.

President Roosevelt will be asked to furnish the subject matter for the contest. This will require a position of nearly 350 words, and the intention to have the test continue for five minutes.

The executive committee has named an honorary committee, consisting of the following: Andrew Carnegie, Thos. A. Edison, Gulelmo Marconi, Thomas T. Eckert, John W. Dillinger and Melville E. Stone.

There is a strong hope that Marconi, Stone and Eckert will be induced to visit Atlanta on the occasion of the tournament.

Japanese dolls are usually elaborate and gorgeously attired. The princely families keep them and pass them down to their descendants. The broad silk for their robes are specially woven in their own patterns on small looms. Wooden dolls are often carved and enamelled.

Special power of attorney was sold at the Nugget office.

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SOCIETIES. THE REGULAR COMMUNICATION Yukon Lodge, No. 75, A. F. & A. M. will be held at Masonic Hall, 2nd street, monthly, Thursday at 8 P. M. C. H. WELLS, Sec'y. J. A. DONALD, Treas'r.

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The Stroll Heart to Heart to He... he find... want in this... the young... suggestions... talks flourish... campaign... for... husbands were... down to... he talks were... husband and... letting in... the theme of... The Stroll... his new role... the fact that... evenings at... that the... ing is more... temporary ne...

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