

CANADIAN WOMEN'S PRESS CLUB

THE Canadian Women's Press Club, which is now such a flourishing organization, owes much to the excellent "start" which it received in the city of Winnipeg. It was for several years efficiently "officered" in that city and is indebted greatly to Mrs. Osborne and Mrs. Walker for its early progress. Mrs. Walker has been elected to the office of honorary president and, on being requested to give a sketch of her work and career, sent such an interesting account to these columns, that it is herewith reproduced, just as it came from the vivacious writer. There are a buoyancy and brightness about the Winnipeg club which are well exemplified in the spirit of Mrs. Walker's communication.

MY maiden name was Harriet Anderson, and I was born in New York City on February 13th, 1865, my mother dying eighteen days after my birth. My father never remarried and when I was about seven years old I went to live with him alone—I had previously been in the care of my grandmother—and together we chummed for many years as I was an only child. My father had a taste for the stage and had been quite successful as an amateur actor and singer of comic songs. Therefore, quite



MRS. C. P. WALKER

naturally, he began developing in me any talent he thought I possessed in the line of theatricals. So, at the early age of five I made my debut as an elocutionist (!) at one of my father's Odd Fellows' Lodge concerts. I remember that the late Tony Pastor, so long the king of the variety stage both as a singer of serio-comic opera songs and as a manager, was present on that auspicious occasion, as he was a member of the lodge giving the entertainment. My selection was "Little Jim." I had previously stipulated that I should receive a bouquet as a reward for reciting, consequently when a handsome bunch of flowers, all done up in one of those stiff paper cones edged with lace paper then in style, was presented me I was more pleased with having received what I had insisted upon than astonished at the gift. I had an encore—or at least I concluded it was an encore and stepped forward upon my own initiative and to my father's surprise recited this classical verse:

"Stir the pudding, Peggy,
And give those cakes a turn!
Be quick! Be quick! you lazy girl
Or one or two will burn!"

After that concert I appeared frequently at entertainments running the gamut of recitations then popular. No, I will take that back, for I never memorized or recited "Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night," which was the "piece de resistance" with all elocutionists of that day.

When I was thirteen I entered an elocution contest at the famous Chick-

ering Hall, New York City. There were twenty contestants in all, and the majority of them were grown men and women. The selections were confined to pathetic and dramatic and mine was "Spartacus to the Gladiators." The first prize—fifty dollars in gold—was awarded me and now that I look back upon the event I believe the audience gave it me as a reward for my unadulterated nerve in tackling that particular address, for certainly I could not have deserved it for any other reason.

Shortly after this prize-winning episode a friend of my father's, George Herbert, a theatrical stage manager, called to see us one day and said that A. M. Palmer, Manager of the Union Square Theatre Stock Company was about to produce "The Lost Children," (somewhat similar to "The Two Orphans,") a play by A. R. Cazaraun, and he needed a young girl about my age to play one of the children. Mr. Herbert suggested that Papa take me up to Mr. Palmer and try for the part. Papa and I went up to see Mr. Palmer, but when that gentleman heard that I had had no experience on the stage he dismissed me with the remark that he was looking for an actress and not an elocutionist. My dad was not to be put off with that, however, as his paternal pride was strong, so he asked Mr. Palmer to give me a hearing. Mr. Palmer called in his stage manager, Charles Parselle and told him to have Mr. Cazaraun hear me recite. They took me to the stage and, in the empty theatre with just those two for an audience, I proceeded to spout my favorite "Spartacus." As there was a happy blending of comic and dramatic in the part I was trying for, Mr. Parselle asked me if I knew anything humorous, and I gave him "Miss Maloney on the Chinese Question." When I had finished Mr. Cazaraun bade me stay on the stage. He disappeared in the front of the theatre and speedily returned with Mr. Palmer himself, and I was told to repeat my little pieces. At the conclusion of the second hearing I was immediately engaged by Mr. Palmer for the part of "Stephen Fournier" in "The Lost Children" at a salary of \$25 a week. I made my debut about four weeks later and in the cast were Charles R. Thorne, one of the greatest leading men ever known to the American stage; Linda Dietz, a very beautiful and gifted English actress; Ida Vernon, a handsome woman who is still before the public. I last saw her with Mrs. Fiske; J. H. Stoddard without doubt one of the finest character actors the English-speaking stage ever has had, and who will long be remembered for his superb portrayal of "Lachlan Campbell" in "The Bonnie Brier Bush"; W. J. Lemoyne, another player whose name has gone down in theatrical history, and a dozen more members of that famous stock company.

"The Lost Children" only ran four weeks, but I was re-engaged to play child parts, and the following season appeared as "Brisquet," the office boy in "French Flats," one of the first of the amusing French farces to be presented in America. In that company were those mentioned above, also Sara Cowell, who afterwards became Mrs. Lemoyne and who is to-day one of the best readers and exponents of Browning before the public; Sara Jewett, a very pretty and decidedly able emotional actress, George Holland; Joseph B. Polk; Maude Harrison; Ellie Wilton; Walden Ramsey, a handsome and gifted young juvenile man; Harry Courtaine, a most brilliant actor and a wonderful linguist. "The French Flats" ran for three solid months, and in the following summer when the company made its annual visit to Chicago, Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia was presented in those cities.

I remained with the Union Square Company for two years, when I had reached that awkward age and height where I was too big for little people and too little for big people, so I retired and continued my studies.

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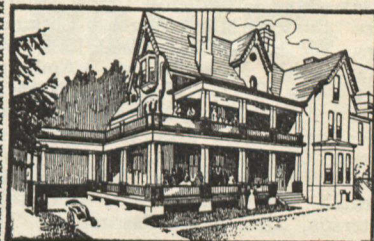
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