

THE SEMI-WEEKLY TELEGRAPH, ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, APRIL 13, 1908

THE THOROUGHBRE

A Story of the Stage

BY MARGARET KILROY

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His whole knowledge of life was that of paint and tinsel, of flies and daisies, of mimic kings and tin clad warriors. His whole ambition was to be "a thoroughbred," because his father had taught him that this was the greatest aim in life. And for a long time he was getting old, being at the ripe age of seven—he had tried with all his little might to reach all ways to that great standard.

Things were often hard to understand; it was so hard to draw the line sharply to believe that the "heavy man," who was so kind, was really much worse than the electrician, who always scolded. Sometimes his faith in his own judgment was shaken, and standards were hard to establish. He almost broke friendship with his father when the latter played lingo and the wild audience hissed. Jerry was quite sure, too, that they were right in hissing. Again, for two days, he didn't talk much when his father played Cassius. But he always loved him as Romeo. It brought drama to him. He was sure that he had a mother who could be as tender as this Juliet. It had seemed funny to him, as the years had come along, that he should be the only boy in the world—the big world of railway trains and hotels—who had no mother. Sometimes, out of the dim subconsciousness of the year, a dream came to Jerry and he remembered a mother, fair and sweet and winsome and loving even as Juliet. But the remembrance was very dim, and when he spoke to his father about this dream he was sharply silenced. Jerry hadn't much experience of sharp words, except from the electrician, who scolded forbiddingly at him and scolded him whenever he drew near the switchboard; and since his father had told him that, playing with the switchboard was dangerous and naughty, a thing that might end in dreadful fires and terrible accidents, Jerry had come to believe that as angry as his sunny little soul knew how to be, if something happened to remind him of her. It wasn't nice to think that he might have hurt his father that way, and after due consideration, Jerry decided that he had better apologize. His father had told him that a thoroughbred was never afraid to apologize when he was in the wrong.

That father of his was still looking very sad and stern, and Jerry clambered onto his knees wondering how he should proceed. There was no response of a caress or cheery word, as was usual, and Jerry's heart began to feel several sizes too big for his chest.

"I'm sorry I said anything about the dream, father," he said earnestly. "I didn't know you'd mind. Of course it isn't your fault that we haven't got a mother! I wish I had a mother you, sorry—"

"—I'm—polished!"

Masseywell kissed his son, and told him it was "All right, little chap," but his face grew no brighter, and Jerry felt so—

"Wasn't it right—my 'polish'?" he inquired anxiously. In Jerry's mind, a "polish" was some magic charm that ought to make everything happy at once. Masseywell looked at his boy for quite a long time, and at last said that he would tell him a story. Jerry settled himself in his father's arms and smiled contentedly. His father's stories were his greatest treats.

This story was a long one, and Jerry didn't understand it all. What he did manage to understand was something like this:

There was a world, somewhere, that wasn't like his world where people painted their faces every night, and changed so wonderfully from week to week, until first brave and then cruel things, until Jerry's poor brain was tired out trying to make his ideas of things and people fit

came behind the big curtain and the proscenium arch. Jerry's biggest treats were to be allowed in front of these. They didn't know that the Tower of London grew so quickly, and the bluff was playing, because Tim Murphy knew just how to make the "hands" brace the flats in proper order; nor that when the setting sun looked so beautiful at the back of Bowditch Camp it was because Jake Cohen was handling the "short lines," while the electrician creaked down the heavy "dimming levers," and clicked up four of those fascinating little handles at the right hand top corner of the switchboard. And they didn't even want to see or hear about all these wonderful things—the miracles of Jerry's daily life. In fact, these strangers didn't like the people—Jerry's people, who knew how to do these things. They only liked to sit in orchestra chairs and laugh or cry or be angry, as the case might be, but not for the world to know that they were friends with the people who had been making them laugh, or cry, or be angry.

Jerry's blue eyes got bigger than ever as he made these discoveries; but greater wonders were to follow.

It seemed that Jerry had a mother; yes, a real living mother, and ten times sweeter than the one he had in his head. She had been married father her mother and father had been very, very angry. They wouldn't speak to her or to father, and she had been unhappy, and then father had had a bad season.

Jerry knew so well what that meant. Lots of things made bad seasons. Things that happened in a place called "Wall street" made bad seasons sometimes; other times there would have been big theatre fires in the city, and people were afraid to come to the show. Then again, there was what father called "general financial depression"—that made bad seasons; and finally there was when Tim Murphy called "the devil's own luck," and that made the worst season of all.

So father had had a bad season, and the worst, and mother of his was ill; he, Jerry, had been ill, too—it was when he had been quite a little boy, so that was why his dream mother had been so vague—and father had no money to pay for doctors or anything.

Then mother's people—who didn't like the stage had taken her away and man. He had then, on top of the wreck, Jerry saw a huddled form lie, misshapen and still. It was Jake Cohen, the flyman, who had often been warned of the danger of falling asleep in his perch up aloft—and had done it once too often.

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childish chatter was garnished with a swear word or two, that didn't seem very bad when Jerry brought it out with the utmost gravity, and because he had heard it used by his friend in some similar circumstance. Generally, too, the expression would be wrongly remembered.

Certainly Masseywell only shouted with laughter when told by his son that whether he, Jerry, spent his pocket money on chewing gum or candy was none of his father's damn business.

Jerry was seldom so aggressive; his nature was as sunny as his smile, and that, if Tim Murphy knew just how to make the "hands" brace the flats in proper order; nor that when the setting sun looked so beautiful at the back of Bowditch Camp it was because Jake Cohen was handling the "short lines," while the electrician creaked down the heavy "dimming levers," and clicked up four of those fascinating little handles at the right hand top corner of the switchboard. And they didn't even want to see or hear about all these wonderful things—the miracles of Jerry's daily life. In fact, these strangers didn't like the people—Jerry's people, who knew how to do these things. They only liked to sit in orchestra chairs and laugh or cry or be angry, as the case might be, but not for the world to know that they were friends with the people who had been making them laugh, or cry, or be angry.

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for a few minutes; but he was as proud of these appearances as if he had been the star. In this new part Jerry's wild hopes were realized. He had "lines to say!" In the first act he said, "I shall always, always love you, mother dearest," and in the fourth act he declared, "Don't be frightened, mother; I will take care of you."

He went about asking all the actors if they thought he "read his lines" properly; and he took all the advice they showed upon him about his expression and the gestures he should use very gravely. "Don't be frightened, mother; I will take care of you."

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world entirely divorced from dramatic rulings. In the meantime, and pending his mother's return, the one really important thing was to find out more and more of how a thoroughbred ought to act in all sorts of different situations. He set about his quest manfully. It became a joke in the company, causing laughs that had a catch behind them often not, for every one loved the little fellow. And because of his quest they nicknamed him the "thoroughbred!" They were a mixed crowd, Americans from many States, Paul Malher