

# Elsie Ferguson

The people's latest "movie" favorite  
By C. J. Dillabaugh.

ONCE there was a very quiet girl who wasn't very pretty. Sounds like a fairy story—it is, a really true one. Even her parents didn't think her pretty and she was so quiet that it never occurred to them that she would some day be very brilliant.

"I was terribly shy and timid as a child," she says, "particularly when it came to talking. This was principally because I didn't care to talk trivialities, and when I did think of some thing I considered worth saying, I felt that I would be misunderstood so I said nothing—therefore, I got the reputation of being a dull child."

my first speaking lines. I thought I was shouting out shrilly to the housetops, but I must have been too confidential about it, for not even those on the stage could hear. However, the great first night came. I said my lines and I was no longer a chorus girl, but a dramatic actress."

But this did not last long, so I was put back as a chorus girl, where I remained for a long time, but when I



"Did I really look like that?" And Mr. Geo. M. Cohen, the well-known American comedian, assures her she did.

It is rather surprising then, that this sort of child should become a chorus girl. But she did when she was fourteen, although she seemingly had not the slightest idea of making the stage and screen her life work. Her mother had planned to have her go to college, and then marry and settle down to home life. These plans were changed when one day a girl friend asked her to go to a theatrical manager's office where she was to apply for a place in the chorus of a new musical production. She had no intention of applying herself, and went rather as a lark! She plodded up the dusty stairs to the most unpicturesque office, and after the manager had finished talking to her girl friend, he turned to her, and despite the fact that she was still in short dresses, with her hair floating down her back, he asked her, "Don't you want to go on the stage, too?"

He put the idea into her head, and without second thought, she chirped "YES."

"All right," was the answer.

A few days later she received a rehearsal notice and she began dancing and singing like mad, trying to compete with 50 other girls who also were rehearsing for the chorus of "The Belle of New York."

It was not until the night before the show opened that the news leaked out, and then Elsie's mamma was torn with conflicting emotions. She was grieved at her little daughter's duplicity, yet delighted with her pluck. So into "The Belle of New York" chorus went Elsie, and she not only played in New York, but went on tour.

Miss Ferguson has since confessed that it made her quite unhappy to be in the "merry merry" for she was



In "The Song of Songs."

not what the other girls called "a good fellow," and she was pretty much alone.

"I know I was not a good chorus girl," said Miss Ferguson, laughingly, "or at least, I was a good chorus girl, for I took myself and life very seriously."

"It was a great moment of my life when I was given

begin getting dramatic parts, as I realized my inadequacies, I listened and studied. Instead of remaining in my dressing room gossiping and reading novels, I stayed in the wings, watched the others, listened to the directors, and when I wanted to know about things, I asked questions. Unconsciously I learned the tricks of speaking and gesture; I hitched my ambitions to a star, and worked diligently to make myself a real success."

ONE of Miss Ferguson's chief characteristics is her sense of humor. She has been showered with admiration from unknown persons.

"There was a time when an unknown admirer, a man who wanted to meet me, appealed to my love of admiration; that was in the early days when I did not know what the life of an actress was, but I have learned that the safest way to keep the public, is not to let them become disillusioned by seeing me out of character."

"I remember quite well a very close friend who had an unknown admirer who wrote her the most importunate love letters day after day for seasons. He was mad to meet her; it kept up such a long time, and he was so persistent and faithful in his admiration, that when she found he had met some people who were friends of hers,



In "Barbary Sheep"—that rich and beautiful presentation—Miss Ferguson made her first appearance on the screen.

and had persuaded them to present him, she agreed to the introduction. This is what happened. The minute he met her he lost interest. She never saw or heard of him from that day. I have profited by her experience; I am too clever to let any unknown admirer get close enough to see the real Elsie Ferguson. The only safe way to fan such an infatuation, and keep such a man interested, is to confine his impressions to the interpretation of the screen and the stage."

As an artist, Miss Ferguson stands in a class by herself, and no degree of success or public acclaim can turn her head or induce her to believe that she has no more to learn and nothing to unlearn. She is always the exemplification of naturalness, and yet she declares there is no such thing as actual naturalness on the stage or screen; one seems natural—that's all.

"I hope I make that clear. If a woman quarrels with her husband or sweetheart in her drawing-room, there is a scene in some degree, of course; probably she raises her voice a key or two, and she moves about the room, or she may grant herself a few gestures, but that scene would be absolutely lost on the screen; she must at least double, or in fact quadruple it. In accomplishing this for the silent drama, we do not add intensity to our voice, but just to our expressions and determine just what emphasis to give certain ones, so as to increase the emphatic point when needed."

"WITH this naturalness there must also come variety, a change of tempo and expression, so that your audience will not become tired or your work become monotonous. I have never derived any false opinions from my a long, hard pull for me to attain the success I have. I am successful to-day, does not mean that I will be to-morrow. Women have rather a hard time in life. All of them have. Sometimes I think that it is a very horrible



Elsie Ferguson in "A Doll's House," by Ibsen. Her dramatic ability was certainly proven in this.

thing to be a woman."

Because Miss Ferguson is so charmingly beautiful and so attractively natural, it is perfectly safe to talk about her beauty. "Of course," she says, "every woman must devote some time to keeping herself well-groomed. I possess and of improving it. I believe beauty is a matter of mind; it must radiate from within. The beauty we rub on with a rabbit's foot, or acquire across the counter, is fleeting; rouged, red

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