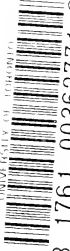


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 00362771 8

The Gaiety Stage Door



MR. JAMES JUPP

frontispiece

The Gaiety Stage Door

Thirty Years' Reminiscences of the Theatre
by James Jupp



With an Introduction by
Mabel Russell Philipson, M.P.

Jonathan Cape
Eleven Gower Street, London

First published in 1923
All rights reserved



Printed in Great Britain by Butler & Tanner Ltd., Frome and London

Introduction

IT is with great pleasure that I write this brief Introduction to Jupp's book. If the more intimate memories of the Gaiety in its palmy days, the life behind the scenes, the characteristics of the late Mr. George Edwardes and the world-famous artistes whom he gathered around him, are not to become blurred by the passing of years, it is time some one recorded his impressions of the men and women who made the Gaiety a name to conjure with wherever the mother tongue is spoken. I know no one better qualified for the task than Jupp. For more than thirty years he was stage door-keeper at the old and the new Gaiety, and not only George Edwardes but many of the artistes came to trust him as a confidant and welcome him as a friend. Within his knowledge must be many secrets, scores of romances, and not a few tragedies. The stories he sees fit to tell will appeal to a wide public and not least to those of whom he writes.

MABEL RUSSELL PHILIPSON

Contents

	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
MY PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE, HOW I JOINED THE GAIETY, PRODUCING A PIECE, "BREAKS," CONNIE EDISS, DODGING A WRIT	13-20
CHAPTER II	
HOW THE GAIETY WAS LEASED, EARLY PRODUCTIONS, THE ORGANIST-CONDUCTOR, THE "MERRY FAMILY" QUARTETTE, KATIE SEYMOUR, VOICE TRIALS, SINGERS OUT OF CURIOSITY, "SING UP THE SCALE," TEDDY PAYNE'S LISP, A LATE START, THE PARSON CHORISTER, MISGUIDED "TUBBY," MARIE TEMPEST'S JOKE, SEYMOUR HICKS NOT FOOLED, THE FURNITURE REMOVER, THE BALLET CLASS	21-33
CHAPTER III	
A STAGE-STRUCK TRAGEDY, A TALE OF GOLD, SCORNED PEARLS, THE OBLIGING CLOCKMAKER, A GIPSY'S PROPHECY, THE MURDER OF TERRISS, KING EDWARD	34-49
CHAPTER IV	
SHOW GIRLS, THE TALL FAIR MANNEQUIN, THE WEALTHY ITALIAN AND THE ERMINE COAT, I WIN A BET, OFF IN A YACHT, "I HAVE COME BACK," A FRESH START, GERTIE MILLAR, HER MARRIAGE, THE INFATUATED NOBLEMAN	50-60
CHAPTER V	
CHORUS GIRLS' CLIMBS TO HIGH DEGREE, MRS. STIRLING, OLIVE MAY, JUPP ELUDED, THE COUNT WHO WAS SHOT, COOCH BEHAR'S GIFTS, A COMPLETE VINE, LILLIAN RUSSELL AND MAUD HOBSON, MAKING STARS, GLADYS COOPER, MARIE STUDHOLME, MABEL RUSSELL, THE INFATUATED SULTAN, AN ADMIRER ON HIS KNEES	61-76
CHAPTER VI	
STRANGE LOVE PASSIONS, GABY DESLYS' WORSHIPPER, THE SILENT LOVER, "BILLY'S LITTLE LOVE AFFAIR," A PROFITABLE MISTAKE, PANGS OF CONSCIENCE AT SEA, A TRIP TO WINDSOR, CONFUSING NAMES	77-91
CHAPTER VII	
MAUDI DARRELL, HER LAST APPEARANCE, MOLLY, THE RICH AND POOR SUITORS, I PLAY MENTOR, A SAD ENDING	92-101

Contents

PAGE

CHAPTER VIII

FLO DUDLEY AND HER ENGAGEMENT, A TAXI-CAB TRAGEDY, SEQUEL ON THE SCAFFOLD, TRICKING GIRLS, GONE IN THE MORNING, A COXCOMB, MAUD HOBSON, HER BRILLIANT MARRIAGE, R. L. S., BACK TO THE STAGE	102-117
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

CHAPTER IX

BOGUS AGENTS, GEORGE EDWARDES' IMPERSONATOR, A DISAPPOINTED BUSYBODY, THE MYSTERY PACKET, THE BOOKMAKER'S LOSS, SPONGERS, SUPERSTITIONS, NO. 13, WEEDON GROSSMITH AND SIR J. M. BARRIE, EDNA MAY'S GOOD TURN	118-130
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

CHAPTER X

ONE GAIETY GIRL'S END, BEGGING LETTERS, COLOSSAL IMPUDENCE, WAGERS, TEDDY PAYNE'S SIRLOIN, AND BETTING, AN EMBEZZLER'S LUCK, PRACTICAL JOKES, AN ORIGINAL STUNT	131-147
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

CHAPTER XI

GAIETY COMPANIES ON TOUR, A JOHANNESBURG TRAGEDY, A QUICK RETURN—FRED STOREY'S PRANKS, A THIEF CORNERED	148-154
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

CHAPTER XII

STAGE-DOOR RULES AND A WAGER, EVIE GREENE'S FLAT, TRYING TO DODGE BEHIND, A BRAZEN ATTEMPT, A FOUND PURSE, GEORGE EDWARDES' UNREHEARSED SCENE, VISITING A DISTILLERY, GIFTS OF WINE, ACTORS' PETS, CHAMELEONS AND A SNAKE, STAGE-CLOTHES EXPENSES, A READY-MADE SUIT AT £55	155-174
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

CHAPTER XIII

EVIE GREENE AND THE CHORUS GIRL, A GHOST STORY, FRANK DURNING'S MISSED TRAIN, "LOCK YOUR DOOR"	175-181
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

CHAPTER XIV

FLORENCE ST. JOHN, HER EARLY STRUGGLES, THE SILENT SINGER, A LOVE TRAGEDY, A POST-CARD ROMANCE, IRVING AND THE JAM, W. BLAKELEY AND THE VINE, A KING EDWARD STORY, DAN LENO'S NARROW SHAVE, THE WRONG BED	182-197
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------

Contents

PAGE

CHAPTER XV

- GEORGE EDWARDES' ADVICE, "COME BACK IN SIX WEEKS," "THE DUCHESS OF DANTZIG," THE LEADING LADY'S RETORT, THE LOST MOUSTACHES, CYRIL CLENSY, AND HIS DRESSER, G. P. HUNTLEY'S DIG, GUILTY, THE JUDGE' BETTING SLIP 198-207

CHAPTER XVI

- GEORGE EDWARDES' GREEN APPLES, THE "AWFUL SMELL," A "WALK" TO THE OFFICE, THE "GUV'NOR'S" GENEROSITY, EDMUND PAYNE'S FLY, THE LONG-HAIRED CABBY, THE "GUV'NOR'S" GAMES, A BRIDGE PARTY, JUPP UP LATE, WOULD-BE BLACKMAIL, MISTAKEN IDENTITY, THE BUTLER-COOK, RACE THIEVES, GETTING THINGS BACK, KINDLY ADVICE AND A SLIT COAT, A FIRST BET, THE YOUNG BLOOD IN THE BAR, SUPPER FOR TWELVE, THE LINK-MAN'S ERROR, PILFERING, MAISIE GAY'S ESCAPE 208-241

CHAPTER XVII

- SIR CHARLES SANTLEY, SULLIVAN'S FIRST OPINION OF MELBA, A RACING TIP FROM RIPPED PYJAMAS, THE RETORT DISCOURTEOUS, THE TRIP TO JERUSALEM, A GRUESOME EXPERIENCE, ANOTHER, CHARLIE CHAPLIN 242-251

CHAPTER XVIII

- IRVING OFFENDED, GEORGE EDWARDES ALSO, DAISY MARKHAM'S BREACH OF PROMISE DAMAGES, BABS TAYLOR, "HULLO, JACK!" A TOUGH CUSTOMER, THE DUMMY TELEPHONE CALL, HELPING TO JOBS, A SILLY-ASS YOUNG MAN, FINDING HIM A CHANCE, A PAVEMENT BARITONE, A LIFETIME'S OPPORTUNITY SCORNED 252-267

CHAPTER XIX

- THEATRE SPORTS, LADY FOOTBALLERS, ALPHABET DOUGLAS, CHALLENGED TO A FIGHT, THE MAHARAJA'S GENEROSITY, CONNIE EDISS PLEASED, GIFTS TO ACTRESSES, GEORGE EDWARDES AND JU-JITSU, QUEENIE GUEST'S HORSE, MALCOLM SCOTT'S COFFEE STALL, J. T. TANNER'S FIRE 268-280

CHAPTER XX

- THE LADY BOUNTIFUL, MAURICE FARKOA'S SLIPS, A DUET SPOILED, IRVING'S BUTLER, GRACIE LANE'S INTERVIEWER, FLORENCE LLOYD'S COMPLIMENT, THE FIVER ON THE WHEEL, AN ACTOR IN PAWN, W. S. GILBERT'S LESSON 281-290

Contents

PAGE

CHAPTER XXI

- THE FAREWELL TO THE OLD GAIETY, FREE REFRESHMENTS, THE PROGRAMME, "THE LINKMAN," THE FINAL SUPPER, THE AUCTION, HOW A SONG WAS BORN, LAST-NIGHT SUPPERS, SUNDAY ON A SIDING, IN THE GAIETY RESTAURANT 291-304

CHAPTER XXII

- A THOUGHT READER, THE "GUV'NOR" ASTONISHED, GEORGE EDWARDES' GRIMSEY FRIENDS, A QUIET TEA, IN THE DARK, "DOPE," A LADY OF TITLE, BASIL HALLAM, ACTORS IN KHAKI 305-317

CHAPTER XXIII

- A RARE GIFT, THE OFFICER'S TAXI-CAB, A PIECE OF MELODRAMA, A 1914 DISAPPEARANCE, THE SUSPICIOUS RETURN, AIR RAIDS, THE BOMBS IN WELLINGTON STREET AND ALDWYCH 318-333

CHAPTER XXIV

- FILM WORK, JUPP AS LORD KITCHENER, AN IMPROMPTU POSE, A FILM ON THE RACE-COURSE, THE HORSE THAT WOULD WIN, THE CONFIDENCE TRICK, JUPP GOES ONE BETTER, THE SPRY WAITER, CLEARING A BAR, EXPENSIVE FREE LUNCHEONS, A VISIT AFTER TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS 334-352

Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
JAMES JUPP	<i>Frontispiece</i>
GEORGE EDWARDES	14
KATIE SEYMOUR	18
WILLIAM TERRISS	42
GERTIE MILLAR	52
CONSTANCE COLLIER	66
MABEL RUSSELL	68
MAUDI DARRELL	90
A. E. DODSON	134
FLORENCE ST. JOHN	180
CONNIE EDISS	232
DAISY MARKHAM	250
KATE VAUGHAN	290
CONNIE GILCHRIST	296
GEORGE GROSSMITH, JUNR.	300
NELLIE FARREN	320

CHAPTER I

MY PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE, HOW I JOINED THE GAIETY, PRODUCING A PIECE,
"BREAKS," CONNIE EDISS, DODGING A WRIT.

SIR JAMES BARRIE has said that by far the most romantic figure in any theatre is the stage-doorkeeper. To that I would add that by far the most romantic theatre in the world is the Gaiety Theatre, London.

I have been stage-doorkeeper of the Gaiety for thirty years. I suppose I have taken round to stars and chorus girls more chocolates, bouquets, and presents from admirers than have all the other stage-doorkeepers in Great Britain. I was the connecting link between the patron and the players who made the Gaiety.

Conjure up the old names! Nellie Farren, Olive May, Kate Seymour, Constance Collier, May Yohe, Marie Löhr, Phyllis Dare, Connie Ediss, Ada Belmore, Maudie Darrell, Gaynor Rowlands, Isobel Elsom, Avice Kelham, Rosie Boote, Cissie Loftus, Gabrielle Ray, Lily Elsie, Gladys Cooper, Marie Studholme, Mabel Russell, Ruby Miller, Ada Reeve, Ellaline Terriss, Blanche Massey, Kitty Gordon, Gaby Deslys, Evie Greene, Gertie Millar, Edith Kelly Gould, Birdie Sutherland! I have known them all.

In 1892 I left the Army, in which I served with the 8th King's Royal Irish Hussars, and came home from India. I had an introduction to the late Mr. George Edwardes, the "Guv'nor" beloved of the profession. He engaged me as his clerk on May 1.

The Gaiety Theatre then stood on the ground now occupied by the offices of the *Morning Post*, and Mr. Edwardes' premises were on the northern side, nearly facing the front entrance of the Lyceum Theatre, then the home of Sir Henry Irving. The first time I saw

The Gaiety Stage Door

Irving was on that May 1, and the last time I saw him was on the last night of the old Gaiety in 1903.

In India I had had some experience with the stage. Visiting theatrical companies would be short of choristers, and soldiers with voices would be allowed to fill those parts. I appeared thus in the chorus in "Dorothy," "The Pirates of Penzance," and "H.M.S. Pinafore." So I had some experience to offer to Mr. Edwardes.

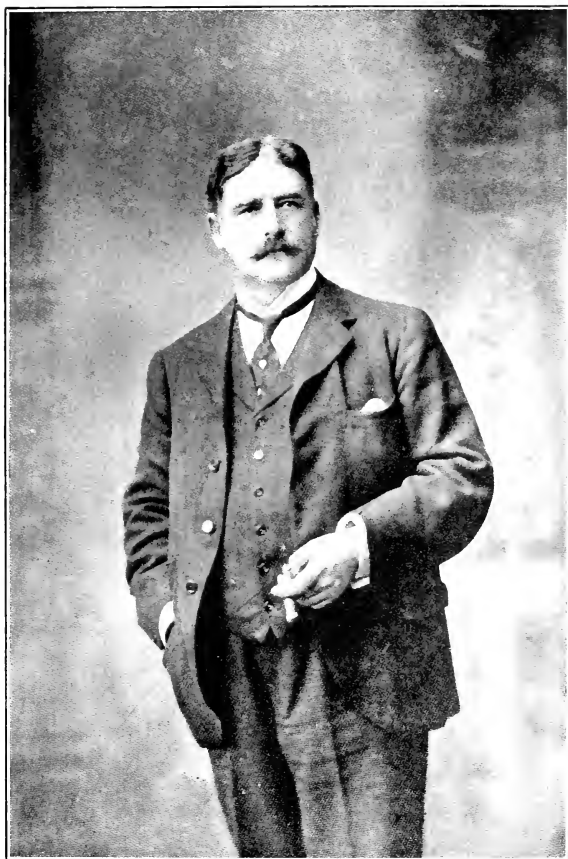
I soon discovered that I was not intended to be an office clerk, but a confidential clerk.

An ideal stage-doorkeeper needs to be very shrewd. Money is not the Open Sesame. Money may, perhaps, be the means whereby a note or card is delivered more promptly, but not for passing anyone through the sacred portals.

I had strict instructions, and was responsible for everybody who went behind. Therefore I got the artistes to share that responsibility, and if a man or woman should be asked for, I sent up to inquire if the visitor should be admitted.

There is no such thing, and never was such a thing, in any well-conducted theatre, as being able to go round and have a "lark with the jolly girls" by the mere passing of a coin. The Gaiety was conducted on the lines of the most rigid institution. The ladies dressed on one side, which was approached by its own staircase, and the men on the opposite side. Courtesy prompted one to pass the compliment to the stage-manager if he or she wished to visit the other side, even though it may have been on business connected with a play.

Don't think for a moment this is a tall story. It is true. Even such well-known Pressmen as Messrs. Chance-Newton, G. R. Sims (*Referee*), "Jimmy" Waters (*Daily Mail*)



Midgley Asquith.

MR. GEORGE EDWARDES

face p. 14

Producing a Piece

Charles Hands (the war correspondent) would never have dreamed of attempting to pass through the swing door of the stage without permission, although I knew them all and was aware that they were personal friends of the "Guv'nor."

Even Baron de Rothschild and his brother, Sir Alfred, who rented the Royal Box by the year, never went behind without permission.

I will give you an idea of the production of a Gaiety piece. Say a play has been written by J. T. Tanner or "Jimmy" Davies, with music by Meyer Lutz, Ivan Caryll, or Lionel Monckton, and accepted by Mr. Edwardes. The first thing is that the author reads his play to the principal artistes, who sit round him on the stage. Then the different parts are handed out, and the next two days are devoted to a little study at home.

During those two days the producer arranges his puppets on a miniature stage with an exact model of the stage-settings and scenery to be used in the production, and when the first call is made there is no hesitation as to where one enters and the rehearsals start in earnest, the artistes having an idea of their lines in the first act at least. The stage-manager also has been busy getting his choristers into formation.

Do not think choristers are nobodies—they play very important parts even if they are only thinking parts, because each one has his or her place on the stage, and regular crosses and movements to be thoroughly mastered, so that there won't be any ungainly grouping.

For instance, an inexperienced or inefficient chorister might easily cause the grace of a dance to be entirely lost. Hence the long rehearsals. The most apparently trivial movement is gone through over and over again until it is correct.

The Gaiety Stage Door

Well, principals and choristers having become *au fait*, there is what is known as the first general call. That means everybody concerned—artistes, author, producer, and even the stage-carpenter and property-master, known as “props,” who is now in a position to chalk out on the stage where the scenery will be and the amount of room provided for the actors ; doors, entrances, archways, and such like being all indicated in chalk.

No doubt you have all heard the story of Mr. Seymour Hicks producing a scene with the chorus, and there happened to be a pond in the scene. He was giving the rhythm to them as they moved about, and singing any old words so long as the tune was correct. Some of the girls got a little off the allotted space, and Mr. Hicks, still singing, rushed up to the girls and led them back, singing, “You’re walking in the water.”

Before any real action can take place the chorus-master has to teach the choristers their parts in all the music in which they are concerned. This is sometimes a very laborious undertaking, because it is rather the exception to find choristers who read music at sight, and their parts have to be strummed over and over on the piano until Tenors, Basses, Sopranos, and Contraltos have all thoroughly learned them. The composer as a rule does not do this work ; there is always a pianist on the theatre staff, and that is his job.

Having made a start at the first general call, we begin to see a little light and to have an idea of what it is all about. The dialogue and situations are dove-tailed little by little, until the first episode in the play is reached. So it goes on, day after day, until the first act is fairly straight. Then the second (very seldom a third). An artist such as Percy Anderson has been designing the dresses and costumes

Fitting the Costumes

to be worn, and the colour scheme has been gone into with the scenic artist and the producer. Why the producer? Little do the majority of people think, when they go to see a play, of the work and pains that have been spent on the effects.

Another little army of workers is hard at it, the copyists writing out the orchestral parts from the composer's score.

The property-master and his little staff make hundreds of "hand props" such as apples, pears, and other fruits, rustic seats and other moveable articles, all of which are specially made for each production. You will never see in a new London production the smallest article that has ever been used before.

Then the costumes have to be fitted and made specially for each person, and this is perhaps the worst and busiest time of the whole business. From my point it certainly is. M. Cornelli must see Mr. Edwardes. Willie Clarkson also must see him at the very same moment. But what can be done when I am equally aware that there are half a dozen other people waiting in some part of the building, ready to snatch a word with him, while all the time they are waiting he is closely engaged with some city magnate going into colossal figures?

To cater for the wants of all these people, and to let them down as lightly as possible without giving offence, is no easy matter, and it was very hard work at first.

Things have not changed at all in this respect. From the old days of Nellie Farren, Fred Leslie, E. W. Royce, Senr., Sylvia Grey, Arthur Roberts, Constance Collier, Rosie Boote (Marchioness of Headford), to this present moment, the only difference is as between the chignon and bustle and the bobbed-hair and knee-short skirts, the bell-shaped "topper" and the velour. Public taste has

The Gaiety Stage Door

changed, but the atmosphere of the theatre and the Bohemianism remain.

In spite of the hard work the artistes do during rehearsals, they are always a merry and seemingly light-hearted crowd. My stage-door was a sight when there was a "break" in the proceedings for either lunch or half an hour for refreshments and a smoke.

Scores of young bloods would be waiting to take their own particular ladies out to Romano's or Gatti's, while others would go farther afield to the Café Royal or Oddenino's. On the other hand, I remember once Mr. Edwardes spoke to one of the chorus ladies and asked her if it was she he had seen coming out of a humble café in the Strand.

"Why go there, my dear? Why don't you get a good lunch at Romano's?"

"But, Mr. Edwardes, I can't afford to go there!"

This had evidently not occurred to him. The next day he made arrangements with Mr. Purefoy of Romano's to let all his company have lunch at half-price on presenting his or her professional card.

Life was never dull. If I was not being told the latest story by Arthur Roberts, George Grossmith, or Teddy Payne, there was always something new and interesting from lovely Marie Studholme or Maud Hobson (niece of John Hollingshead, who was at that time still actively connected with the Gaiety). Then Connie Ediss was always "Merry and Bright," as Alf Lester used to sing. She was as funny off the stage as on it, and dull care always kept at a very respectful distance when she was about. How she kept her wonderful spirits up to such a pitch is a mystery, but she is just the same delightful woman to-day. Perhaps it is the result of the operation on her



Ill. by Walter

MISS KATIE SEYMOUR

face p. 15

Dodging a Writ

glands (thyroid) she was telling me about, but I think she was only giving my leg a bit of a pull, and that it is simply her natural don't-care-a-continental way of going through life.

There is a cry from below : " All down on the stage, please," and the rehearsal is resumed, Arthur Roberts reluctantly throwing away a newly lit cigar (about the twentieth that day).

On one occasion I had to be more than usually on the *qui vive*, because Mr. Edwardes knew that he was being subpoenaed by Mr. Seymour Hicks to bear witness in some case or other, and I was on the look-out for anybody who looked like having the writ, as Mr. Edwardes wanted to get out of attending if possible. The man turned up on the very day that the " Guv'nor " had a horse named Fairyfield running at Hurst Park. I managed to let him know that the man was waiting at the door, and unfortunately at that time it was the *only* door. Mr. Edwardes with Mr. Mike Levenstone was very concerned as to how to dodge the fellow, and appealed to me.

" Jupp ! what am I to do ? I must go down to see my horse run. I simply must go. Can't you get rid of him ? "

I told him to be as close to the door as possible without being seen, and as soon as I came back to make straight for a hansom which I should have waiting for him. If he and Mr. Levenstone would do that, he could leave the rest to me. I went out, got the hansom, and was careful to have the flap-doors already wide open. I had it brought exactly in front of the stage-door, and then went in. Mr. Edwardes and Mr. Levenstone came hurrying out and the man made a rush for them, but I happened to be in between. That cabby knew his business, because

The Gaiety Stage Door

it seemed the cab was over Waterloo Bridge and out of sight before the minion of the law realized his lost opportunity. He was furious, and threatened to summon me for obstructing him in the execution of his duty. I pretended to be very innocent, and told him if he wanted to solicit alms he might do it decently and write. He was furious before, but this seemed to make him worse.

“Solicit alms! Solicit alms!! I’ve got a writ to serve on him, and you’ve prevented me.”

“A writ! Why on earth didn’t you say so?”

He did his best to say something, but the words failed him.

When the “Guv’nor” got back, he asked: “Well, Jupp, how did you get on with that fellow?” I told him what happened, and all he said was, “Ah, Jupp, you’ll be hanged one of these days. Never mind, Fairfield won at 8 to 1 against, and I was on it.”

Mr. Edwardes was essentially a sporting man, and in partnership with his brother the Major took the greatest interest in all kinds of sports; racing and the training of racehorses were uppermost, but he was extremely good at that quietest of all games, chess.

CHAPTER I I

HOW THE GAIETY WAS LEASED, EARLY PRODUCTIONS, THE ORGANIST-CONDUCTOR, THE "MERRY FAMILY" QUARTETTE, KATIE SEYMOUR, VOICE TRIALS, SINGERS OUT OF CURIOSITY, "SING UP THE SCALE," TEDDY PAYNE'S LISP, A LATE START, THE PARSON CHORISTER, MISGUIDED "TUBBY," MARIE TEMPEST'S JOKE, SEYMOUR HICKS NOT FOOLED, THE FURNITURE REMOVER, THE BALLET CLASS.

NO manager of a popular London theatre ever began business under more eccentric conditions than the first lessee of the first Gaiety Theatre, Mr. John Hollingshead. The building, as a building, had been designed, its position chosen, and even its title had been selected. The architects and directors had been commissioned before he came upon the scene. He met Mr. Lionel Lawson in the street one day accidentally, and the following duologue took place.

Mr. Hollingshead : " I hear you are building a theatre."

Mr. Lawson : " Quite true."

" I should like to take it !"

" All right ! Got any money ?"

" Not much, about £200."

" No matter, you can get more."

So the lease was settled.

About a fortnight before the theatre was due to open, the painting-room of Messrs. Grieve and Son, off Drury Lane, was burned down, and with it went the bulk of the finished scenery for the Gaiety show. It had all to be repainted.

The first plays (there were three) to be presented on the opening night—Monday, December 21, 1868—were " The Two Harlequins," an operetta by M. E. Jonas, in which the principal parts were played by Mr. C. Lyall and Miss Constance Loseby ; " On the Cards," a comedy-drama in three acts by Alfred Thompson, the principals

The Gaiety Stage Door

being Alfred Wigan, M. Stuart, Madge Robertson (afterwards Mrs. Kendal), and Nellie Farren, who then went by the more dignified name of Miss E. Farren, but the gallery boys and pit-ites soon got on friendly terms; and "Robert le Diable," an operatic extravaganza by W. S. Gilbert, "which will be supported by the whole comic, vocal, and pantomimic strength of the company."

The first musical director was M. Kettenus, from Her Majesty's Opera; but he soon returned to the Italian school, and Herr Meyer Lutz began his long connection with the Gaiety, which lasted over a full generation.

Born in Germany, Meyer Lutz spent practically the whole of his life in England. He was an organist at Birmingham; leaving there he went to Leeds, and then, through the influence of Cardinal Wiseman, he became organist at St. George's Cathedral, Southwark, for forty years. But he was chiefly known to the public as the conductor at the Gaiety.

It was there that his talent as a composer found greater scope, for the musical arrangements of "Columbus"—in which Nellie Farren made such a name for herself—were to his credit; and he was responsible for much of the success of the "Princess of Trebizonde," which was produced in 1870 with John L. Toole as the principal comedian.

He composed the music for that great favourite "Black-eyed Susan"; and the "Pas-de-Quatre," in "Faust up-to-date," lives still, although people may not know what it is they are humming. He was appointed Grand Organist to the Grand Lodge of Freemasons by King Edward in 1890. He died in 1903 at his residence in Edith Road, West Kensington, where a few days previously his brother-in-law, Furneaux Cook, also breathed his last.

While I am mentioning the deaths of old Gaiety favour-

Katie Seymour

ites, let me mention that in the quartette known as the "Merry Family" were Kate Vaughan, Nellie Farren, E. W. Royce, and Edward Terry; and by a coincidence Kate Vaughan died on the same day that memories of the past were being revived in "The Linkman"—the last piece, together with "The Toreador," to be played at the old Gaiety. In this Gertie Millar recalled some of the characteristic graces of the "Morgiana" of more than twenty years before. Kate Vaughan played for the last time at the Gaiety Theatre, Johannesburg, and at her burial in the cemetery at Braamfontein, one of the pall-bearers was one of that "Merry Family" quartette—Edward Terry, who was also playing in Johannesburg at the time of her death.

That was also in 1903; and that same year, almost at the same time, poor little Katie Seymour—another famous dancer—had just arrived home from South Africa, and died at thirty-three. Catherine Phœbe Mary Athol (Katie Seymour's married name) was a most fascinating little artiste, and she and Edmund Payne used to enter into their duets wholeheartedly, and seemed to enjoy their work quite as much as the delighted audiences. She began her stage career at the age of twelve, and travelled in the provinces for a long time with the Brothers Horne, but clever and amusing as they were, their "turn" was greatly enhanced by the inclusion of that delightful little dancer.

She afterwards went into a pantomime, and it was there that George Edwardes saw her and offered her an engagement in London. She appeared in "The Shop Girl," "The Circus Girl," "The Runaway Girl," and last of all—as far as the Gaiety was concerned—in "The Messenger Boy." Then she went to America to play in "The Casino Girl."

The Gaiety Stage Door

There is a time when it is possible for almost anyone to pass my door without a challenge, and that is when there is a voice trial—officially called an “Audition.” Then anyone with a roll of music or a song need just show this to me to be at once sent below.

Nowadays a voice trial is a pathetic affair. Only the other week there was an audition at a well-known musical-comedy house, and twenty people were wanted. For those twenty vacancies no fewer than fourteen hundred people turned up.

In the old days the extraordinary variety of people who applied would supply an inventive mind with characters enough to write a dozen plays ; but I am inclined to think that a good many of them only came as an excuse to have a look at the theatre from behind. This was proved immediately they were called upon to sing. The extraordinary noises and uncanny sounds some of the people made were too weird to call for annoyance at one’s time being wasted, but rather made one regard them with a curious interest.

An actor might be on his way to attend one of the auditions and, meeting a pal, would drop in and have a Guinness to tune his voice up. Then the friend would ask him where he was going, and on being told, the sudden desire to satisfy his curiosity overcame him. “Can’t you get me in with you, old man?” The actor, knowing the ropes, would say : “Certainly ! Here, just take one of these songs—that’s all you want.”

On the other hand, there are many well-known people playing leading parts who took up the profession on the spur of the moment. In the case of the Gaiety Theatre, we seldom wanted anyone because it was the policy to keep the company together as much as possible, and that was how the authors and composers knew almost exactly whom to write for and the class of music most suitable.

Teddy Payne's Lisp

Then the chorus were so thoroughly used to each other that their work became quite as much a feature of the show as the principals'.

But we always had vacancies when our touring companies were being sent out. Sinclair Mantell was the chorus-master at one time, and although it might have been a source of much amusement to others, it must have been frightfully monotonous for him. Nearly every one seemed to choose the same song to sing, and although it might have been of great interest to a psychologist to study the many different renditions of one particular song, I have known Mantell pathetically ask: "Oh, my dear young lady, don't you know any other song—you are about the twentieth, so far!" If she hadn't any other with her, he would say: "Never mind, just let me hear you sing up the scale."

These auditions were always attended by one or two of the chiefs, in case any unsuspected talent should be discovered. George Edwardes and J. A. E. Malone would be there if they were looking out for anyone in a particular line, and on those occasions Sydney Ellison and Ivan Caryll usually came.

I remember one voice trial particularly. There was a little man who brought a vocal score of one of our pieces, and when his turn came to show what he could do, he said he would give an imitation of Teddy Payne. "Very well, let's hear it," said the "Guv'nor." I was down on the stage at the time and heard him. For the benefit of those who have never heard Edmund Payne, and in order to accentuate the point of my story, I must mention that he had a lisp—one of those nice little lisps which, in the case of a girl, would be called a decidedly pretty lisp.

This man was going through his turn when Teddy

The Gaiety Stage Door

Payne's head and shoulders appeared through the door, and he listened to the imitation of himself right through to the end. When he had finished, I remarked : " Well, for an amateur I think that was quite good, don't you ? " Teddy Payne looked at me in an incredulous manner and almost gasped. At last he managed to get out " Good ? Good ? How can you say he ith good ; why, the fellow can't pronounth hith ethith."

During this exchange of opinions the next man was called, and he started " The Last Watch," but when he got as far as " This is the last—last time we meet," he was interrupted by a voice from the rostrum : " That will do, thank you ! Next one, please." It was a prophetic sentence he had sung.

The next man was a tenor with one of those voices that hurt the listener. W. S. Gilbert used to say that the tenor was not a voice but a disease. He must have heard this man sing when he came to that conclusion. His chosen item was " Lend Me Your Aid," a very ambitious solo for an amateur to attempt. Sydney Ellison had come over to speak to me, and this misguided tenor started off : " Lend Me Your Aid," which is repeated. *He* was also stopped. Sydney looked at me as if he were about to visit the dentist and said : " That man has every right to cry out for assistance ; what he really wants is a step-ladder to reach the top notes." But perhaps the most graphic description was when Ivan Caryll put his hand up to his neck and whispered : " Take your hand away from my throat, can't you ? "

There was one woman there who had come in with the others, and whom I had admitted because I thought she was acting as chaperon to one of her grand-daughters ; but when she came up to me on the stage and asked my

The Parson Chorister

advice as to what she should sing, I was dumbfounded. She had no music with her, and was quite alone. She had a fairly thick veil on, but on close inspection the grey hairs were distinctly visible. I told her that Mr. Mantell would be able to accompany her to something without any music, and when the cry : "Next, please," rang out, she stepped forward and, standing in front of Mr. Edwardes, sang the hymn "Abide with me."

Now, even in our long and varied experience we had never come across anything like this before, but I have never seen the "Guv'nor" behave in a more courteous manner. He had a long chat with her. She had come all the way from Rhyl to try and get something to do, as she was now all alone, and she thought the life on the stage might help her to forget a lot of painful memories. The "Guv'nor" must have found this one of his chances to do somebody a good turn, for when he had seen her as far as the stage-door and said "Good-bye !" to her, I know she went away with a piece of crisp paper which she had not possessed previously.

A clergyman came to one of these trials, and, not dreaming that he wanted to have his talents put to the test, I asked him what I could do for him. "Well, perhaps you would kindly inform me how I can best get to see the manager of the theatre."

I told him that I would send his card down to Mr. Mantell if he thought he would be able to be of any service, and then he informed me that he had decided to leave the Church and take up the profession. I sent him down with the rest of the crowd, and getting one of the stage-hands to relieve me on the door, went down to see a bit more of this parson. I told Sinclair Mantell that a clergyman had called to see him.

The Gaiety Stage Door

“A what! A clergyman! I don't know one,” he said.

“Well, here's your chance to make amends,” was my rejoinder, and I called the reverend backslider over to us. Poor Sinclair was positively nervous. “You wish to see me?” he asked.

“Yes! er—the—er—fact is,” said this up-to-date Rev. Robert Spalding, “I have come to the conclusion that I am much more fitted for the stage than I am for the Church. You see, I have had quite a lot of experience as an amateur, and have met with most encouraging successes time after time at our many gatherings. I have weighed the matter in a most sober and reasonable manner, and after a time of careful reflection have decided to take this step.”

Sinclair Mantell was himself again, and asked him what his pet song was, or if he had any particular line he wanted to go in for. The parson beamed upon him: “Oh! I thank you so much. Yes, I have a decided leaning towards the humorous side, and have always scored top-hole with Huntley Wright's song from ‘The Country Girl’—Yoho! little girl, Yoho!” This was too good to waste, so Mantell asked him to sit down and wait while he heard the few remaining aspirants. When they had gone he said:

“Now, let us hear you. Can you give us the dance that follows the song?” What a question to ask! Could he? Could he not! Now, if Arthur Helmore—the original Rev. Robert Spalding in “The Private Secretary”—had come along and told us he would caricature Huntley Wright as a parson it would have been excruciatingly funny, but here was this man in clerical garb making himself grotesque, and it was more than we could stand. I went up to the stage-door again, followed a few moments afterwards by one or two of the stage-hands. One of

“ A little Spirituous Liquor ! ”

them didn't even smile, but with a nod of the head merely grunted : “ Blimey ! ” and went out for a drink.

Later on Sinclair came up and said : “ I couldn't stick it any longer, Jimmy. You'll find him downstairs still singing and dancing to himself, unless you will come round to Short's. I think I've earned a little stimulant.” He wouldn't even wait for me to accompany him—his one aim seemed to be to get as far out of reach as possible, and I was just about to follow him and help him recover, when the perspiring parson came up. I asked him how he had got on, and he told me he did not quite know because the music suddenly stopped and he found himself alone. Did I know what had become of the accompanist ? I told him that Mr. Mantell had been hard at it all day, playing song after song and dance after dance for scores and scores of people, and he had suddenly come over faint and had just rushed out to Short's for a drop of brandy before he collapsed entirely.

“ Dear, dear. That is very distressing, is it not ? Do you think he will be there now ? Perhaps a little spirituous liquor might invigorate me ! Will you join me ? ”

I took him round to Short's, and as soon as Mantell saw us approaching, he fled. I advised this parson to go up to Daly's Theatre and ask to see Stanley Wade. I told him he would very likely get a job to understudy Mr. Freddie Kay. He said he would go, but I never heard anything more of him.

But he was not the only misguided person who had it in his mind that he could make a success on the stage, for I remember a man who really ought to have known better. He was one of our own staff. How he ever came to get such an erroneous idea is inconceivable, but one day he asked Sinclair Mantell if he would hear him sing when-

The Gaiety Stage Door

ever he could spare a moment. Naturally he said he would hear him whenever he liked, but he asked him if he seriously thought of giving up a good position like his for the very uncertain one of a chorister. That somewhat offended —. Wait until he had heard him sing ! There would not be any talk of “ chorister.”

Now — was a fellow with whom we all got on well, and it was a pity to see a man like this losing his mental balance. He was very short, in fact “ tubby.” His face was quite a nice one for the box office or the saloon bar, but not quite up to the standard required for a *Jeune Premier*. The merest suggestion of it could not be entertained, so as he had evidently been stuffed with this nonsense by some professional leg-pullers, the only thing to be done to save him was to unstuff him again, and to do it in no uncertain manner.

It was arranged that he should sing on the stage at a private audition all on his little own. Everybody connected with the theatre knew about it, but when our friend went down below to the stage, the place was apparently deserted. The safety-curtain had been taken up so that his voice could be heard to its fullest advantage all over the theatre, and Sinclair Mantell sat at the piano, while the stage-manager, Mr. A. E. Dodson, went down to the stalls.

The opening bars of “ Let me like a Soldier fall ” were heard. Now to sing one needs a voice. Friend — had evidently left his elsewhere, for nothing escaped his lips except a faint meow, suggestive of a kitten that had been out in the rain all night. That was the only sound that broke the silence of the theatre.

He piped out : “ Yes—let me like a soldier fall,” and then on the word “ fall ” there was a soul-shaking crash of battens, weights, buckets, etc., and somebody started

Marie Tempest's Joke

the iron-curtain down. — is still a very highly respected member of the theatrical profession, but he is not on the stage.

Miss Marie Tempest once played a trick at one of these voice trials, and she did it to avenge a friend of hers. This lady friend had been down with Marie Tempest's card, which got her a hearing immediately. This lady had a beautiful voice, worthy of any West End theatre, but unfortunately her face was not in keeping—it was decidedly on the plain side. She was not engaged.

When Marie Tempest heard of her friend's failure she went down herself the next day, dressed in a very quiet manner. She also presented a card of introduction—her own—and was sent down on to the stage. She sang as well as she ever did, but was not engaged.

Whoever those people were, they could not have been very well acquainted with the personal appearance of London stars, for they did not recognize her. "It is very kind of Miss Tempest to send you Royal Academicians to us, but unfortunately you are not quite the type required for the stage. The Queen's Hall, or any other concert platform, is more suitable for you."

Marie Tempest knew what was to be inferred, and got her own back by saying: "You misunderstand—Miss Marie Tempest did not send me. I *am* Marie Tempest, and if you don't think my friend and I are quite the type required for the stage, come to Daly's Theatre to-night and hear me."

Another trick was played by Ellaline Terriss, and it was intended as a joke on her husband, Seymour Hicks; but it was not quite a success. A carriage drove up to the stage-door, and an apparently old lady alighted. She was deeply veiled, but there was a certain something about

The Gaiety Stage Door

her that seemed familiar, so I looked at her rather closely. She said : " Don't give me away, Jupp. I only want to play a joke on Seymour—I am going to get my voice tried." Thinking there might be some fun, I followed her down to the stage. Seymour Hicks was in charge of this audition, and seeing the old lady enter, followed by me, he called out : " Jupp, give that old lady a chair ; is she waiting for anyone ? Ask her to sit down." When one or two people had sung, and the request for " Next, please " was made, Miss Terriss got up and walked towards the piano. She placed a copy of " A Little Bit of String " in front of Maudie Thornton (the chorus mistress) and the music began.

Now, I don't think the person who can successfully fool Seymour Hicks is born yet. The old lady started the song, but instead of being stopped after a few bars, as is the custom, she was allowed to sing the first verse right through. When it was over Seymour Hicks called out, " Please go on—I want to hear the next verse." The old lady asked : " Do you really, Mr. Hicks ? "

" Yes," he thundered. " My wife used to sing that song, but you sing it a thousand times better than she ever did. Sing the next verse, please, and then come down into the stalls. I want to speak to you."

That was enough for her. She made a hurried exit. When Mr. Hicks came up, I asked him if he knew who the old lady was. Much can be conveyed by a wink !

Personality is a great attribute in the profession. Seymour Hicks' enormous activity has always been an essential of his performances. I believe that his propensity for throwing chairs and tables aside when he was on the stage provoked the late William Terriss to say to his daughter, Ellaline Terriss, when she told him that Seymour Hicks

The Ballet Class

had proposed marriage : " What ! You want to marry that furniture remover ? "

When I began to understand things at the Gaiety, I appreciated the enormous " factory " (if I may call it so) it really was. I had seen the chorus girls and the ballet dancers come on the stage and do their business in the usual easy and graceful way, and like the ordinary playgoer thought their efforts excellent ; but I never dreamed that it was the result of hard and strict training. This training reminded me of the Army I had just left, but our " physical jerks," as they are irreverently termed nowadays, were not nearly so strenuous as the leg exercises that our ballet girls had to go through.

Dressed up in their ballet skirts they would spend a whole morning under Katti Lanner's instruction, and perhaps even then only one particular movement had been perfected. Talk about discipline ! Although it was pleasurable, it was conducted on very strict lines, and each one knew that she had to be the same as her sister artiste, otherwise it would cease to be a combination.

CHAPTER III

A STAGE-STRUCK TRAGEDY, A TALE OF GOLD, SCORNE PEARLS, THE OBLIGING CLOCKMAKER, A GIPSY'S PROPHECY, THE MURDER OF TERRISS, KING EDWARD.

IN my capacity as stage-doorkeeper I have come into contact with every class of man and woman, and known people right from the first day they came to sing at an audition (voice trial) to the day when their names appeared in letters as high as themselves. The "stage-struck" are the most interesting lot, if one is observant enough to notice the different forms this fascination takes. Some are extremely funny, while others are equally sad. The more common type is the young man who has made some sort of success with amateurs, and his friends will tell him that he reminds them very much of Hayden Coffin, except that, if anything, he is better-looking, and this kind of thing gets into the poor young fellow's head with the result that he wants to give up a good job in the City and go on the real stage.

He is most indignant when he is told that his voice is good but wants training, and if he comes back in a year's time he may get a chance in the chorus. Then there is the girl who has read so much about actresses in novels—or perhaps sensational magazines—that she has made up her mind to become an actress without asking herself anything about qualifications. That is the type which is the most pathetic of all, because nothing will daunt it.

This is the story I have to tell of the wife of a bank-manager. He held an excellent position in the City and there was nothing within reason that his wife could not have. They had a lovely home in the neighbourhood of Surbiton, and among their pleasurable possessions was a house-boat on the river and a beautifully appointed yacht, which was kept at Southsea. Gowns, jewellery,

A Stage-struck Tragedy

and all the good things that a woman could desire, were hers, and yet she was unhappy. She had the fever for the stage. Her husband was a most indulgent man and, at first, made no attempt to interfere with her beautiful dreams.

He even wrote to Richard Temple, the Savoyard, and asked him if he would take his wife as a singing pupil. Mr. Temple interviewed them both, and after hearing the would-be prima donna, said he did not care to take pupils unless he could see some real promise of success. He thought it would be a waste of money, and did his best to let her down as lightly as possible. But so terribly eager was she, and the husband so anxious to please her, that in the end he was persuaded to take her. He told me about her one day when the husband's name cropped up during conversation, and he said it was hopeless trying to teach her ; she had no voice.

She took lessons for three years, and during this time she appeared to be comparatively content. This she looked upon as the beginning of her great career to come. When Dick Temple could stand it no longer he told her she had got as far as he could instruct her and the lessons must cease. From that time the happiness of her home began to fade, because she started on a heart-breaking search for an engagement. At least it would have been heart-breaking to anybody of less tenacity of spirit.

It was not conceit—it could not have been, for that would soon have been taken out of her by the awful rebuffs she met with from different managers and agents she interviewed. Then one day a mutual friend came along to me, and he told me that he wanted me to do a great favour for him. He said that this mad infatuation had become an obsession, nobody could do anything with her, and his

The Gaiety Stage Door

great friend (the husband) was in despair about her. She had long ceased to be even so much as a companion to him, and everything was neglected in this vain endeavour to get on the stage. As soon as her husband had gone to his bank she would be off, and spend the day seeking an engagement. She would sit up half the night trying her voice until the strain on the poor chap's nerves became almost too much to bear. Then the thought came to him that "Jupp of the Gaiety may be able to do something."

"What can you do, Jimmy? Do your best, old man, because, apart from this infernal mania, she is an awfully decent little woman, and you know what a good chap he is. Can I bring her along to you? If there is no chance of getting her a job, will you give her a good talking-to? Surely you have met this type before and know how to deal with them."

There was nothing for it but to agree, so the following morning he brought her along. I rang up Blackmore's agency and told them who was speaking, because I knew that would carry weight. I asked them if they would spare me a few minutes if I brought a lady along. They knew that I was a busy man and could not afford to wait. "Yes, come along now, and I will see her at once." This was indeed a concession, because in the ordinary way one might call at Blackmore's for months and never see the inside of the office proper. When I got there I gave Mr. Blackmore a brief outline of the case, and knowing this class very well, he promised to send her back to me cured. But he was wrong—nothing could cure her. As a matter of fact nothing ever did. She came back and thanked me, and then I realized whom I had to deal with. "They are all the same—they all say the same thing—so much

A Home Broken-up

so that I believe my husband must have put them up to it. I know he never wanted me to go on the stage, but I *will*, I *will*, I tell you, in spite of him. Mr. Jupp, I am sure you could do something to help me, if you only tried. Will you, please ? ”

What on earth could I do ? If I asked the “Guv’nor ” to see her, he would think I was taking an undue liberty owing to my confidential position with him—or perhaps worse still, far worse, he might think I was having a joke at his expense. Yet here was this pathetic little woman, pretty and prepossessing enough, but with this mad desire. I promised that I would let her know the moment an opportunity came, and with that she went away.

It was only to be expected that a woman like this would fall into the hands of bogus managers and agents, of whom there are hundreds about on the look-out for stage aspirants. On the promise of getting her an engagement they got pounds and pounds out of her ; and then began the deception at home. Money had to be got in some way or another to satisfy the gluttony of these wolves, and her jewellery began to disappear. She was almost entirely estranged from her husband, but occasionally the clouds would clear and they would be on almost affectionate terms for a brief period ; but he noticed that it ceased immediately she had got more money out of him. This money, of course, went in the same way as all the rest. The home was neglected and he became nothing more than a lodger, and all happiness was gone from it. Still she persisted, and the sad finish was told me by the man who had come to me on her behalf.

It appears that one of these bogus managers had given her an engagement in a touring pantomime, and under an assumed name she had left her husband, home, position,

The Gaiety Stage Door

and all that was worth having for what she thought would be the realization of her fondest dreams, and one day the friend came and told me what we thought was the last chapter of a very sad and miserable story. The bank-manager, being deserted in this cruel manner by the woman he had always loved, had gradually become broken down—not in worldly position, but in spirit. All interest in life had departed with the flight of his wife, and his friends noticed the terrible change that came over him. Then, one morning, he failed to put in an appearance at the bank. For several days he was absent, and inquiries being made at his house, it was found that he had also gone away, and had left no message with a soul. The bankers becoming somewhat alarmed, auditors were called in, and after an exhaustive search of the accounts everything was found to be in perfect order. There was nothing wrong elsewhere. The tradesmen had all been settled up with almost to the last, and there were no outstanding debts of any kind. It was therefore very strange that he should go off in this manner without drawing any money from his own banking account. There was no trace of him, and nothing was heard of him until about two months after the day of his going away.

The irony of the last act in this drama was that a party of theatrical girls were up the river for an outing, and as they were about to land on Tagg's Island the body of this unhappy man was found. He must have been there for a long time, according to the coroner, but he was easily recognized.

So ended this pitiful story. What became of the woman I never knew, but as there was no possibility of her ever making good on the stage, the only conclusion one can arrive at in such very unusual circumstances is that she came to no good off the stage.

A Tale of Gold

The daily round, the common task of a stage-door-keeper is by no means a monotonous one. The variety of people one meets lends interest to almost every minute, and all sorts of things are happening both grave and gay, as no doubt the reader will acknowledge if he follows these stories and reminiscences of mine to the end.

I remember one morning—it was a Monday—I was talking to the linkman when a gentleman came in. He was evidently of the wealthy country type, and I thought perhaps he had come on business from out Bracknall way in connection with the "Guv'nor's" horses. He said that he had occupied a stall on Saturday night, and had left something behind. He would not say what it was, so the linkman took him round to the housekeeper to make inquiries. She said that seven umbrellas, two ladies' bags, and one pair of opera-glasses had been found. "Nothing else?" inquired the man. "No, there was nothing else. The cleaners have been round and finished their work, and they only brought these things up to my room." The man seemed a bit perturbed, and in a very anxious voice asked if he might be allowed to go down into the stalls and look. He knew exactly where he had left it.

The housekeeper said he could go down by all means, and the linkman should show him the way. Down they went, and going straight to the stall he had been sitting in he felt in front of it, and there, hanging round the patent box holding opera-glasses, was a small leather bag. It would not have been noticed in the semi-darkness, but this man knew what he was looking for, and exactly where to find it. Giving the bag a slight shake, the musical sound of gold clinking against gold told its own tale. "Thank goodness, that's all right. Let us go back to

The Gaiety Stage Door

the stage-door for a moment." He thanked the house-keeper for her courtesy, and then he and the linkman came back to me. He loosened the strings of the little leather bag and poured out a heap of gold on to my desk. Then he counted it. There were eighty pounds in sovereigns. He gave one to the linkman, one to me, and putting the remainder into the bag, dropped them into his pocket, and with a smile thanked us and went out.

The linkman's face was a study. He was several shades paler, and his eyes were dimmed with moisture as he said : " Blimey, Jupp ! fancy that lot hanging in the stalls since Saturday night, and us not knowing a word about it." Then, looking at the bright coin he had just been given, sadly said : " An eighty to one chance gone west ! " That was his way of viewing the golden incident.

Talking of chances missed recalls one night when the theatre policeman came into the stage-door and, placing some pearl beads on my desk, said : " Here you are, Jimmy—some beads for your little daughter." They rolled off the desk, and I picked them all up—as I thought, and handed them back to him, telling him that my daughter had got past the penny-prize-packet stage. " Oh, they'll do for my youngsters," he said, and put them into his pocket.

The next day the story came out as to how he came by these supposed beads. A wealthy lady had been to the theatre that same night and had worn a valuable necklace of perfectly matched pearls. This had unfortunately got broken and the pearls had fallen off loose on to the pavement outside, but in the crowd of people coming out of the theatre the accident had not been noticed. This policeman, who was attached to the theatre, found quite a lot of them when the crowd had gone off to their several

Scorned Pearls

homes. He evidently had no idea of their value, because he told me afterwards that when he saw some of his comrades marching down from Bow Street to go on duty he had thrown one at the leader in fun, saying : "Hurry up, you fellows, you'll be late !" Little did he dream that in that one shot he was throwing away a pearl worth anything from thirty to a hundred pounds (according to its size). He had taken the pearls home after I had scorned to take them, and had given them to his two young children. They played a game of marbles with them for a couple of days, but when the notice of the loss of the pearls was sent round to the police stations he very quickly recovered them. When he told me of this I thought I would have another look round in case I had not picked them all up when they rolled off my desk. Although the office is swept out regularly I did find two. I handed them to him, and he added them to his own and took them up to the station.

There was a big reward offered for the finding of these pearls, but as they were found by a policeman, and the police are not allowed to take a reward unless granted in special cases, there was nothing more heard about it. I believe there were only ten pearls missing, and of course the wealthy owner was only too glad to get the others back and the missing ten could be replaced. The point of this story and a chance being missed is this : If I had had the slightest idea of their value and had accepted the pearls, I should have been eligible for the reward, being a civilian, and the substantial sum offered would have been—but oh ! don't let us talk any more on such a painful subject.

Much more fortunate was one of our cleaners. She had only been in our employ a fortnight when one morning

The Gaiety Stage Door

in sweeping up inside one of the boxes she saw something glittering under the light of the electric lamp. She picked up a beautiful single diamond earring. This was inquired for later on in the day, and her lucky find resulted in the reward of ten pounds.

I don't like telling tales out of school, but I must just mention an artful bit on the part of one of our staff. In order not to give him away I will say it was the linkman, but it wasn't.

A cab of the ordinary type drove up one evening to the front of the theatre. The passenger jumped out, paid his fare, and went into the vestibule to book his seat. The linkman went to close the flap-doors of the hansom, but noticing a golden sovereign lying just underneath the seat, jumped in, and calling out to the cabby, "Go to Charing Cross," was driven off. He got out at the station, which is only a few hundred yards away, gave the cabby a shilling, and walked back to the theatre nineteen shillings to the good. I won't dwell on the merits or demerits of his action, but he could not be accused of being in any way dull-witted.

But in the case of a contemporary of mine the same cannot be said. In this case I am sure he won't mind my mentioning his name, because he has so often told the story against himself. He was the stage-doorkeeper of the Lyceum, and one morning a man came along with a ladder and said he wanted to see the clock on the stage. There was nobody about just then, so Barry (that was the stage-doorkeeper's name) asked him if he knew his way down. Of course he did! He was the official who looked after the theatre timepieces. Right-o! Down he went. In a few minutes he came up with his ladder and the clock under his arm. "I shall have to take it back



Window & Grov.

MR. WILLIAM TERRISS

face p. 42

The Obliging Clockmaker

to the shop, but I won't inconvenience them for the show to-night. I'll let you have it back in good time."

The guileless Barry consented, and then called him back. "Look here," he said, "I've got a gold watch which was presented to me by my "guv'nor," Sir Henry Irving. I wish you'd have a look at it and see what's wrong. And while you are at it, the swivel on the gold chain is loose. Can you fix those up and let me have them when you bring the clock back?" This man was of a very obliging nature, and said he would give them his own special and undivided attention.

He evidently did, for Barry never saw either of the things again.

George Edwardes nearly always came to the theatre in his own private brougham, which was driven by the ever-faithful Turner. He would never wait for Turner to get down and open the carriage door for him, but would jump out like a man in a hurry, and with a brief, "Same time to-night, Turner!" would come in and go straight to his office. This must have got Turner into a negligent way, and is the reason for the following little incident.

One night Turner drove up at the appointed hour to take the "Guv'nor" home, and seeing Mr. Edwardes standing talking to a friend, got down and opened the brougham door. Then he got up into his seat again and waited. Mr. Edwardes shook hands with his friend, and bidding him good night, approached the brougham. There was a bit of a wind up that night, and before the "Guv'nor" got to the vehicle the door banged to. At the same moment Mr. Edwardes turned back and came to me with some final instructions for me. The banging of the carriage door was evidently taken as a signal by Turner that Mr. Edwardes had got in, so he drove off at a good rate. The

The Gaiety Stage Door

instructions he had to give me took a couple of minutes, so that when the "Guv'nor" went outside again, Turner was a long way off and well on his way home. A hansom had to be got—not an easy thing to do when the theatres are being emptied of their patrons—and the "Guv'nor" drove off wondering who had spirited his brougham, horse, and coachman away.

When Turner explained how he had fully thought that Mr. Edwardes was inside through the banging of the door he only laughed, but advised him to make sure in future that the occupant was of a more tangible nature.

The instructions Mr. Edwardes had turned back to give me were that, the next day being Friday—the day on which salaries are paid—he wanted me to take the cheques and other documents down to Ascot and I would find him in Tattersall's Ring, where he would sign them. This could not be done overnight, as they were not made up. The next day I told Mr. Marshall of the "Guv'nor's" instructions, and off I started with my cheques, etc. I saw him on the course talking with some friends, and there was a gipsy begging them to cross her palm with a coin and let her tell their fortunes. When Mr. Edwardes saw me approaching, he moved towards me. "Here you are, Jupp"; and taking the packet off me, produced his fountain-pen. He laid the papers on a seat of the coach which he invariably had at the Ascot meetings and was about to sign them when the gipsy came up. "Do let me tell your fortune, gentleman—you've got a pretty hand—and a pretty foot. Let me read your hand for you, kind gentleman." Mr. Edwardes had indeed nice hands and feet, but being above such flattery, he only smiled and asked her to go away. "Can't you see I'm busy? Go away, there's a good woman." Then, as an after-

The Murder of Terriss

thought he said, "Tell Jupp's fortune." "No, not him, he has no money." The "Guv'nor" laughed, and said: "Bless my soul, I do believe you can tell fortunes, for that's true enough—Jupp never has any money."

When he had finished signing the papers, he humoured the gipsy and let her read his hand. It may or may not be anything more than a most extraordinary coincidence, but that gipsy said: "I see you in a very large building with hundreds of people in it—there are ladies and gentlemen dancing and singing. See! look here, kind gentleman! There is another very big building. It isn't yours, but you will buy it later on. There are hundreds of people, and more gentlemen and ladies dancing and singing. This other building has a name beginning with A. Oh! look here, gentleman—there is trouble, but not for you. There is blood, much blood—but that will be before you buy it."

Mr. Edwardes thought that was quite enough, so giving her a few shillings went and rejoined his party.

Not very long afterwards poor William Terriss was murdered at the stage-door of the Adelphi Theatre, and he was carried on to the stage, where he died. There was indeed blood—much blood—as the gipsy had foretold, and that theatre, the name of which begins with A, shortly afterwards became the property of Mr. Edwardes.

William Terriss got his nickname, not from his deportment on the stage, as most people thought, but from the fact that he was for a long time an officer in the Navy. He was also a chess enthusiast, and on the afternoon of the tragedy I was sent round to the Adelphi Theatre with a verbal message from Mr. Edwardes for a return game with him.

The Gaiety Stage Door

I was told that Mr. Terriss would not arrive until about half an hour before the performance that evening, so I went back in what I thought was good time. I was just getting into Maiden Lane, where the stage-door of the Adelphi is, and happening to meet an old friend, stood for a few moments talking to him, when the murder took place.

The assassin—named Prince—was hiding in a nook awaiting the arrival of Terriss, and when the actor was fitting his key into the lock of the private entrance, darted swiftly across the narrow road and plunged the knife into him. The theatre was crowded with an enthusiastic audience, for William Terriss was one of the most popular of actors of his day, looking forward to seeing their hero in one of his latest plays.

Little dreaming of the awful thing, I continued on my errand, and arrived at the stage-door just as he was being carried down the steps. Imagine my horror—nay! terror, because I ran back like one demented to the Gaiety to tell Mr. Edwardes, but he had just left with some friends and gone to dinner. I took a hansom and drove to the first place where I thought he would be, and eventually found him and his friends at the Café Royal. With my mind in such a state I forgot all about decorum and etiquette, and went straight to his table and told him the awful news as quietly as I could.

But his friends must have overheard me, for, with looks of understanding, they rose as one man, and without a word or even a sign, left the building, and, as I learned afterwards, went straight to the Adelphi.

Richard Le Gallienne, one of Terriss' dearest friends, wrote the following poem :—

Le Gallienne's Poem

To murder Terriss 'twas as though one said,
"Come! let us murder manhood, let us slay
"The bravest face of beauty in our day,
"Courage and honour find, and strike them dead,
"Yonder young hero with the shining head—
"Come! let us smite him into senseless clay."
Surely the very steel had leapt astray
Ere it one drop of that kind blood had shed!
To murder Terriss! quench that gallant light
Of dauntless life, London's young Galahad.
Of simple courage, honour, beauty, truth;
Romance's own proud image of a lad,
Love's very vision of victorious youth.
Terriss, good-bye! There is no play to-night!

To this day William Terriss' two sons, "Bill" and "Tom," who are in America running their own companies, producing films, never fail to write to me on the anniversary of their father's death. As I write, poor Breezy Bill seems to be looking at me from a very fine portrait painted by Mr. Shirley Fox, which is hanging on the wall in front of me.

So ended the career of one of the handsomest and most popular actors that ever trod the stage, through the fevered imagination of a madman—for Prince was proved to be insane.

Mr. Edwardes liked others to participate in his pleasures. There never was a big race meeting at a get-at-able distance but he invited friends and members of his companies to coach down to the course. Ascot for preference, as one of his country resorts, Wingfield Lodge, was quite close. One of his successful horses was named after this house, Wingfield's Pride. Ascot is a four-day meeting, and

The Gaiety Stage Door

there was always the "Stationary" Coach reserved for his party. This was composed of the stars of the day. What an array of talent on one coach! Lily Langtry, Nellie Farren, Birdie Sutherland, Letty Lind, Katie Seymour, Sylvia Gray, Ellaline Terriss, May Yohe, Grace Palotta, Maud Hobson, Marie Studholme, Evie Greene, and Julia Gwynne (Mrs. George Edwardes); but in addition to talent, what beauty!

But they were only a few of the party, for gallant as he was, Mr. Edwardes was not quite so selfish as to keep the less attractive opposite sex out of the festivities. Hayden Coffin, "Pat" Malone (the "Guv'nor's" right-hand man, without whom Mr. Edwardes is untruthfully supposed to have been unable to breathe, such was his indefatigability), Huntley Wright, "Teddy" Payne, Harry Monkhouse, Arthur Williams, Fred Leslie, Willie Ward, and Arthur Roberts.

Once the "Guv'nor" came out of the paddock! Smiling radiantly, he told his guests that he had a nice little winner for them. "Now I want you all to back a winner. Just have a little bit on So-and-so. But don't you bother, I'll do it for you, and if anything goes wrong and it should happen to lose, I'll get Jupp to come round and collect the money." Which, of course, he never did, because my memory is very good, and being with him on all such occasions, I know he never allowed guests to be out of pocket.

The next day was Saturday, and we coached down to Windsor Races. For some unknown reason he asked me if I had any money, and I said, "No." "What on earth do you do with your money? You never seem to have any. Just take these two pounds and go over to the half-crown ring and put a bit on (he mentioned the name of a horse) and do yourself a bit of good."

King Edward

I consulted the race-card, but there was no such name. I took the hint and guessed that he did not want to encourage me to back horses, and I found out later that, although he gambled himself, he disliked leading others to do so.

As stage-doorkeeper at the Gaiety I had the honour of coming into personal touch with the late beloved Peace-Maker of the World, King Edward VII. His Majesty arrived a little earlier than the appointed time, and, although attended by people who should have known the Royal entrance next to the stage-door, came to me. I conducted him, and shall always remember his amusement when he discovered his mistake.

CHAPTER IV

SHOW GIRLS, THE TALL FAIR MANNEQUIN, THE WEALTHY ITALIAN AND THE ERMINE COAT, I WIN A BET, OFF IN A YACHT, "I HAVE COME BACK," A FRESH START, GERTIE MILLAR, HER MARRIAGE, THE INFATUATED NOBLEMAN.

I COME to Show Girls. They are chosen not only on account of their figures, height, and beauty—necessary attributes, it is true—but chiefly on account of their drawing power. Brains are not asked for so long as the show girl knows how to wear the beautiful gowns provided for her ; but the most important question is : how many stalls and boxes can she fill, with whom is she well acquainted ? If she is a woman of great personal attraction and boasts a lover or two of the aristocracy, she is certain of a position.

She is then the means of attracting to the theatre nightly thrice or four times her weekly salary. She is paid a good one too, because, don't forget, she usually has a beautiful flat or a house which has to be kept.

Some show girls, in addition, are really clever, and having once been entrusted with a few showy lines, come speedily to the front and turn out to be very fine actresses of a grand and statuesque order. The majority, though, retire, and I cannot recall one case of any being deserted and left in poverty. There have been other cases, of course, where a woman has merely used the stage career as a cloak, and when she has managed to land a good catch, has ruthlessly chucked the profession as something which, having served its purpose, is no longer of any use to her.

There was a very beautiful young girl who came to us when she was about twenty-two years of age. I won't say she used the Gaiety to find a husband, but I remember she left the stage because she believed she was in love, and afterwards regretted the fact. She was a tall, fine-

The Tall Fair Mannequin

looking girl, with a lot of fair hair and a soft, sweet voice, and was a mannequin in a West End establishment.

If I gave you its name you would all know it, and most of you would remember the name of the girl too. The establishment is patronized by people of great wealth, and naturally the mannequin came into contact with them. She was a sweet, unspoiled girl, but so remarkable was her beauty and so vivid her personality, that my Lady This and my Lady That would talk of her, and at one period, if the subject of beauty cropped up in the West End, one would be sure to cite the mannequin as the most beautiful girl in London.

She became the topic of smart clubs and Park Lane drawing-rooms, and it was not surprising that her fame reached the ears of theatrical agents. At last one of them went to her and said that he could get her a job at the Gaiety. It was a long time before she could be persuaded that the offer was made in earnest, and when she agreed, she looked upon it more as a joke than anything else, and stipulated that she would still follow her employment.

George Edwardes, upon the application of the agent, agreed to see her, and after one look offered her a position. He was amazed when she stated that she still wanted to follow her employment during the daytime, but thinking that the whim would soon pass, he consented.

So this young girl, who could have become one of George Edwardes' greatest stars, paraded exclusive creations before aristocratic West End ladies in the daytime, and at night appeared in yet more gorgeous gowns at the Gaiety.

George Edwardes watched her that night with the eye of an expert. For a little while success did not affect her. She would come quietly and go quietly, but soon my little office swarmed with floral tributes for her and invitations

The Gaiety Stage Door

to supper. She seemed amazed at the furore she had created, and at first refused to have anything to do with her admirers. Of course her reserve attracted them the more, and one evening she drove up to the theatre with an enormously wealthy Italian Count. This gentleman had haunted the stage-door for days and days, until at last he had found a mutual friend, who introduced him to our new girl.

I think the Count swept her off her feet. I heard that she had relinquished her post in the West End, and soon one of our Gaiety girls told me that the fair-haired enchantress had become engaged to the foreigner. Very soon she was literally covered with the most costly jewels, and her gowns were equal to any of the wonderful creations she had worn on the stage or up West.

There was a sensation over a magnificent ermine coat she had been seen wearing on one or two occasions, and there was a lot of discussion in the girls' dressing-rooms as to what it had cost. Various guesses were made, until it became a topic all over the theatre. I made a guess, and backed my judgment with a small stake. Eventually there were quite a number of bets resting upon the price of this coat, and I was deputed to get the matter settled.

I was very friendly with her, and the next time she arrived wearing the ermine coat I told her about the bets we had made regarding the cost and asked her to settle the point. For a moment she looked amazed, but then burst out into laughter, and said: "Of course I will tell you, Jupp. There is no secret about it, and as I am going to marry the Count, and am very much in love with him, I am sure he won't mind. The coat cost three thousand guineas." It was a much larger sum than I had estimated, but I won my bet.



MISS GERTIE MILLAR

face p. 52

Off in a Yacht

That incident led to a further conversation, and I could tell that the girl was deeply in love with the man who professed so great an admiration for her and loaded her with presents. I really believe that she knew very little of the world when she first came to the Gaiety, and I ask you whether one girl in a thousand, suddenly transformed from a mannequin to a Gaiety favourite, would have kept her head any more than she? The car she rode in, also a present from the reputed wealthy Count, was a perfect wonder. Although the girl never got beyond the ranks of the show girls at the Gaiety, I have seen Gaiety stars whose names were blazoned outside the theatre look with astonishment and envy as the one-time mannequin stepped from her royal car and passed to her humble dressing-room.

One evening she did not check in at her usual time, and we had given her up when she dashed in excited and out of breath. There was no time for explanations then, and thanks to the dexterity of the dresser, her gowns were thrust on her rather than fitted, and she got on to the stage just in time. Before the show was over, word went round that she was not coming back. That night I missed her as she went out, but next day I heard that she had cancelled her contract at the Gaiety, and, although she had not actually broken off all connection with the West End establishment, she sent them word that she had now finally severed her agreement with them.

I learned that the Italian Count had persuaded her to go on a yachting trip with him, and, loving and trustful as she was, the one-time mannequin had thrown up everything at his behest. The next time I heard from her she had landed at a fashionable Italian watering-place, and then there was a long silence. I often used to think of her,

The Gaiety Stage Door

and sometimes the "Guv'nor," who had been very disappointed at her suddenly relinquishing her stage career, asked me if I had any news.

One morning I was taking down a telephone message when a girl walked into my office and quietly stood while I completed my business. As I replaced the receiver I looked at her, and my mind was stirred by vague memories. She was quietly dressed in a serge costume which had lost its smartness, and as I looked at her I saw that the girl was haggard and worn.

She did not speak for a moment, and I vainly tried to place her. Then she smiled, and in a moment I knew her. Here, stripped of all her finery, and her once sparkling eyes dimmed with weariness, was the beautiful mannequin who might have been a Gaiety star.

"Yes, Jupp, I have come back," she said in the quiet voice I knew so well, "and I want you to help me." Then she sat down, and without any hysteria or passionate tears, but with a pained note in her voice, which hurt me more than anything else, she told me what had occurred. "I suppose I was too simple and believed too readily," she said simply. Then she told me how, on arrival in Italy, the Count had turned out to be not so generous as every one in London believed him to be. "That would not have mattered to me," she went on, "but other things occurred, and I saw him in his true light. It was the shock of my life, and I thought my heart was broken when I discovered that his love for me had been pretence."

Gradually I learned the full facts, and it turned out that the man who had loaded her with costly presents and whom she expected to marry, had left her stranded in one of the fashionable Italian resorts. She was in a swell hotel when she discovered the desertion, and to her consternation

A Fresh Start

discovered that practically all her valuable jewellery had gone, although some of it was in every legal sense her own property. It may have been the work of some hotel thief, but, be that as it may, nothing was recovered, and with only a few pounds in her pocket she returned to London.

She was too depressed to go back to the exclusive establishment in the West End where she had been so great a favourite, and asked me if I thought Mr. George Edwardes would give her another chance. I knew that the "Guv'nor" was furious at the way the contract had been ruthlessly thrust aside, but I also knew that he was one of the most kindly men in the world, and I told her I would see him.

The "Guv'nor" always had a high regard for her, and under another name she took up an engagement in one of his touring companies. For the first time she gave her mind seriously to the stage as a career, acquiring the technique and experience without which even such rare beauty as hers could not carry very far, and in the provinces at any rate most of you know her as one of your favourites; and many a chorus girl on tour has told me that anyone in trouble or in doubt has no surer friend than the fair-haired leading lady who dances and sings as though she had never known a care in her life.

Although show girls get excellent salaries and hobnob with the male members of the aristocracy, they are by no means allowed to play fast and loose with their theatrical obligations. They are paid to appear at the theatre and their regular attendance is enforced. If they are absent it is obvious that they must be spending the evening in company with a party of people, many of whom would otherwise be at the theatre.

I remember Teddy Royce, Junr., when stage-manager,

The Gaiety Stage Door

making an example of one of these undependable girls. Miss J. H. sent a telegram one night to say that she would not be able to appear that night as she had burned a lot of her hair whilst curling it. What on earth prompted her to send that wire beats me. Three nights later she turned up, and I told her Mr. Royce wanted to see her before she went up to her dressing-room. She went down to him.

“Let me see where you burned your hair off, Miss H.”

She took her hat off and made some sort of show as to where it was much shorter than it should be, and did her best to carry off the matter convincingly.

But Mr. Royce merely said : “Well, Miss H., I am quite certain it cannot have grown very much in three nights, so you had better go home for the remainder of the run of this show. Perhaps it may be quite right again by the time we are ready to produce another.”

Another equally stately and attractive girl instantly took her place. There were always plenty of show girls on the waiting-list, and the fast and loose game was not worth the candle, especially if an engagement meant supplying a satisfactory “means of support” to any representative of the law who might suddenly take it into his head to make inquiries.

Miss Gertie Millar is an example of what talent and personality will do on the stage. There was a time when police had to marshal the crowds that gathered round the theatre to catch even a fleeting glimpse of her, as, with her Pekingese, she darted from stage-door to motor-car.

She quickly proved that she was one of those who could never be kept in the ranks, and, forging ahead, she took

Gertie Millar

a leading part in a string of very successful musical comedies, each one running into hundreds of performances, and in a short time Gertie Millar's name was boosted in the same large type as those of Edmund Payne, George Gros-smith, and Connie Ediss. She became the rage of London.

Gertie Millar's name is as well known to-day as ever were such famous names as Jenny Lee, Jenny Hill, Nellie Farren, and Millie Hylton, and, needless to say, she had her admirers in the thousands. For quite a long period Gertie Millar was regarded as the biggest actress in London, and yet, with all her popularity, she never changed.

She married the composer, Mr. Lionel Monckton, and most of the plays in which she scintillated as a Gaiety star were either composed by him alone or in collaboration with Ivan Caryll. It is a coincidence that one of the greatest successes she ever made was in the part of a Yorkshire girl, Mary, the heroine of that delightful play, "Our Miss Gibbs."

Upon one occasion, when she had been spending a part of her summer holiday with her parents in Bradford, taking them about with her for trips here and there, I happened to be in Blackpool. In the evening I took a seat in a music hall in the Tower, and in front of me sat Gertie Millar and her husband, Lionel Monckton.

On the bill was Mendel, the blind pianist, and part of his programme was to invite any member of the audience to come on the stage and play something, preferably a composition which had never been heard in public, and he would endeavour to reproduce it note for note. For a time no one seemed able to accept the invitation, and the turn looked in danger of falling flat, when Gertie Millar,

The Gaiety Stage Door

ever generous to help a fellow-artiste, persuaded her husband to go on the stage and play a test piece.

Every life has its light and shade, and when she was the most famous woman in London, and her life seemed one continual round of sunshine and success, there happened in the experience of Gertie Millar an episode which, quite unavoidable as far as she was concerned, necessarily caused her considerable pain and worry.

In the early days of her Gaiety triumph Gertie Millar was one of the most courted women in London, and every night the theatre staff were kept busy dealing with floral tributes and other kinds of gifts. It meant a lot of work, but no one minded that, for Gertie Millar always had a cheery smile and kindly word for the most humble of the theatre attendants, and, indeed, we came in for a share of reflected glory. Whenever she went to her car Miss Millar made her way through an avenue of admiring crowds. Her admirers ranged from the highest to the lowest in the social scale, and there were many disappointed suitors when her engagement to Mr. Lionel Monckton was announced.

One of her most ardent worshippers was a young foreign nobleman. I often used to see him hanging around the stage-door, a tall young man about twenty-four years of age and of light colouring. Miss Millar avoided him every time she came through the stage-door.

At last he secured an introduction to her, and offered her all sorts of valuable gifts if she would extend her friendship to him. Miss Millar gracefully declined any offer of friendship, and finally was distressed at the frequency with which he took to hanging around the theatre, and I did what I could to prevent any unpleasantness.

I think this was just a case where a young fellow, rich

The Infatuated Nobleman

and impulsive, had fallen head over heels in love with the Gaiety actress, while she, on her part, refused him encouragement and desired nothing better than to be left alone. I thought the young fellow looked a trifle pathetic as he hung around the stage-door waiting hours just to get a glimpse of the star as she hurried in ; but I was used to his sort, and none of us anticipated what was going to happen. I thought that the passing of time would cure the young man's hopeless infatuation; but instead of that he came and stood there every night, and very often went into the theatre and sat moodily in the stalls, having no eyes or ears for anyone but the woman who had so definitely rejected his advances.

At last he became such a nuisance and upset Miss Millar so much that we had to put a stop to his visits. For quite a week he did not put in an appearance, and Miss Millar was rejoiced to think that there was an end to his unwelcome attentions.

Miss Millar lived in Russell Square, and one night this foreign nobleman, whose reason must have given way, broke into the house. He was discovered, but before anyone could grapple with him, he shot himself dead. It was frightful for Miss Millar to be subjected to such an experience, and her nerves were badly shaken. When the police inquiry was held, nothing was brought to light to show what his motive could have been, beyond the fact of his hopeless infatuation for the Gaiety star, and the only presumption is that, through morbidly dwelling upon his disappointment, he lost his reason.

Every one at the Gaiety was very much distressed on Miss Millar's account, for it was a nerve-racking ordeal for a woman of her kindly and vivacious temperament, and we were all glad when at last her nerves seemed to

The Gaiety Stage Door

recover from the consequent depression and shock, and she was once more the laughter-loving actress whom we knew so well. It says much for the affection with which the public regarded her, the undisputed queen in her own particular line, that, generous as they had been to her always, they should simply shower tributes upon her after this incident.

I don't suppose her jewellery could be surpassed by any other living artiste, and the floral gifts I have known her to receive during the week would easily stock the largest florist's shop in the West End of London. For some time after the distressing affair in Russell Square she was overwhelmed with floral gifts, and I know how greatly she appreciated this method of the public in showing her their sympathy and affection. She deserved the popularity she won at the Gaiety with the public and staff alike, for she was very faithful to her old friends.

All the time she had a dresser named Mrs. Williams, and no matter where she went she would not change her. At this present moment, when it looks as if the Gaiety star has finally retired from the stage, her old dresser, and I have it on direct authority from the dresser herself, is living in a nice house at Maidenhead, with an annuity of £150, both the gift of Miss Millar.

CHAPTER V

CHORUS GIRLS' CLIMBS TO HIGH DEGREE, MRS. STIRLING, OLIVE MAY, JUPP ELUDED, THE COUNT WHO WAS SHOT, COOCH BEHAR'S GIFTS, A COMPLETE VINE, LILLIAN RUSSELL AND MAUD HOBSON, MAKING STARS, GLADYS COOPER, MARIE STUDHOLME, MABEL RUSSELL, THE INFATUATED SULTAN, AN ADMIRER ON HIS KNEES.

AN instance of the rise from chorus girl to an exalted position is that of Sylvia Storey, the daughter of that very versatile man Fred Storey. She was not long upon the stage—at least she was quite young when she married Earl Poulett.

Again, we have Rosie Boote, also one of our chorus girls who quickly came to the front, not only as an actress, but the singer of many songs which still live in the memory of middle-aged theatre-goers. She is now the Marchioness of Headfort.

Going farther back, there is the romantic career of Connie Gilchrist, now the Countess of Orkney. She started her stage life at twelve, and could easily claim honours against the Infant Phenomenon of Charles Dickens' imagination, as she was a very excellent actress at that age; but unlike the great majority of child actresses, who seldom fulfil their youthful promise, she remained at the Gaiety until she grew into a woman, and each year saw her adding to her laurels. She was the rage at the time of her first appearance at our theatre, and there were many managers trying to get her to sign on with them for their own productions, but she remained faithful to her first love. She had had some previous experience on the halls, but her real professional career started and finished with the Gaiety. After her marriage she was never seen again on any stage, but is a very prominent and beautiful personage in the hunting-field, especially in the neighbourhood of Melton Mowbray.

The Gaiety Stage Door

The famous Mrs. Stirling was at the Gaiety, and in the ranks of the show girls whose parts were chiefly of the "thinking" order—but in her case her very silence was eloquent, for was she not the talk of London for a long time? Her divorce case was the sensation of the day, and the chief topic. Why people should have thronged about the stage-door to see her go in or come out, I cannot conceive, but they did, all the same, and the radiance of our star artistes was momentarily obscured. She was a Miss Clara Taylor, hailing from New York, but when she came to our theatre in "Our Miss Gibbs" she had been married to Mr. John Alexander Stirling, a lieutenant in the 3rd Scots Guards, and divorced by him at the early age of twenty-four. He was only twenty-eight himself.

This divorce case started in January, 1909, before Lord Guthrie in Edinburgh, and there were cross-petitions between the husband and wife. Mr. Stirling cited Viscount Northland as co-respondent, a man of twenty-six, the son and heir of Earl Ranfurley.

And in her cross-petition Mrs. Stirling cited Mrs. Mabel Louise Atherton, the daughter of Sir Edward Dean-Paul, Bart., as co-respondent. That brought Mrs. Atherton into notorious prominence once more, because she had previously gone through the divorce court in an action by her husband, Colonel T. J. Atherton. In this case the co-respondent was Captain the Hon. J. R. L. Yarde-Buller. She had volunteered to go as a nurse during the South African War, and it was out there that she met Yarde-Buller. At the end of her case—which she lost—she sued Yarde-Buller for breach of promise, but he did not marry her.

He married Miss Denise Orme, who was playing at the Gaiety in "Our Miss Gibbs" at the time when Mrs.

The Count who was Shot

Stirling came upon the scene. The close of Mrs. Atherton's troubled career came in 1919, at the end of the war. The echo of the two long divorce suits fell upon the ears of the public as a revolver shot. Mrs. Atherton had committed suicide.

Olive May was another girl who sprang into prominence at the Gaiety. It was in "Our Miss Gibbs," and she understudied Gertie Millar, and during the latter's absence in Manchester played the principal part very successfully indeed. Lord Victor Paget came upon the scene, and was to be found nightly in his usual stall feasting his youthful eyes on the graceful dancer. He obtained an introduction to her, and then divided his time between stalls and stage-door. He was a very persistent lover, and I remember one occasion when he got behind the scenes in spite of my refusal to admit him.

On that night it was very inconvenient for Olive May to see him, and I told him that she was busy studying a new scene with the stage manager, and asked him to excuse her for not seeing him just then. He went away from my door and somehow or other made an entrance, because not much later in the evening our manager, Mr. W. H. Dawes, came to me and asked why Lord Paget had been admitted when Miss May had particularly requested that she should not be disturbed.

I told him that he had not come through my door, so the only solution to the situation was that some of our attendants could not have been too superior in the matter of bribery. A golden coin has been known to work wonders and there is no doubt that the private door in the Strand leading to the gentlemen's dressing-rooms had been opened by a golden key. Olive May and Lord Paget were married shortly afterwards, but their happiness was

The Gaiety Stage Door

not of long duration, and the finish of their brief romance was in the divorce court, where she regained her name of Olive May.

Another marriage into the peerage from the lesser lights of our theatre was that of Miss Irene Richards. She was not long with us before she became acquainted with Lord Drumlanrig, and his wooing was so ardent that the marriage took place very shortly, and so far theirs has fulfilled the happy ending which should belong to all such stories.

A dramatic story of love and war is that of Miss Chloe O'Hara and a Russian Count. She was playing in "Yes, Uncle" in Birmingham, and her part was a prominent one originated by Miss Julia James. This brought her sufficiently to the front to be noticed by the Count. It was during the Great War, and people had too much on their minds to take heed of their love romance. They were married, and things seemed to be perfectly all right between them, but her prominence as an actress brought her husband under the vigilant eyes of the military authorities, and he was asked to give an account of himself and his presence in England. His replies being extremely unsatisfactory, and our officers very rightly suspicious, he was interned and the Russian authorities communicated with.

The result of our inquiries was a request for him to be deported and delivered into their hands. This was done, and when he was taken over and tried in Russia he was proved a Bolshevik and put up against a wall and shot.

One sometimes reads in the newspapers of princely gifts made to popular actresses, and there is no reason in my mind to doubt the veracity of these reports, because I happen to know of numerous cases which have never been acknowledged.

Lillian Russell and Maud Hobson

The Maharaja of Cooch Behar thought as little of presenting a lady with a Rolls-Royce, a diamond tiara, or even a furnished villa in the country or up the river as I should of standing a pal a cup of tea.

I mention Cooch Behar's name because on each of his visits to London some one would be the richer, and his generosity was not confined to ladies. This fabulously wealthy Indian Prince was one of the most generous men I have come across, and those people who know nothing of theatrical life and always imagine that there must be an ulterior motive behind every gift, would but need to know Cooch Behar for a short time to realize that his presents were only the outcome of a generous nature.

My stage-door was a miniature Covent Garden on the occasion of a First Night. Baskets of the most exquisite flowers from Bond Street, Regent Street, Piccadilly, and other quarters filled the hall, and as they were taken into the dressing-rooms of the ladies to whom they were sent, so their places were filled by another consignment. These flowers were not always of the "cut" variety, but growing in huge pots and in full bloom.

The most beautiful present I ever saw was one sent to Miss Gabrielle Ray. It was a complete grape vine, which had been trained to grow in the shape of a half-hoop, and when it stood inside the hall looked like the handle of a gigantic fruit basket. It stood about ten feet high, and there were twenty bunches of beautiful black grapes suspended from the vine. I was told that it was first started to train in this manner purely as an experiment, and after eight years this was the result. It was certainly a thing of beauty, but an extraordinary one to deposit at the stage-door of a theatre as a gift. It was conveyed in a cart, and took four men to carry it.

The Gaiety Stage Door

The death of Miss Lillian Russell reminds me that she could be included in the list of Gaiety stars, inasmuch as she appeared at the old theatre in 1883 in a musical play entitled "Virginia and Paul," composed by her husband, Mr. Edward Solomon, who afterwards was famous for much more successful plays than that. The beauty of Lillian Russell was comparable to that of our own lovely Maud Hobson, and the likeness between the two was remarkable.

The last time Maud went to America to play was in 1903, and she played Lady St. Mallory in "Three Little Maids," that delightful one-man piece, book, lyrics, and music by the late Paul Reubens. Lillian Russell was in New York, playing at Webber and Fields' on 29th Street and Broadway, and Maud Hobson was next door at Daly's Theatre, Broadway. Then the resemblance was instantly noticed, and when these two beautiful stars walked out together they presented a picture such as only twin sisters could. Maud Hobson was very well known in the States, and was sometimes referred to as the English Lillian Russell.

Maud Hobson was the niece of John Hollingshead, who was the first manager of the Gaiety, and naturally became acquainted with his chosen friends. Her jewellery was exquisite and valuable, but she never made an unbecoming display of it. She used jokingly to say that she was saving it up for her old age. As a matter of fact she had a magnificent diamond tiara safely lodged in her bank which would have provided for a dozen old ages. She never needed it, for it remained with her, along with her still lovely face, until her death.

Talking of presents and the play "Three Little Maids" reminds me of a slice of luck that befell the diminutive



J. K. & C. Hoffmann.

MISS CONSTANCE COLLIER

face p. 69

The Making of Stars

George Carrol, who played the part of the Caddy in that piece. The "Maids" made their entrance in a governess car, drawn by a fine little donkey, and when the run of the piece was drawing to a close, George Edwardes one day met George Carrol with his little daughter. The "Guv'nor" was so taken with the little one, that when the last night arrived he told Carrol that he could take the donkey and car as a present for his little girl. Some present! It would have been a bit awkward if he had lived in a flat in Brixton, but fortunately he had a nice place out somewhere in the neighbourhood of Barnes. As no one is supposed to have ever seen a dead donkey, perhaps it is still alive and doing service for his grandchild.

The reader must not be carried away with the idea that the life of an actress is one long round of gaiety, with just sufficient breathing time to attend to her professional duties. She is not always holding court and either accepting or rejecting the hearts of princely lovers. Stars are made by the *public alone*. Outside influence, or inside influence, if it comes to that, can certainly put a person into a prominent position, and cause their names to be writ large on the outside of the theatre; but these influences cannot *keep* these people in such prominent positions without the approval of the public. Over and over again attempts have been made to thrust the alleged ability of a woman down the throats of the man and woman in the street, but when they have paid their shillings and half-crowns, they give their own verdict, and that is the *true* one.

But when a star is discovered, and all London has his or her name on their lips, and the success made in one night proves to be a permanent one, then, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, that fortunate girl has had a sound training either in the provinces or as an understudy,

The Gaiety Stage Door

and being given a chance, her gifts have been immediately recognized by *the public*, and nothing can take away the fact that she has arrived. *That* is the person who worthily has her name in large type and whom the public pay to see.

There are several places known as the "comedian's grave," but it is only because the public's is a sense of humour so keen that more than a red nose is required to amuse them. A better name for those cities would be "The Alleged Comedian's Grave." Take two cases of sudden leaps into fame—Miss Irene Vanbrugh and G. P. Huntley, the most lovable of all the "silly ass" types we have ever had.

In each case there was sound experience and great ability, but they had to wait for that wonderful day to arrive when their chance would come and the tide in their affairs take a turn. It was said of Miss Vanbrugh, when she made such an enormous success as Sophie Fulgarney in "The Gay Lord Quex," that the curtain rose on an eight-pound artiste and fell on an eighty-pound artiste. She was not a pampered pet, but was and is an actress of rare gifts, and the success she made has proved to be permanent.

So in the case of G. P. Huntley. He had been known for years in the provinces, but after his first performance in London in "Kitty Gray" he was famous all over the world. To the present day there is only one G. P., as his personality is essentially one apart and inimitable.

Another name which was once in very small type, but suddenly grew into prominence and is now known the world over, is Gladys Cooper. She had been in the chorus on tour, and later played small parts, and when she came to the Gaiety understudied Miss Denise Orme (now Lady

Mabel Russell

Churston) in "Our Miss Gibbs." When Miss Orme left, Gladys Cooper played her part of Lady Betty, and made a great success in it.

I need scarcely mention her beauty, because picture post-cards of her can be seen in the shop windows anywhere from Tooting to Timbuctoo, or Yarmouth to Yokohama. She abandoned musical comedy and went into the legit., which was evidently her real *métier*, because she is now one of our foremost actress-managers, and along with Mr. Frank Curzon has produced some very fine plays.

Constance Collier was also at one time a show girl at the Gaiety, but speedily proved that she was a very gifted actress.

One of the most romantic stories of the Gaiety stage is that of the still popular and lovely Marie Studholme. Some ten or fifteen years ago Marie was a great musical comedy favourite, and whenever she appeared at the famous old theatre one could be certain that the stalls and boxes would be crowded out.

Marie was a kind-hearted girl, and deserved her popularity. She was among the prettiest of all Gaiety stars, and certainly one of the most successful. I can offer my assurance that her wonderful smile was in no way an affectation, because she was nearly always so jolly that the smile was merely in keeping with her spirits. Her first husband she divorced, and then remained single for quite a time, until one day a young gentleman came into her life, whom she eventually married. This was Mr. Harold Borrett, a son of General Borrett.

A tall, smart, military man, Mr. Borrett was a fine fellow. His devotion to the lovely Marie was such that he actually obtained an engagement in "Lady Madcap"

The Gaiety Stage Door

to be near her. He had a good voice, so was quite worthy of his contract, and was not regarded by the rest of the cast as an interloper.

In her riverside bungalow at Laleham she still likes to entertain her friends of former days, and the possession or absence of wealth on the part of her guests makes very little difference to her.

What a romantic career, too, is that of Miss Mabel Russell, who, ten years ago, made such a name for herself in London at Wyndham's Theatre with Sir Gerald Du Maurier. There was no influence behind that delightful little actress, and although she rose to great heights, she never forgot the days of her humble beginning.

To-day she lives in an exquisite corner of Mayfair, but success has not robbed her of one little bit of womanly grace and charm. A sweetly pretty girl, and a dancer of airy grace, she was the sort of girl every one loved at first sight. George Edwardes found her, and with his unerring instinct for talent knew that here he had a great star in the making.

I remember her when she was a pretty chorus girl about eighteen years of age. For some time it must have seemed to her that she was destined for the chorus and the chorus only, but the beloved "Guv'nor" watched her very carefully, and she got her chance in one of the George Edwardes' provincial tours.

She quickly won the heart of the provincial audiences, and if she had been less clever I believe she would still have been successful, by reason of her perfectly delightful personality. On tour she made many friends, and nearly every week entertained millhands to tea without fuss or publicity. These girls literally worshipped her, and out of their love for her used to send her tributes in the shape

A Motor Tragedy

of dress lengths, pieces of silk, etc., and would wait for hours around the stage-door if they could get just a glimpse of their idol.

It was just the same inside the theatre. I have seen the rest of the girls gather together in the wings when Mabel Russell was making her *début* in a new rôle, and watch her fate with as keen and nervous an interest as though it were their own. If Mabel won success, every individual in the company rejoiced over the fact.

When she came to town she became our foremost soubrette.

Romance came to Mabel early, but it was a romance short-lived, ending in tragedy. When she was overwhelmed with gifts and almost deafened by applause, she would smile and say in her whimsical way, "I can hardly believe all this is meant for me," and it was in some such spirit that she realized that Stanley Rhodes, a nephew of the great financier, Cecil Rhodes, had lost his heart to her.

Mabel was about nineteen when this joy came to her, and as I write I can see the two lovers now as I used to see them driving up to the stage-door. He was a tall, fair, handsome man, about twenty-three, quiet and self-composed, and she, a smiling, radiant vision, appreciating the joy of it all in the memory of the struggle of her youth.

Stanley Rhodes would bring her to the Gaiety in his car, and take her away after the show, while several times a week he would shower bouquets upon her. There is no shadow of doubt that it was a real love-match. Other people showered wonderful bouquets upon her, some of them worth £20 at least, but although she received them with a grateful smile, she always looked for her lover's tribute, a bunch of orchids, which were her favourite flower.

The Gaiety Stage Door

There was great excitement in the Gaiety company when the marriage was announced, and it was just in keeping with her kindness and comradeship to invite every one to the wedding. George Edwardes was very cut up at losing her from the stage, for her position with the public was absolutely secure, but he got over his disappointment in time to wish her the greatest happiness.

When Stanley Rhodes led his beautiful bride to the altar we all anticipated a happy journey along the primrose path of joy and contentment for both of them, but within a few months the dream was shattered. Rhodes idolized his wife, and rarely went anywhere without her. They had great plans for the future, when death intervened. They were out motoring together, when there was collision. The husband was driving the car, and was killed, and Mabel, who was by his side, was thrown out and badly hurt.

“It was a shocking thing, Jupp,” she said to me when I saw her some time after the accident, and for a long time we wondered whether the happy-spirited star we knew so well would ever recover her spirits. Time, however, heals the deepest wounds, and eventually she came back to the stage, and after a long interval we rejoiced in the knowledge that romance had again come into her life. She is now very happily married to Mr. Hylton Phillipson, and is a proud mother of two children, a boy and a girl. The girl was born during the two minutes’ silence on the first Armistice Day, and there is no prouder mother in London than the former Gaiety star.

While on the subject of individual admirers I must tell you of one of the most remarkable episodes during my period of service at the Gaiety. Perhaps the reader will

The Infatuated Sultan

think that in some details I am imaginative, but the story is true in every detail.

A Sultan of Zanzibar became infatuated with Madge Saunders, the beautiful Gaiety actress who is now Mrs. Leslie Henson. The Sultan was on a visit to London, and several times came to the Gaiety. He was a Nubian, blacker than night, and I should imagine that if his ancestors were anything like him, they must have been the origin of Nubian Black.

Nowadays the customs and conventionalities of civilized countries are understood if not appreciated by even the nomads of the desert, but this Sultan had evidently not been initiated into the rules governing London Society. One night he was in the Royal Box with two or three of his suite, when he decided that Madge Saunders would be a great capture. His plenipotentiary came to me and said that he wished to convey a message from the Sultan to Miss Saunders, acquainting her of the Monarch's condescension and pleasure.

I said I would send down to the artiste and ask if she would see him. This surprised him greatly, and he told me that it was the Sultan's command that he should go straight away and deliver his message, and it must be obeyed instantly. I am sure that I would have been taken out and knobkerried if I had been in Zanzibar, but feeling secure in the Gaiety I told him that I was in command, and that he must wait until I received an answer from Madge Saunders.

The reply came to the effect that she regretted that she could not receive the Sultan, as all her spare time would be fully taken up that evening. That was enough for me, and, having received my cue, I soon convinced the Ambassador that his request was a hopeless one. The intimation

The Gaiety Stage Door

was followed by a scene which would have been considered too absurd and ludicrous for even the wildest burlesque. The Sultan, when he heard of Miss Saunders' answer, became furious, and, stamping out of the box, went down to the vestibule and demanded to see the manager, Mr. Marshall.

He said that he had decided to buy Miss Saunders, and that she was to be delivered up to him as soon as the performance was over. It took a long time to make him understand that such purchases were not allowed in this country, and he was not mollified for a long time. The Royal party left the theatre eventually, one member of the suite at least threatening all sorts of things, and great care was taken to see that nothing untoward befell Miss Saunders until the Sultan had left the country.

Madge Saunders was a great favourite while she was at the Gaiety, and the success she made in one night has proved to be a permanent one.

Occasionally a Gaiety artiste would have a faithful follower who kept aloof from the usual circle of perfervid admirers, and I shall never forget how one man worshipped Violet Lloyd, one of the Gaiety stars in "The Shop Girl." While this popular artiste was playing at the Gaiety she was the means of bringing in at least one shilling nightly which would not have been paid over if she had been absent. This nightly payment was made by a man who earned a humble living in the waste-paper line. A humble sort of business, it is true, but his devotion to Violet Lloyd was comparable to that of a sinner for his patron saint.

Every night this man would take up a position outside the stage-door and wait for Miss Lloyd to arrive. When she approached he would go down on his knees, and, with hands clasped as if in prayer, reverently follow her with

An Admirer on his Knees

his eyes. As soon as Miss Lloyd had disappeared through the stage-door he would go straight to the gallery and pay his shilling. This nightly procedure was remarked upon, and the attendant in the gallery kept a sharp eye on the stranger.

The fellow would always have a newspaper with him, which he perused during the show, but the moment Violet Lloyd came on the stage down went the paper, and he would watch her with rapture. On her exit up went the paper again until she reappeared. This happened at every performance, and after a few nights of it the girl became rather nervous, although the man did not obtrude himself in any way.

As the poor old fellow was not the least bit offensive, I just mentioned the matter to a detective friend at Bow Street Police Station, and the next night a couple of detectives came along and watched him perform his rites of silent adoration, and then pay his shilling as usual. They followed him after the show was over, and reported to me the next day that they had found out who and what he was, and where he lived. They were satisfied that, although humble, he was quite respectable. One of the detectives gave him a hint that his behaviour was rather disconcerting to Miss Lloyd, and it was noticed that from that night he took up a position on the opposite side of the street, but from where he still commanded a full view of the stage-door.

All through the long run of "The Shop Girl" he kept up this procedure, and paid his shilling for the gallery with unfailing regularity, until Miss Lloyd went away with one of the principal Gaiety touring companies for the opening night of a new show at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester. When she arrived at the Manchester stage-door

The Gaiety Stage Door

she found her devoted waste-paper man standing on the opposite side of the little back street.

She noticed this, and felt grateful to the man for sparing her further embarrassment. He followed the company all along its provincial tour, going into the gallery armed with the evening paper every night, and apparently following his humble calling in each town where the play was produced. Every night Miss Lloyd saw him in the gallery until, just about a fortnight before the tour ended, he failed to put in an appearance on the Monday night.

The star, with whom he had never sought to exchange a single word, missed him, and when his disappearance was related to me, we wondered what had become of him. About a month later he pulled up his barrow outside my stage-door at the Gaiety and came in to see me.

He related how he had gone after the company, as I have told you, but his money being exhausted, had been forced to tramp back from Nottingham to London, sleeping under hedges at night and picking up a bit of work here and there so as to get sufficient food to keep going. The poor fellow had spent all his savings, a little over £60, and had gone back to his business of buying old newspapers, etc.

He told me that as soon as he had saved up a little money again he would follow Miss Lloyd about until he died. All he desired was that he could see her once each day, and then his day would be crowned with happiness. I told Miss Lloyd of our conversation, and, kind-hearted now as always, she said that if the man was in distress I was to help him, but not to let him know that she was the good Samaritan.

As it happened, the old fellow never came near the Gaiety again.

CHAPTER VI

STRANGE LOVE PASSIONS, GABY DESLYS' WORSHIPPER, THE SILENT LOVER,
"BILLY'S LITTLE LOVE AFFAIR," A PROFITABLE MISTAKE, PANGS OF CONSCIENCE
AT SEA, A TRIP TO WINDSOR, CONFUSING NAMES.

IT is extraordinary the extremes to which people can be driven by their so-called love for another. The weekly papers generally devote several pages to stories of crimes—murders and suicides, all of which are committed through desperation of some kind, and which is put down to love, but which is nothing more nor less than jealousy, that jaundiced state of mind which distorts one's mental vision. Jealousy is born of an overwhelming selfishness, and has no more relation to love than a cesspool has to a running stream.

The uncanny effect that some women have upon the sensibilities of certain men is incredible, and the lengths to which the men go are almost unbelievable. I have mentioned a few cases in this respect, but I think for downright hysteria the one concerning Mlle. Gaby Deslys is unequalled.

This man had followed her all over the Continent, and wherever she happened to be performing, he could always be found. He begged and implored for her favour, he bribed people to get him an introduction, but she would have nothing to do with him. None of his numerous offerings ever reached her, but still he persisted. When she came to London this man followed her, never giving up hope that one day he would succeed in winning her favour. He became such a nuisance to her that he was warned about his behaviour, and told that if he persisted in pressing his unwelcome attentions upon her, more drastic measures would have to be taken. In his case it could not have been love, for he had never spoken to her in his life, and knew nothing of her character or disposition.

The Gaiety Stage Door

It was purely—or rather impurely—an overwhelming desire, and the failure of all his efforts to satisfy it gradually drove him into a state of hysteria.

One night she was going through one of her dancing turns with her partner, Harry Pilcer, when suddenly a wild-eyed man jumped up from his seat in the front row of the stalls and caused great consternation by throwing handfuls of gold and silver at her. Then he whipped out his gold watch and chain, gold cigarette-case, and a pocket-book and threw all of them at Gaby Deslys' feet, and all the time making most passionate avowals of his love for her. He was led out by a couple of the attendants, and taken to the stage-door. His property, and as much of the money as could be recovered, were all restored to him, and then he was given the choice either to promise never to molest Mlle. Deslys again or be given into charge, in which case matters would be made pretty black against him.

On giving his solemn word not to offend again he was allowed to go. A careful watch was kept so that he should not manage to gain admission to the theatre, but he never turned up again. Perhaps the climax was reached when he suddenly lost all control over himself and made such an exhibition of his insanity, and then the spell was broken, his reason returned to him, and he had become a normal being once more.

I remember another case of even a stranger attitude. Stranger, because the man was a clever, perfectly level-minded man. He was a wealthy man, hailing from Sydney, Australia, and during a visit "Home" he paid a visit to the Gaiety. He fell in love with our then leading lady, Miss Evelyn Laye, but in that passive way in which true lovers of flowers can wander through a garden with-

The Silent Lover

out the least desire to pluck a rose for his own personal possession. From the moment he saw her on the stage no other woman had any more than the ordinary attraction that a nice man responds to. Yet he never sought to know her.

He would sit in his stall nearly every night just for the pleasure of looking upon her fresh young beauty—for she was a lovely girl—and it was well known that the bouquets and dainty boxes of chocolates sent anonymously were really at his expense. It was really a most novel and interesting case of unselfish devotion.

It happened that there was a vacancy for an electrician to work on one of the limelight perches, and the man who successfully applied for the job was this extremely undemonstrative lover. His name was Sam Worthington, and he proved to be a thoroughly sound and practical man with a good all-round knowledge of the possibilities of electricity, so that he was quite worthy of his hire. This Mr. Sam Worthington was perfectly content to throw the limelight on to the artistes during the show so long as Evelyn Laye was one of them.

The flowers and chocolates still continued to arrive, but he never gave the slightest indication of having any knowledge of them, but there was no possible doubt that he was the sender. He never spoke to Miss Laye, never made a business excuse to do so, and when she left the Gaiety to play the leading part at another theatre, he suddenly found that the job didn't suit him, and promptly gave it up.

There was another case of quite a different character to either of the foregoing, and the ending to it was quite a fitting one. As far as my personal knowledge was concerned it only lasted a fortnight, and I used to call it "Billy's

The Gaiety Stage Door

little love affair." The girl's name was Billy K——, and a very nice, quiet, almost sedate little girl she was. She used to come nearly every night unattended, and she would never give the slightest encouragement to would-be followers. The only exceptions were when she came in the company of her fiancé, and on those occasions he would take a seat in the circle and wait for the show to finish. Then he would come round and have a chat with me until "Billy" was ready to be taken home.

I didn't like the attitude of the man at all. He did not seem to trust the girl out of his sight, and his questions as to what she did and who met her on the nights he was away made me thoroughly disgusted.

It was thus that I got to know the man's voice quite well, and hence this little story. One night Billy came to the theatre alone, and went straight up to her dressing-room. Very shortly afterwards the 'phone rang, and taking up the receiver, I heard a voice which sounded somewhat familiar, asking if he could speak to Mr. Jupp. I answered that Jupp was speaking. "Oh, is that you, Mr. Jupp? Well, could you tell me if Miss Billy K—— has arrived yet?" I told him that she had; then he asked me if I would give her a message. It was a request that she would go out to supper with him that night. "She might not exactly remember him, but it was quite all right. He had had the pleasure of meeting her a few nights ago, and would be greatly indebted to me if I could get her to go out with him."

That rather put me off, because I thought I knew who was speaking. I sent up the message, and gave him the answer, which was a polite but most decided refusal. This happened for four nights, and she said it was an extraordinary thing that this rush of invitations should

“Billy’s Little Love Affair”

come so unexpectedly. She had no recollection of having met any strange young men lately, and had no idea who they could possibly be.

I have remarked that I resented the way her fiancé had questioned me, and her remarks made me somewhat suspicious. I thought I would give her a little assistance, as she was such a thoroughly nice girl, and worthy of a far better man than this poor-spirited fellow.

“Well, to be quite frank with you, Billy, I first thought it was your fiancé’s voice. A trifle hoarser, but his all the same.” She couldn’t see my drift, so I left it at that, but I intended to take a sort of paternal attitude. The next night her fiancé came along with her, and I purposely broached the subject before the girl had left him.

“I think your young friend must have given up asking you out to supper with him. It is past his usual time for ringing me up.”

I knew at once that my remark had hit home by the sly, sidelong glance he gave me. “Has some one been asking you to go out with him, dear?” he asked. “Who is he?”

She reassured him with a slight pressure on his arm, and answered: “I haven’t the least idea who he is—he never gives any name—merely states that we met a few nights ago, but I don’t remember anyone at all. Anyhow, he can stop asking me, for I don’t intend to go, whoever he is.”

With that she left him, and went inside and up to her dressing-room. I said nothing, and he also went away.

The next night I was rung up again, and the same request was made, with the usual refusal. It went on for a few more nights—then another vacant one—he was accompanying her. This rotter couldn’t trust the girl,

The Gaiety Stage Door

and his mean jealousy of her made me angry, so one night I persuaded her to let me promise that she would go out with him if he would call after the show.

She said she would do nothing of the kind, so I told her that I firmly believed it was her fiancé all the time, and he was only playing a cowardly game to find out what she did in his absence. I asked: "What is he doing to-night? Can he possibly come to take you home?"

"No, this is one of his late nights. He can only spare about two nights a week—to-night he is too busy."

Now that was just what I wanted. "Well, look here, Billy—let me make the appointment for you to go to supper with this alleged new acquaintance, and I'll bet you what you like you will find your jealous young fiancé will be here to tax you with infidelity."

Then the light dawned, and with an incredulous stare she asked me if I really thought that such was the case. "If I thought he would behave like that to me, I would never forgive him! Why, I never go out with anybody, and that is why I have been so puzzled as to who it could be so persistently asking me to go out with him! Oh! Jupp, do you really think it is he?"

"Well, let me give the answer, and we shall soon know. After all, you will at least know where you stand, won't you?"

At this she consented. Sure enough, the 'phone rang, and I was urged to do my utmost to get Billy to say "Yes." I told him that Miss K—— had left a message to the effect that if that same gentleman rang up and asked her to go to supper, I was to say that she would accept if he would bring a friend with him who could entertain a girl she would bring. He answered that he would do so, and would call just after eleven o'clock.

A Malicious Young Skunk

Shortly after the show was over, who should march into the stage-door but Billy's fiancé. He had a triumphant sneer as he asked me if Billy had gone yet. I said, "No, she has not come down yet—but she is going out to supper with a friend. She is not expecting you to-night."

The malicious young skunk said: "I know all about that, thank you. But you are mistaken in one point. She is *not* going out to supper. I am here waiting for her."

That put "paid" to the bill, and I only said, "Very well, you can wait for her—but not in my hall. Get out—and get out quickly before I lose my temper."

When Billy came down I told her what had occurred, and she asked me to let her call him in again. She did so, and he came.

She said very quietly, but quite firmly: "For a fortnight you have been ringing up, pretending to be some one else, and trying to find out what sort of girl I am. I didn't suspect you until to-night, so I decided to put my doubts at an end. I am not in the habit of going about with chance acquaintances, and that is why I have been refusing you all this time; little dreaming that I was being spied upon. I now refuse *you* yourself, and furthermore, I forbid you ever to seek my company again. I have finished with you for ever."

She said "Good night" to me, and without a glance at her late fiancé, went out. He was about to follow her, but I quickly stepped in front and said: "Oh! no, you don't. I ordered you out of my hall a few minutes ago, but now I've changed my mind. You shall stop here until that dear little girl has time to get away. Then you can go, and understand, you are not to come here again."

So ended what I call "Billy's little love affair."

Talking about the telephone reminds me of an occasion

The Gaiety Stage Door

when I was rung up in error which turned out a profitable mistake for me. It was about two-fifteen in the afternoon, when a ring came. A voice asked: "Is that you, Jimmy?" "Yes," I answered, just as I do to scores of people who ask the same question by way of preface. "Right-o! Take this down, will you? For the two-thirty—ten bob each way on Box-of-Tricks, and ten bob each way Sweet Katie for the three-fifteen." I stopped him when he had got so far. "I say, you've made a mistake. I'm not a bookmaker. My name certainly is Jimmy, but I'm not the man you want. You'd better buck up and get the right number if you want to be in time for the two-thirty race."

He rang off, and from what happened to me I sincerely hope he got on in time. I looked up the horses named, and asked our stage-manager, who was a sort of racing expert, what he thought of them. He said as the tips had come in such an accidental way I might just as well have a small flutter on them.

I rang up a man we had occasional transactions with, and had half a sovereign each way on those two horses. They both won, and at a good price too; but such is the awful greed of man that I regretted not putting more on. However, I am extremely obliged to my unknown tipster, but should he happen to be numbered among my readers I hope he will believe me that all my winnings were spent long ago.

George Edwardes used to cross the Channel so frequently, either on business or pleasure bent, that he found it less bother to take a season ticket between Folkestone and Boulogne than to book a passage each time he went, and in course of time he became quite well known on each side of the water as well as on board the steam-packets.

Pangs of Conscience at Sea

I suddenly had a great desire to cross the water and make acquaintance with the casinos at Boulogne and Wimereux. But the expense was a little bit above my limit, so, being by way of confidential man to the "Guv'nor," I told him that I should like to spend part of my holiday over there, but the expenses were too high for my small savings.

I asked him if he would be using his season ticket about that time, and that was quite as much a hint as he needed. He chuckled a bit—at my cheek, I suppose—but said if I didn't mind taking the risk of being found out, he had no objection. He warned me, though, that it might mean having to pay double fare and possibly a heavy fine into the bargain.

A little excitement of that kind only added to my pleasure, so off I went, armed with the all-important season ticket, and without the slightest qualms. Not until I got to Folkestone did I fully realize what I was doing. I was impersonating a man who was well known to practically all the officials, and it would be a marvel if I got through all right. Then again there was the return journey. I began to funk it, and had almost decided to pay my own fare ; but it suddenly crossed my mind that I could pretend that I had taken the wrong season out of the office drawer in my hurry. Anyhow, I would chance my luck.

Everything went on famously, because at the pier and at the foot of the gangway they merely glanced at the ticket and I was allowed to pass.

But on board it was different. They *thoroughly examined* each one in turn.

When the examiner approached me, my heart jumped into my throat, but swallowing it again I presented the ticket with my thumb over the name. That did not

The Gaiety Stage Door

succeed—he wanted to hold the beastly thing in his own hands and have a good look at it. His first remark made me feel sick. “You have got very much thinner, Mr. Edwardes. Have you been ill? And if I may make a personal remark, I think you look much better with your nice fair hair and moustache. What on earth made you dye them?”

He said all this with an amused little smile. He was considerate enough to say it all very quietly, so that no one else could hear, and shortly afterwards I learned the reason for this clemency on his part. “But perhaps I am anticipating, eh, Jupp? Perhaps you are only taking charge of the dear old Guv’nor’s ticket, eh, my old friend Jupp?”

What a relief! He knew me. So taking a good look at him—a thing I had not dared to do before, in case he read my guilty conscience in my face—I recognized a one-time box-office keeper at the Vaudeville Theatre in the Strand. We shook hands, and he said it would be quite all right, but he would advise me to make sure that I travelled in his boat when returning, as every one knew Mr. Edwardes and I was sure to fall.

I did not enjoy my little trip a bit, and was heartily glad to get back again at the end of a few days. I have been over many times since, but the ticket was always my own, and paid for by myself. It is only too true that conscience makes cowards of us all, and rain and storm, mud and slush, or even seasickness, are not in it as a downright spoil-sport with a guilty conscience. I felt that every one I met knew all about it, and were whispering the fact to one another.

Devotion to duty, no matter whether the task before us be of no particular importance, or one upon which the

A Trip to Windsor

fortunes of an Empire may rise or fall, is a most ennobling attribute to one's character, and greatly to be encouraged, especially in the young ; but we had an office-boy once who rather overdid it. He took things too literally. One morning the "Guv'nor" came to the office a shade earlier than usual and hastily wrote a note. He addressed the envelope and then told me to send the boy out with it at once, as it was about a matter that should have been attended to on the previous night.

I had not finished going through the morning letters, so, just opening the office door, I called the boy and gave him the note. "Take this note straight away, Alf, and get back as soon as you can." The boy departed, and I returned to my work. It is a pity that I neglected to look at the address to which that note was directed. A penny stamp would have solved the whole thing. Half an hour went by, then an hour, and still no Alf. What on earth had become of the youngster? Fortunately we had plenty of people to call upon to do any small jobs that an office-boy generally does. He had not been seen since the morning by anyone, although we made inquiries of all the staff, and I began to get a bit anxious.

I told the "Guv'nor" of the boy's long absence, and asked him if he had enclosed any money in the note. "No, Jupp, there was nothing in it. It was to tell my saddler to have some new harness ready by the time I get to Wingfield to-night, as I particularly want it for to-morrow."

That boy turned up at six o'clock that evening, hungry and tired. I asked him what he had been doing all day. He looked very injured at being asked such a question. "You told me to take that note straight away and get back as soon as I could, but you did not give me my fare, so I had to go all the way home to Walthamstow first and

The Gaiety Stage Door

get the money off my mother, and it was some time before she came back to dinner. I took the note, and the man says I am to tell Mr. Edwardes it will be all right."

I knew he was too young to have been drinking, but I couldn't grasp the facts of the case yet, and asked: "Money for your fare? What fare? Where have you been?" "Windsor!" was the astonishing reply. The poor lad had obeyed my instructions too literally.

When I told the "Guv'nor" about it, he said: "Well, whatever else one may think about it, he cannot be accused of being lazy or unwilling. Keep an eye on him, Jupp. We may make a good man of him. And here, give him this sovereign for his expenses."

That boy remained in our employ until long after his first shave, and I often meet him in the West End, where he is a very prosperous transport agent. On the last occasion I met him he invited me into the Queen's Hotel, and during a chat about some of the old times, he suddenly said: "By Jove, Jupp, this is a coincidence," and produced a letter from a saddler in Windsor respecting some harness which he had ordered. "Do you remember my famous journey to Windsor? Well, that is the same man."

Brilliant man of business and great artist that he was, George Edwardes had an appalling lack of memory for names, and would mix them up into an astonishing tangle. Sometimes I have had to guess whom he was talking about by means of associating the trend of his remarks with the profession of the man in question. For instance, he would say: "Jupp, remind me to tell Mr. Barket about those tables and chairs in the last act. They are spread out too much and block up the entrances." I knew by that that it was Mr. Burcher he meant. But he would not

Confusing Names

consistently call him Barket—sometimes it was Baker, and once it was Plucker. Where he got that name from I cannot imagine.

We were in the thick of the final rehearsals of a new show, and every one was hard at it, when the "Guv'nor" suddenly stopped the artistes who were on at the moment, and calling Teddy Payne and Katie Seymour to him, suggested that it seemed to be a very excellent place to work in a duet for the two of them. He gave them his idea of the duet, and the two artistes agreed with him. Right! it should be arranged for at once.

"Get on with what you are doing in the meantime. This duet will not interfere with any of the lines—it will only make a little break. Here, Mr. Wilson"—(his real name was Dodson, but that didn't matter)—"I want you to send for Eustace Miles at once. And tell whoever you send that he is not to come back without him. Find him as soon as possible, and bring him back with him."

Mr. Dodson looked curiously at Mr. Edwardes, and asked: "Eustace Miles, sir? Do you really want me to send for him?"

"Certainly I do, and at once—it's in connection with this restaurant scene, and a letter may not get to him until to-morrow morning—I want him at once!"

The mention of restaurant reconciled Dodson to the name of Eustace Miles, who is the proprietor of the famous Vegetarian Restaurant in Chandos Street, so the assistant stage-manager was dispatched at once. When he arrived at the restaurant he asked if he could speak to Mr. Miles. "Mr. Miles is in his office—what name shall I say?"

"Say I have a message from Mr. George Edwardes, of the Gaiety Theatre, please."

That promptly brought the famous ex-Tennis Champion,

The Gaiety Stage Door

and now Champion of the Vegetarian Cause, out of his private office.

“ You wish to see me, sir ? ”

“ Yes, sir ; Mr. Edwardes is very busy rehearsing at the moment, and he wishes to see you immediately.”

Mr. Miles looked puzzled. “ Wants to see *me*. I don't know the gentleman. Are you sure there is no mistake ? ”

“ There is no mistake if you are Mr. Eustace Miles, and this is certainly where our Mr. Dodson said I would most probably find you.”

Still in doubt, Mr. Miles asked : “ But have you any idea what it is about, because I am very busy at present.”

“ Oh, yes,” he answered. “ It is about a scene in a restaurant where a duet is to be introduced.”

Mr. Miles' brow cleared. “ Oh, well, now I think I understand. If it's anything to do with a restaurant he may want some advice on technical details.”

In a very little while he presented himself before the “ Guv'nor ” and asked : “ You want to see me, Mr. Edwardes ? What can I do for you ? ”

It was the “ Guv'nor's ” turn now to look puzzled.

“ Not that I know of, sir ! What is your name ? ”

“ I am Mr. Eustace Miles, and your messenger has just come for me, saying it was on urgent business.”

The “ Guv'nor's ” face was a study, and it was the only time I ever saw him embarrassed. He got out of it very cleverly, and without letting Mr. Miles suspect that a mistake had been made. He kept him talking for a little while, and then they shook hands and parted.

When he had gone the “ Guv'nor ” called Dodson over and said : “ What on earth did you let me send for him for ? You must have known perfectly well that I meant



Foulsham & Banfield.

MISS MAUDI DARRELL

face p. 90

Fretwork

Eustace Ponsonby, and Leslie Stuart can compose the music."

I suppose the great amount of work he was getting through made him confuse the name of the author with that of the restaurant-keeper, as the scene was all to do with a party at a restaurant.

I never knew the "Guv'nor" to get ruffled over his work, and he never allowed himself to fret over it. "It had to be done," was sufficient for him, and he saw that it was done. The famous comedian G. P. Huntley has his own views on the subject of "Work." He once said to me, "D'you know, Jupp, old sport, my favourite hobby is fretwork. Yes, that's it—fretwork. I work on Monday, and fret all the rest of the week."

CHAPTER VII

MAUDI DARRELL, HER LAST APPEARANCE, MOLLY, THE RICH AND POOR SUITORS,
I PLAY MENTOR, A SAD ENDING.

IN my collection of photographs is one beautiful girl, dainty of build, vivacious of manner, and of a fascinating personality, Maudi Darrell. She was about seventeen when she first came to the Gaiety. Like Mabel Russell and many other girls who won success under George Edwardes, Maudi Darrell was practically unknown when the "Guv'nor" gave her the first contract. There never was a theatrical man equal to George Edwardes in divining the possibilities of a little-known or obscure artist.

Maudi Darrell was the daughter of the music-hall and theatrical agent, Hugh J. Didcott, but although for the sake of an old friend the "Guv'nor" consented to see and hear Maudi, he would never have given her an engagement at the Gaiety if he had not been convinced that she was talented. Maudi Darrell was born for the stage. She could dance as well as sing, and it was not long after I had checked her through for the first time that I realized the new-comer was to be the rage of the season. I never knew a girl more full of life. Laughter and she were twin sisters. Maudi was bubbling over with gaiety and high spirits as much after a long, wearisome rehearsal as when she passed by the stage-door on her way in. Rather dark, Maudi was always neat and smart, and after her promotion from show girl to song and solo dance, she became the talk of the town.

The box office was crowded out with West End swells, eager to buy stalls where they could come within range of her sparkling eyes and under the witchery of her twinkling feet. Every night my office was packed with floral tributes and gifts representing a small fortune. I remember hand-

Maudi Darrell

ing over to her one night a huge floral tribute principally composed of orchids, at that season most expensive, built up like a castle, and as she knelt down to read the card which bore the signature of a Duke, I thought what a pretty picture she made.

I packed this magnificent gift and a score of others into her motor-car that night, and as she sang out in that bright manner which made her beloved by so many, "Good night, Jupp," and threw a kiss, I wished that I were an artist to paint the lovely picture she presented.

I did not imagine then, and she did not imagine, that the time would come when, knowing that her end was near, the incomparable Maudi Darrell, the one-time darling of the stage, would leave her husband's estate in Scotland, and broken and ill as she was, would travel down to London, and that I should carry her from her carriage, drawn up outside the stage-door, to a private box, that she might look for the last time upon that Gaiety stage where no star in the theatrical firmament had shone more brightly than she.

I did not see Miss Darrell for a long time after she was married to Ian Bullough. One day we heard that the former Gaiety favourite was ill. Weeks went by, and the reports concerning her became more serious.

I was standing at the stage-door one afternoon some time before the evening performance was due, thinking of nothing in particular, when a car drove up and stopped a few yards away. I walked towards it, and saw that the occupant was none other than Maudi Darrell—but what a change! Maudi the vivacious, the actress who had set all London alight, and had once been the brightest star in the theatrical firmament, was lying full length in the car, and upon her face had crept shadows of impending

The Gaiety Stage Door

death. She must have been very weak and in pain ; but when she saw me she smiled, and even in her agony the smile had not lost its sweetness.

“ This is the last time I shall come to the old theatre, Jupp,” she said.

We carried her from her carriage to a box, and although very few members of the audience recognized in the invalid woman the star of other days, the members of the company knew of her presence, and the show that night was played for the benefit of Maudi Darrell.

She remained to the end, and then with one long last lingering look she bade farewell to the scenes of her former greatness.

One of the most exciting hours I ever spent during my career as the stage-doorkeeper of the Gaiety was during the War, when the theatres were doing more business than they had ever done before. During that time we had many popular actresses at the Gaiety, so that when I relate this story it will not be easy for you to identify the lady in the case. She was one of the most beautiful women who had ever charmed a London audience. I will call her Molly, because that is not her name. Molly was a nice sort of girl, and had reached the topmost rung of the ladder of success in one leap. I would not deny her rare gifts and beauty, but all the same she was lucky in getting the early chance she did, and to be perfectly frank I think that for a time her success went to her head.

At any rate, while she had been a chorus girl, she was quiet and studious. In a single night she became a star. Crowds of women waited for her after the matinée, and in the evening I kept my messengers busy with bouquets and invitations for the new principal.

I do not suppose that one girl in a thousand could have

Molly

maintained her mental balance. Molly was literally overwhelmed with popularity, and presently I noticed that, instead of the quiet smile, was a loud theatrical laugh, and that, instead of the quiet greeting, was a hail-fellow-well-met sort of shout as she shook off her group of admirers and dashed up the stairs. Molly could have had a dozen expensive dinners every evening had she so desired, and most of the little plush cases we took to her dressing-room contained jewels.

The bouquets were so numerous that every evening she would send a cab packed full of flowers to one or other of the hospitals, and it seemed to me that every third officer home on leave called at the stage-door to leave his card.

Then Molly's chief pal in the days of the chorus told me one day that all the fine fellows who came home on ten days' leave had no chance of winning the popular actress. Long ago Molly had confessed to her that her sweetheart was a humble fellow who had gone to the War in the early days, and that, although they were not married, there was a perfect understanding between them, and that success or failure could not rob them of the affection they bore for each other. Poor little Molly. She did not know the world very well then, and did not realize that success is sometimes more difficult than failure.

I hoped that the romance of youth would stand the test. As month succeeded month, and one admirer succeeded another, it seemed probable that Molly was not to be caught in the whirlwind after all, but one day the chorus girl who had been a close friend in the former days told me that Molly's sweetheart was missing, and that it seemed probable that he was killed. I looked for a tell-tale tear or a sigh of sorrow, but that night Molly seemed to be in her happiest mood, and stepped into the luxurious

The Gaiety Stage Door

motor-car with a gentleman occupying a big position in the City, who, for some reason, was not called into uniform.

Presently it became obvious that he was the favoured suitor, and that her spasms of friendship with the officers home on leave had mostly arisen, as in scores of other cases, from a desire to brighten their holiday and to give them the joy of bright companionship. Soon the engagement of the popular actress to the City man was a secret no longer, and I wondered what the future had in store for them. I was uneasy. I wondered whether it had been merely a coincidence that Molly had not accepted the offers of any suitor until after there had come the rumour of the death of her girlhood's sweetheart, or whether she had in reality always kept a warm spot in her heart for the boy of her first romance.

Other business drove the beautiful little girl and her love affairs out of my mind until one night, as I stood smoking a cigarette at the stage-door, a soldier approached me.

He was not in officer's uniform, but he looked a fine, clean-souled sort of fellow, and at the second glance I remembered that I had seen him in the old days once or twice when he had come along after the show and had escorted Molly away from the theatre. Like every old soldier, I had a warm spot for the boys who were standing up for the old country, and I offered him my hand. He took it as one in a dream, and then I saw that there was a strange look in his eyes. "Where's Molly?" he said hoarsely, and, wondering for a moment whether he had been drinking, I temporized with him.

A little farther along the street I noticed a luxurious limousine, and knew that in half an hour or so Molly

The Rich and Poor Suitors

would come out of the theatre in the company of the man who was to be her husband and step into the car.

“Molly is on the stage just now,” I said, “and I cannot send her any message for some time. Why do you want to see her?”

There was a pause, and then, so quietly as to rob the statement of all melodrama, the young soldier pulled a revolver out of his pocket, saying, “I mean to see her, Jupp, and when I see her I shall shoot her.” I saw that he had not been drinking, but was nearly off his head with mental anxiety of some kind, and, telling him not to be a fool, I got him into my little office and shut the door. Then I went out to the motor-car and asked the chauffeur if he would pull up round the corner. Apparently he thought that I was acting under instructions, for he obeyed instantly.

Then I sent up a message to Molly telling her of my visitor, and adding that I thought she should be careful how she treated him. Almost immediately she sent down her dresser to say that on no account would she see him, and it did not take me long to come to the conclusion that her nerves had been very badly upset by the intelligence I had conveyed to her.

Realizing that I was in something of a quandary, I went back to my visitor, and thinking the direct way was the wiser, I told him plainly that Molly did not want to see him. Without a word, and so suddenly as to take me by surprise, he dashed past and along to the dressing-rooms. Like some wild creature he tore along, but fortunately he had never explored the passages before and was unable to find the girl whom he sought. Before he could retrieve his mistake I had got hold of him and dragged him away.

The Gaiety Stage Door

“I will have none of that sort of thing here,” I said sternly, “and the best thing you can do is to tell me the whole story and then I will see what I can do for you.”

For a moment it looked as though I were to be faced by a tough situation, but under my guidance he quietened down, and I took him across to the Waldorf Hotel. There we had a glass of champagne, and I kept him as long as I could, hoping against hope that Molly would be able to leave the theatre and get away before her old sweetheart got out of hand again. It was a pitiful story the lad (for so he seemed to me) told me in the lounge of the Waldorf.

It appears that Molly and he had been sweethearts from childhood, and I have no doubt that he had loved her as well as any man could. Everything had gone smoothly up to the time of her sensational success, but that and the War had forced her to face an entirely new set of circumstances, and she had not been able to stand the test of fidelity to her old love. As I have said, one must urge the War as an excuse, for it is probable that if the companion of her childhood had stayed at home instead of going to fight, they would have remained companions.

I told him that, although Molly had been overwhelmed with admirers, she had never pledged herself to anyone until there came the report that he was missing and probably dead. At that he became furious, and with the vehemence of a man who was almost beside himself with mental anguish, he swore that it was a lie. He said that he had never been reported missing, but that suddenly the letters of his former sweetheart had ceased altogether, following upon a period during which the intervals between them had gradually lengthened.

I Play Mentor

Working himself into a fury, he declared that the stories of his disappearance had been invented, and that soon after her letters had ceased, he received word that she was engaged to a rich man. I tried to head him off, but he was stronger in his rage than two men, and somehow I could not find it in my heart to call a policeman. Standing outside the stage-door was the man to whom Molly was engaged.

Apparently the soldier knew him quite well at sight, for he made a dash at him. To do the City man justice he held his ground, and it was not until I whispered to him that the poor fellow was beside himself and urged him to go away for a time that he consented to move. I told him that his car was round the corner, and while the infuriated soldier was out of earshot I suggested that he should take a taxi and pretend to drive away in another direction.

He was unwilling to take my advice until I pointed out to him that while the two men stood there it was impossible for Molly to leave the theatre without there being a dreadful scene, and that in any case within a moment or two a crowd would collect, attracted by a dispute between the two men. Suddenly he darted into a passing taxi, and just as quickly the soldier, from whom I had managed to take the revolver, darted after him and jumped into another car. While this pursuit was in progress I got Molly out of the theatre by another door, and took her to the waiting car. Within a short time the poor soldier boy was back again at the theatre, infuriated at having missed his quarry in the traffic and demanding to see the girl with whom he had been in love.

I told him plainly that she had gone, and, dragging him

The Gaiety Stage Door

into my office, I talked with him for a long time, until I made him see sense, and convinced him that if he really loved the beautiful little actress, he was behaving in altogether the wrong fashion.

He told me that he had secured special leave from the trenches immediately he had heard that Molly was about to be married to another man, and that he was due to return the following day. He was so depressed and broken-spirited now that his passion had spent itself, that I was afraid to leave him alone.

I arranged for him not to make any other attempt to see the actress during the few hours left to him, but to return to his duty, and then, when he was calmer, to write to her and ask if he could see her on his next leave. I did not like to leave him alone during the night, and persuaded him to go home with some one whom I knew, and the next day I was told that he had left by the early morning train and was on his way back to his regiment.

To tell the truth I had feared that, if left alone during the night, he would have done some harm to himself, and when I knew that he had gone back to duty, I rejoiced that the tragedy had been averted. Alas ! it had only been postponed.

Within a few weeks they had news that he had fallen in action, and although it saddened me considerably, for somehow I had liked the young fellow, I was glad that he had gone back with his mind cleansed of all frenzy and that instead of the hatred there had come to him a more worthy regard for the sweetheart who once had been. Molly told me, when news of his death came, that a few weeks earlier she had received from him a sane, well-reasoned letter, in which he acknowledged that perhaps

Sweet Memories

he had judged her harshly, and after assuring her that he would ever cling to some of the sweet memories of other days, he wished her every happiness in the new life she had chosen.

CHAPTER VIII

FLO DUDLEY AND HER ENGAGEMENT, A TAXI-CAB TRAGEDY, SEQUEL ON THE SCAFFOLD, TRICKING GIRLS, GONE IN THE MORNING, A COXCOMB, MAUD HOBSON, HER BRILLIANT MARRIAGE, R. L. S., BACK TO THE STAGE.

I REMEMBER a young lady being engaged at the Gaiety Theatre for a little while, and whom I knew quite well. She was a most prepossessing girl with a beautiful figure, which showed off to great advantage the lovely costumes she had to wear. At that time she did not hold a high position on the stage because she was practically a beginner. She was the widow of a City man, and finding herself left with a young son to educate and provide for, thought she would turn her musical abilities to advantage. She was a fine-looking young woman of about twenty-four when I knew her, and had a splendid voice in addition to being an accomplished pianist. She got an offer to go on the music-hall stage as a single turn, giving songs at the piano, which she accepted. It was some little time afterwards that I again saw her, and she told me that she was getting on very well indeed. She had played "Principal Boy" in pantomime, and her music-hall contracts extended for years.

It was during a visit to Manchester—at the Tivoli to be precise—that she was introduced to a Mr. Hopwood. He was represented as a very wealthy man. He paid her especial attention and gradually insinuated himself into her good opinion. He spent plenty of money on her and gave her valuable presents, at the same time protesting his love for her and begging her to marry him. Poor Flo Dudley thought it was an excellent match to make, and as her boy would not only be well provided for but well educated, and his future career cared for, she accepted his offer of marriage.

Flo Dudley and her Engagement

The theatrical agent who had got her all her engagements and arranged her contracts for her was very astonished and much put out when one morning he received a letter from a Mr. E. G. Hopwood telling him that he and Miss Flo Dudley were about to be married, and that he wished all of her theatrical contracts to be cancelled. He went on further, saying that he would call in person and pay up whatever was due in the way of commission on these contracts. There was a postscript asking that their marriage should be kept strictly secret at present. When this Mr. Hopwood went in accordance with his appointment, the agent pointed out that the marriage would have to be made known, as otherwise the contracts could not be cancelled. Mr. Hopwood told him that he would not allow Miss Dudley to go on the stage again, and that even her engagements for the following week must be broken. He left the office, and nothing was heard of either of them for some time, until a letter came to that same agent saying that she wanted to return to the stage and asking him if he would act on her behalf as he had previously done. The agent replied, asking her to come to his office. She arrived, and he had only put one or two questions to her when she suddenly burst into a passionate fit of weeping. Then the truth dawned upon him. "I know what is the matter. That postscript to the letter Mr. Hopwood wrote me gives the whole game away! You are not married!" Between her sobs she said: "You are quite right. I was introduced to him in Manchester and understood that he was a wealthy man, so as I had my boy to consider I consented to marry him."

Then she told how her son had been placed at a boarding school, and she and Hopwood had gone away to Brussels, where they had spent a very happy time. She had only

The Gaiety Stage Door

been back a few days, and was stopping with her sister in Ilford when, to her great dismay, she discovered that Hopwood was a married man with three children. She determined to have nothing more to do with him—hence her desire to get back on the stage. The agent said he had seen Hopwood at a theatre and Flo Dudley said: "I don't want to see him again," and begged him to get her an engagement as soon as possible. He said he thought he could get some of her old contracts to stand good, and made an appointment for her to come along another day and sign the agreements.

Now, it appears that this man Hopwood persevered in his attempts to get Flo Dudley to go back to him, but she was too horrified at his cowardly deception and would have no communication of any kind with him. Hopwood had somehow or other got to know of a man named J. Kelly with whom Flo Dudley was very friendly, and he made use of this man's name by sending a bogus telegram asking her to meet him at a restaurant in Holborn. Little dreaming of the trick that had been played upon her she went in answer to the telegram, and on arrival at the café was confronted by Hopwood.

He must have pleaded very earnestly, for she allowed him to entertain her and then take her in a taxi-cab to Fenchurch Street to catch the 11.55 p.m. train back to Ilford. When they were very close to the station the taxi-cab driver heard three loud reports, and thinking something had gone wrong with the tyres stopped the cab and got out. On examination he found there was nothing wrong; and then the awful truth came to him. He opened the near side door, and the unfortunate woman nearly fell out on top of him. She was bleeding profusely, but was quite conscious.

A Taxi-cab Tragedy

She said : " Mind, Cabby, he has got a revolver and has shot me ; take me to a hospital ! " A policeman who had also heard the shots, and had run after the cab, now arrived upon the scene, followed by a lot of civilians. The poor woman collapsed as soon as she had managed to warn the cabby. Just then another shot was heard, and two other policemen who had arrived, arranged to attract the attention of the other occupant of the cab while he could be seized from the opposite door. They had no sooner decided upon this plan of action than a fifth shot was heard. Upon entering the cab they found Hopwood lying across the seat with blood pouring from wounds in the head and a smoking revolver in his hand. He was carried out and laid at the side of poor Flo Dudley. When an electric ambulance arrived they were both taken away to Guy's Hospital, where it was found that she had three wounds and was sinking fast. She regained consciousness, and realizing that her end was near, asked for a priest from the church of SS. Peter and Paul of Ilford to be sent for. The priest came as quickly as he possibly could, but too late to administer extreme unction.

Hopwood was in the hospital for about a week before he could be charged with the crime, but he was " taken over " by the authorities until such time when he could be discharged from Guy's and taken into official custody.

When the news of the awful affair reached Hopwood's wife she made straightway to the hospital, but he absolutely refused to see her.

He was soon well enough to be discharged, and then the proceedings against him began. He was first taken before the magistrate at the Mansion House, whence he was sent for trial at the Old Bailey. I shall never forget that trial. It was the first murder trial I had ever been

The Gaiety Stage Door

to, and I am certain it will be the last. I suppose it was because I knew the poor murdered girl and had liked and admired her, that the trial had an irresistible attraction for me. It was no morbid desire that needed satisfying, but I could not have kept away until I had seen it through. And I did ! It was terrible in the extreme, and even the most sober of the newspapers had long accounts of the hysterical scenes in the Court. The way that man wept and moaned was too awful to witness for long. One moment he would protest his innocence of any intent to do any injury to the poor girl, and he would pour forth long declarations of his passionate love for her ; the next he would be explaining in a detailed manner the exact manner in which the shots had been fired, and swearing that Flo Dudley had fought and struggled with him, and that this was the cause of the revolver going off. This would be followed by another flood of burning tears and heartrending moans. During an interval when the Court had adjourned for lunch, one of the most gruesome of all the incidents occurred.

I was in company with one of the firemen from our theatre and he introduced me to a Mr. Pierpoint (and then in a whisper I was told—"The hangman, you know !"). I wondered why this man should come to hear a murder trial, and thought he would get a sufficiency of such fearful things when it came to his professional part in the tragedy. When the question was put to him he calmly answered that he was up on the case to have a look at Hopwood in order to make arrangements.

I protested that, although there could only be one end to the trial, he might not get to the scaffold. The executioner merely said : " I know what will become of him." I asked no more questions.

Sequel on the Scaffold

Mr. Justice Avory did not appear to be the least little bit affected by Hopwood's tears and grief—in fact in his summing up he pointed out the vast difference between his outburst of strong emotion and the precise manner in which he had questioned different witnesses on very trivial points.

When the jury had tested the pistol in order to find if it worked as easily as Hopwood had made out, and there could be any possibility of the wounds having been made accidentally, they retired to consider their verdict. They only took a quarter of an hour, and were unanimous in a verdict of "Guilty." The manner in which Hopwood listened to the final address of the Judge and the passing of the death sentence was more suggestive of a perfectly indifferent spectator than that of a man hearing his dreadful doom. Hopwood appealed against the sentence, but without avail, for the appeal was dismissed.

He was hanged at Pentonville on Wednesday, January 29, 1913.

He spent a very restless night before his execution, and occupied most of the time in writing farewell letters to former friends. The following letter was written by Hopwood when he had only a few hours left to live :—

" My dear ——,—I cannot go to my long rest without writing to thank you for the many kind actions I have received at your hands, and to ask you to believe me when I tell you that it was not my nature to be unkind to anyone in the world, and more particularly to this poor girl of whom I was very fond and did my best for. I know everything looks very black against me, but believe me, I would not have hurt her for all the world—but in my desperation that night, having all my hopes completely crushed and

The Gaiety Stage Door

wrecked through those I trusted—believe me, I must have been driven insane, and madly and wickedly decided to shoot myself to get out of my troubles. My brain was on fire and my heart was crushed. I got deeper and deeper into trouble. Believe me, I shall be very pleased indeed to go to my rest, as I am utterly heart-broken and crushed, the only source now of sorrow to me being that I must leave such a stigma upon my poor, innocent little children, which breaks my heart. You know the many hard fights and struggles I have had against adversity in my short life, and I trust that in time to come you and I may be permitted to meet again where Peace may reign and where there are no more bitter struggles.”

Hopwood must have been in financial difficulties, as the notice of liquidation of one concern in which he was interested was filed at Somerset House on September 30, 1912, two days after the tragedy in the taxi-cab occurred. His final instructions regarding money were that he had hoped to collect sums of money amounting to between seven and eight thousand pounds due to him, and this should be secured and devoted to his family.

Whenever there is trouble afield, no matter whether it be great or small, there is always supposed to be a woman at the bottom of it ; but I have known of some contemptible tricks played upon girls by men.

I remember a charming girl who made a fool of herself over a young fellow who had pretended to be a member of a good old English family, and got this girl to trust her happiness to him—temporarily. How he got his money to take her about no one knows, but one can surmise in view of what happened in her case.

Upon one pretext or another he would profess to be

Tricking Girls

disappointed over a cheque, and to pay the hotel bill and other incidental expenses incurred during a holiday he would get the loan of some of her jewellery and get cash advanced upon it. She thoroughly believed all that he told her, and kept on letting him have her valuables until their holiday was up and he could straighten matters up when they returned to London.

She told me all about it one morning at the theatre, and the meanest part of the story was that he had not only pawned the property, but had sold the tickets so that there was not the remotest chance of recovering anything, as she had no idea where the transactions had taken place.

But I think one of the meanest and, to my mind, one of the most purposeless tricks ever played was in the case of two of our chorus girls. It was quite a usual thing for young men about town to get a sort of scratch introduction to a girl and without any preamble to ask her to supper and to bring two or three friends along with her. That was a nightly thing and there was no harm in it, and meant a nice, pleasant supper and possibly a visit to a night club before being driven home in the waiting Rolls-Royce. The occasion I am referring to was just on similar lines, but without the pleasant ending. One night two alleged young gentlemen drove up in a car to the stage-door, but they did not come in to ask me for anyone.

The company were just arriving, and I was too busy to take any particular notice, but when the crowd of artistes, stage-hands, and the usual "followers" of the girls had thinned a bit, I saw these two young fellows talking to one of our girls.

She was saying : " Very well, about twenty past eleven. Thanks very much. Yes ; I'll bring a friend with me ! " Then she came and signed the book and went inside.

The Gaiety Stage Door

The young fellows drove away again. There was nothing unusual in that, so I was in no way surprised to see that girl and another of our choristers join those two young men at the end of the show and drive off with them.

What happened afterwards was this : The four went to a well-known hotel at Kingston, where they had a nice little supper, after which there was the usual jollification to the accompaniment of wines and liqueurs. The time slipped by and the girls suggested that, as it was so late, they had better get home. Then they were told that the car had been dismissed until the morning and bedrooms had been engaged.

There were no trains at that early hour, so the only thing to do was to remain there. After more wine had been disposed of the girls consented, and the night was spent at the hotel. In the morning the two young men got up, and went to have a morning bath. When they had finished the girls followed suit, but on their return they found the rooms empty. Thinking their young gallants would be down in the morning-room awaiting them, they went below. No one was there ! They waited for some little time, and then made inquiries :

“ Had breakfast been ordered ? Did they know where their gentlemen friends were ? ” and similar questions.

The men did not turn up again, so the girls ordered breakfast, thinking they had gone to see about the car, but when the bill was brought to them and an examination of it showed that nothing had been paid for, the truth flashed across them that there was something wrong. It was a heavy bill—wines and liqueurs, supper and bedrooms—even the baths were all down on it, and not a shilling had been paid.

As the morning went on and luncheon time approached

A Girl as Hostage

the situation became rather desperate, so one of the girls remained in the hotel as hostage while the other hurried up to town. She came to the theatre and told me all about it.

I had not anything like sufficient money on me to meet such a bill, and told her the best way out of the difficulty was to confide in Mr. Marshall, our manager. I knew he was not the kind of man to see any of our people in such a difficulty, nor yet would he begin any of those entirely unnecessary lectures, but would see her through. She took my advice, and the poor girl had to go back to Kingston, pay the bill, and get her friend out of "pawn" so to speak.

I think those girls preferred to take their supper in the security of their own flat for a long time afterwards. Of course only Mr. Marshall and I knew the story, and he did not know that I was aware of it, so it was in safe keeping, and the girls were spared any humiliation and thoughtless jokes at their expense. I am still on the look-out for those two young men, but have had no luck in running across them as yet.

Jokes of all kinds are continually being played by actors and actresses, but they are always of a humorous nature, never unkind. I remember the case of a conceited young fellow and a joke being played upon him which took a good bit out of him. He was everlastingly telling of his conquests in relation to the fair sex, and if there is anything that is more objectionable than another in a man it is conceit. One morning one of our girls handed me a note and asked me to give it to this twentieth-century Don Juan. "Don't say who sent it, Jimmy, will you? We are only going to have a bit of fun with the silly young coxcomb."

The Gaiety Stage Door

This girl stopped chatting with me for some time, and then I guessed that she wanted to be present when the note was delivered. The young blood came for his morning letters, of which he certainly had a few, and I gave him the note as well. He read it, and it was quite evident that he was greatly pleased with it and with himself. He bombarded me with questions as to who had left it ; what she was like ; young and pretty, no doubt ; and so on. The girl gave me a wink which encouraged me to join in the conspiracy, and if there is a girl in the world such as I described I should think she would have to be kept in a gilded cage and fed on the fruit of the gods. He took it all in. The next morning another note was handed to me. I merely told him, and with perfect truth, that the same young lady had brought it. This went on for a few days until, in addition to the note, there was a lovely red rose made up into a buttonhole. He read the note, and with a very self-satisfied air pinned the rose in his coat and went off.

My fellow-conspirator said : " Now, Jupp, you will see some fun, because we have arranged the *dénouement* to take place when you are free to get your lunch, so you will see what it is all about."

She told me that he was to wear that rose and be at Lincoln's Inn Fields bandstand at 12.30 that day, but only on condition that he was a single man and not engaged to any other girl. He would find the writer of the notes wearing a pale blue dress with a black picture hat. In her waistband she would have three red roses similar to the one sent to him. I went with her, but of course kept out of view, although I could see all that took place. There he was waiting, but instead of the wonderful vision of loveliness I had described being there to cast herself at his

Apples on a Plane Tree

feet, the whole lot of our chorus girls at a given signal came trooping up from one of the avenues on the farther side and affected great surprise at meeting him there. They chaffed that poor young fellow unmercifully, and I think it did him good, for I never heard any more about his wonderful conquests.

On each side of Aldwych, and right up to the top of Kingsway, young trees were planted at regular distances apart. One of them stands in front of my stage-door. One night, after the show was over, and I was preparing to go home, one of the stage-hands brought up a large box containing a few score of "property apples" which had been left over after the production of a new piece. These he deposited in the hall. Shortly afterwards he reappeared, dragging a long ladder after him. I asked him what he was going to do at that time of night, but he only told me that he had been instructed to bring them up. Then he went home. The fireman came on duty and I also left. The next morning when I arrived I saw a crowd of people standing outside the stage-door gazing up at my own particular tree in great wonderment. As I got nearer I noticed a policeman cross the road and heard him say: "Now move along there, please; you mustn't block up the way like that. Pass along there, please." Then *he* also followed the intent gaze of the bewildered people, and he stopped his orders to "move along," his eyes riveted on the extraordinary sight. Could he believe the evidence of his own eyes? Here was an ordinary plane-tree, similar to a hundred or so all along the pavements, and yet so entirely different. It was laden with the rosiest and most tempting-looking apples ever seen. I also had a look at them, and at once recognized the "props" of the previous night. I added to the

The Gaiety Stage Door

mystery by casually remarking to the policeman : " They are coming along splendidly, aren't they ? " and then went into the theatre.

One night a van was driven up to the stage-door and a carter came towards me with several large cardboard boxes. They were addressed to a man named Howard Fothergill, c/o Stage-door, Gaiety Theatre, Strand. These were sent along with a bill for £3 1s. 6d. I told the man that I did not know anyone of that name. The only thing he could do was to take them back and make inquiries. Even if I had known such a person I certainly should not have paid the bill without some information about the transaction.

I got on the 'phone and spoke to the Strand hosiery firm whence the things had been sent, and told them there must be a mistake, as we had no Mr. Howard Fothergill, and I did not know of one anywhere else. The next morning there was a rehearsal for one of our touring companies, and I mentioned the name of Howard Fothergill to the touring manager. There were several others present, but not one of them knew the name. Later, the comedian of the company came up and asked me what had happened about the things sent from the Strand hosiery, so I told him. Then he enlightened me on the subject.

" Do you remember that awful rainstorm we had in the afternoon ?," he asked. I remembered it quite well, and a young deluge it was. " Well, it was like this," he went on to explain. " I only had a very thin light suit on, and was wearing a straw hat when that downpour came, so I took shelter in the doorway of the Strand hosiery stores. I gradually got farther into the shop as more people took refuge, and the storm showing no sign of abating, I thought I might as well go right in. I did so.

Maud Hobson's Name

"I couldn't very well take refuge inside the place without making some purchase, so the only thing to do was to make a good job of it. I ordered a lot of things, and told them to send them here to Mr. Howard Fothergill. I am awfully glad you mentioned it this morning, because it had slipped my memory for the time being. Thank goodness we go away on Sunday!"

Then, evidently expecting me to sympathize with him, he said: "Hang it all, Jupp, old sport, I couldn't get drenched to the skin, could I now?"

In the death of Miss Maud Hobson not very long ago theatrical circles lost one of its most beautiful figures, and her life-story was one of an extremely romantic character. She was a native of Australia, being born at St. Kilda—a lovely little watering-place just a short distance from Melbourne. When quite young she was brought to London. She was a niece of "Honest" John Hollingshead, and at that time he was the manager of the Gaiety Theatre. Nowadays the term "manager" almost invariably means a paid servant, but not so in those days. The theatre was his, and he managed everything connected with it. So it was not surprising that Maud Hobson, when old enough, was given a start in the profession, if only on account of her fresh young beauty.

Her real name was Jeanne Maud Manson, and the name of Hobson was given to her by accident. There was a well-known City man, a great friend of Honest John's, and his name was Hobson. One day they were chatting in the offices of the theatre when young Maud came in to visit her uncle. This was before she had started on the boards, and Mr. Hobson was fascinated by such a vision of youth and beauty. When she had taken her departure, he declared that there wasn't a girl in the

The Gaiety Stage Door

company who could compare with her, and for a first prize in a beauty competition she would undoubtedly be his choice. She was jokingly called "Hobson's Choice" ever afterwards, and when she was at last included in the Gaiety Company her name appeared as Maud Hobson as if by common consent.

Her chief claim to prominence in the memory of theatre-goers is that she was the original "Gaiety Girl" in the piece of that name. The part was that of Alma Somerset, and Maud was the first to play it.

Her stage career was very brief at the first, for she was only eighteen when she met Captain W. B. Haley, of the 11th Hussars, a gentleman in a very high position in Queen Victoria's Government. Their attachment soon became so great that she gave up the stage and they were married, and Captain Haley was sent out to Honolulu, where he took the position of Commander-in-Chief to the late King Kalakana of Hawaii. He became Prime Minister, and his lovely wife was the idol of the island and the chosen friend of Queen Lillukelarni.

It was during their sojourn in the Samoan Islands that Maud made the acquaintance and afterwards became the firm friend of that romantic figure and brilliant author, Robert Louis Stevenson.

In later years, after Captain Haley died, Maud returned to her uncle, Honest John, and her old love, the stage. She had by then matured into a strikingly beautiful woman, but this was not her only asset, for she also proved an excellent actress and held a prominent position almost up to the day of her death.

After a lapse of about fifteen years she went for a tour of the world with the Gaiety Company. When they were in San Francisco the news got about that the boat in which

Honolulu's White Queen

they would go to Sydney would stop at Honolulu for about eighteen hours, and a message was sent to the island. When the boat arrived there was an enormous crowd assembled, and the members of the Court and Ministry, as well as the military of the island, were arranged in proper form, and an address of welcome was presented to the White Queen—Mrs. Haley.

All the members of the Gaiety Company were decorated with a sort of long boa of smilax, which was worn round the shoulders and reached nearly to the ground. They were entertained to lunch, and afterwards driven round the island. At Weikiki they saw the surf-riding which is a favourite pastime of the natives, but the members of the company let it go at that, declining an invitation to try their skill. It is by no means a simple thing, but it will no doubt be remembered that the Prince of Wales successfully accomplished it there not so very long ago.

Before the company left the island for Sydney they were entertained by the Court musicians and dancers. Their send-off was a fitting end to their splendid reception, and a personal triumph for the central figure—beautiful Maud Hobson.

BOGUS AGENTS, GEORGE EDWARDES' IMPERSONATOR, A DISAPPOINTED BUSYBODY, THE MYSTERY PACKET, THE BOOKMAKER'S LOSS, SPONGERS, SUPERSTITIONS, NO. 13, WEEDON GROSSMITH AND SIR J. M. BARRIE, EDNA MAY'S GOOD TURN.

BOGUS managers and agents have always been a menace to the theatrical profession, yet never have sufficiently drastic measures been taken to render their trade not worth while. Nothing prevents a man from calling himself a theatrical agent, and charging aspirants five or ten shillings to have their names placed upon his worthless register, in return for which they are promised an engagement.

One of the most daring examples of out-and-out bogus management that I have heard of was the case of a man who carried on business as the head of the "Edwardes' Theatrical Syndicate," and posed as an agent under the name of George Edwardes, in rooms in High Holborn. He went a step too far when he put the following advertisement in the *Daily Telegraph*:

REQUIRED—assistant manager for one of George Edwardes' touring companies; also manager of office. Address, stating age, salary, and all particulars to George Edwardes, Postal Department, "Daily Telegraph," Fleet Street.

A great number of applications from persons who would have been glad to serve under my "Guv'nor" were received. It became evident that the somebody who was using his name without authority was also ordering goods in his name without paying for them, and steps had to be taken. Cheques were also drawn in the same way, and they were subsequently dishonoured. A large quantity of silk wearing apparel, which had never been paid for, had been obtained from a shopkeeper in Edinburgh. But the limit was reached when the man applied to the Lyceum Theatre,

A Disappointed Busybody

Edinburgh, for a date for one of George Edwardes' touring companies. This would have been given under the assumption that he was the real person, but it was not done in the usual way.

In any case, how did he expect to fulfil the engagement? What was his idea about it all? Whatever it was, it was soon put an end to, for the "Guv'nor" applied for an injunction "restraining him from announcing or advertising any theatrical companies under the name of George Edwardes, or under any name or title of which the name of George Edwardes formed a part." Needless to say it was instantly granted.

I often wonder what puts it into certain people's heads that girls travelling about the country in theatrical companies are to be pitied, and think that one of their missions in life is to look after their morals. Nobody is more welcome behind the scenes than the curate or priest when he pays his weekly visit to the company visiting the town in which he ministers, but there are others who are by no means welcome. Take, for instance, the following.

In the *Daily News* was this report:—

"Mr. William Forbes began his meetings for Pantomime women in the Provinces at Sheffield on Christmas Day. Tea was provided by friends in Nether Chapel Lecture Hall. After tea, sacred songs and addresses were given. Mr. Forbes gave to each guest a copy of the Marked New Testament. He is now in Leeds."

I do not know whether the *Daily News* or Mr. Forbes was responsible for the delicacy in the reference to "Pantomime women in the Provinces," but the gratuitous impudence of the affair was very well met. The tea never

The Gaiety Stage Door

happened at all, and Mr. Forbes' invitations were treated with the contempt they deserved, as the following extract from the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* shows :—

“ The tea which was arranged for yesterday in the Nether Chapel Schoolroom for those engaged in the ballet at the Sheffield theatres had to be postponed in consequence of the absence of the guests.”

So that the paragraph, although it was a day late, was quite untrue. Perhaps Mr. Forbes was his own Press Agent.

As stage-doorkeeper I naturally came into touch with all sorts of characters and had to be on terms of a certain intimacy with some very weird and wonderful people. We had, in addition to our permanent staff, a band of what we call night hands, men who help the staff in all sorts of ways during the show. These men were generally recruited from workers who only earned a small salary at their daily employment, and found this night job a great help. One night one of these fellows, who had been doing night work for a long time, and whom I knew as well as any of the staff, came to me very much earlier than usual, and during a quiet hour before the business of the evening started, handed me a small packet and asked me if I would take care of it for him. I scribbled his name on the packet and put it in a drawer of my desk.

He did not ask me to return it when he came out after the show, so I reminded him about it.

“ Oh ! that's all right, thanks ; do you mind keeping it for me ? ”

I had no objection, and let it remain in the drawer, but a couple of days later I asked him again if he wanted it, but he said he would like me to take care of it a little longer.

The Bookmaker's Loss

About a week later, on the following Saturday to be precise after he had given me the packet, and I had ceased to bother either him or myself about it, a bookmaker whom I knew very well called. As a matter of fact it was almost an understood thing that he should call and see me about noon every Saturday possible.

He came at the usual hour and we adjourned round the corner to Short's (I am afraid you will begin to wonder which was my place of business—the Gaiety or Short's), and during the usual recital of the week's doings he said :

“ But I must tell you what happened to me last Monday night, Jimmy. I certainly didn't think there was one of the boys smart enough to dip me. Well, I didn't think there was one of them who would have done me down, but nevertheless, I lost a cool two hundred and ten of the best in notes last Monday night. The worst of it is that, puzzle my head as I may, and have, I can't remember exactly what I did nor where I went in the evening.

“ I had the money all right up to about six in the evening and thought no more about it until the next morning. It had gone then. I had not been drinking much, but was not feeling any too grand ; still, it's an absolute mystery to me. Ah ! well, I suppose it's gone for good now, so why worry ? Let's have another ; I've had a good week and can't grumble.”

Now the sequel to this is, that after the matinée that same day, the man who had left the packet with me, instead of going away in the usual manner, waited about outside the stage-door until I was going out for my tea. When I had got a few yards up the Strand, he joined me and said he had waited on purpose, as he had something on his mind which he wanted to tell me. When I looked at him he certainly looked very upset and worried. He

The Gaiety Stage Door

started off by telling me that he was employed in the daytime in the public baths, wash-houses, etc., quite close to the theatre, and that although he was not actually the manager of the place, he was really in charge, though unofficially. Then the story proper came out.

He said that on the preceding Monday evening, when going his round of inspection before closing up, he noticed a little roll of paper which had slipped into a corner. On examining it he found it to be a packet of one-pound notes—two hundred and ten in all. It was his duty to return them to the office at once, but the temptation was too strong for him, and he kept them. He thought he would wait until his excitement had calmed down and he could think what to do before he parted with them. Those were the notes locked up in my desk.

He said he had been too afraid to ask for them back yet, and his plan had been to wait long enough for some inquiries to be made, and if nothing was heard he would keep the money. The reason he had confided in me instead of taking it without saying a word, was that he had changed his mind, and now begged me to advise him what to do.

It was far too late to hand them over to the office because they might, in time, get to know that he had kept them for a week, and that would show that he must have had thoughts of stealing them, and he might lose his job. He said that he had told his wife about the notes as soon as he got home on the Monday night. At first she appeared to be quite indifferent about the whole thing, but soon he saw that she was beginning to look anxious, then she worried and fretted until she could neither eat nor sleep, and in the end had begged and implored him to give the money back to the office. This he was ready to do, but

Spongers

he was so afraid of being suspected, and eventually found out. Would I advise him what was the best thing to do?

I really felt very sorry indeed for him, as it was quite evident that he was not a thief at heart. Of course, it would be quite a simple thing for me to put the whole matter straight, and I told him not to worry any more about it, but particularly to go and put his wife's mind at rest. Then I told him how I had accidentally come to know of the loss of that exact amount in notes on that same night, and I would write and tell the man who had lost them that they were safe. I told him that I would say that he had found them and had been looking in the papers to see if they were advertised for, and he need never say where he was employed, nor where he found them. I wrote and told my pal all I thought was necessary, and the next Saturday he came to see me.

I had then decided that it would be best to keep the bath attendant in the background, although he could be present to hear what took place, and his mind be made easy as to the result.

It was quite a dramatic situation—the three of us in the hall—one of whom had to pretend to know nothing at all about it while I told the tale.

“The chap that found the money is very poor, but a thoroughly honest man, as this proves. Now, what do you think it's worth? How about the odd tenner?”

The bookmaker went better than that. “Tenner be d——d! Here, give him a pony. Now, how about a spot?”

The most difficult class of visitor I had to deal with was the sponger. Even to the present day it is still an impossibility to scent him with accuracy, but I never give

The Gaiety Stage Door

the artistes who may be inquired for a chance of reproaching me with "What on earth did you let that awful blighter in for?" Nobody goes through that door until I have received the consent of the party concerned. I have often gone so far as to scribble a gentle hint when sending up a name, and the reply always gave me the tip as to what to do. On the other hand, a girl like, say, Jean Aylwin was an easy victim. Generous to a fault—almost culpably so—she hated to turn anyone away, and especially if he or she happened to come from Scotland.

On one occasion a well-spoken, nicely dressed man asked to see her, and she sent a message to let him come up. He borrowed his fare to Edinburgh, and of course dear Jean added something substantial to the bare fare. The next night he called again. "Two of the sovereigns" (we used gold in those happy days) "had been unaccountably lost. How, he had no idea, but his journey couldn't be taken; could she possibly make it up, only until he arrived, when, of course, the money would be refunded together with his everlasting gratitude."

She did it. Dear old Jean (I mean "old" merely as a term of endearment)! I wonder if she is still so easy, or if somebody has stung her so badly as to make her sit up and take notice at last. I sincerely hope so.

There used to be a broken-down solicitor who frequented a common lodging-house close by and offered to write begging letters at so much a time. He evidently got clients because on Friday nights (always Friday, that being treasury or pay night), with brazen regularity, some one or other of these needy gentry would ask me if I would kindly ask Mr. X or Miss Z if there was any answer to his note. Then he would whisper his name.

In the case of a stranger to me, as soon as I had sent up

Superstitions

to make the inquiry for him, I got one of the theatre staff to relieve me off the door on some pretext or other, and going out, would watch from a safe distance to see if anything happened. I was also aware of the fact that if he was a worthless sponger he would have some pals waiting nearby, so I had to be wary.

If any money was forthcoming I watched as far as I could, and if he turned into a public house, without actually following him in, I quickly learned whether his was a genuine case and he had gone in legitimately for a much-needed drink, or was waiting for his pals to join him and receive their congratulations. It was worth while doing, as I have been the means of saving a lot of jolly good sorts from being victimized by this class of damned wasters.

Before long they gave up trying it on with our people, as I took it upon myself to tell them straight that there was "nothing doing." I always added sagely, "and there won't be anything doing next Friday either, so don't bother to write." If a case turned out to be thoroughly genuine I was the last man to wish to stand in his way.

The young bloods were a bit of a nuisance, but much more amusing on the whole. It was always easy to put them off with "Good evening, sir. No, I haven't noticed Miss A go in to-night. I don't think she can be coming, as it's quite time she was here." If later on he discovered that she had been in all the time, he could not accuse me of lying.

Actors and actresses are, as a body, very superstitious. If not in the same respect, each one has his or her pet superstition, such as passing on the stairs, putting shoes or umbrellas on a table, whistling in the wings, and peacock's feathers. But one thing you will never get an old experienced actor or actress to do, and

The Gaiety Stage Door

that is to speak the very last line of a new play until the night of production. At rehearsals, when that last line (known professionally as the "Tag") is reached, the usual thing is "God save the King." Whoever has the last line to speak does not always know what it is because the author may have it secreted in his own breast.

With regard to the number 13 the superstition is fairly general with all people, so that it is by no means a monopoly of the profession. Yet I only remember one theatre that had a room 13 and that was the Waldorf Theatre in Aldwych, now known as the Strand Theatre. There may be nothing at all in the connection between this fact and the story I am about to relate, yet it is a curious coincidence.

A well-known actor, Mr. —, dressed in Room 13 and one night very shortly after the production of — he became suddenly ill during the show, and soon after being taken to his room died. For nights afterwards the artistes in the rooms on either side swore that they could hear poor — groaning. I was invited to go over and listen for myself; I had been sceptical about it, and I confess that I heard a voice moaning, and was sure it was no hoax because they were all far too serious about the uncanny affair.

About a week later the fireman who had been on duty all night went to the manager and told him that he could stand the strain no longer. On being asked to explain, he described his experiences of the few preceding nights, and declared that he felt the presence of some one at his side every time he reached No. 13 Room, and that he was accompanied by this weird companion during his hourly round of visits. The fireman was insistent on his being relieved of his job and he left.

There was a room at the Gaiety which of course should

No. 13

have been No. 13, according to the rules of arithmetic, but was numbered 12A. The theatre was closed, pending the production of a new show, and all the rooms were locked and the keys in my possession at the stage-door, with the exception of one office on the third floor which was used by our Press representative. One night a gentleman called to see him, and I told the caller he would find him in the room at the end of the passage on the third floor. He went up. When the two came down about an hour later our Pressman quite unconcernedly asked me who was working in 12A to-night. I told him that he was the only one in the theatre and that 12A was locked up.

“But,” said he, “my friend here mistook the corridor and went along to the end room and tapped at the door. Some one inside called out, ‘Go back along the passage, up the stairs, and you will find your friend in the room above this.’ Who was that, Jupp? There must have been some one there and some one who knew that I was there.”

“But I tell you there is no one at all in the theatre, and No. 12A is locked. Why, there is the key,” and I pointed to it hanging up. “Wait a minute,” I said, and, taking the key, I went up, unlocked the door, switched on the light, and there was only a solitary chair in the room. I went down again and told them they were having a joke, but he declared that what he told me was perfectly true. He still adheres to his story.

Just one more story about No. 13 and there is no possible doubt about this one, not even superstition. It was on July 13, in the year 1913, that a party of the theatre staff and friends (including Ora, the Russian dancer) went for a motor trip from the theatre to Margate. There were

The Gaiety Stage Door

three Wolseley cars, and with the chauffeurs we numbered exactly 13. We had breakfast at Maidstone, and were going on right merrily when, rounding a corner in a little country village, our middle car went smash into another car coming from Ramsgate with two ladies and a gentleman. It was a bad smash and the occupants of both cars were badly injured, one or two seriously, and had to be taken to hospital. At the corner of the road there was a signpost bearing the words "To Margate 13 miles."

George Edwardes was almost as well known in certain cities on the Continent as he was in London, for he spent a great deal of time abroad, either on business or pleasure.

I remember one occasion when he returned, talking about theatrical matters to Arthur Cohen, and suddenly broke off and said he must tell of an extraordinary thing that happened at the Porte St. Martin Theatre in Paris.

It appears that the play-goer in France is no more punctual than we are in England, and on the night in question the curtain had been up a little while, but the play was greatly disturbed by the awful noise made by late-comers into the gallery. A cry of "Au rideau" was raised, and one of the actors, looking very astonished, came down to the footlights and asked what was meant. A lady sitting in the stalls undertook to reply by saying :

"We were unable to hear the beginning, for the people in the gallery are talking too loudly." With ready wit the actor retorted : "You will own, madame, that it is not quite our fault. It is surely customary in the theatre for conversations to be carried on *on* the stage rather than in the house."

The incredible part is that two scenes were gone through again, much to the delight of the audience, who, after a hearty outburst of applause, settled down to the play.

Coincidence

The late George R. Sims was always pleased if he could trace a coincidence, and he was very fond of pointing them out to his friends in the club. From a theatrical point of view he could not have found a more remarkable one than the following, which is pointed out by the late Weedon Grossmith.

It was during one of his usually successful tours in the United States that he sent the following to the *Stage* :—

“The paragraph from an American paper, announcing that I am bringing an action against Mr. Barrie (now Sir J. M. Barrie), is absolutely without foundation. All I said was that there seemed to be a great similarity between Mr. Barrie’s play, ‘The Admirable Crichton,’ and my play, ‘The Night of the Party.’ In ‘The Night of the Party’ the chief character, Crosbie (the butler), compels the master to wait on him. In ‘The Admirable Crichton’ the chief character (the butler) compels the master and mistress to wait on him. At the end of the play in ‘The Night of the Party’ the butler announces the fact that he is going to marry the housemaid and take a public-house in the country. At the end of the play in ‘The Admirable Crichton’ the butler announces the fact that he is going to marry the housemaid and take a public-house in the Harrow Road. It’s the long arm—that’s all.”

There is a good story about Edna May which shows what a sweet little woman she was, and also how ready-witted she was when on the stage. During the early days of a new production of ours at a West End Theatre, one of our leading baritones was suddenly recalled from the provinces to take up the principal part in this new piece. It was a long part, and he was greatly put to it to get the

The Gaiety Stage Door

lines and songs into his head by the night arranged and announced for his taking up the part. He paid more attention to the dialogue and situations than to the music, thinking that they would take little or no time to learn.

When it came to the night of his first appearance he felt very nervous, as it was his initial bow to a London audience. Everything went quite well, and he was doing splendidly until it came to a love-song which he had to sing to his sweetheart (Edna May). The first verse was quite all right, but during the symphony he leaned over the table and whispered, "What's the beginning of the next verse?" But by the time he had asked the question, it was his cue to commence the second verse. Edna May sang it for him and then let him carry on with the refrain.

I think the audience must have guessed what had happened, for they greeted the end of the song with thunderous applause.

CHAPTER X

ONE GAIETY GIRL'S END, BEGGING LETTERS, COLOSSAL IMPUDENCE, WAGERS, TEDDY PAYNE'S SIRLOIN, AND BETTING, AN EMBEZZLER'S LUCK, PRACTICAL JOKES, AN ORIGINAL STUNT.

I CAN remember a beautiful young girl who came to the Gaiety and soon became possessed of little trifles and other gee-jaws as well. This was Miss Norah Hislop, a native of Warwick. She had not been with us long enough to get any higher than the chorus and understudy when she was the centre of a romance and was loaded with presents. Her gowns at the Auteuil meetings or on the Champs-Élysées were the choicest creations of Paquin or Worth, and whether they became her more than she became them was difficult to decide.

She had one quite modest-looking necklet which cost two thousand guineas, a beautiful Mors car, and a fine freehold house at Maidenhead. Then her furs must have cost a small fortune. Oh ! I should not forget to mention her river launch, Lorna Doone, because I had the pleasure of spending a happy Sunday in it in company with several other guests. She did not give up the stage entirely, but would occasionally go on a tour of the provinces, and it was during one of these that she met the gentleman who is now her husband. His business takes him all over the world, and as travelling is a passion with her, she always bears him company. This may seem an uneventful career in comparison with others I have described, but it has the great merit of being a happy one.

As a contrast to it, let me tell you about one of our girls who started under an equally favourable star, but fickle Fortune played her false, or she had failed to charm the goddess, because one day when "Doddy" (the stage-manager) was talking to me at the stage-door, he suddenly

The Gaiety Stage Door

stopped and stared at a very poorly clad woman who was passing by with matches in her hand. Quickly he went out, beckoning me to follow him, and as the woman was only a few yards ahead, he caught up with her. Touching her gently on the shoulder, he said, "Lillian!" The poor soul, looking at him in alarm, and in a choking voice just managing to exclaim "Doddy," turned and fled. It was Lillian P——, a one-time Gaiety beauty. I am glad to say that hers is the only case of poverty I ever encountered.

Of course there have been scores of the begging-letter type, and others who have had the effrontery to come in person with tales of woe, but I have reason to know that they were far from deserving cases. For instance, a woman came one night with two children. She told me who she was, and then I recognized her; but she had never been of much consequence or I should never have forgotten her face. However, she had a very pitiful tale to tell, and she told me it very well—so well, indeed, that I collected £3 15s. in about half an hour and gave it to her in the name of the different artistes I had asked on her behalf. She spoilt the whole thing by going into Short's wine lodge and joining a man who was evidently her husband and calling for two jolly good drinks. I can't always go to that extent myself, especially on a Friday evening, before the ghost has walked.

But for colossal impudence I never knew a case to equal that of a man who once held a position of trust under Mr. Edwardes' management. He had access to the firm's cash, because he managed to appropriate £500 and cleared off. About a year afterwards a woman came and asked me if she could see Mr. Edwardes, but I told her that was almost impossible without an appointment.

Colossal Impudence

But when she told me she was Mrs. —— I thought it just as well to let the "Guv'nor" know she was there. I went in and told him. He told me to find out what she wanted, and then I heard such a miserable tale of poverty and illness that Mr. Edwardes allowed her to go in to him. She said that her husband was ill in bed, and that the real cause of his illness was because they were starving.

She herself had had nothing to eat that day, and very little the day before, and so on, until Mr. Edwardes said: "All right, Mrs. ——, I will send some money to you. I have scarcely anything on me at present, but you shall have some by the next post." As soon as she had gone, Mr. Edwardes called me in, and giving me a "fiver" and some small change, said, "Here, Jupp, jump into a hansom and drive over to ——" Here he gave me Mrs. ——'s address in Kennington. "Ask for ——, and see him. If this is true, send for a doctor, and get in whatever he says he may eat. Leave the rest of the fiver and I'll see that they are looked after."

Here was the "Guv'nor's" real self coming out. Fancy doing a thing like this for a man who had robbed him!

I drove to Kennington, and arriving at the house, gave an important kind of knock at the door. When the landlady came I said, "I am Dr. Jupp of the Gaiety Theatre, and Mr. George Edwardes has asked me to call and see a Mr. ——, who is reported to be lying here seriously ill." The landlady shook her head. "Must be a mistake, doctor. There is a Mr. —— as lives 'ere with 'is wife, but he ain't ill by any means. They've gone out to a music 'all." I couldn't very well rush off, so kept it up a little longer.

"This is the right number. I wonder where the mistake is. You see, madam, I am the theatre doctor, and

The Gaiety Stage Door

Mr. Edwardes has just had a visit from Mrs. —, who says her husband is dying—chiefly from starvation.” “ Well, it’s a funny thing, doctor, because this *is* the address, and we ’ave a Mr. and Mrs. —, but *starvin’* ! Oh ! no, doctor.”

That was enough ! I hurried back to the dear old “ Guv’nor,” and when I told him what had transpired— Well—he very seldom used bad language, but he did help himself to a bit on that occasion !

When help is needed the first two people in the whole world to be sought are the actor and the actress. I have known of some humorous stunts got up in the name of charity. For instance, I remember one morning about 11.30 a lady came to the stage-door and told me that she was acting on behalf of the “ Poor Children’s Outings,” and asked if I would speak to our people about it. She couldn’t have come to a better place, because if there is anybody with a real love for children it is the man or woman whose life is spent in the studies of human characters and their sympathies are always with the weak.

I told her that I would mention it to all the artistes when they arrived (we had a *matinée* that day), and she was just going out when Lily Belmore arrived with a well-known City man whom I knew very well. Here was a chance to keep my promise, so I called them back. I told him of the object of her charitable visit, and asked him if he would give her a start. He was a good sort, and would have done so at once, but Lily suggested that he should give the proceeds of a wager he had made to this fund. He couldn’t very well give the amount, as he hadn’t won it yet, but thought the idea an excellent one for some amusement. It appears that he had dared Teddy Payne to go from the Gaiety without his coat and waist-



J. Bacon.

MR. A. E. DODSON

face p. 134



Teddy Payne's Sirloin

coat in daylight, carrying a sirloin of beef without paper or covering of any kind, and he was to go along the Strand, up to Leicester Square and turn down from Piccadilly Circus on the return journey by way of the Haymarket. This was for £10, and being, as I have said, a matinée day, he told the lady representative that if she called later she would be the richer either from himself or Mr. Payne. She was delighted, of course, and arranged to be back at one o'clock.

"Look here, Jupp, when Mr. Payne arrives, will you tell him that we are over at Simpson's, and that I want to see him particularly?"

With that he and Lily Belmore went off, and Teddy Payne came in very shortly afterwards for his letters, and I gave him the message. He said, "Thanks, Jupp. If he wants to see me so very particularly, it must be about a bet I made with him, and it will cost him a tenner."

I didn't say anything in reply, but thought of the kiddies who would benefit by his tomfoolery.

Half an hour later a butcher's boy arrived with a huge sirloin of beef and said it was for Mr. Edmund Payne, and it was very shortly afterwards followed by that gentleman himself in company with Miss Belmore and Mr. X, the other party to the bet. There were not many people waiting for the matinée as yet, being only a little after noon, and the beginning of the affair was quite tame. Teddy Payne took his coat and waistcoat off as per agreement, and, tucking the sirloin under his arm, went off—followed at a respectful distance by the members of the company, who had nearly all called for letters and whom I had told about the wager.

As soon as he got outside the door he was recognized, and his extraordinary appearance naturally attracted much

The Gaiety Stage Door

attention. The linkman stared at him and the policeman on special duty, for the theatre had an idea of running after him in case he had forgotten his identity and had gone back to the days of his famous ancestors, the clowns who nightly stole beef sausages, etc., from the butchers; but was checked by seeing the small crowd of the company behind.

From there his progress must have been of a very mixed nature, from the incorrigible street arab with his extremely original remarks to the sympathetic lady who told him that the blood from the beef was running down his trousers. However, he managed to get back in about forty minutes—but by no means as quietly, for a huge crowd followed him, laughing and joking, and when he reached the stage-door he flung the sirloin at me and bolted through the swing doors up the stairs and got straight into a bath. What a mess he was in! But that didn't matter. It was a bit of sport, and he had won the bet.

The finish of the story is that the sirloin was raffled at a shilling a ticket to add to the £10 for the charity, and I won it. I can truthfully say that for once it was Payne that brought me pleasure.

There were not many occasions on which I had a chance of getting away for a holiday, but sometimes the "Guv'nor" would send me up to one of his touring companies on business, which naturally came as a change from the daily routine of the Gaiety.

I remember going to Manchester in the winter of 1897 to see "The Circus Girl," and, as luck would have it, the Great Lancashire Steeplechase was being run that week. George Edwardes' horse Wavelet's Pride was entered, and we all went along to see the race and backed our horse at the nice price of 20 to 1. It won easily, and we had a

More Wagers

good time over it. That night after the show a lot of us foregathered up in the circle bar and the conversation turned on eccentric wagers and bets. "Doddy" was with the company at the time, and he said he had to run up to Town, and would accompany me if I would wait a couple of days longer.

Then George Gregory asked him how he was going to manage to get back in time for the show, and Dodson scornfully told him that that was an easy proposition. He went farther and said he would wager that he would go to London, report to me at the Gaiety, and get back in time for the evening performance, and all *without a penny in his pocket*.

George Gregory asked: "How on earth are you going to get there without money?" "Never you mind! That's my look-out. Will you bet me that I don't do it?"

"You say you will travel to Town, report to Jimmy (meaning me), and get back in time for the show, and without a bean on you?"

"I do!" "Very well, then, I'll bet you a fiver you don't."

I had to return to Town the next morning, and Dodson told me to expect him about midday on the following day.

He won his bet hands down, and this was how he did it. He was lodging at the house of a railway porter, and he told him that he wanted to borrow a suit of uniform for a day, as there was a bit of fun going on at the theatre. The unsuspecting porter good-humouredly let him have the suit.

On the morning arranged he busied himself with luggage, etc., just a few moments before the express left, and nobody

The Gaiety Stage Door

took any particular notice of him. If he hadn't been artful enough to leave it until the last few seconds he might have been found out, but he carried it off quite successfully. As the train was on the point of starting he jumped into the rear luggage van, and was well away on his journey before the other porter spoke to him. Now was the critical moment. "Hello, mate, what department do you come from?" "York Road! I've been up guarding some valuable stuff and am just off back again." The fellow seemed to swallow that yarn all right, and "Doddy" felt secure.

Sure enough, at noon he turned up in his porter's uniform and reported to me. He had walked from Euston, and I took him round to Short's and bought him "one." As a matter of fact we had two or three, but he had kept his word and come without a penny, so I played host all the time. He got back to Manchester in good time, changed his clothes, and delivered a note from me to George Gregory, proving that he had duly reported as arranged; but I didn't mention his uniform, and unless George reads this, I don't suppose he can know yet how the trick was done.

Talking about wagers and bets reminds me of a bit of very bad luck which befell one of our touring managers and led him to do a very dishonourable thing, but for which he made full atonement later on. This was the late W—— M——, a very well-known man, especially in the provinces. He was familiarly known as "Eyeglass." He had been known to go swimming with the glass firmly stuck in his eye, so used had he become to wearing it.

He had run up to Town to see the "Guv'nor" on business, and came to see me. I had previously had a tip given to me by my friend Danny Maher, the jockey, but I was to wait for further information about the horse. I told

An Embezzler's Luck

W. M. about it, and he asked me to let him know if I got anything really good. Danny Maher came in later and said I could back his mount without any fear.

I told "Eyeglass," and that was the beginning of the wretched business. "Eyeglass" was the manager of one of our principal companies, and naturally had a lot of money through his hands. When I told him of this dead certainty, he was so sorely tempted that he "borrowed" a hundred pounds out of the takings and backed the horse. It was stupid as well as dishonest, but at the same time it was very hard luck, for the horse lost by only the shortest of short heads.

Now poor "Eyeglass" was fairly in the mire, and as he couldn't raise the hundred anywhere and he was sure to be found out at the end of the week when the accounts were made up, he, in sheer desperation, bolted off with the remainder of the takings, which must have been a good sum. He disappeared for about three weeks, until I went down to Windsor races one Saturday and ran into him in Tattersall's Ring. I spoke to him, and he seemed very conscience-stricken.

He still had a good bit of money left, and he intended to try and pull off a good winner and refund the stolen money, showing that he was by no means an absolute rotter. I was very well in with Jack Arnold, the trainer at the time, and he told me that if Stanley Wootton rode his horse Peridelle I was to back it for all I was worth.

I felt afraid to tell "Eyeglass," especially as I had indirectly been the originator of his downfall, but still Jack Arnold was so confident that perhaps this might be "Eyeglass's" chance to redeem his character. I told him, and he had a heavy plunge on it. That man's anxiety was pitiful to see, and if the horse had lost I am sure it would have been

The Gaiety Stage Door

his finish ; but fortunately it romped home, 5 to 2 against. But "Eyeglass" and I had managed to get "fives" about it before the price shortened. I shall never forget that day. It meant everything to poor "Eyeglass."

He had gone off with about £350 of the "Guv'nor's" money, but now he could repay it in full and still have a good bit left. He squared up, but didn't ask to be reinstated, as he didn't want to have to face all the theatrical managers, who naturally knew of his little lapse. He went to South Africa, where he died.

Of all the practical jokers I ever came across perhaps the most incorrigible was Billy Stevens, who was with our management for many years. There is a tale told about him when he was playing in Sheffield. He was out shopping one morning, and after buying a leg of mutton met two or three of the boys in the company. They suggested a morning drink, so Billy asked the butcher to keep the leg for him until he returned, and then the mischief in his composition suggested a joke. He asked him not to wrap the mutton up, but leave it on the slab just by the door, and he would take it on his way back. He paid for it, and then went with the boys. When they had imbibed, Billy asked the others to come with him and see a bit of comedy played—but he didn't let them into the joke. All they had to do was to look on. When almost next door to the butcher's, he stopped and waited for a few seconds, glancing round in all directions until they got curious and asked what on earth he was looking for.

"A policeman!" was all the answer he vouchsafed. "A policeman! What the dickens do you want a policeman for?" "Ah, just you wait and see."

Before long the man in blue came sauntering along on that side of the street, and when he was nearly up to them

Practical Jokes

Billy made a sudden movement up to the butcher's shop, collared the leg of mutton and ran off with it. The policeman saw him and started off in pursuit, and Billy's friends, not being aware of the fact that the leg was paid for, thought he had really stolen it, as a joke, of course, but stolen it nevertheless. This was going too far, and thinking he might get into some trouble, they also ran after him. The chase was not a long one, as Billy only lived a couple of streets away. Arriving at his lodgings, he knocked quickly at the door, but before the landlady could let him in the policeman ran up and arrested him.

"What are you arresting me for?" asked Billy. "I saw you steal that leg of mutton, and you must come with me to the shop where you took it from." "Oh, very well, I'll come all right." The whole lot of them went together, and arriving at the shop the policeman told the butcher what had occurred. Then Billy started laughing, much to the amazement of his pals; but the butcher quickly saw why he had been asked not to wrap the mutton up, and to leave it in such a conspicuous place.

Billy thought it was time to put matters right, or the man of law might make it unpleasant for him when he found that he had done it deliberately to fool him. He made an excuse about being out too long, as he had promised to return at once, and when he saw the butcher was busy serving some one else, thought it would save time to take it as it was, especially as he lived so nearby.

An invitation to come to the theatre when off duty, and bring his wife, put things in a better light, but that policeman had his suspicions that the affair had been done for his special benefit.

On another occasion Billy was out on a morning round of calls at the different houses where he knew the pro-

The Gaiety Stage Door

prietors, and when he got to one where he was particularly well known, there was a whole gang of navvies in the bars having their midday meal and the usual pint. The road was under repair, and the "No thoroughfare" boards up. This was just the opportunity he revelled in, and he waited until the dinner hour was up. Then he found out who was the foreman and invited him to have a drink, and got two of the boys to keep him in conversation while he went out for a few minutes. They guessed that there was more mischief brewing, and did as he had requested. Billy went out in search of trouble.

About half-way up the street, and where the navvies were taking up the road, was a cabman's shelter, one of those old-fashioned wooden structures they used to have at all of the hackney-carriage ranks. Having been seen in company with the foreman gave colour to what he said to the workmen. "This position is not going to be used as a cab rank any more, and that shelter has to come down. I've just come along to give instructions to your foreman about it. You six men there set to work and get it out of the way." He went back to the hostelry and kept that foreman for quite a little while longer. When they came out, one glance was quite sufficient to tell him that they had actually started on the work—so that was his cue to get away in the opposite direction. The extraordinary part is that the shelter was really taken down entirely before the false instructions were discovered. It was a good thing that it happened towards the end of the week or there might have been trouble.

Touring companies in the old days always had their own specials reserved for them, and the travelling was done in comfort. On one occasion I was going with one of our companies for a couple of days on business, and I

Practical Jokes

got to the station in good time, and was given a place in a carriage with Billy Stevens and two others. Just before the train started Billy brought in a little man of the Jewish persuasion and invited him to travel with us as far as Crewe, which was his destination. No one ever had tickets given to them in those days, the manager booking the whole company and just receiving one special ticket for the lot. When the guard came round in the usual way to check the numbers, all we said was "Company" and he would pass along to the next compartment.

Billy had told his Hebraic acquaintance of this custom, but also told the guard to ask him what company he belonged to. Soon we heard him coming, and the usual "Company! Company!" all along the carriages. When he got to ours we gave the same response. Then the guard said, "And you, sir!" "Company," said the little Jew.

"What company?" asked the guard.

"East End Clothing Company," innocently answered the man.

Talking of touring reminds me of an American company which came over and played for about six weeks at the Gaiety. It was a musical comedy called "Adèle," and I believe the visit was made purely as an excuse to have a look round London. They didn't seem to care whether their show was a success or not, so long as they covered expenses, but what they *did* care about was sight-seeing. I took them round as much as I was able in my spare time, and they all had plenty of money to spend and bought heaps of things to be treasured afterwards as souvenirs of their trip.

In the Caledonian Market they got an absolute craze for cameo brooches, and bought about twenty-five or thirty. They knew what they were about, because they distin-

The Gaiety Stage Door

guished between the genuine article and the inferior stuff, and got some good bargains. I arranged to take four of them, two ladies and two gentlemen, to see Petticoat Lane one Sunday morning. I advised them not to wear any valuables, but they scoffed at the idea of anyone doing them down. They had been on the Bowery and to Coney Island. Surely Petticoat Lane couldn't be worse than those places!

I took them down to Houndsditch and Middlesex Street, where the Petticoat Lane fair is held, and started on a tour of inspection of all the various stalls and shops. One of the girls had a valuable necklet and several rings, while the men had gold watches, fobs, rings, and tie-pins. I didn't like it, and told them to be very careful of getting into a crowd. When we were well down in the "Lane" I heard a soft whistle in front of us, and then one in response from behind. I kept very wide awake, and noticed two fellows come together and with a hurried whisper separate again. One soon reappeared in company with a couple more men and a woman.

They were joined by the other chap, and one or two more, and they gradually closed in on us. As luck would have it, I saw a plain-clothes man whom I knew, and I made a show of my acquaintance with him, in case they knew who he was and would take a hint. He accompanied us until we got to a turning, and then he said in a loud voice: "That's your nearest way, sir," and making way for us to slip up the narrow street he let those others see that he was quite aware of their game.

It was a near thing, because I know only too well that they would have been all over us in another few minutes.

The theatrical Press agent is always on the look-out for

An Original Stunt

an original advertising stunt. The most daring I have known was the work of a gentleman who was a sort of Pooh Bah inasmuch he was manager, stage-manager, Press agent, and lots of other things all rolled into one. This was Mr. Albert Gilmer.

Although he was on the staff of the Gaiety, he lent his brains in assisting and looking after the welfare of other theatres with which he was actively concerned, but naturally not to a rival firm.

A hundred men were given instructions to spread themselves out in twos along Oxford Street and down Regent Street. Each couple at half-past ten o'clock that morning would choose a shop where a lot of people were looking in at the windows or go into a public bar, the fuller it was the better, and the advertising would begin.

In a voice loud enough to be heard by his neighbours one would say, "What time is she supposed to pass along, Bill?" "Oh, almost any time now. I think she's due at the Agricultural Hall at a quarter to twelve." "Well, I'm going to stop here and wait; do you know, I have never seen the Queen since I was a kid."

Now, it doesn't matter where you may be, nor among what kind of company, but the mention of Royalty, and the chance of seeing one of the Royal Family pass along the street, will excite the curiosity of every true Britisher and none more so than your Londoner. So this conversation, being repeated in fifty places along the same street, must naturally spread the news, and it was not long before the people began to ask what the little crowd was gathering for. Each couple spread the news, and of course other people spread it too, so that the work was quite easily done. They had only to make a good beginning, and the public did the rest. Before long the policemen on duty

The Gaiety Stage Door

noticed a most unusual thickening of the crowd and people actually taking up positions on the kerb.

“Come along there, don't block up the path ; move along, please.” But the people were not to be done out of their places; they intended to have a look at the Queen before getting on with their usual shopping and what not.

One policeman was asked what time the Queen would pass and he went quickly to ask his pal on the next beat, and so it spread. One policeman telephoned to Scotland Yard, telling them that Oxford Street and Regent Street was a seething mass of people waiting to see the Queen pass. Had they any instructions about it, as the crowd was too enormous, for the usual dozen or so policemen to cope with.

The answer was that they had received no news, but there must be something in it, and would send up a body of police and some mounted to keep order and regulate the traffic. Of course that did it. The very fact of a large body of police arriving made a few more thousand stop and look until at last the streets were as crowded as if the news that all the crowned heads of Europe would pass had been advertised on all the walls.

Scotland Yard meanwhile telephoned Buckingham Palace, and were informed that the Queen was not going out that day. That did not matter to Mr. Albert Gilmer, for his work was nearly accomplished.

At a quarter to twelve, and just before the police knew that there was no foundation in the rumour, and could disperse this enormous crowd, a loud fanfare was heard coming from the direction of Glasshouse Street at the Piccadilly Circus end of Regent Street.

“What's that?”

“Here she comes!”

A Delighted Public

“ Here she comes ! ”

Up went the cry, and it echoed and re-echoed all along the dense throng. More fanfares! and then behold about fifty horsemen gorgeously attired in costumes of different European periods came galloping from a side street into Piccadilly Circus, thence at a trot up Regent Street and so along to the Princess Theatre in Oxford Street. They made a fine show—not a cheap tinselled affair, but a really brilliant spectacle—and the only actual advertisement was a large banner carried by the horseman in the centre bearing the simple announcement : “ To-night at 7.30 ——— Theatre.”

It was wonderfully effective, and the simplicity of the whole thing makes the idea so almost childish that only a daring man would have undertaken such a stunt, but there it was, and what a result ! And the funny thing about it is that the public were delighted.

CHAPTER XI

GAIETY COMPANIES ON TOUR, A JOHANNESBURG TRAGEDY, A QUICK RETURN,
FRED STOREY'S PRANKS, A THIEF CORNERED.

THERE is no possible doubt that the best-known theatre in the world is the Gaiety, London. Perhaps one reason is that for over fifty years companies have paid visits round the world with just that one announcement—"The Gaiety Company." The names of the artistes and the pieces to be presented were of secondary importance. These companies never returned with their full strength, for some of the girls got married to wealthy men and remained out abroad, and several unhappily died on tour.

The only tragedy I can remember in connection with a Gaiety company abroad was in Johannesburg. One of the small-part ladies, an extremely pretty girl named R—— T——, got mixed up with some of the wealthy men there, but not a reputable set. She was living with one of them at one of the leading hotels, and towards the end of the visit of the company—which generally lasted anything from sixteen to twenty weeks—found that she was in trouble. She told the man with whom she was living and who was responsible for her condition, and asked him to save her from disgrace and marry her.

She was only nineteen, and this was her first trip abroad ; and to return home in such a condition was impossible. The man put her off evasively, but as the tour drew very close to its conclusion, she begged him to do the right thing and make her his wife. There was a scene, and the poor girl vowed that if he did not do so she would do away with herself.

He flatly refused to marry her, and then she told some of her girl friends in the company about her awful state,

The Shortest Tour

and that she would poison herself sooner than go home. She couldn't face her parents.

Some of the men got into touch with this callous scoundrel, but knowing that threats would only make matters worse, they tried to appeal to his sense of honour ; but what a hopeless attempt ! He hadn't such a grace in his whole composition, for although he practically gave them his word that he would see Rosie through, he must have told her again, and finally, that she could go to the devil ; because next morning the poor little thing was found dead in bed in the hotel.

One of the most revolting parts of this shameful story is that the man had ridden out in the night and caught one of the coaches to the nearest station, and taken all her jewellery with him. He had even taken the rings off her fingers before the body was cold. What a hue and cry there was after that scoundrel ! The whole place was up in arms, and search parties went in all directions—from Natal to Cape Town—in the hope of capturing him ; but no trace of him was found.

One fact that greatly helped to keep his identity unknown was that he went under an assumed name in Johannesburg. That is the only sad fate any of our girls have ever met with.

These tours generally lasted about fifteen or eighteen months. The longest tour we ever had was close on two years, but the record for the shortest is held by Miss Maggie May. She went out with the Gaiety Company and the tour was to open at Daly's Theatre in New York. When they arrived, Mr. Charles Frohman met them, as usual, and some time during the day Maggie got a loan of a thousand dollars—about two hundred pounds. The next thing we heard of her was that she had left for home. I

The Gaiety Stage Door

suppose that record could be beaten nowadays, but we had no airships in those days.

Fred Storey, the famous actor, artist, and dancer (by the by, the father of Sylvia Storey, who is now Countess Poulett), caused some consternation among the first-class passengers, the night before their ship entered Sydney Harbour, by doing the "splits" right the full length of one of the dining tables which was all ready laid for dinner. What a commotion—crockery, glasses, cutlery, and all the paraphernalia of the table scattered on all sides, the stewards recovering the bits and pieces as they flew about, while others tried to stop him ; but it was all done with such rapidity that it seemed scarcely a second between his appearance and disappearance.

When found, he was entertaining a few of the passengers in the deck saloon with one of his funny stories. He was a most extraordinary man—a genius in fact, which perhaps explains ; and when brought to account before the captain the next morning, appeared to be very contrite, and when the interview was over and they were once more out on the deck, he suddenly leapt overboard (they were close in by now) and swam ashore. Sydney Harbour is well known to be a-swarm with sharks, and they thought that, in his remorse, he had deliberately committed suicide.

He told us afterwards that it is an acknowledged fact that sharks are by no means as ferocious as they are supposed to be, and are very timid in the proximity of anything splashing ; and he purposely swam with what is known as the "dog stroke." I don't know how much it cost him for the breakages on board, but the whole thing was soon regarded as rather more humorous than serious, especially as he had become a great favourite with all the passengers and officers.

A Night in a Vault

On the way back from New Zealand a call was made at Colombo for coal, and as the passengers were told that it would be a two days' job, parties were made up, and those who had been there before and knew the "ropes" were put in charge, so that the time could be spent in the most advantageous manner.

Some went out to the Galle Face, others to Mount Lavinia; while the rest elected to go to Kandy, a rather long distance into the beautiful country of Ceylon. The party which had gone to Mount Lavinia got split up a bit, but as each one had his separate rickshaw they arranged to be back at the hotel on the quayside in time for dinner. When dinner was about to be served, it was discovered that four of their number were missing—two men and two girls. They gave them half an hour's grace, then started with their meal. Fred Storey had been one of the Mount Lavinia party, and it suddenly occurred to him that he had last seen the missing four inspecting some old tombs which lay on the road between the Cinnamon Groves and the Galle Face Hotel. They all went aboard about midnight—the boat was lying out about half a mile away—and hoped to find their missing comrades safely on board, but they had not been seen since that morning.

After breakfast, no news having reached the company as to what had become of them, they decided to go back to where Fred Storey had last seen them, making inquiries on the way.

On approaching the place, which looked like an ancient burial ground, one of the girls suddenly stopped and told them all to "hush!" Sure enough a faint voice was calling out. It sounded like a ventriloquist calling from a cellar to the people above. Quick investigation settled their minds that their pals had been discovered, and an

The Gaiety Stage Door

attempt was made to force a stout old door which evidently led into a vault. It was far too strong, and help had to be obtained from a native village near by. The party were eventually rescued, little the worse for their rather gruesome experience, as a healthy appetite and a far more precious thirst went to prove. The natives made a lot of fuss about what they considered the desecration of their holy ground, but a few bright English coins took all their prejudices away, and all was "gas and gaiters" once more.

Later they told their tale about just looking into the vault out of curiosity, and somehow or other the door banged to and shut them in. It was a very hot and almost breathless day, and the wind could not have blown it to. It would have required a hurricane to move that massive door, and yet it did get shut.

I wonder if Fred Storey could have thrown any light on the subject?

There was an exciting finish to that voyage home. In addition to the principal members of the Gaiety Company travelling on the saloon deck, were a good number of wealthy ladies and gentlemen who were either returning Home or paying a visit to England. At Colombo a few more were taken on board, and the complement was a fairly large one. There used to be the usual card parties late at night, and all went well until one morning a lady told the purser that she missed some valuable rings.

This alarmed the other first-class passengers, and on examination three other people found that some of their property was missing, including large amounts in bank-notes. All the berths were carefully searched, but without any result. A careful watch was kept on every one from that moment, and a trifle led to the discovery of the thief.

Early one morning a steward happening to look over-

A Thief Cornered

board saw a collar being flung out of a porthole next to where he was standing. This porthole belonged to the gentlemen's lavatory, and it struck the steward as strange that a first-class passenger should get rid of his collars in such a manner. Even if he wanted to put on a clean one, why not do it in his cabin? He went into the lavatory and saw a man who was a regular player at one of the card tables at night, but now it flashed across his mind that he never noticed him during the daytime.

He pretended to be going about some ordinary duty, but as soon as the passenger had departed, made his way round to the purser's bunk and told him what had occurred.

The purser acted very promptly, and, finding the man, asked him if he would let him see his passage ticket. That cornered him.

How he had managed to escape detection might be explained, but where had he slept and how did he get food? He had been nearly a week on board since leaving Colombo and must have got food somewhere. The only logical conclusion was that he must have a confederate in the ship's company.

He was taken in front of the captain, and, on being thoroughly searched, the stolen property was found, and nearly all the money. He was placed in a cabin and locked in, but great was the excitement when the cry suddenly went up that he had escaped. When the door was examined all the screws on the bolt had been removed, but by what means there was nothing to show. After a systematic search of the ship it was concluded that he had jumped overboard. The day before the ship arrived he was discovered inside one of the air-shafts. He had made a plucky bid for his freedom, but was taken good care of this time.

The Gaiety Stage Door

He was a thief, but he certainly was loyal to his confederate, for neither on board ship nor at the subsequent proceedings against him, would he so much as admit that he had any help of any kind.

George Edwardes was as well known on the Continent as in London, for he used to go very frequently to Berlin, Vienna, and Paris in search of new musical plays, but he only went to the United States once, and that was after a lot of persuasion. He went to see his friend Charles Frohman, who held pretty much the same position in New York as the "Guv'nor" held in London. His chief of staff and absolutely indispensable right-hand man was Mr. J. A. E. Malone, and it was often quite a joke in the inner circles if George Edwardes did anything at all without so much as conferring with Pat Malone, as he was familiarly known.

Therefore, when he went to America, leaving Mr. Malone behind, they all inquired what the dear old "Guv'nor" would do without him. The day after he sailed one of our artistes, Mr. Hope-Johnson, arrived at Liverpool from New York, and when he came to Town and asked me if he could go in and report progress to Mr. Edwardes, I told him that he must have passed him on the water. "Oh! I remember now," said he. "As we were crossing the bar in very rough weather, I saw the figure of a man, which I thought was very familiar, leaning over the side, and, in a voice remarkably like his, groaning: 'Where's Malone? Oh, dear! Where's Malone?'"

CHAPTER XII

STAGE-DOOR RULES AND A WAGER, EVIE GREENE'S FLAT, TRYING TO DODGE BEHIND, A BRAZEN ATTEMPT, A FOUND PURSE, GEORGE EDWARDES' UNREHEARSED SCENE, VISITING A DISTILLERY, GIFTS OF WINE, ACTORS' PETS, CHAMELEONS AND A SNAKE, STAGE-CLOTHES EXPENSES, A READY-MADE SUIT AT £55.

I HAVE mentioned before that no one was allowed behind the scenes without permission. Now there was an Army officer who became an almost nightly caller, attracted by Miss D—— B——.

His name was Sir M—— B——, and a very fine, smart, typical young officer he was too. He asked me on several occasions if he could go in to speak to Miss B—— just for a minute—he only wanted to give her a private message—but I was adamant. On no consideration could he go in. He got tired of trying to persuade me, and said no more for a fortnight. Then one night he asked me if I had not belonged to the 8th Hussars, and I told him that that was so. “I thought so, Jupp, because I was talking about you the other night, and one or two of the officers of the 8th said they knew you in the old days and had often been up to see you here. Do you know, Jupp, that I have made a nice little bet which concerns you.”

I asked him what it was. “Ah!” said he with a wise and knowing wink, “that’s a secret, but you’ll know all about it before long. You’ll be all right, though, whether I win or lose. We’ve arranged all that.”

Two or three nights later Sir M—— came with two other gentlemen, one of whom I knew well as one of the 8th Hussars. “Good evening, Sergeant-major,” was their greeting. “How are you going along, eh?” Then Sir M—— asked again if he might go in for just one moment—only the shortest of moments; but I said, “Now look here, Sir M——, you know perfectly well that it’s

The Gaiety Stage Door

not allowed, so why will you persist in asking?" "Oh, all right, my dear Sergeant-major, don't upset yourself."

He strolled to the street door, and I was having a chat with my Hussar friend about old times in India when Sir M—— came marching in, followed by six others, all officers whom I knew. They filed past me in a moment, and passed through the swing-doors. I tried to get out of my little office, but the man I was talking to held the door firmly until they had all gone in, and then he let go and followed himself. Eight of them! They were half-way up the first flight of stairs when I reached them, and I shouted: "Come down there, all the lot of you. Come down at once. How dare you force yourselves into the theatre in this manner?"

The only response I got was: "All right, Sergeant-major, don't upset yourself. Right wheel, there! Forward!" And along the corridor they tramped in file.

At the end of the first passage Sir M—— called out: "About turn! One—two—three—four—Forward! Pick your feet up there, Reynolds!" Back they came, and at the foot of the next corridor: "Left wheel! Forward!" rang out.

At first I was very angry about the whole thing, and thought of sending to Bow Street; but as some of the girls put their heads out of their dressing-rooms (they were only just making up at the time) and laughed at the eight men tramping along, I thought better of it, especially as they had not offered the slightest offence to anybody. On the next flight the girls had evidently heard the unusual tramping and the military commands, and were also looking out of their room doors. The eight officers took not the slightest notice of any of them, but went along in file as

Stage-Door Rules and a Wager

before. Then again came the order : "About turn ! One—two—three—four—Forward !" "Pick 'em up, pick 'em up, there ! Can't you see the Sergeant-major's got his eye on you. My word ! What an eye ! Don't upset yourself, Sergeant-major, we'll be back in a minute ! Left wheel—Forward !" And up they went to the next corridor.

I gave in then, and had to laugh with the others. They simply went through exactly the same thing upstairs, taking no notice of the laughing girls, and when they could go no farther they about-turned again and came down to the stage-door. Then Sir M—— said : "Well, Jupp, I don't mind telling you now that that was the wager which concerned you. You are so infernally strict that I thought of this plan to get in. I'll admit that I would not attempt it on my own, for I know you would have chucked me out into the street without any ceremony. So, although it took eight of us to do it, *I have been behind and without your august consent*. Here's a quid for you, Jupp. Good night."

This was all done in a very few minutes, and they had conducted themselves in such an excellent manner, although a bit on the noisy side, that there was no real provocation to be an absolute boor and make a fuss ; so it passed off as any such bit of devilment should. But that story reminds me of another which was by no means pleasant, and made me appear in the light of a tyrant.

I may point out that this strict rule only applied in the case of the sexes being opposite ; but there was no objection to a lady visiting a girl friend, or a man going up to see his gentleman friend, and that was the awkward part of the incident I am about to relate.

One night a fashionably dressed lady called and asked

The Gaiety Stage Door

to see Miss Evie Greene, and I was just about to send her card up for Miss Greene's permission to admit her when Mr. Arthur Cohen came in. He was a man of great influence and authority in the theatre, so I paid attention to him, with the lady's card still in my hand. I had asked her to take a seat, and he gave her a quick glance and then, with his back to her, signalled to me to let him look at the card. I did so, and he said: "I want to speak to you a moment, Jupp; will you come inside?" I went through the swing-doors, and then he asked: "Who does she want to see?" I told him she had asked for Evie Greene. "Well, on no account let her in. She must not be allowed in the theatre to see anybody—do you understand? If Mr. Edwardes came he would tell you the same, so you can take it as an order from me." I pointed out that there was no rule against one woman seeing another, and it made things very awkward. He said: "Send her card in, but you must give her to understand that no one *at all* is allowed to go to the dressing-rooms during the show." Then he left me to do the rest.

I got one of the dressers to take the card up and told her to say that I had been given instructions not to admit her. When I got back to the hall I told the lady that I had sent her card up, but I was afraid I could not let her up as it was against the rules during the show. She frowned a little, but only for a moment, for with a very friendly smile she said: "That's all right, Mr. Jupp! I quite understand, and I know perfectly well where this new order has so suddenly come from. I will wait until I see what answer Miss Greene sends down." I felt very guilty, especially as she was so nice about it as far as I was concerned. Then I heard Evie Greene's rich voice speaking in an unusually vexed tone, and drawing nearer, she

Evie Greene's Flat

appeared herself, half made up and a dressing-gown thrown about her.

“What's the meaning of this, Jupp? What authority have you for saying this lady cannot come up to my room?”

“Well, Miss Greene,” I answered, “I have had instructions to admit no one at all while the curtain is up.”

She knew quite well that I was not telling the truth, and, knowing me so well, she knew I would not behave like this on my own initiative. She said: “I know it isn't you, Jimmy, but understand this. If this lady does not come to my room in five minutes from now, I will put on my things again and my understudy will have to play. I mean it, Jupp—so you know what to do.” With that she went up to her room.

I knew she was the sort of girl who would not say such a thing as an idle threat, and I hurried up to Arthur Cohen and told him what she had said. He could not go in the face of that, and reluctantly said: “Oh, well, I suppose she will have to be let in.” When I got back again I held the doors open, and said: “Will you come this way, madam. I will direct you to Miss Greene's room.” She was an extremely gracious woman, and as she got up said with a sympathetic smile: “Poor Mr. Jupp, they do get you to do some dirty things, don't they, and let you bear the whole brunt of it. But I quite understand.”

With a significant touch of her nose she intimated that she knew who had given the order. I never found out why he so particularly wished to prevent her from going into the theatre, and I don't think it matters now, but he didn't interfere with the artistes' privileges after that.

In a big theatre like the Gaiety, where a small army of men are employed, one has to be very vigilant, especially a

The Gaiety Stage Door

man in my position, because it frequently happens that players in the orchestra send deputies when they have permission to play at some outside concert, and then stage-hands are very often away and send a man along to take his place for the night. To anyone conversant with the theatre and knowing these things, it would be worth trying to get through when all the others are going in and carry out any nefarious plans they may have formed. But I have only had it tried on twice.

On the first occasion the orchestra were outside smoking during the interval, and as usual one or two of them were having a chat with me. When the bell rang for them to go in again, I noticed a strange face among them. He didn't look at me, but went through the swing-doors in a casual manner. I asked Jacques Grebé if there were any deputies playing that night, as I had not been notified about it, and a stranger had just gone in. He said there were not any, so I went after this man very quickly.

If he had any designs in his mind, I knew he would not be fool enough to go down into the band-room, because there he would have instantly been detected and questioned, so I went on to the stage. I found him up at the back just in front of the backcloth, apparently examining one of the calcium lights. I asked him what he was doing there and if he had signed on in my book. Without the least sign of embarrassment he said he had been in the pit and during the interval had gone out for a smoke. Seeing a crowd of men going back into the theatre, he followed and found himself down there on the stage. I asked him for his pass-out check, and he calmly showed me one.

It was genuine enough, so I took him up to the stage-door and then I told him what my opinion was. If he had only shown some signs of embarrassment or even amuse-

Trying to Dodge Behind

ment on finding himself in this strictly private place, it would have been different, but I was convinced that it was a "try on."

If he could have remained there until the curtain was up, the coast would have been clear for him. The whole company and the stage-manager would be actively employed quite long enough for him to slip up the staircase to the gentlemen's dressing-rooms unobserved, and after appropriating anything of value, could have got out of the private door. I told him to get back to the pit, and to be thankful I had not given him in charge for trespassing.

The other case was when one of the messenger boys from Raynes', the theatrical costumiers and bootmakers, called. He had the usual familiar cardboard box under his arm, and asked if he could go up with his box to see Miss Maisie Gay. Now, all of these people are aware that such things are always delivered in the first instance to the wardrobe mistress of the theatre, and she looks after the artistes' wants.

"Miss Gay is on the stage at present ; what do you want with her ?" I said. He said he had a pair of shoes which she wanted to wear that night, and he was to take them up to her at once. That was his undoing. No one would have sent him with such a message, especially to me, so I told him I would take the parcel and sign for it, but he could not go in. Then he tried to induce me to let him take them up as he had strict orders to give them immediately into the hands of Maisie Gay herself.

"You give those shoes to me, my young lad ; Miss Gay will get them just as quickly. You can go back to Raynes, and tell them you left the shoes with me, that will be quite sufficient."

The Gaiety Stage Door

At that moment one of the dressers returned from an errand, and I stopped her. I stepped out of my little office, and going to the boy, said : " Just take these shoes up to Miss Gay, will you, Alice ? " I went to get hold of the box, but the boy refused to let me have it. This was too much for me, so I took it from him by force, and when he saw it in my hands he turned and fled.

His unwillingness to part with it, his sudden flight, and, now that I had possession of the box, its unusual weight, made me suspicious. On opening it I found it contained nothing more than a brick and some paper packing. Knowing that Raynes would still be on the premises although the shop was closed, I rang them up. They said that no one had been sent on such an errand, and when I told them it was one of their boys whom I had seen for about two years in their employ, they told me he had been discharged a fortnight before. If that boy had asked if he might take the shoes up to the wardrobe mistress I should not have stopped him. There are conventions to be observed even in the delivery of a parcel.

Talking of parcels reminds me of one occasion when I was fairly " had." There is a certain amount of excuse for me, because his message was so plausible and perfectly reasonable, but still it doesn't alter the fact that he took me in beautifully. A man came to the stage-door with a flat paper parcel and said it was for Mr. Ivan Caryll. He had ordered some new music, and there was three and sixpence to pay. This fellow evidently knew his business because new music is always sent out flat. I looked at the open ends, and seeing it was music right enough, told him that Mr. Caryll was in the orchestra then and would not be up until the interval.

The way he put it to me made me feel that it was not

The Best Violin

quite fair to make him spend an hour of his own time fooling about, so I paid the money and away he went. When Mr. Caryll came up I said : " A parcel of music for you, Mr. Caryll ; there was three and sixpence to pay." He opened the parcel, and it was nothing but some old stuff with a few front pages here and there.

Ivan Caryll had a sense of humour and merely asked me not to pay for anything at all in future, as that was the third time he had been had in the same way. No doubt this fellow overdid it and was caught later on, just the same as a musician who had once belonged to our orchestra came to grief. He had been in our theatre for some time and was quite well known to all of the staff, but the trick he played was not attempted during the week. He waited until one Sunday morning, and only the fireman was on duty. I knew he had left us and his story would have been a failure with me, but with the fireman it was different. He rang the bell just about midday, and when the fireman came, apologized for bringing him down, and asked if he might get his violin from the band-room, as he had a job of deputizing at Queen's Hall that afternoon. There was no one to consult on the matter and, thinking he still played in the theatre, the fireman consented. That fellow took the best violin and bow in the orchestra and got away with it. This was reported confidentially to the A.M.U. (Associated Musicians' Union) and all the theatres warned. It was done so quietly that only the officials knew about it and the thief was easily trapped and caught.

He was given six months to think out some other *pas seul* for future performance.

One of the most brazen attempts at making a claim for loss of property was made by a woman who evidently had

The Gaiety Stage Door

not studied the extent to which a manager of a theatre can be made responsible. According to her story she came in company with a gentleman and occupied a seat in the dress circle. When she arrived she was wearing a very expensive opera cloak, which she threw on to the back of her tip-up chair. It was quite all right during the first act of the show, and she went with her friend to get some coffee in the lounge. When she returned she saw what she presumed was her cloak still lying in its place, and thought no more of the matter until just before the curtain fell on the last act.

Then to her astonishment and alarm she discovered that a very old and worthless cloak had been substituted for her own. She sought the manager at once and told him of her loss. Naturally he asked her if she had left it in the cloak-room, and she had to confess that she had not done so. To try and see a little more into the matter, he went with her to the cloak-room, but there was nothing answering to the description given.

The curtain having descended for the last time, the manager invited her to watch all the people who came with cloak-room tickets, while her gentleman friend could take up a position in the vestibule and command a view of all the people as they passed out of the theatre. Nothing happened of course, but she said she would go no farther in the matter if we gave her twenty pounds compensation. She generously promised not to prosecute the management, nor bring our theatre into disrepute by mentioning the unfortunate occurrence to a soul.

Mr. Marshall did not seem quite to appreciate her magnanimity, for his last remarks were: "Madam, if you could have shown me a cloak-room ticket I might have considered your suggestions, but as you cannot, and

A Found Purse

I am in no way responsible, I can only wish you good night."

He was not quite finished though, for he drew her gentleman aside, and speaking in a quiet voice, so that there should be no "second evidence," said: "I should advise you to try it on at some other place, but I don't recommend the West End of London!"

They say that "Finding's keeping," but I remember one of our people coming to the theatre and asking me if I had any money I could let him have until the next day, and explaining that he had lost his purse containing nine pounds in gold and some papers, including an invitation to a Masonic Installation. The only thing he could think of to explain its disappearance was that he kept his season ticket on the suburban Waterloo line in the same pocket as his purse, and that he must have pulled it out by accident.

I usually kept some money aside for emergency cases, so let him have what he wanted. That was just before the *matinée*. In the evening a gentleman came along and I recognized him as a member of my lodge, and wondered what he wanted, as he had never been to the stage-door before.

He said he wanted to see Mr. Ellis for a moment if it were possible, so I sent his name up. While he was waiting, he told me that he was one of the managers of the Army and Navy Stores in Victoria Street, and that on coming up to business that morning, he had found something on the seat of the carriage which made him think it belonged to Mr. Ellis, of the Gaiety Theatre. Then I remembered the purse and gold he had lost, so I asked him if it was a purse he had found. "Yes," he answered. "Oh, so he has mentioned it! Could you recognize it if I showed it to you?" "No, I couldn't," I told him. "Mr. Ellis

The Gaiety Stage Door

told me this morning that he had lost his purse with nine pounds in it." "Anything else?" he asked. "Yes, an invitation to a Masonic Installation." "That's it!" he said. He went in to Mr. Ellis, and they must have made friends at once, for he remained up in the dressing-room for nearly the whole of the evening. No doubt it was a new experience for him, and I am not surprised at Mr. Ellis making him so welcome. Who would not show hospitality to a man who, finding your purse, brings it back to you intact?

George Edwardes was not by any means an excitable man, and could always keep his mental balance no matter how business affairs might be affecting his co-directors, so that the following episode is all the more extraordinary on that account. After all, it was a trivial thing, and yet it made him completely forget himself.

He went into the provinces to see one of his touring companies, about which he had had some disquieting reports, and he wanted to verify them for himself. He didn't announce his visit, but went away from the office without telling me or anyone that he was going up to Sheffield. There were three of them, and they arrived nicely in time to have dinner, and then 'phoned up and booked three seats in the dress circle. The other two went in and occupied their seats, but Mr. Edwardes waited until the manager was out of the way before he went in himself. He did not want anyone to know that he was there, so that no warning message could be sent round to the back. He had heard that they were doing pretty well as they liked and not keeping up the reputation of the Gaiety as it should be.

When the orchestra came in and they were about half-way through the overture, he turned to Frank Tours, who

George Edwardes' Unrehearsed Scene

was one of the three present, and asked : " Who is that young fellow conducting ? I don't know his face ; where did he come from ? " Frank Tours was in a position to know all of our musical directors, but he didn't know this one, and said that perhaps it was the resident conductor deputizing. That seemed to get on the " Guv'nor's " nerves. His own conductor missing to begin with. Looking at the programme for his name, he asked Tours where this conductor had previously been engaged. Tours told him that he had brought him from a number two company, but beyond that he knew nothing about him. " Well, he evidently doesn't care to look after his job, so even if you don't know where he comes from, I can tell you where he's going to ! "

That was the beginning of it. He had to be asked several times to be quiet, and was " shooshed " by his neighbours.

The climax was reached when one of the principals made an entrance in a very quiet scene and was just about to sing the opening notes of his solo, when Mr. Edwardes jumped up and, to the astonishment of the whole house, shouted out : " Go back—go back—it's all wrong—all wrong. "

Then of course there was nothing for it but to take him gently but firmly out. He could never explain how he came to lose all sense of his surroundings. His mind must have been so fixed upon having this matter put right and seeing that things were done properly that he became oblivious to the audience.

He left all provincial matters alone after that.

All actors and actresses love touring Great Britain, and although the highest aim of one and all is to get a London engagement so that they can put the name of a London

The Gaiety Stage Door

theatre on their cards and advertise in the *Stage* and *Era* that they are appearing in the West End, there is always a secret longing to be on tour again.

One meets with such kindly and hospitable people wherever one goes, and the weekly change from town to town brings such great variety into their lives that a provincial engagement comes like the famous advertisement for pens—"a boon and a blessing to men." A visit to the Potteries is full of interest, and a George Edwardes company never leaves Hanley without some charming souvenir from the world-renowned firm of Wedgwood's. This firm always sends an invitation for the whole company to pay them a visit, and a most delightful and instructive afternoon is spent in seeing the different processes. Nothing delights one of our girls more than to watch her own bit of clay being formed right from the very start until it has been baked and finally presented to her in the shape of some little ornament, jug or cup.

A visit to a brewery or distillery is equally interesting but more risky. I remember going with a party from one of our companies over Dunville's, and it would have been well if they had not been quite so keen in their endeavours to entertain us. It was only a small party of about twenty, so we took a coach and drove out to the distillery. On our arrival we were met by several of the managers, under-managers, and still lesser managers, and we soon found ourselves split up into little parties.

We started our tour of inspection with a glass (or two) of champagne in *the* manager's office. Then we were told that we would be shown the whole process of distilling, and would be invited to taste the spirit in its different stages and qualities. We had only been about a quarter of an hour on this sampling business when one of our

Lost—Mothers' Advice

girls confided in me that if she had another spot she would not be answerable for her actions. To use her own language, she said : " Jimmy, if I have just one more glass of this, away goes mother's advice, so I warn you." This did not sound very encouraging for the show at night, and I was very glad to find that we had a " halt " for sandwiches and fruit.

I think they must have forgotten that they were entertaining guests who had to entertain the general public afterwards, for no sooner had one glass been emptied than another of the officials would say: " Now I just want you to taste this, and notice the great difference in the ' bouquet.' " For myself it didn't much matter, but the others had their work at the theatre to attend to, so it was decided that the " tasting " of any further qualities be left to the experts and we would take their word for it.

A final glass of champagne, and then the return to the theatre. What a demand there was for *café noir*, and how necessary it was ! I suppose coming out into the fresh air had its effect upon the party as much as the samples ; and mothers could have gone round with hampers collecting their discarded advice.

That night the name of Dunville was mentioned quite a lot during the show, and the next day a case of whisky was sent round for the artistes. This form of advertising is nearly always used—especially in provincial towns—and the person who cracks the gag is sure to be the lucky recipient of some of the stuff he has mentioned on the stage.

There was one night I remember in this relation. A carter came to the stage-door and asked if Mr. Charles Brown was in. It was a little early yet, so I told him he would have to come back later. He said he had a case of

The Gaiety Stage Door

champagne to deliver, so I said : " Well, bring it in here, and I'll sign for it." He left it, and when Charlie Brown turned up I told him about it. " A case of champagne for me ? Let's have a look at it ! Well, I'm hanged if I know who could have sent it." I asked him if he had been mentioning " Mumm " at any time during the show, and he recalled that one night in a scene in which they were supposed to be taking a sly glass of wine, he had said : " Mum's the word." I suggested that that was most probably the explanation of this present from the champagne firm. He didn't need much convincing as to the right of ownership, and my suggestion was enough. He said : " Send some one for half a dozen Guinnesses from next door, and three or four glasses. We'll have a right royal shandy." I soon got the things, and we enjoyed a couple of quarts of fizz mixed with the stout among four or five of us. The remainder of the champagne was taken up to his dressing-room to be discussed later.

The next day a representative of the firm called and asked me if a case of champagne had been left for Mr. Charles Brown. " Yes, there was one came last night," I answered. Then he told me that it had been left in error. It was intended for the manager of the restaurant next door, whose name happened to be Charles Brown. I said : " That's a bit awkward, because Mr. Brown took it for granted that it was a present from the firm as an acknowledgment of his advertising the wine every night in the show." " Does he ? Does he make mention of our wine in the piece ?" He bit it like a trout at a fly, and I rubbed it thoroughly in. " Of course he does. Why, there has been a little bit of disagreement between him and the stage-manager over it. Mr. Dodson doesn't mind a passing reference to anything, but he says Mr.

A Barrel of Oysters

Brown is overdoing it, and thinks he must have shares in the firm the way he advertises your wine." He beamed on me, and said : " Well, will you give Mr. Brown my compliments and tell him that the mistake will be rectified and he may keep the rest of the wine."

When Charlie came that night and I had told him about the mistake, he said : " Well done, Jupp ; but I think I'd better mention it again to-night in case the fellow comes in to hear for himself, and who knows, there might be another lot sent, not in error. How about a glass of Royal Shandy before we start ? Come on up to my room."

The mention of champagne always suggests oysters as a fitting accompaniment, and reminds me of a barrel coming from New York addressed to the "Guv'nor." It appears that the late Charles Frohman had been drawing comparisons between the oysters they get on the other side and ours, and Mr. Edwardes challenged him to produce any more succulent bivalve than we had to offer. Hence the barrel from New York.

I went in and told the "Guv'nor." " A barrel of oysters ! Oh ! I suppose they are from Mr. Frohman, but I should think it's a bit risky to eat them after that long journey." I have mentioned elsewhere how very careful he was in all matters where health was concerned. Appealing to Arthur Cohen he asked : " What do you think, Arthur—a bit risky, isn't it ? " " Well, I don't know. I suppose they've been in cold storage all the way. Besides, they have them on board all the voyage and they have to be kept in good condition. Let us try a few ! "

The "Guv'nor" was too nervous about them and finally had them sent round to Gow's in the Strand. I was given permission to have a couple of dozen if I cared, and could then give my verdict. I kept on for days having a few

The Gaiety Stage Door

and with the same report as to their excellence, but he never touched one and I became the sole possessor of the lot. I never knew the "Guv'nor" so solicitous about my health. At least twice a day he would ask me how I felt. I don't know if he had been studying the symptoms of oyster poisoning and was trying to diagnose any complaint I might have—but as I was as fit as a fiddle there was nothing to discover.

Actors and actresses are very fond of animals, and nearly every one has a pet of some kind. Dogs predominate, and many hundreds of pounds would be carried under the arm of, say, Gertie Millar, Marie Studholme, or Gladys Homfrey in the small body of a prize Pekingese or Pom. Miss Homfrey used to breed dogs, and was a fine judge of a thoroughbred. One or two girls have had monkeys as pets, but they were stopped from bringing them into the theatre for obvious reasons. Mr. Reginald Crompton always carried a squirrel in his breast pocket, and Fred Walton had much fun with his chameleons. How it is that the London Zoological Gardens have only a few small specimens of this quick change animal, or whatever category this little thing comes under, I don't know. Fred had several big ones. I don't believe they lived very long here, but as he frequently visited South Africa, he always brought a few back, and seemed to understand quite a lot about them and how to take care of them.

The strangest and, in my opinion, least desirable pet was one of Miss P—— H——'s. The first time I saw it was when she leaned on the window-ledge of my little office while I was getting her letters for her. I put them down close to her muff, and before I could draw my hand away, the flat head of a big snake popped out. I instinctively gave it a chop at the back of the head (having

Costumes

seen this done at close quarters in India) and beat a hasty retreat.

The awful fuss P—— H—— made ! How dare I strike her beautiful darling ! She would report me to Mr. Marshall ; she would see that I was severely punished for my cruelty to her pet.

Needless to say, the only result of her complaint was that she was told that I had not gone far enough, and that I should have forbidden her to bring the reptile into the theatre. So she had a row with Mr. Marshall, who said that if she ever came to the theatre with it again, I was to refuse her admittance.

I couldn't very well search the girl, and she would keep it well hidden in her muff until other girls complained about it. Then she was given the choice of leaving the beastly thing at home or stopping at home permanently as far as we were concerned. She chose the latter, and actually left the next day.

Stage costumes are very expensive, and are a serious consideration in the expenditure on a Gaiety production. I particularly mention our theatre because only the leading artists were employed to design the costumes, and they were made by the very best makers of the day. Modern clothes and hats and boots came from West End firms of high repute, and you could depend upon seeing *le dernier cri* on the boards of the Gaiety. George Grossmith was always the most correctly dressed man, and to this day no man turns out with a finer sense of good taste than he. He is an acknowledged fashion leader.

But, expensive as a modern suit worn in a Gaiety piece was, the one worn by the late Teddy Payne in " Our Miss Gibbs " proved ultimately the top of all. He played a Yorkshireman who had come up to London, and as he was

The Gaiety Stage Door

not supposed to be a dandy, he tried to get a suit which he considered looked the part. Several tailors were tried, but as each suit was finished (and paid for) it was turned down. There was a certain something missing.

Eventually Mr. Edwardes suggested a run up to Yorkshire one Saturday so as to study the type of man in his Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes. This was done, and the result was a ready-made suit costing £2 15s., and gave the exact idea he wanted to convey. In all, that fifty-five shilling suit cost more than fifty-five pounds—but it was worth it.

Some of the chorus men and small-part merchants (as they are irreverently called) often were allowed to take their stage clothes for private wear when the piece had come to an end, until at last these gifts would be referred to as a “God bless,” an abbreviation of the familiar saying, “God bless George Edwardes”; but I vow that Teddy Payne never included that particular suit in his own wardrobe!

Talking about wardrobes reminds me about one of our artistes who had an absolute mania for boots. This was Arthur Hatherton, who, when taxed on the subject, admitted that he wore a different pair of boots every day in the month, and would start again on the first day of the next month with number one pair, and so on again through each month; but even then his stock was not exhausted, as he had always a few extra pairs for special occasions. I may add that his collection were not God blesses.

CHAPTER XIII

EVIE GREENE AND THE CHORUS GIRL, A GHOST STORY, FRANK DURNING'S MISSED TRAIN, "LOCK YOUR DOOR."

ALL patrons of the theatre will remember that beautiful and brilliant vocalist and actress, Miss Evie Greene, for, having once seen and heard her, who could forget her representations of such characters as Nan in "The Country Girl" or Mme. Sans Gêne in "The Duchess of Dantzig," to mention two only? But she was an established favourite in the provincial towns, where she played for a long time before she made her initial bow to a West End audience.

Wherever such musical plays as "The Gay Parisienne" or "The New Barmaid" appeared with the name of Evie Greene at the head of the company, the "House Full" boards were displayed at every performance.

Her first appearance in London was in "L'Amour Mouillé," and there is rather an amusing story about her first appearance at the rehearsals of that piece. She was sitting in the stalls by herself, waiting to be called upon, and feeling somewhat anxious. She was in a plain costume and her appearance called for no particular attention. She had no previous knowledge of the magnificence of some of the London chorus girls, much less of the show girls, and became very interested in a gorgeously gowned lady in silks, laces, and diamonds who was floundering about the stalls gangway, and who looked as if she had found the money for the show and had just looked in to see if they wanted another thousand or two. This magnificent lady, catching sight of the pale, anxious-looking girl sitting all alone, approached her with a magnificence matching her appearance. She spoke.

"I suppose you have been on the stage before?" she asked in her grandest manner.

The Gaiety Stage Door

“ Oh, yes,” said Evie, “ but only in the provinces.”

“ Oh, indeed ! I hear that is where they fetched the new principal from—she is a Miss Evie Greene. Has she really a good voice ? ” Somewhat embarrassed, Evie could only answer, “ I really don't quite know—perhaps I am not exactly in a position to judge.”

The magnificent one was about to question her further when she was abruptly interrupted by the voice of the composer : “ Now then, Miss Greene, if you will be so good—— ” And Evie, rising and smiling kindly at the magnificent one, passed from the stalls to the stage and sang a solo.

Later the stage-manager said he wanted all the chorus ladies to come forward, and to Evie Greene's utter astonishment, among them was the magnificent lady in all the glory of her silks and laces and diamonds.

I think I have been long enough on this old earth to be sufficiently sophisticated to listen to a ghost story without being really nervous or having that creepy sensation come over me, but I must confess that when an actual experience is related by a man who has that rare gift of being able to impart to another something of his own feelings, then I am liable to be very impressed. And I certainly was in the story told to me by one of our provincial actors, Mr. Frank Durning. It was the beginning of a new tour. The company were booked to leave London by the usual special train, but when it came to the time of departure, Mr. Durning had not turned up, so the manager of the company left word at the booking office that he was to be allowed to travel by the ordinary train, as his fare was paid. As this story has something to do with an offence against the law, I will not mention the provincial town the company were to appear in.

One Stormy Night

Mr. Durning fully intended to travel with the company, but owing to a breakdown on the Underground Railway he arrived at Euston too late. He had arranged to share rooms in the town they were visiting with another member of the company, who was under the impression that Mr. Durning knew the address. But he had not made a note of it, and had no idea where to send a telegram to. It would be no use sending to the theatre, as no one ever calls at a theatre on a Sunday, so the only thing for him to do was to trust to luck when he arrived and try to find his friend in one of the "professional houses of call." It was rather late at night, and it was bitterly cold, with a driving sleet almost blinding. Not a sign of his friend anywhere could he find, so when it got close upon "Time, gentlemen—please!" he made inquiries about apartments. He was given several addresses, and it being such a wretched night, he was prepared to put up anywhere, so made his way to the nearest one. He was tramping about for nearly an hour before he at last got settled in a little inn, evidently of great age, and under more favourable conditions, of much interest, but for the time being its attractions were chiefly centred in a warm fire and the prospect of a comfortable bed.

The landlord was a kindly sort, and made Mr. Durning as welcome as possible, so that all the discomfort and annoyances of the past few hours were soon forgotten over a bumper of hot "toddy." When it came to time for retiring he was shown to his bedroom, and the landlord's last words to him were: "Don't forget to turn the key in your door before you get into bed."

He scarcely paid any attention to this advice, and not being in the habit of locking himself in, he did not do so. The rain, half sleet, was beating against the window-panes,

The Gaiety Stage Door

and being accompanied by a low moaning of the wind, there was very good reason to be thankful to be indoors on what was evidently going to be a stormy night.

When he had put his light out, he noticed that there was a sort of fanlight connecting his room with another on his left, and a faint light shone through it. Thinking that it merely meant that somebody was reading in the next apartment, he settled down to sleep. What the time was, or what caused him to wake up, he had no idea, because he had not heard a sound ; but it must have been very near to break of day, because there was just sufficient light to be able slightly to distinguish different objects. Not that he had time to look around him—he was only conscious of these facts, for, upon opening his eyes, he found himself gazing into another pair of eyes not more than a foot away from his own. These eyes looked at him in a curious and rather puzzled sort of way, as if trying to settle some debatable point.

Frank was more asleep than awake when he first encountered this gaze, and closed his eyes again. A few seconds later he felt a hot breath upon his face, and heard the stertorous breathing of some one very close to him. Opening his eyes again, he was startled to meet the gaze of those two eyes once more, but this time only about three inches away. They had lost that questioning look now, and seemed to be full of horror, which gradually turned to an expression of terror.

Durning found himself utterly powerless either to move or speak. All he could do was to stare into those terror-stricken eyes. He felt himself go suddenly cold, and all his strength seemed to leave him. He knew that he was entirely at the mercy of the possessor of those two eyes which were piercing him through, and the hot breath upon

The Door Handle

his face was scorching. He did try to move, struggled in his spirit to make an effort to shake off this terrible paralysis, but in vain. He was completely helpless. And then he began to realize that the terror in his own mind was reflected in the face of this ghastly visitor.

He could only keep his eyes riveted on those two others in a devilish fascination. At last they slowly withdrew, and the hot breath became fainter, until at last, in the gloom of that weird light which comes before the actual break of day, he lost all sense of their presence, and the slight sound of a footstep outside his door told him that his fearsome visitor had gone.

His bonds were instantly loosened, and springing out of bed, he hastily closed the door and locked it. That settled any doubt there may have been in his mind as to the reality of this uncanny experience, for he certainly had shut the door before getting into bed, but he found it wide open.

All hope of rest was abandoned, for this proof of its being no imagination had a very startling effect upon him. He thought of calling for the landlord of the inn, but he found he hadn't the courage to open the door again. Then he heard again the sound of something close to the door—the sound of some one cautiously turning the handle. Yes! there was the knob turning very slowly, and then a slight pressure on the door, as if to open it. How devoutly thankful he was that he had locked it this time! The pressure on the door became firmer and more determined, but it was securely locked. Poor Durning felt all the old terror coming back to him again, and he stood motionless, with his eyes fixed on the handle of his door, helplessly wondering what would happen next.

There was dead silence for a few moments, and then

The Gaiety Stage Door

he began to wonder if it was not really all a hideous nightmare, and he would wake up to find all was well, when suddenly he was startled out of his speculations by a hoarse whisper coming through the keyhole. Oh! the horror of it! It was more the hiss of suppressed passion amounting to frenzy than a whisper, and he distinctly heard: "Open the door—let me in—curse you!" Durning couldn't speak, couldn't move. He could only stand there in a daze, yet with a brain on fire. Again it came—a little louder and with fiercer emphasis. "Open the door—curse you! Let me in, curse you!"

Again there was silence for what seemed hours, but in reality of only a few moments' duration. A third time the harsh tones came to his ears, only with something of a despairing sob in it. "Open the door and let me in!" Then a soul-revolting shriek rang out, and the man on the other side of the door began to beat with his fists upon it in a frenzy of madness.

Suddenly the sounds of doors opening and a scurrying of feet along the passage were heard. There was a brief struggle and the madman was overpowered and taken into the room next to Mr. Durning's, from whence the light had shone through the fanlight.

This seemed to break the terrible spell which had held him in its thrall, and he opened the door and went out to inquire into the fearful doings of the night. The landlord was terribly upset, and implored Mr. Durning not to report the matter, as he had kept it a secret from everybody that he was harbouring his brother, his only brother, who had lost his reason through a terrible misfortune. He vowed that he would have him removed to an asylum after the occurrence of that night, if only Mr. Durning would promise not to betray him.



MISS FLORENCE ST. JOHN

July 1890

Alfred Ellis

A Poor, Witless Man

It was a serious offence to have hidden the demented condition of his brother from the proper authorities, but he would do so no longer.

Rest being entirely out of the question, there was nothing to do but get dressed and wait until it was day ; but it had such an extraordinary effect upon Durning that he had to look upon the face of the poor demented man when he was restored to a tranquil state before he would leave. He said that that look of terror on the man's face would have remained with him and have haunted him had he not done so and been able to carry away with him the expression of nothing worse than that of a poor, witless, broken man.

CHAPTER XIV

FLORENCE ST. JOHN, HER EARLY STRUGGLES, THE SILENT SINGER, A LOVE TRAGEDY, A POST-CARD ROMANCE, IRVING AND THE JAM, W. BLAKELEY AND THE VINE, A KING EDWARD STORY, DAN LENO'S NARROW SHAVE, THE WRONG BED.

MISS FLORENCE ST. JOHN was without doubt one of the most distinguished artistes who ever graced the stage of the Gaiety Theatre, or any other theatre, for, in addition to having a glorious voice, she was a most accomplished actress, and her meteoric leap into fame meant not merely a successful appearance in one particular part, but a permanent reputation.

Even when her voice began to fail and she took to legitimate drama, she made as great a success as she had of old.

In my opinion, all actresses are kind and sympathetic, but these virtues positively oozed out of dear Florence St. John. Her maiden name was Margaret Greig, and she was born at Tavistock, in Devonshire, in 1854. Hers was a most adventurous life, and the trials and tribulations she had to contend with at a tender age would have daunted the courage of many a grown-up woman. She was naturally musical and as a child she quickly learned to read at sight, and it was this early practice that not only stood her in such good stead in later years, but practically saved her from the hard study which is usually the lot of a would-be prima donna.

Even as a child she used to sing in public at "Penny Readings," and her vocal abilities and musical aptitude were undoubted. A well-known tradesman in her native town gave her what might be called her first real start in the theatrical profession. He acquired, in exchange for a bad debt, a panorama, and this work of art he sent out on a tour. Little Florence (or Margaret I suppose then)

A Husband's Support at 15

used to sing ballads in front of the picture to vary the entertainment. How long this lasted I cannot say, but it could not have been of any great duration, for at fourteen years and nine months she eloped with a Mr. St. John and her parents refused to allow her to return home.

It was then that the awful struggles began, for her husband fell ill, and she was forced through sheer necessity to try and get work on the stage, but failed to do so. She could not get even any concert engagements, but somehow or other she managed to get up to London, but with no better luck. Fate seemed entirely against the poor young girl-wife. Things became so terribly desperate that in order to support herself and her dying husband, she was reduced to singing outside public-houses to the accompaniment of an old wheezy organ. She travelled a long and hard road before her time of triumph at last came. Yet, as regards the actual length of time, it was comparatively short, because the manager of the London Oxford heard her singing and gave her a three months' contract to appear at his Music Hall. She then went by the name of Florence Leslie.

Owing to her exceptional musical ability and her pure young voice she made enormous strides, and in just one year after appearing at the Oxford she secured an engagement to sing in Opera. She played in no less than thirty-two distinct operas, and in less than three years from the time she first went on the stage she was recognized as an operatic star. Then came an offer to play in that lovely old comic opera "Les Cloches de Corneville." She played the part of Germaine and scored an immense success.

She used to tell a good story about how she got undeserved credit for what was described as "the most merry

The Gaiety Stage Door

and natural laughter ever heard on the stage." It happened thus.

Mr. H. B. Farnie was a very difficult man to please when he was producing a new play, and sometimes he has been known to get into such fits of rage that he would dash his silk hat down on the stage and jump on it. As regards Florence St. John he was never really satisfied with a laugh she had at a certain cue, and he did his utmost to get her to try to improve it and acquire the natural ring that he wanted.

On the first night of the new production he was watching every one very anxiously from the wings, and at the crucial moment when this laugh had to come his artificial teeth fell right out, and the sight of him groping for them sent her into peals of genuine laughter at precisely the right moment.

Mr. Farnie was delighted with her, and when the papers made special notice of that wonderful laughter of hers, he overwhelmed her with his congratulations and compliments. She was too honest though, and admitted that he himself had inspired it in the wings. One would have thought that the ludicrous situation would very quickly have lost its appeal to her sense of humour, and the natural laugh have fallen back into the artificial laugh which had been such a bone of contention, and so it did, but by the time it had worn off the ability to maintain the happy, merry ring still remained with her.

She was at one time the wife of the well-known French actor and singer Claude Marius (he was always known as M. Marius), who also made a name for himself at the Gaiety Theatre. He was first married to another operatic star, but she evidently had lost all her love for him when she gave the following details of him :—

“ A masculine masher—young and beautiful, and slender,

The Silent Singer

sleek and sly, and so elegant. How clever he was, and how he used to manage what he was pleased to call 'his voice.' In an opera called 'Chilperic' at the Gaiety he had a solo in the second act with a top 'A' natural, and this is how he would do it. To see with what grace and energy he worked up to the climax and then, at the supreme moment, rushed up to the front of the stage, opened his mouth (such a pretty one, with a tiny, soft, dark line above it masquerading as a moustache) as wide as he could, lifted his right arm to Heaven, looked the gallery full in the face, and sang straight from the chest. What? Nothing! Not a sound! and the orchestra sustained him with a tremendously big, long tremolando chord, which would have entirely drowned him even if he had really sung the note, and the public always encored him with great acclamation, and he—well, he always did it again!"

Considering the many thousands of actors and actresses, to say nothing of musicians and general staff, employed by George Edwardes, and for the matter of that by other theatrical managers, it is remarkable how free the profession has been from tragedy.

I remember the extremely sad case of one of our ladies, Miss Kitty Melrose. A sweetly pretty woman and one who would have made a big name for herself had her life been mapped out differently and led on happier lines. It was noticed that Kitty was gradually changing from a jolly, light-hearted girl into one whose manner became suggestive of a secret trouble, and eventually she fell very ill.

The doctor who attended her elicited the confession from her that she had been taking veronal, as she suffered so much from insomnia, and had taken an overdose. With careful nursing she got better, but not for long. She

The Gaiety Stage Door

became very ill again, and this time she told the doctor that she thought she had taken enough to end it all, as life was not worth living. Again she was nursed and brought back to health, and she went for a holiday to Paris with a friend of hers, another actress named Mabel Bryce. It was noticed in Paris that she suddenly became very depressed, and she actually returned to London alone. Her friend suspected that there must be some love affair at the bottom of Kitty's melancholia, but no matter how the subject was broached she would always avoid it, and never admitted that that was causing her such distress, but it was true all the same.

The caretaker in London was surprised to see some of Kitty Melrose's luggage in the front-room. Some of it had been opened, and as further proof of the actress' return a bottle of champagne was on the table, and she noticed that a little of it had been consumed. There was only one glass on the table. There was nobody in the flat then, so the caretaker went about her usual duties and departed. The following morning she applied her pass key to the door and opened it, but found that it had been secured on the chain. This aroused her suspicions and she got into the flat by way of one of the windows. The room seemed to be just as she had left it, but when she opened the bedroom door there was a rush of gas, and it was some time after opening the windows that she was able to venture in.

She saw Kitty Melrose lying on her back with her head on the edge of an ordinary gas stove in the kitchen. The poor girl was fully dressed except for her hat and jacket. Another bottle of champagne was on the table along with some letters which had evidently been written since her return. The bedroom flue had been carefully blocked up

A Love Tragedy

with a dressing-gown, a skirt and jacket, and all the windows closed down. One of the letters was addressed to the caretaker. It thanked her for her kindness, and enclosed a five-pound note. There were two other letters addressed to a gentleman.

At the inquest the whole story could easily be read from those two letters, and the whole was made complete when a letter was found in his handwriting. It was to the effect that it would be quite impossible for them to be married, as his people strongly opposed the union and his duty was towards his people. He explained that his mother was very ill, and he was afraid that his marriage to Kitty would have a very serious effect upon her.

He admitted that he had done a wrong thing in letting her think he had intended to marry her, and then went on to excuse himself by saying that he had suffered very much, and his nerves had been sorely tried by her several illnesses. It was a very long letter, and pointed out how they could both benefit by being apart and each could start and lead better lives in the future. Although he gave her definitely to understand that this was the end, and all was over between them, he concluded "With best love, yours, ——" The two letters the miserable girl had left finished the sad story. One read :—

"MY DEAR ONE,—

"I cannot bear it any more. Every one has told me that you have done with me, and I am heart-broken and cannot bear it any longer. Please forgive me, but as I know you do not love me, you will soon forget. All my love, and good luck to you.

"Yours, KIT.

"P.S. It was wrong for every one to keep you from

The Gaiety Stage Door

me. I cannot fight alone. I did believe in you, and did not think you would fail me, but God's will, and I know you thought you were doing right."

The other letter was as follows :—

"By leaving me alone you thought you were doing right, but it was all wrong and cruel. God forgive you, as I hope He will forgive me.

"KIT."

The coroner expressed the opinion that Kitty Melrose had taken so much to heart that the man she loved was not going to marry her, that she had determined to take her life. There was very strong evidence of real insanity, and it was not one of those cases in which juries sometimes, out of kindness of heart, say that a person was insane, her mind was evidently in a very unstable condition.

That very sad story was brought back to my memory when I chanced to meet a great friend of hers in the person of another of our Gaiety girls—another Kitty—Miss Kitty Sexton. She was just about to enter the chambers where her flat is when I met her, and of course our greeting was mutually cordial. Kitty Sexton had a most romantic story to tell me, or rather finish, for I had known the first part of it before she left the Gaiety to join one of our other companies.

The romance concerns a Captain U—— and herself. He was one of the first officers to be sent out to France. His regiment were taking over from another battalion at midnight, and one of the officers being relieved recognized Captain U—— and suggested that his dug-out would be

A Post-card Romance

found a very convenient one from which to get round the trenches and look after his men. If they had not met, this story would most probably never have been written.

Stuck up on the rough walls of the dug-out were some post-cards of actresses, and when he had time to look about him, Captain U—— noticed one of a strikingly beautiful girl. It was one of the ordinary picture post-cards which could have been found in every Tommy's barrack-room, but this particular one had a peculiar fascination for him. Printed underneath he read "Miss Kitty Sexton, Gaiety Theatre," and that was the beginning of it all.

When he and his comrades were "relieved" in their turn and fell back upon a village behind the reserves for a rest, he made up his mind to write to Miss Sexton. It was not a time to consider conventionalities (who did in those days?), but not knowing whether the lady might have a sweetheart at the front, or perhaps a husband, he had carefully to consider how best to approach her by letter and what excuse he could offer for writing to her. How he surmounted that difficulty I do not know, but I do know that he wrote to her; and furthermore, he got one in return from her. She did not care whether he was an officer or a bugler so long as he was out there doing his bit, and her first thought was to show her "sisterliness" to one and all.

In her answer she had naturally asked if there was anything she could do and let her feel that she was also doing what little bit she could, and Captain U—— from the moment he received her letter looked upon his mission out in France as something more than a matter of duty. There was joy in his heart when, after reading the letter over and over again, he realized that it gave not the slightest hint of either husband or lover, but in a

The Gaiety Stage Door

perfectly natural and womanly way had mentioned other friends who were out, and wondered if Captain U—— might meet them—and so forth.

These letters came quite as regularly as could be expected, and whenever I saw the much-treasured "blue envelope" I always kept it until I could give it to Kitty myself. I was taking a very unusual interest in this little war romance, and the expression upon her face changed from week to week as the letters arrived. From an expression of pleasurable interest it gradually became more intense, until at last she would be positively upset if by any mischance, which frequently happened, there was a delay in the delivery of her now precious letter.

I did not need to cloak whatever I said to any of our girls—we were all pals—and so on one of these delayed occasions I said, "Kitty, you have fallen in love with this young officer—now, don't deny it, why even now your looks are a confession—cheer up, my dear, there's nothing wrong with him ; nothing's happened, or you would have very soon heard." She tried to look as if she believed me, but all the same I knew she had that sickening doubt which we all felt when our precious letters did not arrive for long intervals.

One evening she came to the theatre absolutely radiant with joy and pride. She said, "Look, Jimmy—look at this—but don't let anybody see it, you are the only one who knows." And then she showed me a photo of a young and handsome young gentleman—I say gentleman advisedly, because he not only looked it, but there was every indication of it in the mould of his head, and even the way he held himself. Kitty was one of the proudest and happiest girls in the world that night.

So this went on for a long time—several months—and

A Telegram

she and I kept her delightful little secret all to ourselves. There were times when it took a lot of romancing (and even downright lying) to bring back the semblance of a smile to her pretty face and make her believe that all was well.

I shall always remember one night in particular when she came to me for her letter. There was a man friend talking to me, so I just handed her her little pile with the beloved blue one on top, and then went on with whatever he and I were talking about. I was watching her all the time, though, as I was as interested in her and her soldier lover as I had ever been in anybody. She tore it open and read it. Her face lit up, and I thought she would have shouted out for very joy—what happiness was beaming from her eyes! She signalled to me frantically to get rid of my man friend, and every second he remained she seemed to have less and less control of herself. I think for the time being she almost hated that chap.

“Why doesn't he go? Why don't you get rid of him?” I could read it in her excited eyes. It was really amusing to me, and I told the chap that he would have to excuse me and like a sensible man he went. Then she told me that her soldier had got special leave, and that he would arrive a couple of days after that letter. He gave the date, and that letter must have been delayed for two days because he was due to arrive that very day. No wonder the dear little girl was so excited. There was only the theatre he could come to, as she had never thought of giving her private address, and this added to her excitement. By the time she should be going in to make up and get dressed for the show he had not put in an appearance, and I had a hard job to get her to go in at all.

About a quarter to eight a telegram came for Kitty,

The Gaiety Stage Door

and I did a thing I had never done before and have never done since, and that is to open a telegram addressed to some one else. I couldn't help it. This wire was to the effect that he would call during the evening, and if convenient to her, he would be glad to speak to her. Now it was no use telling her just at present, because I knew she would have taken off her make-up, got dressed, and come down to wait for him, so I left it until she had made her first appearance, after which no sincere artiste would ever leave a show unfinished.

I got an opportunity later on, and told her I had read the telegram—for which she forgave me (I believe she thought I had a right to open it)—and it was arranged that he was to wait until after the show. He came about nine and I instantly approved of him—a really splendid young fellow, typically English, and undoubtedly a gentleman. I told him the strict rules of the theatre about visitors, and noted with pleasure that he was glad to hear of them, but that Miss Sexton would be glad if he would meet her immediately after the show. Neither of us being teetotalers I introduced him to my special haunt round the corner, and we toasted each other in wine.

His wooing of Kitty Sexton did not take much doing. He had won her long before, and it came as a matter of course that they became engaged that very night. His special leave was not for long, and this happy young couple decided that there was no reason for delaying the completion of their happiness. A special licence was obtained and Kitty Sexton became his wife. Two days after their marriage Captain U—— was recalled to France. That same week he was killed.

That splendid old comedian, Mr. William Blakeley, father of the late Jimmy Blakeley, used to tell how,

W. Blakeley and the Vine

many years ago, he had occasion to call on Irving—then a struggling actor—at his lodgings in a provincial town. He opened the door and saw Irving sitting in a chair with a bright-looking little fellow on his knee, to whom he was giving large spoonfuls of black-currant jam out of a jam-pot. It seems that the youngster had expressed himself as being particularly partial to black-currant jam, and Irving had told the boy he should have a whole pot to himself. Irving was keeping his promise, and the youngster swallowed every bit of it. That little fellow eventually became Mr. Frank Cooper, who distinguished himself so greatly in Sir Henry Irving's company at the Lyceum Theatre, and became his leading man.

William Blakeley was a great comedian in his day, and was the favourite actor of the Duchess of Teck (mother of Queen Mary), and she rarely missed one of his performances. He was fond of springing little jokes on the management as well as "gagging" to the audience, and in a piece in which he was supposed to be a landowner who wanted to dispose of certain of his property there was, in a corner of this supposed property, a grape-vine. Blakeley got two bunches of grapes—one black and the other white—and pointed out to the would-be purchaser how prolific the vine was. When he was asked if the neighbourhood was a healthy one—"Healthy!" exclaimed Blakeley—"Why, the cemetery is a perfect failure!"

Mr. Blakeley was of a genial disposition and very fond of children. He was generous and charitable and extended a helping hand in time of need to many of his less successful brother and sister artistes. The last time I saw him play was when he appeared as Smoggins in "An Artist's Model."

Jimmy Blakeley followed in his father's footsteps and became a very popular comedian, and he also was royally

The Gaiety Stage Door

favoured, for he was one of Queen Alexandra's favourite comedians. Even before he became a West End Star, when he was with Clifford Essex's Pierrots at Southsea, he had several commands to sing on board the Royal Yacht Osborne. On one occasion Jimmy sang Albert Chevalier's "Future Mrs. 'Awkins," and when he got to the refrain King Edward (who was then Prince of Wales) rose from his chair and, taking his cigar from his mouth, used it as a conductor's baton and led the entire company—crew and all—in the chorus. Poor Jimmy had made a succession of successes in the West End under George Edwardes' banner, and his untimely death at a comparatively early age was undoubtedly caused by shock during the cowardly air-raids.

Mention of King Edward VII (when he was still Prince of Wales) reminds me of a story about him. It is not generally accepted as being true, but as it chiefly concerns a London hansom cabby, one of the good old witty type, which now seems to be extinct, there is nothing difficult in believing it to be perfectly true.

It was soon after the Prince had won his first Derby and he, in company with a friend, hailed a hansom and gave instructions to drive to Whitehall. When they arrived there and had alighted, the friend, in presenting the driver with his fare, asked him whether he was aware whom he had been driving. "Now don't come it, mister," pleaded the cabby, "there ain't a day passes but not somebody tries to kid me as 'ow the Shah of Persia or the President of the United States 'as bin a-drivin' in my keb—don't come it, please, mister!"

"I am not joking, really," was the smiling reply. "The gentleman who just alighted is the Prince of Wales."

"Wot ho!" chuckled the cabby with a knowing wink.

Dan Leno's Narrow Shave

"Well, you can just tell the gentleman wot's just alighted as 'ow the 'orse wot's been a-pulling 'im along is Persimmon. Gee-up, Persie!"

The Gaiety actor, Fred Leslie, and Dan Leno were never formally introduced to one another, and their meeting was unconventional to say the least. It was in a Lancashire town, and Fred had just had a shave and was waiting in the shop while the barber went next door to get some change. Dan Leno, who had never met Leslie, came in and said he wanted a haircut. Leslie recognized the great little comedian and thought he would have a joke.

"Certainly, Mr. Leno," said he, and promptly thrust Dan into a chair, covered him with a towel, and started to lather his chin.

"I want a haircut, not a shave," said Dan, starting up. Fortunately the barber returned with the change just as Dan was about to "go for" Fred. They were great friends for many years afterwards.

A very devout lover used to be heard morning, noon, and night singing, "Kind, kind and gentle is she." Eventually he married the kind one. Eighteen months or so later he could still be heard humming it, but with this significant variation, "Kind, kind and gentle—IS SHE?"

Every man who has been a patient in a hospital in France will understand the following little incident far better than my poor attempt to describe it:—

Frank Fraser (brother of our leading baritone, whom I have mentioned before) was the first actor to be invalided home from France. He joined up at the very beginning of the war, and was seriously wounded at Festubert during the first "scrap" there. When he was lying in

The Gaiety Stage Door

hospital, where he had been quickly dispatched from the dressing-station, he noticed one of the nurses come into the ward and tie a white ribbon into a bow on the bed-rail of the man next to him. He asked the nurse what significance that had, and she replied, "Oh! that means that he is to be sent back to England for treatment." The poor chap whose bed was so adorned cheered up at the good news. "Blighty! that's what it means, chum. Blighty!"

Frank congratulated him and wished him good luck. This led up to "Where is your home?" and they found that they knew many places in London where it was quite possible that they had both been without knowing one another, and then, naturally, Frank's comrade said how heartily thankful he was to know that he was to be sent back. Just as he was expressing his delight, the door of the ward opened, and the same nurse came back consulting a Medical History Sheet. She went to the man's bed and compared the cards, and then—the poor girl must have felt pretty unhappy at having to do it—she took the white bow off the one bed and tied it on to Frank Fraser's. She had made a mistake. She didn't speak and neither did the two men, but Frank told me that he felt more sorry over that incident than if it had been reversed.

James Sinclair was another of our Gaiety boys who joined up in the early days of the war. He was a fine handsome young man, well over six foot and a good all-round athlete. He belonged to a very wealthy family, but he would not apply for a commission, preferring to join up as a Tommy in the 3rd Dragoon Guards. When on leave he always paid me a visit and told me what he knew of things "over the road." One day he came with the

A Last Celebration

joyful news that he had come into a fortune of £50,000. We duly celebrated what was considered his great good luck, and I regret to say that that was perhaps the last celebration of it that he ever knew, for the very next day on his return to France, he was killed.

CHAPTER XV

GEORGE EDWARDES' ADVICE, "COME BACK IN SIX WEEKS," "THE DUCHESS OF DANTZIG," THE LEADING LADY'S RETORT, THE LOST MOUSTACHES, CYRIL CLENSY, AND HIS DRESSER, G. P. HUNTLEY'S DIG, GUILTY, THE JUDGE'S BETTING SLIP.

IT was not so much luck which enabled George Edwardes to become a most successful theatrical manager as a capacity for understanding exactly what the public wanted; and his vision had to extend far beyond London, because his provincial audiences were of the most vital importance to him, and that was where his wonderful judgment came in. He spared neither effort nor money to provide his public with the fare they wanted, but it cost a lot in the beginning to find out their exact tastes.

I remember the "Guv'nor" talking to a friend of his who was evidently going into management. He had come along like a sensible man, and honestly confessed that he was in search of some truths about the business which could only be known through long practical experience. He had come to the right man indeed, for was not George Edwardes the "Daddy" of them all?

"It is like this," the "Guv'nor" said. "I regard the members of an audience as the real critics. It is no use defying them as so many managers I know have done. That's altogether wrong! It is certainly very galling to spend many thousands of pounds upon a piece only to be rewarded with hisses; but when there is dissatisfaction my plan is carefully to examine the cause and see if there is really anything to complain about. Take, for instance, 'The Artist's Model.' The first-night reception was far from flattering. No expense had been spared in the production, but it did not seem to appeal to a certain section of the audience.

Making a Success

“On the fall of the curtain there were calls for ‘Edwardes.’ I went in front and asked: ‘What is wrong? Don’t you like it?’ ‘No!’ came the response. ‘All right,’ I said, ‘come again in five or six weeks. You will like it then.’

“Various alterations were made which I thought would improve the piece, and the result was that it became one of my greatest successes. I believe in trying to make an audience like a piece, and I knew that they trusted me to do my best, and I have always found the public very appreciative as well as very loyal.

“It is really astonishing how many people visit the Gaiety and Daly’s year after year. As an illustration of how considerate they are, I might mention the first night of ‘The Country Girl.’ The curtain did not ring up until nine o’clock, owing to unforeseen circumstances. There were yells and cries and stamping of feet. At five minutes to nine I went before the curtain and apologized for the delay, and explained that a series of accidents had occurred. I appealed for their indulgence, and instantly their impatient cries changed to cheers, and a rousing reception greeted the first scene.”

George Edwardes’ tact and diplomacy were proverbial in the profession. They helped him enormously in the successful management of certain exacting and excitable artistes.

When George Edwardes took over the Lyric Theatre his idea was to produce a piece which would in no way clash with his other already established successes at the Gaiety and Daly’s—to say nothing of his ballets at the Empire—but it was to be something quite apart from his accustomed policy, and he admitted that he was making something of a leap in the dark. But such was his courage

The Gaiety Stage Door

that he tried the experiment "off his own bat" and stood to lose £10,000 at one fell swoop.

It all depended upon the verdict of the public on the first night. The piece he chose to open with was "The Duchess of Dantzig." It was an experiment, and he frankly admitted that he did not know how the public would accept it. But he said he had made up his mind to find out. I remember him saying in that quiet, even tone: "If the public receive it favourably, it means a fortune for everybody concerned; but if the reverse, well! I shall have enjoyed spending £10,000 to satisfy my curiosity."

As everybody knows, "The Duchess of Dantzig" was an enormous success, and the late Evie Greene touched the height of brilliance both vocally and histrionically as the washerwoman "Sans Gêne."

I have remarked that the "Guv'nor" could persuade a person to do almost anything, but he used to tell a story against himself which is the exception. When he was getting a company together to do a tour of the world there was one lady whom it was most necessary to star. Unfortunately for the "Guv'nor," this lady knew of her importance. She knew that her name had been particularly mentioned by the managers in America, Australia, Africa, and other places to be visited. He made her the same offer that he had made to Nellie Farren, which the latter had accepted and was perfectly satisfied with—£100 a week *and all expenses paid*. He enlarged upon the great benefit it would be to her health, and the rest her voice would get during the voyage, and he emphasized the numerous presents of diamonds reported to be given by Indian Rajas. She stuck out for £200 and all expenses. Ultimately he asked her to think the matter

The Shorn Moustaches

over. The very next morning he received the following note :—

“DEAR MR. EDWARDES,—If you accept my terms, you can have all the Rajas’ presents.”

There is another story, the humour of which had to be explained to him before it was appreciated. I have mentioned that the production of a new show was left almost entirely to the stage-director, such as J. A. E. Malone or Sydney Ellison, and the stage-manager, and between them the work would be done ; but George Edwardes kept a watchful eye, and when it came to the final rehearsals he would take them in hand and give the show the finishing touch, which was without doubt the touch of a master. There is always a dress parade before a dress rehearsal, so that if any alterations have to be made in costumes or make-up, there will be plenty of time for them.

Mr. Edwardes came along with his monocle in his critical eye. When it came to an inspection of the chorus gentlemen’s costumes and make-up, he noticed three or four of them had moustaches, and the piece being the “Greek Slave,” he did not think it quite in keeping with the period.

“It doesn’t matter now, but don’t wear them at the dress rehearsal. Let it go for to-day.” Now it appears that these men had asked permission to grow their own face decorations, and the stage-manager had said that he saw no reason why they should not do so. After Mr. Edwardes’ objection to them they had no choice but to become clean-shaven. The dress rehearsal was begun (not the one to which the public are invited) and he noticed that these men had to carry a Greek god (Mr. Hayden

The Gaiety Stage Door

Coffin) on to the stage, standing on a platform, and that they stood out very prominently from all the other choristers. He called out : " Just one minute, please. Aren't you the four gentlemen who were wearing moustaches ?" They told him that they were. " Well, I did not quite realize what you had to do, and I've changed my mind. I think perhaps it will be better if you put them on again."

The roar of laughter that greeted this made him stare ; but when it was explained, he joined in the laugh against himself.

Cyril Clensy, the mimic and actor, and a man who could be equally famous as a 'cellist if he but chose to let the public know what a master of that instrument he is, told me a story the other day which, considered from a professional point of view, shows the awful type of man who nowadays has it in his power to engage an artiste.

A man was wanted for a dramatic sketch, somewhat after the style of Auguste van Bieni's " Master Musician," in which he had to play a solo on the 'cello, and of course, as the character was that of a great musician, this solo had necessarily to be well rendered. An agent was applied to, and he thought of Cyril Clensy. He wrote to him, asking him to call.

Needless to say, a contract was made out and signed, as it was left to the agent to get the right man, and there was no necessity to refer Clensy to the manager. The agent knew his abilities as an actor and musician. When the agent told the manager that he had secured the very man he wanted, and mentioned Cyril Clensy's name, he said :

" Oh, that's good, very good indeed ! He will be splendid, I know. But you had better get him to set to

Clensy and his Dresser

work on the 'cello and *learn to play it, because we open in three weeks.*"

There is also a human story about Cyril. It was during the war, when he was a sergeant.

One night, when they were mounting guard, Clensy was in charge. The officer came along and inspected the new guard, and having occasion to find some slight fault with one of the men's rifles, called Sergeant Clensy and asked him to examine it for himself. As soon as Cyril spoke the officer turned to him and looked very intently into his face. "What is your name, Sergeant? Is it Clensy?" "Yes, sir, that is my name!" Fortunately for the man whose rifle had caused this interruption, his offence was forgotten. "I should very much like to see you when you come off guard, Sergeant. Come to my quarters, will you?"

When the time came, Cyril cleaned up and presented himself at the officer's private room. "Come in, Sergeant! Sit right down and make yourself comfy. I won't ask you what you will have because I remember only too well what you like, and I've got it here for you."

Then he turned to Clensy, and asked him quite seriously: "Don't you recognize me, or are you still proving what a good actor you are? Come, tell me the truth."

Cyril admitted that he could not place him, although there was something familiar about his voice and he seemed to remember the name. The officer laughed. "Well, I suppose it is our meeting under the very altered conditions. My rank, to begin with, would naturally put you off the scent; but if you will recall the time when you were giving your mimicry at Wyndham's Theatre in

The Gaiety Stage Door

place of the usual curtain raiser, you might be able to recognize your dresser." It was the man who had dressed him for six months. Cyril promptly sprang up, saluted, and then, shaking hands with him, congratulated him upon his position. They spent many happy hours together.

The comedian, G. P. Huntley, with his ever ready wit, got in a beautiful dig at a particularly objectionable American the last time he came across from New York. The boat had not got quite far enough for it to be legal to open the bar, and G. P. was whiling the time away amusing some of his English friends with stories and anecdotes. This unpleasant man kept chipping in with irrelevant remarks.

G. P. noticed that draped round the clock in the saloon was a large American flag, so he remarked that, as they were all waiting for a drink which is not permitted under that flag, it should be replaced by the Union Jack. That set the American going. He began a long eulogy of the Stars and Stripes, when G. P. interrupted with an apology, and asked him if he would kindly explain exactly why stars and stripes were chosen for their national flag.

"Wal, sir, each star in that glorious flag represents a city or place of importance which we Americans have conquered."

"Oh, indeed," said G. P. "Is that it? Quite a brainy idea. Thanks for enlightening me. But, are you sure all the stars are there? I have an idea there's one missing."

"No, sir, there is nothing lacking on *that* flag, *sir!*"

G. P. looked a little bit more sternly than is his wont. "You are wrong, you are *one* star short."

Guilty

With amused indulgence the American asked : " What star is that, sir ? "

" The Mons Star," quietly returned the comedian.

This racing story happened in Ireland and is true.

Major Edwardes, my "Guv'nor's" brother and partner in the ownership and training of racehorses, was in Dublin to look after some horses of theirs that were undergoing their final training before being entered for races. A friend of his, an Irishman, took a great fancy to one of the horses which had been given the curious name Guilty. He asked the Major if it was for sale.

As a matter of fact it was, and after a little while a bargain was struck ; but it was decided to leave Guilty where it was to finish its training. At the time Pat was delighted with his purchase. Imagine Major Edwardes' surprise when, about a fortnight later, he received notice to the effect that Pat had instituted proceedings against him for the return of his money on the grounds that the Major had sold him the horse under false pretences.

Not one word of complaint had reached him, and the matter had not been referred to in any correspondence, so he went to Dublin to answer the charge at the Four Courts. The case for the prosecution was, briefly, that Major Edwardes had represented the horse as being perfectly sound and as coming of a good stock, and on that representation Pat had paid £500 for it. Pat had been closely watching the horse ever since, and was prepared to swear that the horse was of very inferior breed and in his opinion was not class enough to enter into any kind of race, let alone a race of any standing.

When the Judge asked the Major to give his ver-

The Gaiety Stage Door

sion of the transaction, he said that he was prepared to stand by all he had claimed for the horse. Then he said : " As a matter of fact, my lord, the horse is entered for a £500 race to-day, and I am confident he will win it."

The Judge looked at him for a moment, and then, taking a slip of paper, he dipped his pen in the ink, and asked : " And what did you say the name of the horse is ? " Major Edwardes answered : " Guilty, my lord." " And what time is the race to-day ? " " It is the two-forty-five race, my lord."

There was a hush in the Court as the Judge nodded, said " Thank you ! " and wrote something down on the slip of paper. He carefully blotted it, and signalled to the usher. When that important personage approached, the Judge handed him the slip, and the usher departed. It was noticeable that many people had suddenly found it necessary to make a note about something on slips of paper and hurry out of Court.

The case went on until the luncheon interval. After lunch the chief evidence was on behalf of Pat, who wanted to get his money back and also claimed damages. They were in the thick of a very heated discussion when the door opened and a boy handed a telegram to the policeman stationed there. The voices suddenly ceased, and there was dead silence in Court as the policeman handed the telegram to the usher, who, in turn, took it up to the Judge. It was really wonderful the amount of interest every one took in that wire. One might have thought they all had a personal interest in it.

They held their breath as the Judge tore open the envelope and read the contents. Then an astonishing change came over the Judge. " Mr. —," he shouted, " how

The Judge's Betting Slip

dare you come here into the Court and accuse an honourable gentleman of lying to you. You say it's not a good horse ! You say it's not fit to run in a race ! I tell you you are wrong. Not fit to run in a race, indeed ! It's WON ! ”

CHAPTER XVI

GEORGE EDWARDES' GREEN APPLES, THE "AWFUL SMELL," A "WALK" TO THE OFFICE, THE "GUV'NOR'S" GENEROSITY, EDMUND PAYNE'S FLY, THE LONG-HAIRED CABBY, THE "GUV'NOR'S" GAMES, A BRIDGE PARTY, JUPP UP LATE, WOULD-BE BLACKMAIL, MISTAKEN IDENTITY, THE BUTLER-COOK, RACE THIEVES, GETTING THINGS BACK, KINDLY ADVICE AND A SLIT COAT, A FIRST BET, THE YOUNG BLOOD IN THE BAR, SUPPER FOR TWELVE, THE LINKMAN'S ERROR, PILFERING, MAISIE GAY'S ESCAPE.

MR. EDWARDES was very careful about his health—and that of others, I may add ; and if there was a man in the world whose word was law to him, it was his doctor. He happened to have some slight ailment once, and the doctor told him it was nothing, and that if he would eat a green apple every morning he would have no more trouble in that direction. This was a command to him, and every morning I got a supply of fresh green apples from Covent Garden and put them on his desk. One day he was very deep in thought, and the stage-manager of Daly's Theatre, Mr. Stanley Wade, came and said he wanted to see Mr. Edwardes on urgent business. Some hitch had occurred in connection with one of the touring companies, and he must be consulted at once.

The "Guv'nor" said he couldn't be disturbed, but when I told him that Mr. Wade said it was very urgent, he said : "Very well, then ; show him in, Jupp." He came in, and went straight away into the important business—something or other had gone wrong and the company had to open in the Midlands on the following Monday. Would he tell him what he would advise in the matter, and so on. Not a word did Mr. Edwardes offer, but went on poring over his papers.

Mr. Wade started again : "You see, Mr. Edwardes, what an awful fix this will put us in ; we must open, and—— !" Here he was cut short with a short "That's

The "Awful Smell"

all right, Stanley. Have an apple ! it will do you good." However, he put the business to rights and Stanley Wade went out greatly relieved in his mind, but he forgot to take the apple.

Anything in the nature of a smell would send the "Guv'nor" into a state of alarm, and I remember the awful fuss he made one morning when he arrived. The instant he entered he started back and called me. "Open all the windows, Jupp—wide open. We'll all be poisoned. What is that dreadful smell? It must be the drains—that's it, the drains. Send for Love" (a plumber in Exeter Street) "at once. Open all the windows first, and then go and fetch him." He wouldn't go near the office until Love had been found.

"Examine all the drains, Love—there's a terrible smell and we'll all be killed. Find out where it is and set about it at once." Love spent a long time in a thorough examination of the whole floor and reported that he could find nothing wrong anywhere. "But there is something terribly wrong and you've got to find it. Make an estimate of what it will cost to take up the drains and we will move out until it is done." Mr. Love said it would cost at least £100, and tried to convince him that there was nothing really wrong. No ! it had to be done, and he must start on it the next morning.

A great pal of mine, Walter Warner by name, called on me that evening : he always came to see me in the morning and evening, and was a very privileged person, inasmuch as he could come into the office where others would not dare. I told him of the fuss, and the prospect of being stuck in some strange offices until the job was finished. Walter sniffed and asked : "Is this the smell he complains of?" I told him that it was, but it

The Gaiety Stage Door

was nothing now compared with what it had been in the morning.

“ Well, you can tell your Guv'nor that it was my fault, I dropped a eucalyptus bean and accidentally trod on it just as I was leaving you and forgot the awful smell these raw beans create. That is the cause, sure enough ; I know it only too well, and am awfully sorry, Jimmy ! ”

When I told Mr. Edwardes he was greatly relieved, but asked me to be very careful in future. “ If you must have your pals call on you here, don't let them bring any of these eucalyptus beans with them, or any kind of beans ; do you understand ? ” He saw the humour of the thing later on.

Another occasion which shows how nervous he was about anything wrong with him was when he had a slight touch of cold and began to sneeze. When he got to the office he told Mr. “ Pat ” Malone that he was afraid he was in for a bad attack of influenza. “ Well, nip it in the bud ; take my advice and send Jupp for a bottle of C.B.Q.'s. They'll put you right in no time ! ”

No sooner had I got back with this patent medicine than in came William Terriss, and when he heard the “ Guv'nor ” sneeze, strongly recommended ammoniated quinine. This was also procured.

Then Mr. Arthur Cohen (the husband of Florence St. John) popped in, and he had a go at being amateur doctor. His prescription was Owbridge's Lung Tonic. That was another thing I had to get.

Then Mr. Chance Newton arrived, and told him the finest thing in the world was a boiled Spanish onion taken at night. There was scarcely any business done that morning ; the great question was how to save the “ Guv'nor ” from the 'flu. I think they must have discussed the dread

A "Walk" to the Office

complaint to such lengths that the germ got frightened and flew away to a better subject, for the next morning all trace of it had gone, and without any of the remedies having been tried.

He was always worrying about putting on weight, and as nothing seemed to reduce him, he asked the doctor if he would give him some advice. The medico told him not to worry, but gave him a good talking to about always taking cabs, even for the shortest distance. "Now, will you promise to walk from your house in Park Square down to your office every morning for a month?" Mr. Edwardes dared not refuse his doctor anything, so gave his promise.

The next morning a cablegram came about an hour before the "Guv'nor" was due, so I jumped with it into a hansom, and took it to the house. He was about to leave, and said: "I'm going to walk down to the office, Jupp; the doctor says it will take my weight down for me, so you get off and don't expect me for another hour."

When we reached the end of the square he looked at the crowded Marylebone Road, and calling a cab said: "I've just remembered an important engagement, Jupp; I must get off; but I advise *you* to walk, it will do you good!" When I got back to the office there he was, seated in his easy chair, toying with a green apple.

Connie Ediss came in soon afterwards, and the greeting was very comical to my mind. "Hullo, my dear, how are you?" "Oh! I'm quite well, Mr. Edwardes, thank you; but, oh! I do wish I could get my weight down a bit." "Well, my dear; do as I do. I walk down to the office every morning, and it's wonderful the amount of good it does! Have an apple, my dear!"

I have remarked that he was not only greatly concerned

The Gaiety Stage Door

about his own health, but that of others, and he was extremely kind in cases of illness, but on the other hand he was an unconscious humorist. He never seemed to realize the disparity between his own position and that of some of the people he offered advice to. One morning he was a little bit late, and his great friend William Terriss was waiting for him. When he came in, he noticed that I did not look quite up to the mark. "What is it, Jupp—a touch of liver? You look a bit yellow about the eyes. Perhaps you are too much in the office and don't get enough exercise. Now, I know what would be a splendid thing for you: Get a horse and ride up to business in the morning; you could stable it at Aldridge's during the day, and have a good ride home to Mitcham." William Terriss laughed, and asked: "How the dickens can Jupp afford a horse on his salary? If you are so keen on him having one, you've got several broken-down racing hacks, give him one of yours!" "Well, I'll think about it. Yes, I might give him old Dorothy, she'll shake him up, for she runs away with everybody."

He would recommend the most expensive of remedies to people who could scarcely afford to buy Epsom Salts. For instance: He was driving with some friends from Windsor Station to his home, Wingfield Lodge, and on reaching a rather steep hill they all got out to relieve the horse. There was an old man working on the side of the road, and now and then he would rest on his pick, and putting his hand on his side, give a slight moan as if in pain. George Edwardes, the sympathetic, asked him what was the matter. "I think I've got lumbago, sir." "Do you drink beer?" asked the "Guv'nor." "Yes, sir," replied the man. "Well, then, *don't*. Don't do it! It's bad for lumbago. What you want is Mattoni Gies-

The "Guv'nor's" Generosity

hubbler Water—that's the thing to clear your system. Here, Jupp, write it down for him."

This was really the limit, and I just hinted that it was an awfully expensive remedy for the old man. Then the ludicrous side dawned on the "Guv'nor," and all he said was : " Well, write it down, and give him this half-sovereign." I suppose the old fellow had an extra pint for dinner instead. I know I should have.

That incident must have put the monetary side of the question into his mind, and made him more practical in his advice, for that evening we got to the theatre a long time before the show started, and there was one of our chorus girls sitting in the hall. Mr. Edwardes asked her why she was so early, and she said she was going to take it quietly, as she didn't feel quite well. " You want fresh air, my dear. Here ! you've plenty of time ; get into a hansom and drive up and down the Embankment for half an hour, that will give you an appetite." He promptly took two sovereigns and gave them to her.

These things are mere trifles, I admit, but they were of very frequent occurrence, and he never tired of attending to the welfare of members of his company. There are several cases which incurred great expense.

The late Barter Johns, who was the conductor at Daly's Theatre, fell very ill, and the doctor said he needed a rest and advised a sea trip. Mr. Edwardes booked a return trip in one of the P. & O. liners, and sent him to New Zealand. He had a berth on the upper saloon deck and no expense was spared, *and his salary in full was going on all the time he was away.*

It is no wonder that people remained under his management for such a long time. I could mention scores of artistes who have been with him for periods lasting any-

The Gaiety Stage Door

thing between fifteen and thirty years. Some had been with him all their theatrical lives, and only his death broke the contract.

The late Edmund Payne met with an accident during the run of "The Shop Girl," and one of his legs snapped like a carrot. He was laid up for such a long time with it that the inactivity (for he was a well-known athlete and cycling gold-medallist) made him seriously ill, and he very nearly succumbed. His doctor's bill came to over £500, which was paid for him. Teddy Payne left £24,000, so you see that Mr. Edwardes was not kind to the poor only.

Speaking of Teddy Payne recalls one morning when he drove up to the theatre in a fly, and you never saw such a thing outside a museum before. I have seen quaint vehicles inside museums, but never one like this in the Strand. And if the fly was a curiosity, the driver was even more so. The Biblical Joseph famed for his coat of many colours would have regarded this man's coat as a curiosity in variegated raiment. As for the horse, it reminded me of Jerome K. Jerome's description of the cab-horse in "Three Men in a Boat" as a "knock-kneed, broken-winded somnambulist." The "Guv'nor" happening along at the moment stared in amazement at this strange sight, and seeing Teddy Payne about to alight, said: "Hullo, Teddy! What have you got there? I've never seen anything like that before!"

Teddy Payne in an injured tone told him that it was a fly, and was good enough to bring him to and from Stoke Newington, where he lived.

"Well, now, what do you say, Teddy, to a little coat of paint for the butterfly, a wash and brush-up for the Derby candidate, and then a trot down Rotten Row as a bit of a

The Long-haired Cabby

change?" I really believe Payne had bought the weird turn-out, but it was never seen at the stage-door again.

One morning the "Guv'nor" said he wanted a hansom cab to be at the door in five minutes, so I went to the rank at the Victoria Club and chose the nicest-looking one there, as Mr. Edwardes wouldn't ride in anything shabby-looking; but I didn't notice that the cabby had very long hair at the back. I told him to come to the stage-door at once. When the "Guv'nor" came out he asked: "Did you get the cab, Jupp?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right! Where is it?"

As the thing was only a few yards away and right in front of him, I merely pointed and said: "There it is, sir."

He looked at it, and shaking his head said: "I can't ride in that, Jupp—look at it—and look at the cabby. It makes me think of Van Biene and the Broken Melody. Give him a shilling and I'll get another."

I really think it was the horse that put him off. He was so fond of animals, and horses in particular, that if he were riding in a hansom and they came to ever such a slight incline he would always stand forward on the footboard to ease the weight.

He did not often ride in hired vehicles, except in cases of great emergency, for he had one of the smartest phaetons to be seen in the West End. It was a picture to see him driving his perfectly matched bays, and Turner, the tiger, sitting with arms folded and looking as smart as the crimson paint on the delicately proportioned wheels of the phaeton.

One morning there was a narrow escape from a serious accident, not only to himself but to many others. He was

The Gaiety Stage Door

turning into Oxford Street when something happened to startle one of the bays. This set the other going, and the result was that they took fright, and only the "Guv'nor's" splendid horsemanship saved a catastrophe. He and his brother, Major Edwardes, were well known as trainers, and for their perfect management of saddle or harness horses.

One might be inclined to think that a man whose life was spent in the affairs of the theatre combined with horse-racing would of necessity be rather loose in the conduct of his general life, but this was not so, for he did not drink much, and he never used much more than the big—big D, denied by Captain Corcoran in "H.M.S. Pinafore."

There were two games he was very fond of, and they happened to be the very extremes. No one except a great enthusiast could possibly find anything exciting in chess, and yet he loved it, and he and his great opponent, William Terriss, would sit for hours after the show, and play a game in dead silence ; and if anyone came at such a late hour I was never to admit them.

The other game was Auction Bridge, and then it didn't matter ; any of his real friends were welcome, and the night would be turned into the next day before they thought of breaking up.

When a card party was arranged for, it was always done in a manner to the entire satisfaction of every one—refreshments, etc., being provided, and they could settle down to a night of complete enjoyment. But the one I am about to tell of was an impromptu affair.

It was just after the curtain had fallen, and Mr. Edwardes was about to go home, when Mr. Mike Lemier, a City financier, rang me up and asked if he could get on to Mr.

A Bridge Party

Edwardes. The "Guv'nor" came, and after speaking to him, he told me to ring up Mr. Terriss and ask him to come over as soon as his show was finished. He said: "Don't go home, Jupp, we are going to have a game of Bridge, and I might want something. Have we anything to drink in the office?" I told him we had about half a dozen bottles of whisky and some sodas, so he thought that would do. I saw all the company take their departure, and closing the outer doors waited for the arrival of his friends. They soon rattled up in their cabs: William Terriss was the first, as the Adelphi Theatre at which he was playing was very close by, and then Arthur Cohen, Mike Lemier, Walter Pallant—another well-known City man, Mr. Braberg, and Leslie Stuart, the composer of "Florodora," "The Silver Slipper," "Soldiers of the Queen," etc. These were too many for a Bridge party, but they arranged to take sides of three, and each take a hand alternately.

They played for high stakes, and I was not the least interested of the party, for I was allowed in the room and, knowing the game, was comparing the difference between the calls they made and what I should have made. I soon came to the conclusion that I was safer serving them with a Scotch and soda now and then, and looking on, than taking part in the game. They were all splendid players, and it was for all the world like a huge gamble on the Stock Exchange. The risks they ran!

This went on until about four o'clock in the morning, and Mr. Edwardes, who had stuck to his Mattoni Geishubler Water as usual, suddenly discovered that he felt hungry. Then the others joined in. "Ah, yes, George! a nice chicken sandwich will go very well." "Jupp! What have you got to eat?" I had to confess

The Gaiety Stage Door

that we had nothing at all : he had only asked about the drink, and I had been too busy seeing the company off the premises to think of it. "Never mind ! It won't take you long ; go and get us some chicken sandwiches, and anything else you can." I reminded him of the lateness—or rather earliness—of the hour, but that didn't seem to make any difference ; he simply said : "Well, get anything you can for us ; now, don't be long !"

This was a nice errand to be sent on at four o'clock in the morning, but there it was : he was the best "Guv'nor" in the world, and if anything could be done it *should* be done. But where to go for such things at that time ? It was a bit too early for any of the hotels or restaurants, and I knew they wouldn't have anything from a coffee-stall. But wait ! Why not a coffee-stall ! Hard-boiled eggs and fresh bread and butter would make some nice sandwiches, and I had almost decided on this plan when I thought of the Press Club, which provides for the members of the Press at any hour after midnight, because that is when they can best spare the time. I was well known to them all—for who had not been on some occasion or other round to see me ?—and soon got a nice selection of sandwiches in the shape of sardines, eggs, ham and tongue, and hurried back with an armful. I think I spent about a sovereign on them, and you could get a good lot for £1 in those days ; but a quarter of an hour after I set them down on the sideboard there wasn't a crumb left big enough to swear by. They finished the lot, and with another whisky and soda resumed their game.

The time was getting on, and I had had no rest since coming to business the previous morning, so retired to my own little office downstairs ready to let them out when they had had enough of it. The first to leave was Mr.

A Fruitless Search

Braberg, and merely for the sake of saying something, I asked him how he had got on at the game. He said : " Well, they've touched me for three figures, and your Guv'nor has sold me that theatre in Croydon which he gave to his wife. I am afraid it's a white elephant, but I've bought it. You can come as manager, if you like, Jupp ! " He put a sovereign down on my desk and said : " Here's a cab fare home. Good night ! " When the others came down—it was well after five in the morning—the " Guv'nor " said : " Oh ! not gone, Jupp ! I thought you had gone home. Well, never mind ; these gentlemen will give you a sovereign each, I am sure. Take a cab right home, and you needn't be early in the morning." Arthur Cohen was the only one who didn't actually give me anything tangible : he only gave me a rather lengthy and fruitless search, for he said : " I've dropped a sovereign upstairs in the office, Jupp, so you can keep it." I never found it !

I didn't turn up until midday and still felt very far from work, but the " Guv'nor " was there, as fit and fresh as ever. " You are very late, Jupp ! What's the matter ? " I reminded him that I hadn't had any rest for over twenty-four hours, and even now had only managed to get about three hours in. " Oh ! of course, we were up late, weren't we ! You had better go to lunch—it is just about time. You must have made a good bit in tips last night, and that pound Arthur Cohen dropped will pay for a nice lunch at Romano's." I don't know whether the expression on my face conveyed anything to his mind, but he laughed. Romano's indeed ! That was the " Guv'nor " all over. Never, or seldom, thought about one's position, but looked at everything of that nature from his own standpoint.

The Gaiety Stage Door

A man in his public position had a very large mail every morning, and I had the job of sorting them out for his perusal when he arrived. The number of begging letters he received was appalling ; most of them only found their way as far as the wastepaper basket, but others he would reply to with an enclosure, and, at the risk of seeming uncharitable, I must say it was not a wise thing to do, for in a few days another letter in the same handwriting would arrive with another plea. No one ever seemed to benefit by his benevolence, for, like Oliver Twist, they asked for more.

There was the case of a woman who had once been at the theatre in some capacity, and her begging letters had been responded to on several occasions. She must have got it into her head that this was a source of income and that she had a right to ask for money. A courteous letter told her that Mr. Edwardes could do no more, and then she wrote in such a manner that at last the "Guv'nor" saw the real danger of having let her have money almost weekly. It might appear to others that she had a claim upon him. She was evidently deep enough to have foreseen this, and one morning she wrote a letter almost amounting to blackmail. I was sorting the letters out as usual, and in came a woman whom I did not know ; I asked her what I could do for her. She said she would wait until I had finished what I was engaged on, and came close up to the desk. She looked searchingly at the letters, and quick as thought caught one up and made for the door.

I am by no means a weakling, but the struggle I had with her was a long and fierce one. I first of all demanded the return of the letter, but she said it was hers and she wanted it back as she had sent it in mistake to Mr. Edwardes. I told her she couldn't leave the office until

Rough and Tumble

she had given it back. Then the struggle began. If it had been a man it would have been fairly easy, but one cannot very well fight a woman, and yet I was determined to get that letter. She was equally determined on getting away with it before Mr. Edwardes arrived—hence the struggle. It developed into a rough and tumble, because she fought desperately for the door, and I had to use considerable force to keep her back, until at last there was nothing for it but to tackle her in real earnest. We slipped and fell, and the struggle continued on the floor—thank goodness there was a good thick carpet. In the end I forced the letter from her clenched fist, and that made her more furious than ever.

Talk about the ferocity of a mountain cat that guards her young! I think she could give the fiercest of the whole tribe chinks and beat it. I was in a deuce of a mess when I at last managed to get her out of the door and lock it on my side. When the "Guv'nor" came I told him all about it, and then he read the letter. It was from the woman he had befriended, and this was the beginning of what might have been a nasty blackmailing affair, but thank goodness that fight with me had spoiled all her plans, for she had sent the wrong one. It was to a friend of hers telling of how she proposed to extort money from George Edwardes under threats.

Nothing more was ever heard of her; but it was a caution to the "Guv'nor," and perhaps some really deserving cases have been neglected through the rotten behaviour of that woman.

A man called at the office one morning and asked to see Mr. Edwardes. I told him that he had not arrived, and asked him if he had an appointment. He was nicely dressed enough, but not quite the sort of man the

The Gaiety Stage Door

“Guv’nor” would make a bosom pal of, so imagine my surprise when he said : “ Appointment ! Why, your boss and I don’t need to make any appointments—we are great pals ! ”

I was a bit taken aback at that, because, although I have written this grammatically, he did not speak it so. I thought perhaps it was some racing friend, and told him that if he cared to wait I would send his name in. Then he told me some things that astonished me : How the “Guv’nor” and he went to the Fleur-de-lis public-house every morning when he happened to be down at Wingfield Lodge, and have a pint of beer before breakfast. It always gave them a good beginning for the day. They would get the stable boys round and treat them, but after breakfast they never touched beer. “ George only has his pint in the morning, no more, and after that he never drinks anything else but cherry brandy.”

Now this was indeed news, for of all things the “Guv’nor” never touched it was beer. Cherry brandy I couldn’t say anything about ; but beer ! *Never !*

“ He told me he was coming up this morning about some horses, and as I have business also, I just want to make a time to meet, so that we can go back together.”

A few moments later Mr. Edwardes came in, but, evidently not recognizing his bosom friend (and strange enough the other allowed him to pass without any greeting), went straight into his office and began looking over his letters. I asked : “ Shall I send your name in now, sir ? ” “ Has he come, then ? ” asked he. “ That was Mr. Edwardes who just went in,” I told him. “ Well, that’s not the one I want. I want Mr. George Edwardes.” I had started to explain to him that there was only one other,

Mistaken Identity

Major Edwardes, and that he was at Ogbourne, when in came George Conway.

Their greeting was very cordial, and the whole thing was clear to me. Conway was Mr. Edwardes' valet, and was always spoken of as George, and being a somewhat important person in the neighbourhood of Bracknall, where Wingfield Lodge is, this man had quite taken it for granted that the surname was Edwardes. Conway asked me if Mr. Edwardes had come yet, and I told him he had, and as he did not need any permission, he went through the swing-doors and disappeared into the private office. The "bosom friend" stared at me as if he couldn't quite grasp the situation, and finally, with a very bewildered, yet injured, air, went out!

He would have been still more injured if he had heard what the "Guv'nor" said to me a few moments afterwards: "Who is that man I saw waiting in the hall, Jupp—is he a friend of yours?" "No, sir! I don't know him." Before I could explain any further he said: "I'm glad of that, because I wanted you to get rid of him: he makes the place look quite untidy."

Now that I have mentioned one of the "Guv'nor's" servants, I might as well tell of an Irish butler named Michael Queeney.

One night the "Guv'nor" returned to Park Square a little bit earlier than usual, and told Queeney to be sure and call him at five o'clock the next morning, as he had to be in Newmarket early. When five o'clock came Queeney knocked at the bedroom door several times, and getting no answer went in. Mr. Edwardes was fast asleep, so he gently shook him, saying: "Ye've got to get to Newmarket, sorr. It's toime ye wus up!"

As there was scarcely any response, he kept on shaking

The Gaiety Stage Door

and repeating : " Sure, and it's Newmarket ye're after, sorr ! D'ye hear now ? Newmarket it is, sorr ! " He managed to arouse him sufficiently to say " All right, Queeney ! I'll be up in a moment. " He left him—but in a quarter of an hour returned again, and finding his master still asleep, steeped a bath sponge in cold water, and putting it on the " Guv'nor's " face, shouted : " Is it Newmarket ye're after ? Sure it's the first race ye've missed. Now, will ye get up ! "

This same Queeney had some shamrock sent to him for St. Patrick's Day, and he desired to adorn the " Guv'nor " with some of the emblematic leaves, so he placed some in the hat-band of one of his hats, and left it in readiness for when Mr. Edwardes was coming out. Conway came into the hall just as Queeney was putting the final touches to the sprig, and asked him what the devil he was doing with his master's hat. " Sure, an' isn't it St. Patrick's Day ? The master's got to have a bit of the leaf. " " That's all right enough, but don't put it in his hat. Damn it all, man, look at the band ! you'll put it all out of shape ! "

Then they had a row about it, and Queeney became very abusive, so the very superior valet ordered him to go below and not interfere with his master's attire in such a manner again. That made Queeney wild, and there was a bit of a scuffle, when Mr. Edwardes came upon the scene. He had overheard some of the abuse, and thinking Queeney was entirely in the wrong, ordered him out of the house, telling him he would not have such a disgraceful scene happen again in *his* house.

Queeney went out of the front entrance, down the area steps, and so into the servants' quarters. When the " Guv'nor " returned that night Queeney was there as usual, and the " Guv'nor " asked him : " Who told you to come

The Butler-Cook

back here? Didn't I send you away this morning?" "You did indeed, sorr! an' very sorry I was too, sorr! If you don't know when you have a good servant, I know when I have a good master—d'ye mind that now!" Afterwards the whole cause of the trouble was explained, and peace was restored.

The trouble mistresses have nowadays in getting servants to remain with them is not a new grievance, and when it comes to cooks it is an old, old story, and Mrs. George Edwardes, in spite of her great charm, one morning found her household minus that dictatorial but necessary person, the Cook. Queeney came to the rescue with an offer to serve in her stead until another could be found. "But can you cook, Queeney, really?" "Cook, ma'am, of course I can cook!" "But can you manage a brace of pheasants?" "Is it pheasants ye want? Just give 'em to me, ma'am, and don't ye go misbelievin'. I'll cook 'em so as you'll say ye niver tasted anything like 'em, ma'am!"

He was entrusted with the delicate operation. He set about the business in a most masterly manner, and when the time came he basted them with butter until they were ready to be served. Proudly he carried them up himself, resuming his duties as butler; but as soon as Mrs. Edwardes put the fork into one of the birds—ugh! Queeney was quite right. She had never tasted anything like it—nor yet had she smelled anything like it.

He had cooked the birds without drawing them! He was allowed to confine his attentions to "buttlng" for the future, and the Edwardes family had to dine at some hotel or other until the household was complete in number again.

The "Guv'nor" never wore much in the way of jewellery.

The Gaiety Stage Door

but the little he ever displayed was of a costly nature. I remember a black pearl pin worth fully £500. He was particularly fond of that pin, and I am inclined to think that he regarded it as a sort of mascot, for he never went to a race meeting without it stuck in his tie. Perhaps wearing it so frequently brought it to the notice of some of the sporting "heads," because one morning he was going to Gatwick and at Victoria Station, when about to book his ticket, he felt a touch on his right shoulder. Turning in that direction he could not recognize anyone he knew in the crowd, nor yet on his left. He remembered the touch on the shoulder, because in a few seconds after securing his ticket he missed the pin. He was very upset, but not being of a hysterical nature, went down to the meeting, and I believe he had a very good day.

On the course he met a bookmaker, a Mr. Atherton, who was a member of the Victoria Club, to which Mr. Edwardes also belonged. He told him of his loss of the pin, and Mr. Atherton promised he would make inquiries among the boys. A little later in the day Atherton reported that it was not any of the English gang, and was most probably one of the Continental set, and he would try to find out more about it and recover the pin if possible.

Perhaps the reader will not quite understand this procedure, but among themselves race-gangs will tell of the day's doings and stolen property can be recovered providing the owner is willing to pay for its return, but it would be no use attempting to give a man into custody and accuse him with even a slight knowledge of your loss. You would not stand an earthly chance, for "honour among thieves" is by no means an empty phrase. Therefore the only thing to do was to trust to Atherton and luck.

The Patent Watch Chain

Two or three days later he came to the theatre and told me he wanted to see Mr. Edwardes on private business, so I sent in his name. The "Guv'nor" told me to admit him, and to stop there myself so that no one could get in from either direction. I, of course, heard what took place. Mr. Atherton said: "I can get your pin back, George, but it will cost you £100, and you are to ask no questions." The "Guv'nor" agreed, and the pin was restored.

After that experience a safety screw was attached at the bottom of the pin.

On another occasion he was travelling with a friend who was wearing a gold watch attached to a heavy gold chain, and Mr. Edwardes warned him about it. "Be careful of your watch and chain, Arthur—they will have it as sure as you're alive." His friend assured him there was no fear of losing it, as he had a patent attachment inside the pocket, and it would be impossible so much as to touch it without his knowledge. "All right, Arthur, if you are sure, but I thought the same about my pin, but they had it off me, sure enough." Later in the day he wanted to back a fancy, and unbuttoned his coat. His watch and chain had gone. "George!" he said quietly, "you were right! They've been over me and got my watch." "Come with me," was all the "Guv'nor" said, and taking him to one of the bookmakers, told what had happened. The bookie promised to see about it, and after that race was over beckoned to them both to come over. He said he knew who had the watch and chain, and he could get it back in a few minutes for a fiver.

The owner of the property knew something about the freemasonry among these people and agreed to pay the money. He went farther, by offering to give the thief another fiver if he would come and show him how he had

The Gaiety Stage Door

managed to do what he had thought was an impossibility. "Don't be afraid! It's quite all right! I understand he's one of the boys, and I won't give him in charge! I only want to know how he did it." The man came, and after returning the watch and chain, and the safety appliance had been properly applied, deliberately took it off him while he was speaking, and before the other thought he had begun to demonstrate. That was enough! He vowed he would never wear anything of value again on a race-course. He replaced the things and buttoned up his coat. When they were returning home that evening he had occasion to unbutton his great-coat and under-coat to look at his watch. It was gone!

There was one incident I shall never forget, which was perhaps cleverer than the foregoing one, and thinking it over afterwards, I could see how the whole thing had been mapped out. The Gatwick races were starting that day, and the "Guv'nor" had a coaching party down, but I was sent back for the racing colours, which had been left behind, so I hurried to the office and took a hansom to Victoria only just in time to catch the train. As I ran along the platform in search of a third-class carriage, the whistle went—the flag was waved, and the train began to move. I couldn't afford to miss that train, and seeing a gentleman hurriedly open a first-class compartment door and jump in, I followed suit. I don't mind spending money, but I do object to giving it away to the railway companies. Still, I would travel first class this time.

There were only three others in the carriage, a lady and gentleman on the left, facing the engine, and the other gentleman, who had so nearly missed the train, sitting on the right. I took the remaining corner seat.

The lady and gentleman were obviously visitors to Eng-

Kindly Advice and a Slit Coat

land—the cut of their clothes told me that, and the unusual display of jewellery on the part of the lady was quite sufficient. No one would go to a race meeting, unless with a party of friends, so adorned. He began to make a few general remarks to the late-comer on my right.

He asked all sorts of questions about Gatwick, and the best place to go to in order to see the races, and so on. As they got on more friendly terms, the gentleman on my right said : “ I hope you will pardon me if I make a personal remark, but I should certainly warn you about the lady’s jewellery, and also that pin of yours. Gatwick is quite a nice meeting and is frequented by a fashionable crowd, but there are others, you know.” “ But surely there can be no danger from thieves in such a public place, and in daylight ? ”

The other laughed and said : “ My dear sir, some of the cleverest rogues in the world visit these meetings, and it is only people like yourselves that they pay any attention to. They could get a good day’s work from you and that lady alone. I really should advise you to put the more conspicuous of it away.” Here he pulled out a gold watch. “ You see, I have the time on me, but I don’t advertise the fact by wearing a chain—it is unwise.”

The other thanked him and thought it would be wise to take his advice, and I quite agreed with him. A valuable cameo and diamond brooch was removed and a bijou watch ; also a necklet of beautifully matched pearls. The gentleman unfastened his fob from his watch, and putting all these into a wallet placed the lot in his hip pocket, which he buttoned up. The man who had offered the advice smiled, and thanked them for the compliment they had paid him in taking his advice.

He was a fine-looking man, and gave me the impression

The Gaiety Stage Door

of being an officer on the retired list. When we arrived at Gatwick he was the first to rise, and opening the door got out. But he stood there politely holding the door wide open, ready to assist the lady out. Most courteously he did so.

At the same moment he was greeted by several other well-dressed gentlemen. "Hullo, old man, glad you came down! We thought you had missed the train." There were about half a dozen of them, and there was very little room for the lady and gentleman to pass, so he smilingly reproved them for their impoliteness and asked them to make way, at the same time getting very close to the stranger, as if guiding him along the crowded platform.

In a few moments he was allowed to go on his own, for the others called to their friend, saying they were not going straight on the course yet. He excused himself, and after suggesting a couple of horses which he fancied would win, politely wished them an enjoyable day and went off with his friends.

This seemed all right, and even I, who had mixed up with all sorts of crowds and conditions of men, thought it merely the exchange of courtesies between them.

The lady and gentleman followed the stream of race-goers and I was just a little behind them. Just for a second I happened to catch full sight of his back, and I saw a great slit down his dust-coat. Then the whole thing flashed before my mind. The man's lateness in catching the train; yet with half a dozen pals in the next carriage he had chosen that one in which the lady and gentleman were. Then his anxiety for the safety of their jewellery, the crowding of his friends round them on the platform, and finally this long slit in the dust-coat. No one else knew the jewellery was in his hip pocket. Very clear indeed, but as the deed

A First Bet

was done I did not want to be mixed up with the affair, so got off to the "Guv'nor's" coach as soon as possible and gave him his racing colours.

There was another incident that day, and the finish of it was very funny indeed.

I had been looking after the party of actresses and their friends who had come down on the coach with Mr. Edwardes, and was quietly enjoying a leg of chicken and some wine, when I saw one of the "Gov'nor's" oldest servants approaching me. He was an old chap who did all sorts of odd jobs about the stables and the garden, and assisted generally with light work.

He used to tell people that, although he had been associated with horses all his life, he had never been to a race meeting. I was surprised to see the old chap on the course, but applauded his loyalty when he said that he had come especially because the "master" had entered one of his horses, and he thought he would like to see it run. He told me that he had brought £2 with him, as he wanted to back Mr. Edwardes' horse. I had no beer to offer him, so I gave him a drop of wine, and then showed him a reliable bookmaker to deal with. I even had to instruct him as to what to pay. I would have put it on for him myself, but some of the party would always be asking me for something or other, so I told him to go along and just say: "A pound each way, Bird on the Wing."

I told him to be sure and get his ticket for the bet, and come back and I would find room for him with me where he could have a good view of the race. He managed it all right, and I told him to be careful and not fool around in the crowd if he had much more money on him. He pulled out some coins and counted them—exactly two and nine was all he had left, so that didn't matter, and I let him go

The Gaiety Stage Door

off and see the sights. When he came back I got him a place, and he saw the race quite as well as if he had been in the Royal Box.

Bird on the Wing won, and I told him to go and get his money. He searched all his pockets, but he could not find the ticket. It was nowhere to be found. I knew it was a hopeless case, but as he had jotted the number of the ticket down, went to the bookie on the off-chance, but the ticket had been presented and the money paid out. There it was right enough, entered in his book. He had been dipped while having a look round.

Poor old chap ! he was very upset about it, and I tried to console him, and I would have tried to make it up to him on a later race if he had waited, but just at that moment the bookie shouted out his list for the next race : " All gone but 2 and 9." The old man jumped away and hurriedly saying to me : " Do you hear that ? He said all's gone but 2 and 9 ! How does he know that ? I'll take damn good care he doesn't get that," and he went quickly out of the ring and hurried straight home.

I laughed so much that the bookie, whom I knew, asked what the joke was, and when I told him he roared.

As it happened, I could have done the old chap some good, because the "Guv'nor's" other horse, Clon-Flynn, romped home, and we all had a really good day : we had not only backed two of his winners, but had a tip about another, which made three for the day.

We got back to the theatre in plenty of time for the show, and everybody feeling very pleased with themselves and the world in general.

During the evening one of the popular young bloods of the time came and called to see Olive May. He was an



Ellis-Walton.

MISS CONNIE EDISS

1007-232

The Young Blood in the Bar

awfully nice chap, but his devil-may-care way of looking upon life got him the nickname of Reckless Reggie—his real name being Reginald R——. He had become almost a nightly visitor, and although he used to ask to see one of the gentlemen artistes at first, it was soon apparent that the attraction was little Olive May, and he gave up all pretence afterwards and asked quite openly for her. In parenthesis, I may mention that nothing came of it, for she married Lord Victor Paget. However, that is beside my story.

That night, when he called, I sent his name up to Miss May as usual, and the reply courteous coming back, which pleased him, he said: "Can't you get away for a bit, Jupp? The show won't be over for nearly two hours yet. I know it's against the rules to see any of the girls during the show: let's go somewhere for a drink." There was nothing to prevent me, because once the curtain was up I was master of my own actions, and so long as I left somebody to attend to the needs of any callers, I could always take a little recreation. So we went out, and it was then that I learned how he deserved the name of Reckless Reggie. He led me through the back streets until we got to the Black Horse, in Bedfordbury, just alongside the Coliseum, and in we went. This was a house I had not been to much, as it is a bit too out of the way from our theatre, but evidently Reggie was well known there, for the greeting he got was most cordial. I thought it very strange, and especially as we were not in the saloon bar even. The proprietor shook hands, and then asked: "Well, what devilment are you up to to-night, eh? It always means something when you come in this bar." "Well, my friend here doesn't know I've got a job here with you as barman, and although it's my night off, I'll

The Gaiety Stage Door

do a bit of work," and he straightway lifted up the counter-flap and went behind. He took his coat off and rolled back his shirt sleeves, and pretending to hear an order given, said :

"Half a dozen quarts of fizz, Guv'nor ; hurry up, they seem to be thirsty.—What for you gents there ? Stout ! Bottle or draught ? Draught, eh ! All right, pint of stout here.—Now you, sir : What's yours ? Scotch ? Yes, sir, double Scotch here ; no soda, sir ? Very well then, another drop of Scotch to make up.—And now yours, sir ?" And so he went on, serving as fast as he could, but his chief delight seemed to be in pumping the beer or stout. All I can say is, that if he ever had to work for a living, he could do far worse than apply for a job as barman. He treated the whole house, and it's a pretty big place, and when one drink had been consumed the glasses were replenished. He asked for a box of cigars and handed them round to everybody.

It only took about half an hour the whole thing, and after quietly settling up his account, put his coat on and said to me : "Come on, Jupp ; we don't seem to be popular here : let's go somewhere where we can get a drink !" And out we went.

This was just one of his little bits of enjoyment, for we went straight down to Romano's, and he had his first drink in the shape of a Martini cocktail with a cherry in it, so that I reckoned that little wineglass of gin and water must have cost about ten pounds.

From there we went to the Savoy, and he ordered supper for twelve people, and when I asked him if he had a party on, he carelessly said :

"No ; but I'll invite some of the girls to come after the show." He gave the order for some chicken sand-

A Handsome Present

wiches to be sent over to the stage-door of the Gaiety, and said : "That's *your* supper, Jupp !"

I thought it was time I got back, so left him ordering flowers and chocolates for the girls. He evidently felt quite sure of his ground, and he proved to be right, for his little supper party consisted of Olive May, Florrie Ward, Doris Dewar, Rosie Brady, Kitty Mason, Maie Saqui, Violet Lloyd, Gertie Millar, Connie Ediss, Ethel Sydney, and Daisy Roche. I remember them well, because I had a list made out and went round to the dressing-rooms to invite them.

I have mentioned before that the "Guv'nor" had a coaching party whenever the Ascot Races were on, and his guests were chosen from the theatre, and their intimate friends. But there was one occasion when, in addition to these, there was a party made up of the theatre staff. The famous horse Santoi, belonging to Mr. Edwardes and his brother, was running in the Royal Hunt Cup, and of course we wouldn't hear of any other horse. Mr. Michael Morton, who rejoiced in the nickname of "Monkey Morton," after whose enormously successful play "San Toy" the horse was named, was among the coaching party. He came to me and asked if we had backed anything yet, and I told him that we intended doing Santoi.

"That's the one, Jupp ! It will win right enough. Now I will stand treat for you four boys" (meaning myself, the butler, valet, and the theatre linkman). "Here's £20—that's a fiver each—put it on Santoi and it will be a nice little present for you. I'll get Mr. Levenstone to lend you his ticket for Tattersall's Ring, and you can go over there and put it on."

I was too busy to go myself, having all the guests to

The Gaiety Stage Door

look after on the other coach, so we deputed the linkman to stake the money. He went to Mr. Mike Levenstone, and having got the loan of his ticket, went into the big ring. When he returned, Mr. "Monkey Morton" asked him if he got the money on all right. "I got it on, sir!" "What did you get about it?" he asked. "Well, I managed to get 2 to 1 about it, but it has shortened now to 6 to 4." "Oh, well, that's good!" said "Monkey," and left us to join the party.

Just before the race we all had our own little side bets, and then took up our stands on the top of the coach. The bell rang, and that electrifying cry rang out: "They're off!" There they were, and how easy it was to pick out the "Guv'nor's" colours—turquoise jacket with white chevrons and turquoise cap. The linkman was standing next to me, and he said in an excited voice: "Kilmarnock is going to win this race." "Is it! You wait!" was all I answered.

Our linkman was like a madman, and nearly knocked me off the coach in his excitement. "Kilmarnock! Kilmarnock wins!" I shouted out, "Shut up, you idiot! What the h—— are you so excited about! We've backed Santoi, you d——d fool! Shut up!"

Suddenly something wonderful happened. The linkman was still screaming like a lunatic that "Kilmarnock wins by a street!" when he became strangely quiet, and so did everybody on the course. There was an ominous silence, and then a mighty shout went up as Santoi leapt forth, and like a flash passed the leader and won a magnificent race.

I turned to the now silent linkman. "Now where's your infernal Kilmarnock, eh?" Then I saw his face.

A Rotten Turn

He was deathly white, and I thought he would fall off the coach, so I supported him and asked if he felt ill. "It's the excitement, I suppose. It always upsets me," was all he said ; but I had a job to get him down on to the ground.

Everybody in our two parties were congratulating one another and the "Guv'nor" in particular, when Mr. Morton came to us and said : " Good luck to you, boys ! I'm very glad you've won ! Mr. Levenstone will let you have his ticket again, and you can go and draw your money, and cut it up between you."

The linkman got the ticket and remained away for quite a long time, and when at last he returned he was very agitated and said he couldn't find the bookie anywhere. Mr. Levenstone cried : " That's all rot ! They don't have any men of that description in Tattersall's Ring. Come with me. I'll soon find him for you. What's his name ? Give me your voucher !" " I didn't get one, there was no need—I have known him for some time !"

" Oh, have you !" exclaimed Mr. Levenstone, and yet you don't know his name. Come on, we must look into this !"

He took him round the different bookies, none of whom had a bet for £20. There were many twenty-fives, fifties, and so on, but not one for twenty, *and no bookie was missing from his place*. So there was only one conclusion to arrive at. No wonder he was so excited about Kilmarnock. It was a rotten thing to do on his pals, and the "Guv'nor" sacked him on the spot.

During all my long experience at the Gaiety Theatre I am glad to say that we have been remarkably free from theft. I don't remember more than one case, and the thief was

The Gaiety Stage Door

eventually discovered, and since then there has been no recurrence.

For several days artistes reported losses from their dressing-rooms, money and rings being missed. As a rule the artistes hand their purses or wallets to their dressers, and he or she is responsible for them ; but in these cases they evidently had not done so, and the dressers felt very uncomfortable about the matter.

They insisted on being given the custody of all valuables afterwards, and the pilfering ceased ; but the matter was not dropped, for I got a couple of my friends from Bow Street, and gave them a full description of all the rings and trinkets which had been stolen. The money, of course, was gone for good, as it was nearly all in gold and silver. Whoever had taken the things must have been acquainted with the play and the times the artistes would be down on the stage, so it must have been an employee. The call-boy was too busy a person to have time for such pilferings, even if he were capable of them—which he was not, for Alf Cockell was chiefly instrumental in getting the first clue. Naturally every possible person was suspected, but all was done in secret, no one dreaming that a couple of extra stage-hands were really detectives. One night the call-boy was on his round giving calls to artistes, and the chorus were likely to be late for the finale of the first act, so he jumped into the lift, which was not supposed to be used by him, and told the lift-boy to take him up to the top quickly.

When he got to the top he only stepped out and shouted : “ Chorus ladies down quickly, please. You’ll be late ! ” and turned back to the lift. Now the boy who worked the lift evidently thought the other would be going along the corridor and did not expect such a hasty return, and the

Pilfering

call-boy noticed something glittering in his hand which he hurriedly put back into his trousers pocket and turned very red. It was only a day or two afterwards that this came into his mind again, because, as I have said, he was a very busy young man when the show was on, and had all his work cut out to attend to his duties without thinking of other affairs. It was not until he was questioned by one of the detectives that he mentioned the matter, and this set the "splits" on the scent again.

All had been very quiet for a few days, and nothing further had happened, so it looked as if there was an end to the business. The lift-boy came to me about a quarter of an hour before the show finished, and asked if he might go to the other side of the theatre. There was no reason why I should not give him permission, so I told him to hurry up and get back to his lift for the curtain-fall. When he came back all seemed well, and having brought the "Guv'nor" down, he went home. Then the electrician came and reported that his wallet containing £4 and several private papers had been taken out of his pocket during the last half-hour. I told my Bow Street friends that the lift-boy had been over on that side, but I felt rather guilty in putting them on to a bit of a boy.

Yet there it was—the thefts were going on again, and money doesn't evaporate. They got his address off me, and went to investigate. The sequel was that the wallet containing the money and papers was found on him, and then he confessed to the other affairs. He had watched until he saw the dresser go out on some errand or other, and knowing that the artiste was down on the stage, that was his opportunity. I don't think I should have attached

The Gaiety Stage Door

any importance to his asking to cross over to the other side, if the call-boy had not told about seeing the glitter of some object that night when he went up to call the chorus girls. Pawn tickets for all the jewellery were recovered, but the money had been spent.

The boy was sentenced to three months' hard labour.

Before the arrest of the boy an episode happened. Maisie Gay was playing at the theatre and took it into her head to have a nice hot bath before going home. She had only to step out of her dressing-room into the bath-room, so conveniently is everything arranged. She didn't take the precaution to tell anybody except her dresser, who always waited until she was fully dressed and then locked up after her mistress had gone, but this night she merely told her not to wait, as she would have a bath first. No one mentioned it to me, and as all final instructions to the fireman on night duty came from me, he was ignorant of the fact that she was there. When the theatre was locked up and he was going on his first round to see that all the lights were out and things in general were in a proper condition, he heard a soft rustling noise up above him. These thefts were still in everybody's minds, and this sound in an empty theatre put him on the *qui vive*. Softly he crept upstairs and listened. Yes! there it was again, a gentle rustling sound and then a soft footfall. There was a glimmer of light just visible from under the door. More of the rustle and more soft footfalls, and the door was cautiously opened. The fireman whipped out his revolver and cried: "Who's that?" A slight startled exclamation and then he shouted: "Answer, or I'll shoot!" "It's me—M-m-maisie Gay. I've been having a bath! How you

Maisie Gay's Escape

startled me, Stone !” (that was the fireman's name). He was the one to be somewhat unnerved afterwards, because, as he told her, he really meant what he said and would have fired if she had not spoken.

CHAPTER XVII

SIR CHARLES SANTLEY, SULLIVAN'S FIRST OPINION OF MELBA, A RACING TIP FROM RIPPED PYJAMAS, THE RETORT DISCOURTEOUS, THE TRIP TO JERUSALEM, A GRUESOME EXPERIENCE, ANOTHER, CHARLIE CHAPLIN.

IT is of deep interest to me to know that there was a close relation between the Gaiety Theatre and the late Sir Charles Santley. How few journalists have mentioned the fact that he was one of the Gaiety stars and played in company with the famous Nellie Farren. In this connection it is also worthy of note that four of the greatest men ever associated with the stage, and whose lives were spent entirely in its service, belonged to the Gaiety Company.

Mr. Henry Irving was the first actor to be honoured by the Crown with a knighthood, thus removing that term "Rogues and Vagabonds" for ever. Then as regards music, surely no more representative name can be mentioned than Arthur Sullivan—another Knight—Doctor of Music, and decorated with the M.V.O. He also belonged to the wonderful list of Gaiety celebrities.

If one were asked to give the name of the greatest of all librettists, would not the name of W. S. Gilbert occur to one's mind? Well, his first play was produced at the Gaiety Theatre, and he also was knighted.

Then the fourth great name is that of Sir Charles Santley, who at that time was by far the greatest English baritone singer. In fact, it was acknowledged that as a vocalist he was one of the most scholarly interpreters of either opera or oratorio in the world. Gounod was so impressed by his glorious singing—not only by his voice, but by the depth of true sympathy he expressed—that he wrote the famous solo "Dio Possenti" (you remember the first line of it—"Even bravest heart may swell") for him, and it was introduced into "Faust." Whenever you go to hear

First Opinion of Melba

that glorious opera and fail to hear "Dio Possenti" sung, remember that it is because they are giving a strictly correct interpretation of "Faust." Not by any means because there is no one to sing it.

At one time Santley studied under Garcia, and he was very proud of the fact that he was one of the very few pupils at whose head the hot-tempered professor had not aimed books.

It is curious that, when Mme. Nellie Melba arrived in this country in 1886 preparatory to entering on her studies for Grand Opera, Sir Arthur Sullivan, after hearing her sing, said that he did not consider her vocal attainments sufficiently good to justify him in including her in the Savoy Opera Company. He added, though, that if she worked hard, he might be able to give her an engagement in "The Mikado" after a year's further study. One had to be indeed a real singer in those days. Was not the Savoy Chorus known as the "Choir" of London? Sir Arthur was not alone in his opinion, for Signor Alberto Randegger, after an interview with Melba, wrote saying that he did not feel warranted in accepting her as a pupil.

In after years Sir Arthur and Randegger were numbered among Melba's warmest friends and admirers, and on many occasions she teased them both for their early want of confidence in her powers. It was left to Mme. Marchesi to realize the power of Melba's voice.

I had an amusing experience with Mr. McKenna, the racehorse owner and trainer—he himself supplying the amusement. He used to train at Epsom as well as in Ireland, and although George Edwardes and his brother the Major went in for training horses at Ogbourne it was Mr. McKenna who bought nearly all of their best horses for them, among them being San Toy (Santoi), Wavelet's

The Gaiety Stage Door

Pride, Bird on the Wing, Wingfield's Pride, and many other winning horses whose names I cannot recall.

Mr. McKenna called at the theatre one afternoon to see the "Guv'nor" about one of his horses which was entered for the next day's racing at Warwick. They had had a successful time at The Curragh, but Mr. McKenna was particularly keen on winning a certain race at Warwick on account of some side wagers which had been made.

These wagers were really between them as to the comparative merits of a horse called Floral Maid and George Edwardes' horse Patron Saint. I told Mr. McKenna that the "Guv'nor" was not in the theatre just then, so he stopped with me for a little time and I took the opportunity to ask him if he knew of "anything good" that I might have a little "flutter" on. He said he could not give me any decided opinion at the time, as he must find out the weights first, and see how Patron Saint was handicapped in comparison with the rival horse Floral Maid.

"Come and see me at Haxell's Hotel in the morning, Jupp. I'll be able to tell you then. You'd better come fairly early, as I shall be off soon after breakfast." The next morning I went along to the hotel and inquired for him—I had taken his advice and called early—too early in fact, because they said he had not had his bath as yet. They sent up word that I was below. A message was brought back saying that I was to go right up, which I did.

He was still in bed, but sitting up with half a dozen papers littered about. He asked me to sit down while he helped me to a large whisky and soda. Then he turned to his papers, hurriedly turning over the pages of each until at last he found what he had been searching for—the weights the horses would be carrying that day at War-

A Racing Tip from Ripped Pyjamas

wick. There was a moment's complete silence, and his eyes were riveted on the racing columns. Then he started muttering in a low suppressed manner, and I saw his hand go up to the top button of his pyjama jacket. He ripped it off with a growl. He read a bit more and off came another button and flung across the room. The third button was treated to the same thing, but the fourth resisted. This made him angry, so he tore at it so viciously that he brought away a good strip of cloth as well. He was still reading and muttering to himself. His hands disappeared underneath the clothes, and I heard another vicious rip, so I thought I would inquire into the matter.

"What's wrong, Mr. McKenna? You seem to be a bit upset."

"Upset is it? *Upset.* To think (rip) that the handi—(rip)—cappers (rip) should give my (rip) horse (rip) ten pounds more than (a fearful tear) Floral Maid (surely he must be tearing the sheets up) and he's never won a race!" Then came the final. "They must be raving mad." That did it.

With a last and fiercer rip than all the others put together he jumped out of bed, and I could not help laughing. His pyjamas were in ribbons. It struck me that I might glean a little information from his behaviour without asking him to volunteer to give me any. He evidently thought his chances of winning were nil, so the logical conclusion for me to arrive at was that he had evidently considered that the race lay between those two horses. He had conveyed his opinion very forcibly indeed, and I took it as a tip. I backed the rival horse, although I felt it was almost disloyal on my part to do so. Floral Maid just managed to finish in front of Patron Saint by a very short head.

This little story is one by no means flattering as far as

The Gaiety Stage Door

our theatre was concerned, but I think it was a witty example of the retort courteous—or should I say discourteous? One night the linkman came round to me and he was roaring with laughter. When he had gained control over himself he told me that about half an hour after the curtain had been up, a man in dress clothes staggered up to the box office and asked, “Is this the ‘Pictures’?” He was in a condition which would have broken the heart of a stanch Pussyfoot. “No, sir, this is not the Pictures, this is the Gaiety Theatre,” answered the box-office manager.

“Well, whatever it is, have you got any seats left? I want to go in.” The manager had decided against this desire.

“I am sorry, sir, but you can’t go in, there’s not a seat in the house left.”

“But I *am* going in. I insist upon going in. Where’s the manager? I want to see him.” The linkman having overheard this conversation thought he had better keep close by. The box-office manager left his stool and came out to the front.

“You can’t go in, sir! I tell you it is impossible to-night.”

“But why?” persisted the inebriated one.

“Well, if you really want to know the truth, sir, to be quite frank with you, you are drunk.” The man looked very indignant for a brief moment, and then burst into loud laughter.

“Drunk! Why, of course I’m drunk, you silly ass! Do you think I should want to see your rotten show if I were sober?”

Anyone who has been to Nottingham and is fond of real genuine ancient history will no doubt have paid a visit to the curious old hostelry known as The Trip to

The Trip to Jerusalem

Jerusalem. It is an ancient house which has been hewn out of—or rather into—the solid rock at the foot of the castle. During the visit of one of our companies, a member met a friend, who was down for the day on business. The actor wanted to have a friendly chat with him, but as it was a day on which he had a *matinée*, they agreed to meet at 9.30 p.m., when he would be free (he appeared in the first act). The only thing remaining was to fix a rendezvous. The actor said, “Let us meet at The Trip to Jerusalem.

The other did not appear to have heard of the place, so the necessary directions were given and they parted.

When the actor had finished in the evening, he made his way to the meeting-place. He waited for half an hour, but his friend did not appear, so he decided to go back to the theatre and join the other members of the company when the show was over. Lo and behold! in the hotel next door to the theatre was the friend who had failed to turn up. He was far from sober and said he had been searching all over Nottingham, trying to find the place, but nobody had ever heard of it.

He had asked policemen, postmen and publicans, but one and all denied any knowledge of such a place. “You’ve been pulling my leg, and I thought you were a pal of mine. What on earth made you play such a tomfool game on me?” The actor told him that he was not making a fool of him, and there must be something wrong, because as far as The Trip to Jerusalem was concerned he had only just left after waiting for over half an hour.

“What did you say? What is the name of the place?”

“The Trip to Jerusalem. Why, I told you quite distinctly this morning and you remarked upon the unusual name.”

“Well, no wonder I couldn’t find it and no one had

The Gaiety Stage Door

ever heard of the place—I've been asking all the Nottingham publicans where I could find 'The Pilgrim's Progress.'"

On that same tour two of the girls had a gruesome experience. They were to play in Oldham and arrived rather late on the Sunday evening. These two girls in question had not made any arrangements about apartments for the week, and thought there would be little difficulty in securing a suitable place; but after searching about for a couple of hours they began to realize that their position was getting somewhat desperate. Chorus girls are not usually in a position to put up at hotels even for one night, and something had to be done, and quickly at that. They had been to one place where they had been refused, although the landlady admitted that she had not let her rooms, so they decided to go back and try to induce her to take them if only for that one night. They were very nice girls, and although the woman seemed to have a strong reason for keeping her apartments empty that week, they prevailed upon her.

All the excuses she made were brushed aside—they would sleep anywhere so long as she would take them in. Eventually they were told that if they would come back in an hour's time she would have prepared a room for them to sleep in. They wanted to do the work themselves, so greatly relieved were they, but the landlady would not hear of it. She would not let them sit down in the kitchen until the preparations were made. No, they had to go out and return in an hour. Fortunately the girls ran into some other members of the company and they all kept together until it was time to return.

The woman seemed very agitated and had every appearance of having done some heavy work during their absence. It was a good thing that the girls had brought some pro-

A Gruesome Experience

visions with them, including the remains of the Sunday's dinner, because it turned out that there was scarcely a thing in the house. The woman was evidently very poor, and that made it all the more mysterious why she had been so loath to let her rooms. The girls retired, but although they were fagged out with the journey and the long search for apartments, they could not sleep. In the middle of the night one remarked to the other that she could detect a very strange and unusual odour in the room and asked her companion if she noticed it also, or if it was only her imagination. The other girl also had noticed it.

In the morning when dressing one of them had occasion to open her travelling-bag, and found that it had been pushed far under the bed when her friend had put her own there, so going on her knees she peered underneath and stretched out her hand, which instead of meeting with the bag came into contact with something cold and clammy.

She was startled, but as it was daylight and she had the company of her girl friend, she investigated farther, and then to her horror found that there was somebody lying dead in a coffin there.

They hurried down to the landlady and told her of their discovery, and then the poor woman broke down. She said that it was her husband who lay dead there, and she would not have the lid of the coffin screwed down until the undertaker came on the day of the funeral. She had not intended to let the rooms, but as the girls seemed to be in such a desperate plight, and she sorely needed the money, she had decided to hide the coffin under the bed. That was why she had sent them out of the house for an hour in order to give her time to do it. No wonder the poor soul looked as if she had been working hard when they returned.

The Gaiety Stage Door

That was a dramatic beginning for their week at Oldham, but more was yet to come. In those days at the old theatre there was a very dark passage leading from the stage-door to the steps which led to the dressing-rooms and then on to the stage. A member of the company went down to the theatre rather early to get something he had left in his dressing-room overnight, and groping his way along this dark passage, he knocked into an obstacle. Thinking he had got too close to the wall, he stretched out his hands to feel his way. He came into contact with it again, and this time he noticed that the obstacle, whatever it was, moved away at his touch. He was about to follow it up, thinking it might be an opening, when it swung back again and his hands touched it once more. He felt for his matches and struck one, and to his horror the light showed the dangling form of a man. It proved to be the stage-carpenter of the theatre, and he had hanged himself that morning.

I remember long ago, when I lived in the neighbourhood of Camberwell Green, meeting with members of the profession every Sunday morning at the popular house of call in Coldharbour Lane—Messrs. ——. Little did I think then that one of the members of Mr. Fred Karno's companies would one day convulse the whole picture-going world with his antics, and instead of counting the shillings left "to go the week on," would have to employ accountants to count up how much he had "to go the week on." We were friends when Charlie Chaplin was in obscurity, and I am glad to say that we are still friends now that the limelight is focused upon him with its most brilliant light.

When he came over not long ago from California, he called to see Miss Edie Kelly and Mr. de Courville when we were playing "Pins and Needles." We had a right



Olsen Bassett

MISS DAISY MARKHAM

face p. 210

Charlie Chaplin

good old yarn about the old times up at Messrs. — (which is still the popular rendezvous of the profession as of old), and then he left me, as he had seats for the show.

I know that he left somewhere after one o'clock in the morning, having thoroughly enjoyed the evening with old friends, and he walked along the Embankment with a set purpose in his mind. He gave a treasury note for one pound to every one he found sleeping or resting on the seats as far up as Blackfriars Bridge, where of course it comes to an end.

CHAPTER XVIII

IRVING OFFENDED, GEORGE EDWARDES ALSO, DAISY MARKHAM'S BREACH OF PROMISE DAMAGES, BABS TAYLOR, "HULLO, JACK!" A TOUGH CUSTOMER, THE DUMMY TELEPHONE CALL, HELPING TO JOBS, A SILLY-ASS YOUNG MAN, FINDING HIM A CHANCE, A PAVEMENT BARITONE, A LIFETIME'S OPPORTUNITY SCORNED.

DURING the run of the Gaiety burlesque, "Ruy Blas," or the "Blasé Roué," there was introduced a grotesque pas-de- quatre, danced by Fred Leslie, Charles Danby, Ben Nathan, and Fred Storey, dressed as ballet girls, and their heads and shoulders made up to represent Irving, Toole, Terry, and Wilson Barrett respectively. This gave offence to Mr. Henry Irving (as he was then) and he protested. His protest had weight.

This was a very important incident in George Edwardes' management. He said: "Nothing could be farther from my wishes than to wound any man, least of all a brother manager, and an artist of Mr. Irving's position in the profession, but he should have written to me in the first place and not to Mr. Leslie. I am the manager of this theatre, and perfectly willing to take the responsibility of anything done on my own stage."

Fred Leslie joined in, saying: "Why, he has been burlesqued times out of number, and has never objected before. The man who first travestied him, Edward Righ-ton, is now a member of his company, and opens with him to-morrow night in the 'Dead Heart.' People like imitations of him: it's one of the penalties of his fame, and not a very heavy one. I am sure that if ever I should rise to his heights of tragedy, and Mr. Irving should sink to my position, I shan't have the faintest objection to his burlesquing me." The incident was closed, and the offending make-up cut out, but as Fred Leslie pointed out,

Daisy Markham's Breach of Promise Damages

the great tragedian should have remembered that he was once a burlesque actor himself.

A very remarkable romance of the peerage and the stage was that of the Marquis of N——, who succeeded to the title in June, 1913, by then aged twenty-eight, and Daisy Markham, who was practically the originator of "The Glad Eye."

A romantic friendship quickly sprang up between the noble young Guards officer and the pretty, dainty Daisy Markham. The Marquis occupied his box in the theatre with increasing frequency, and when he did not see the play, he would call for her and take her home in his car. The attraction was mutual, and they became engaged to be married. Miss Markham then asked to be released from her theatrical contract, and she has not appeared on the stage since ; but very shortly she became still more prominently in the public eye, on account of the breach of promise action which followed her engagement.

It was really a very sad affair, as it turned out, because the young Marquis was truly in love with her and she with him ; but, bound by a vow solemnly given to his dying father, he had, against his own wishes and the dictates of his heart, to break his promise to marry her. An extract from one of his letters will prove this :—

" I have always, and do at this present moment, love and respect you more than any one in the world. But, Daisy, the ways of the world are hard, and I want you to believe that what I am now doing is from a sense of duty, genuinely believing that it is the best for both of us. You will always be my ideal, and you will always be my beautiful dream."

That letter was written under evident great stress of

The Gaiety Stage Door

emotion because his fondest hopes were irretrievably dashed to the ground. He placed his position before the girl he had asked to be his wife, and he consented to settle £50,000 upon her when the suit was called on. The proceedings only lasted thirty minutes. These were the highest damages ever awarded in a breach of promise case.

Miss Fortescue brought an action against Viscount Garmoyle and was awarded £10,000. Phyllis Broughton obtained a handsome sum from Lord Dangan, and Birdie Sutherland was awarded a large sum from the Hon. Dudley Marjoribanks, afterwards Lord Tweedmouth.

Many people will remember the sensational end of Babs Taylor, a Gaiety girl, who was shot dead in her West End flat after several hectic love affairs. Babs was one of the belles of even our bevy of beauty, and I remember how shamefully she treated one of her most ardent admirers.

He was a wealthy young man about town who had just added to his already large banking account a legacy of £160,000. He worshipped at the shrine of Babs, and became her absolute slave. He really fell in love with her, and spent thousands and thousands on her adornment and the gratification of her vanity. *She* did not give up her job at the Gaiety, but when the "off" season came round and every one who *was* any one had deserted London, the time for holiday-making was opportune, and she went off with her then wealthy young lover on a lengthy yachting trip. Something went wrong in their absence, and on arrival back the smash came. He had to sell his yacht, then his property, and finally everything was swallowed up, so hopelessly had his affairs become involved. Well, for a time he was *non est* and Babs continued at the Gaiety.

One night about 10.30 a private of some Highland

“Hullo, Jack !”

regiment came to me at the stage-door. It was he ! I always liked him and thought him a thoroughly decent fair and square young man.

“Do you think Babs will speak to me, Jupp—now that I am broke ?”

“I’ll send your name in if you like, but the show will be over very soon now—why not wait until she comes out ?”

“Perhaps that would be best,” said he; and lighting a cigarette strolled out.

I could see that he didn’t want to get into conversation, as it could only be embarrassing, to say the least, after his short-lived affluence.

As the company came out he strolled in again and waited until Babs appeared. He offered his hand, saying in a quiet voice which suggested hope and yet fear as to what reception he would get, “Hullo, Babs. How are you ? I hope you are well.”

She ignored the proffered hand, and with a little laugh, merely said : “Hullo, Jack,” in exactly the same tone she would have used to me, passed him by, and, stepping into an expensive Rolls-Royce, drove off with another gentleman.

His eyes followed her all the while, and when the car turned into the Strand and out of sight, returned his gaze to me. There was no show of anger, but what a look he gave me ! He was suddenly broken-hearted, for he truly loved that woman. Sadly he said :

“There you are, Jupp ! I’m broke and she has no further use for me. Isn’t that enough to make a man shoot a woman ? Ah, well ! Good night, Jupp !”

There have been times when, in my capacity of stage-doorkeeper I have refused admission to people of great

The Gaiety Stage Door

business importance, but fortunately they were generous enough to admit that I was on the safe side personally and that the "door" was well guarded. On the other hand, I have saved Mr. Edwardes from a lot of boredom, because he was such a very kindly and considerate man that if he were allowed the time he would see anyone and consult, comfort, or cajole.

There was one lady who had the idea that she wrote plays. Unfortunately for her the "Guv'nor" was not of the same opinion, and he had allowed her to be shown in so frequently with always the same wearisome result that he told me never to allow her in again. "But don't be unkind, Jupp! Just say that I am out."

Shortly after this injunction she called again with the usual formidable bundle of manuscript under her arm. I don't know exactly what had happened on her previous visit, but guessed enough after Mr. Edwardes' instructions; but on this morning she seemed to be particularly determined, and fixing me with her keen eyes, said, "Good morning!" and made as if to pass through the door. "Pardon me, madam! Do you wish to see Mr. Edwardes?" I asked.

"Yes, I do, on very important business; and I have no time to wait."

"Well, I am sorry, but you will have to wait until to-morrow because he won't be here to-day."

"Oh, is that so? Are you quite sure?"

"Quite, madam; he has gone to Ogbourne to see his brother about a racehorse."

I did not like the look she gave me when, at that very moment, an inner door opened and a well-known voice said: "Give it to Jupp; he'll attend to it."

"Who's that?" asked the authoress.

A Determined Woman

“That is Mr. Arthur Cohen, who also wants to see Mr. Edwardes, and I suppose is writing a note to him.”

I could see she didn't believe me, and had evidently no intention of leaving, so now my difficulty was how to get rid of her and still obey the instruction—“Don't be unkind, Jupp.”

I made a pretence of consulting the telephone book and rang up the “Guv'nor,” who had no idea of what was taking place, and I not only wanted to warn him, but also to get a little advice. Of such experiences are learned the evasions of the truth.

“Hullo! This is Jupp speaking—Yes! Yes! Could you tell me if Mr. Edwardes has arrived at Ogbourne yet? He has! Oh, thank you! There is a lady here who has seen Mr. Edwardes several times before, and has brought a new play for him. Would you be kind enough to find out if I can make any appointment?”

Evidently I met with understanding, for there was a judicious pause which would give the impression to the uninitiated that a search party had been sent out for Mr. Edwardes. Then came the reply. I did my utmost to look very businesslike, and even sympathetic, but happening to catch the gleaming eyes of the lady, I closed mine and listened as if in great concern on her behalf.

Now for it! “I am sorry, but Mr. Edwardes won't be back this week, but may be here on Monday evening.”

“Before you put that receiver back let me speak to him!”

At that moment a man I had previously rather disliked rushed in, and I thought would give the whole show away, but, oh! how I loved him a second after, when he demanded the telephone immediately. I loved him and she hated him. She sat down with a terribly determined air, and I

The Gaiety Stage Door

scented trouble. One thing I was thankful for was that I had given the timely warning, and the dear old "Guv'nor" could either make his escape or remain quiet until I let him know the coast was clear. When my newly found friend had finished his betting transactions on the telephone (for he never used our 'phone for anything else), I knew it was most imperative that he should understand the situation, so I quickly said (with an accompanying wink of warning):

"I thought you were going to Ogbourne with Mr. Edwardes this morning. I was hoping you would put me on to a winner when you came back."

How my heart was beating, hoping that he would understand. But I need not have been so perturbed had I known the astute person I was dealing with.

"You're too young to bet, my lad; but perhaps I will give you a really good thing after I've seen your chief. Have you a guide here? Find out a train for me about 6.30."

Not having a guide I couldn't oblige him, which was of no consequence to either of us. He played his part splendidly, and instead of going into the Sanctum of Sancturums, as was his wont, he made a hurried exit.

Still she sat there, unbelieving as ever. Would nothing convince her? Would nothing calm that menacing brow? Oh, how she looked at me! I have often wondered what she really thought of me during that quarter of an hour; much worse I should think than her expressed opinion on a post-card two days later. Her expression was really vindictive. After all, I was paid to do this kind of thing, and legitimately prevent people from hindering a busy man from carrying on his work; because even in those early days the Gaiety was only one of his concerns. There

A Hansom Eyrice

were also Daly's and the Empire, to say nothing of half a dozen touring companies, and the time spent on this woman during another useless interview would be hopelessly wasted. I must get rid of her—but how?

It was becoming a personal matter now, and I told her it was no use her waiting. She became abusive, which finished up in my conducting her firmly to the door. I hope I still remembered not to be unkind, but her manuscripts were strewn about the floor, which rather suggests a struggle, but it was not quite as bad as that.

I thought that was the end of a very unpleasant and distasteful episode, but there was a second act. Now, it is extremely funny, but it was not then. I saw her approach the driver of a cab (there were no taxis in those days), and thought she had accepted defeat and would make a "hansom" retreat.

But no! After a few mysterious signs and whispering on her part, and a comprehending grin on the part of the cabby, I saw that vehicle slowly but surely wheeled from the rank opposite over to our side and placed directly under the window of the "Guv'nor's" office. With a look of defiance, not only at me but at the little bit of the world in general which happened to be in sight, she mounted the "dickey" (the grinning cabby holding the horse's head), and so on to the driver's seat, which brought her vision into line with a party of four seated at a table in the office—George Edwardes, Arthur Cohen, William Terriss, and Mike Levenstone.

I was fascinated, rooted to the door-step, and might have remained there until this moment if I had not been suddenly called back to the grim reality of the affair by a shrill shriek of triumph from the petticoated Shakespeare who descended to the pavement, but not nearly so quickly

The Gaiety Stage Door

as I went to keep an appointment somewhere at a safe distance and yet near enough to observe her next move.

A post-card was sent openly to me at the theatre two days later. It was one of those printed cards which make one a member of "The Amalgamated Society of Liars."

I have been instrumental in getting lots of people on the stage, and have naturally taken a sort of paternal interest in their careers. In the ordinary course, it would have been a very difficult thing to get an interview with a man like George Edwardes, but he never refused to see anyone I introduced.

I remember being at a friend's house one Sunday evening, and there was the usual little impromptu concert one hears at suburban villas on such occasions. There was one girl there who sang a song in such a natural manner, and with such a clear enunciation, that I became interested in her. She was an ingenuous young thing, and told me that she worked as agent for a photographer. She had to go from house to house soliciting orders, and received commission on all she got. She was only about eighteen, and had a sweetly pretty face in addition to a natural grace. She was well educated and accomplished. I asked her if she would sing again for my special benefit. After she had complied, I told her of my connection with the stage, and pointed out to her that she could get a far better chance of advancement if she adopted the theatrical profession.

Now most girls of her age would have been fired with enthusiasm and gone into ecstasies of delight at the prospect, but this little lady only said that she would be glad to get an opportunity of trying, but she feared she was not talented enough. She had no exalted opinion of herself, and that pleased me far more than if she had jumped at the offer and eagerly pressed for an appointment.

A Quick Rise

I arranged for her to come down to the Gaiety and bring the last song she had sung. She came, and I spoke to Mr. Malone about her. He was just as considerate as Mr. Edwardes in anything I asked, and he told me to take her down on to the stage and he would hear her sing. Her name was Amy J——, but I suggested that she should change it to Amy Gray. She did so, and as Amy Gray she was instantly engaged. She started where all wise young people should make a beginning—in the chorus.

A girl possessed of any real talent can pick up tuition from the chorus, and especially as an understudy, which is invaluable. The man or woman who is given a leading part on account of a good voice backed up by influence always shows those awful signs of the untrained amateur; but a good, sound groundwork obtained in the chorus work, and the instruction received as an understudy, make them thoroughly presentable whenever called upon to take up a principal part, even at a moment's notice.

So it was with Amy Gray. She was sent into the provinces with one of our touring companies and understudied Agnes Fraser. It was not long before her chance came, and she played Miss Fraser's part with such success that when the next tour was being arranged and Miss Fraser had been allotted a part in a London production, Amy Gray's name figured on the play bill as a principal.

From that time on she made enormous strides, and was acknowledged as a provincial star. I was naturally very proud of my "find," and we were great friends. If she had not married and retired from the stage, she would have been one of our foremost musical comedy artistes to this day.

I have suggested that people should adopt a stage name only on two occasions—the first I have just mentioned,

The Gaiety Stage Door

and the second was in the case of a young man, and Gray having proved so successful, I got him to take the name of Reggie Gray. It happened thus.

One morning a young man of about twenty came along to the stage-door and asked me if I could get him an introduction to anyone who would give him a chance to go on the stage. He said : " If you can get anyone to play a song for me, I will give him a sovereign."

Jacques Grebé was down on the stage, so I 'phoned down and told him of this young man's offer. He came up and spoke to him, asking the usual questions as to what he had done theatrically and where he had sung. He admitted that he had had no previous experience, but would give him a sovereign if he would play a song over and give him his opinion.

When this young man came up again he said he would like to have a chat with me, if I would join him at lunch. We went into the Dutch Bar next door, and I had a good look at him. He was well dressed. He had an easy way of lounging, rather than standing, and gave one the impression of an easy-going, good-natured " Johnny " or " Dude." He said he had a great desire to get on the stage, and promised that if I would help him to that end his father would see that I was recompensed for my trouble.

He had come up from Birkenhead with this idea fixed in his mind, and with the full consent of his father, who was a wealthy man and was not at all dictatorial as to what calling he adopted, so long as it was one in which he could take a serious interest.

I asked him what Jacques Grebé had said about his singing.

" Oh ! he was very nice, and all that, but I know I am not a singer ; I only wanted to get my foot in, so to speak ! "

A Silly-Ass Young Man

I asked him if he could dance.

“No! I know nothing about stage-dancing!”

“Well, have you ever played any parts with amateur theatricals?” I asked.

“Not much—only very small bits of the silly-ass order.”

Now that was just what was in my mind.

“How did you get on with *those* parts?” I asked.

Then I began to see some real hope when he modestly said :

“Oh! I suppose it was all right—I made them laugh right enough—I suppose that is why they never offered me any other kind of part; but that is not what I call acting—I didn’t have to act at all—it was perfectly simple and easy.”

He did not know that he was proving to me that that was his natural beat. Not what he called acting! Simple and easy! Was it indeed! I have known excellent actors who have tried to understudy similar parts, but with all their knowledge the best they could make of them was a forced and unnatural humour.

I promised that I would do my best to help him, and asked him to call and see me the next day. In the meantime I went over to the Strand Theatre and spoke to my friend, Walter Dagnall. He was sending out a touring company in which Aubrey FitzGerald was playing one of his usual “silly-ass” parts. I explained the case to Dagnall and said that if he had not yet engaged his entire company he might give this young Reggie Gray (as I had christened him) a chance. Would he let him understudy FitzGerald, and, who knows? he might turn out to be possessed of an original personality. As a matter of fact I really thought he did, and that was why I took the trouble—not on account of his promise of reward. I think

The Gaiety Stage Door

Dagnall must have seen that I was more than usually interested, and he said :

“ Very well, send him over to me in the morning and let’s have a look at him.”

The next day I took him over to the Strand Theatre (by the by, the Aldwych Station of the Underground Railway is on the exact site of the old Strand Theatre). Walter Dagnall asked him several questions, to all of which young Gray answered quite truthfully, and made no pretence of having any accomplishments. However, Dagnall said :

“ All right, Jupp ; I’ll fix Mr. Gray up for this tour.”

With that I returned to the office and awaited events.

During the tour the understudies were rehearsed every morning until they were thoroughly well up in their parts, and thus it is that one learns the art of stage-craft. They had been playing for about fourteen or fifteen weeks, when Aubrey FitzGerald suddenly fell ill, and was kept away from the theatre for four or five nights. Reggie Gray had had a thorough grinding in the part and knew it perfectly. He played during the principal’s absence, and I was told later by Walter Dagnall that his success was instantaneous, and it was just as young Gray had said—he didn’t have to act—it was all so “ simple and easy.” Of course it was ! He just went on in that good-natured, lounging manner and spoke his lines naturally. He had a personality and did not need to act. His tuition in stage-craft had taken the rough edges of the novice and amateur off and he presented a clean-cut figure of the “ silly ass.”

He never looked back after that, and has always held a prominent position under whatever management he has engaged. I got the best reward for my services that a man could wish for in the shape of a sincere and loyal friend. Whenever he returned from a tour I was the first man he

A Pavement Baritone

called upon, and it was always a pleasure to hear him tell of his experiences in the provinces, where he was well known and exceedingly popular. He was always the same kindly, good-natured young fellow as when I first met him, but with one slight difference : he was now a first-class actor.

There was one occasion when a man came round singing to the people waiting for our theatre doors to open for the matinée. Mr. Edwardes was in his office and suddenly stopped in his work. He listened intently. The singer was a tall, good-looking young man with a pure baritone voice of exquisite "timbre" and of great range. He was singing one of the popular ballads of the day and was accompanied on a portable harmonium. It was a very exceptional voice and he sang well, but to the trained ear it was uncultivated. Mr. Edwardes went to the window and had a long look at this young fellow, and when the song was over and the hat was being passed round, the "Guv'nor" said :

"Jupp, go out, will you, and tell that young man I would like to speak to him !"

I went out and waited until he had made his collection, and then signalled to him. When he came up I told him that Mr. George Edwardes wished to speak to him for a moment. He did not seem to attach much importance to this intelligence and said :

"Well—this is my busy time—I've got several pitches to go to yet—I'll come in the morning before I begin going my rounds."

I did not give *that* answer to the "Guv'nor," but told him that he seemed a bit nervous, and that I had arranged for him to come in the morning.

Judging from the result of the following morning's

The Gaiety Stage Door

interview I might have saved my pains. He called and I showed him in to the "Guv'nor." He put several questions to him in a delicate manner, as to why he was singing in the street—if he had any parents and so forth. Then he made an offer which any right-minded young man would have been everlastingly grateful for. It was that he should be put under a master and be thoroughly trained for opera, comic-opera, or musical comedy, whichever his voice proved to be most suitable for. He would be clothed and have board and lodging found for him, and during the time he was studying (perhaps two or three years) he would be paid £5 per week. At the end of his studies he was to enter into a contract with Mr. Edwardes, who would put him on the stage in London, and if he (Mr. Edwardes) had any judgment, he would be assured of a very successful career.

What an opportunity ! How many young men would have given their ears to have had such a chance ! It was practically a guarantee for life, and yet, incredible as it may seem, this offer was rejected.

The young man did not seem to be capable of seeing it in its true and wonderful light, but rather regarded it as an attempt to interfere with his liberty and force work upon him. His final remark showed his point of view.

"Do you know that I rake in as much as £20 a week at this game ? Sometimes more, and I am my own boss. I sing when and where I like, and not at all if I don't feel in the mood. Study ! *Me study !* No, thanks !"

Then I suppose some glimmer of decency must have come to him, although it was but a dim one, for he said :

"But I suppose you mean well right enough. Well, I'll be off now, as it is time my mate came along with the 'strill' ready to start business."

A Lifetime's Opportunity Scorned

That happened many years ago, but that man still sings about the West End of London, chiefly at street corners, where there is a public-house. I often see him and wonder if he remembers me and ever regrets the folly of his youth. I don't know whether there was any truth in his estimate of his weekly takings, or whether it was a defiant boast in order to put an end to the interview, but I can only say that, judging by his appearance, he neither looked like a £1,000 a year man nor even a happy one.

CHAPTER XIX

THEATRE SPORTS, LADY FOOTBALLERS, ALPHABET DOUGLAS, CHALLENGED TO A FIGHT, THE MAHARAJA'S GENEROSITY, CONNIE EDISS PLEASED, GIFTS TO ACTRESSES, GEORGE EDWARDES AND JU-JITSU, QUEENIE GUEST'S HORSE, MALCOLM SCOTT'S COFFEE STALL, J. T. TANNER'S FIRE.

THE great advantage from a sporting point of view of having practically a permanent staff and company at the theatre was that we were able to form clubs and go in for all sorts of sports and games. The same conditions obtaining at other theatres, it was a great source of amusement, and a splendid chance to get a Sunday's outing. We used to go down to Walthamstow, Stratford, Croydon, Upton Park, or another place where there was a ground, and spend a most enjoyable day.

We had an excellent cricket team and an almost unbeatable football team (we also had a team of lady footballers), but in addition to these we had a rowing club which won the *Daily Telegraph* Shield—swimming, cycling, and hockey clubs. Edmund Payne was a well-known figure on the track at Herne Hill, and the winner of several gold and silver medals.

Whenever we went far enough to play a match we went down in coaches, inviting members of the company and friends to accompany us, and if the match happened to be football, naturally one of our girls would be called upon to kick off. I remember an occasion when we were to play against a team of footballers who rejoiced in the name of "Anchor and Hope." These people were reputed to be very hot stuff, and as there were no hard and fast conditions that our team must consist of members of the Gaiety Company and Staff only, I spoke to my friend—the famous Essex and All-England Captain, J. W. H. T. Douglas, or Alphabet Douglas as he is called by the

Landing a Tartar

“crowd” in England. The Australians gave him another name, taking his initials to form it—“Johnny Won’t Hit To-Day.” I can’t quite see the application, but never mind! I told him that we were up against the hottest team we had met as yet, and asked him to play for us. He agreed, and said he would bring two others with him. I had to make it quite clear to him that there was nothing unfair about his playing with us, because he was too thorough a sportsman to do anything that could not be considered the “clean game.” I told him that there were no restrictions on either side, and I had no idea whom we were meeting, except that they were very “mustard” indeed.

The team we had on that occasion included, in addition to Mr. Douglas, the popular comedian Robert Hale (goal-keeper), and the two friends J. W. H. T. had promised to bring along—Messrs. Gordon Tabernacle and Johnny Campbell. It must be remembered that Mr. Douglas was about that time the Amateur Middle-Weight Champion of England, which adds zest to the following incident during the match.

Douglas happened to collide with one of the opposing team and sent him sprawling; it was purely an accident, but the other fellow took it very badly and threatened Douglas with condign punishment when the match was over. Unfortunately they came together again a little later on in the game; there was another collision, and again the angry man was sent sprawling on the ground. “You wait until this game is over—I’ll give you bumping into me!” Douglas told him that it was a perfectly fair charge, and he had no intention of deliberately knocking him over, but such things occurred in all games of football. It was no use. He was going to teach Douglas a lesson—and “learn him” as he put it. I thought I had better give

The Gaiety Stage Door

this aggressive fellow a friendly hint that Douglas might be more difficult to "learn" than he thought ; so when an opportunity presented itself I said : " I shouldn't pick a quarrel with that man if I were you ; you'll find out you've made a great mistake if you do. He doesn't go in for vulgar brawls, he is a very well-known gentleman, but take it from me—he *can* box when he's put to it."

" I don't care an adjective who the adjective he is, I'll learn him not to come barging into me ; he's got to go through it," he shouted.

I thought I had better tell him, although I did not want Mr. Douglas' name to have been mentioned, but such an unsavoury incident had to be put an end to. " Very well, have it your own way, but all I can tell you is that if you *do* give him a thrashing you will have beaten the Amateur Middle-Weight Champion, Mr. Douglas."

He looked at me thoughtfully for a moment, and then turned away, still sucking the slice of lemon with which he was refreshing himself. The second half went off without any further upset. When the match was over Mr. Douglas thought he would go and put matters right with his antagonist, so finding the dressing-room in which the Anchor and Hope-ites were, he knocked at the door and went in.

" Where is the man who is so anxious to get my blood ? " he asked. There was no response. " Well, if he's not in here, I wish you'd tell him that it was purely an accident and I'd like to see him when he's dressed. Tell him he'll find me with Mr. Jupp, and if he's not a teetotaller and is not still angry, I'll be pleased if he'll ' have one ' with me."

The late Maharaja of Cooch Behar was a frequent visitor at our theatre whenever he was visiting England, and I

The Maharaja's Generosity

think it must have been his favourite place of amusement, for he was always giving some sort of entertainment to small parties of the company, each in turn. He took an interest in all our doings, and when he heard of our different clubs, he expressed a desire to attend the next match. He provided us with motors to go down to the ground at Farnham and gave a sumptuous feast to every one concerned. I invited him to become President of the Club, and he readily accepted the position.

This feast took place on a Good Friday, and we arranged for two matches against the Royal Air Force—one match against the men, and the other was "Gaiety Girls" versus "Farnham Aircraft Girls." The men beat us by six goals to five, but our girls won their match by five goals to nil, so on the aggregate we won the day by four goals.

The Dolman Sisters especially distinguished themselves. They were fine all-round athletes, and had won several swimming championships. The only unpleasant incident was when Harry Burcher, who was stage-manager at that time, received a ball full in the face from one of the backs and was completely knocked out.

Our cricket matches were of perhaps more public interest because the team would be made up from all the theatres, and each player would be a London star and have his own following. These matches were generally played at the Oval, to which the public were admitted and the same prices charged. The most attractive match of the season was "London Actors" versus "Jockeys," Challoner captaining the latter.

Nearly all of them were sound cricketers, and the public had the double pleasure of seeing a really excellent game between their favourite actors and the leading jockeys of the day. It was also a chance for the "wits" of the Surrey

The Gaiety Stage Door

“crowd” to expand themselves, and the sallies that greeted all in turn as they came out to bat, or went on to bowl, at a good or bad stroke, caused much amusement to players and spectators, so that it was usually a happy gathering. The public opinion of each was openly expressed, but Connie Ediss overheard something about herself which pleased and amused her. She took a seat in the Pavilion just behind some young women who were comparing notes about the actors and actresses present, but they had not seen Connie enter. She heard her name mentioned and couldn't very well help hearing what was said about her.

“I'd love to see Connie Ediss off the stage; I suppose she'll be here somewhere. Isn't she a scream? What a dear, fat old thing she looks—I love her—she makes me die—but I suppose all that fat is just put on for the part, because you can see what a pretty face she's got—and isn't she funny? I must have a look at her.”

Connie made as silent an exit as she ever did in her life, but she repeated what she had overheard, expressing the opinion that it “bucked her up more than all the complimentary Press notices ever did.”

That girl's criticism was a very sincere one, and she was perfectly right when she called her a “scream.” I remember when she was going over to America, she had to make out an identification form, and after giving all the details required she arrived at one space reserved for “Birthmarks if any.” In this space she wrote “Ashamed to say.” I don't know what the official thought when he read that, but I hope he had a sense of humour.

In the way of receiving gifts of money, jewellery, and even property, there can be no doubt that an actress is far more fortunate than her sisters following any other path in life. Take a girl in any other calling you choose,

Actresses' Jewellery

and inquire if she is the recipient of promiscuous gifts to the great extent that a popular actress is. You will sometimes read in the papers, or see the placards announcing "Actress's jewels stolen," and when you have read it, it will probably be the first time you have ever heard her name. Some sceptical person will remark that it is only a bluff to advertise her ; where would she get such valuable jewellery, as he had never heard of her before ! He may not have heard of her, and perhaps her name has never been of sufficient importance to be given a place in a play bill, but the jewels are hers nevertheless, and nine times out of ten they have been given to her by an admirer.

Some of our chorus girls—not to mention show girls—have jewels that are comparable with any worn by the richest women. The society of an actress is sought only by men who are prepared, and expect to find it a somewhat expensive luxury.

There was one girl in our chorus named Edna Loftus, who was given jewellery worth £2,000 to make her first appearance on the stage with, and every night afterwards a quart bottle of champagne was sent up to her dressing-room, which no doubt was shared among the other girls in the room.

If that jewellery had been stolen I suppose some one would have said it was all rot, and done for advertisement.

Eddie Kelly (afterwards Edith Kelly Gould) was dancing on the stage one night, and when she came off she found that she had lost one of her ear-rings. What became of it no one ever knew, but to show the value of that one ring a reward of £100 was offered in all the papers. It was a three-diamond ornament with an emerald drop as big as a filbert nut. She valued the pair at £2,000. She used to give her rings into the safe keeping of her dresser,

The Gaiety Stage Door

and it was rather an incongruous sight to see this ordinary working woman standing in the "Bell" public-house taking a glass of stout while on her fingers she had two or three thousand pounds' worth of rings.

But of all the women either on or off the stage who have been famous for jewellery, no one has surpassed Mlle. Gaby Deslys. She had amassed a fortune amounting to millions, and her love of self-adornment was made manifest by the exquisite gems on her fingers and neck, in her ears and hair. When she was playing in the "New Aladdin" at the Gaiety, her dressing-table would have on it trinkets worth a king's ransom, and beautiful as were the possessions of the other girls in the company, those of Gaby Deslys represented a far larger sum than all the others put together.

There was an incident during the rehearsals of the "New Aladdin" which rather disconcerted the "Guv'nor," Mr. George Edwardes. Gaby Deslys was a spectacular dancer, and she was rehearsing a special feature with the Ju-Jitsu expert, Yuko-Tani. He would just touch her hand and over she would go, spinning like a top: an easy thing for him to do to her, but the operation had to be reversed, and that was where the rehearsals came in. One morning Mr. Edwardes was looking on, and Gaby could not get the knack of Ju-Jitsu sufficiently to throw Yuko-Tani as he had thrown her, and only a master of dancing could have faked it, so they had to keep on trying until she improved in the grip. Mr. Edwardes was so interested in the magic of Ju-Jitsu that he asked Yuko-Tani to show him how it was he could so easily throw a person about.

Now George Edwardes was anything between sixteen and eighteen stone, but that was of no consequence to

George Edwardes and Ju-Jitsu

Yuko-Tani. Instead of explaining how and where to grip a person, he took the "Guv'nor" literally. He said: "Come, I will show you." He took him quite gently by the hand and then—whirr! up in the air, one-spin round, and the "Guv'nor" landed safely on his feet again, but he was very startled and bewildered. That this midget of a man should throw eighteen stone about like a shuttlecock! He managed to gasp out: "How on earth did you do that?" but before he could ask anything further Yuko-Tani said, "Like this," and whirr! up in the air again—another turn in the flight and down once more—but unfortunately this time, instead of landing on his feet, he came down on his back.

More bewildered than ever, he rose to his feet saying: "Don't do it—I don't like it—I'm too old for that sort of thing. Now you two get on with your rehearsal like good people. I'm sure it will look very effective—very effective indeed." He was always very nice to Yuko-Tani, as indeed he was to everybody, but I don't believe he ever shook hands with him again, in case—well, who knows what his reason was, but it is easy to guess.

We had a girl at the theatre who caused a sensation once or twice a week, and the ever-crowded Strand would pause in its tracks to gaze at the sight. Her name was Queenie Guest, who was understood to be the wife of a wealthy German banker, Baron von Stein. She used to go for a ride in Rotten Row every morning, and there she was in her element. A very beautiful woman and a splendid horsewoman, she presented a fine picture there, but one does not expect to see a woman mounted on a magnificent thoroughbred bay mare, followed by four pedigree greyhounds, taking the air in the Strand. She would come along for her letters, but I think chiefly to let me have

The Gaiety Stage Door

a look at her mounts (of which she had several), knowing my love of horses and dogs. As she passed along the Strand the omnibus-drivers and cabbies, the hawkers of toys standing at the edge of the kerb, the shopkeepers and even the *blasé* policemen on duty, would make way for her to pass along, and by the time she reached the stage-door she had always collected quite a crowd of the curious folk who always seem to find time to put their own affairs aside and take up a personal interest in such matters as these.

One morning she came on a splendid creature which she had only just bought. "What do you think of this, Jupp? Beauty, isn't she, eh?"

"Look here, Miss Guest, it isn't quite fair for you to bring these lovely animals along—it takes me back to my old cavalry days. I should love to have a turn in Rotten Row astride her. Take her away, there's a good girl—you make me quite envious."

She laughed and said: "Rotten Row! that's just where I *am* going; it's the first time I have been on her back, and she's a wee bit difficult to handle, but we'll soon get to understand each other in the Park." Off she went, followed as usual by her four dogs.

I never saw that beautiful mare again, for early that afternoon the papers came out with the news that Miss Queenie Guest had met with an accident while riding in the Row. An unexpected flight of birds startled the mare, and the beast dashed pell-mell down the Row, and crashed into an iron gate and dropped stone dead underneath her. Fortunately the accident was not more serious, for beyond a shaking and her distress at the death of her beautiful new pet, she sustained no injuries.

Rotten Row was by no means the only place where she and her animals were a familiar sight, for she used to ride

Malcolm Scott's Coffee Stall

out to Wimbledon whenever the Yeomanry were going out and would ride in front of them. She did this so frequently that there was a keen sense of disappointment if anything (such as a *matinée* or rehearsal) prevented her from joining them and taking up her gratuitous position at their head.

Whenever and wherever the fair name of Charity is used, you will always find the name of its most whole-hearted champion—the theatrical profession. I have known many a man and woman who have given regular subscriptions to several charities in which they had no more personal interest than that it was for a good cause. The homeless and the wanderer who find their way on to the Thames Embankment used to look forward to a certain figure dressed in evening clothes and opera hat. Whenever he appeared, accompanied by one or two friends, they knew that their hunger would be appeased for at least that night. That gentleman was the famous music-hall star, Malcolm Scott.

How I got to know of these visits was from one of our leading singers, who was one of the accompanying friends. He, Malcolm Scott, and George Mudie had rooms in a large house just over Waterloo Bridge, and when they arrived home from their different theatres Scott would say : “ Well, boys, to-night is Embankment night ; I want a pound each, please.” He didn't always come down on the same men for the pound subscription, but would intimate to other friends in different houses to call, for “ to-night is Embankment night.” They knew what that meant, and the pounds were always produced.

He did not go about his charitable business in the glare of the limelight so that all might see and approve, but waited until it was well after midnight. Then they would

The Gaiety Stage Door

journey forth in search of the coffee stall. Everybody knew who he was and what his errand was. "Good night, Mr. Scott! Come to buy me out again? I rather thought it was about your night, so I laid in a good stock."

Then Malcolm would get inside that little coffee stall and, assisted by the owner, would serve out hot coffee, tea, or bovril with sandwiches, cakes, hard-boiled eggs, cigarettes, tobacco, and anything else that there happened to be, until nothing was left. Then he would pay the reckoning and retire with his friends to their rooms.

This happened every week while he was in Town. He thoroughly enjoyed these nocturnal visits, but not more so than the poor devils who had no rooms to retire to, but had to find a convenient seat or sheltered corner where there might be a chance of sleep.

If Malcolm Scott had been an older man, so that his kindly visits would have dated back another fifteen years from that date, he might—nay, undoubtedly would—have earned the gratitude of a man who became a very famous author.

I was having a chat with Mr. J. T. Tanner one night when the curtain had been up for some time, and the stage-door was quiet. He was in a confidential mood. He said: "You only know me as I am now, Jupp; but not very long ago my only address was 'The Embankment, Charing Cross, London.' I have very painful memories of nights spent there, without a copper. How I used to envy the less unfortunate ones who had enough to be able to patronize the coffee stall near by, and still have sufficient left to purchase a little breakfast. It was there that I fell in with a man—or rather he forced his conversation upon me, for I was in no mood to exchange confidences with anyone, much less with this fellow who was manifestly

J. T. Tanner's Fire

an *habitué* of the Embankment. Yet it was during that fellow's chatter that I got an idea which was to change my path in life and lead me to where I am now."

J. T. Tanner was one of the most brilliant authors of the lyrical stage, and among his great successes which brought in thousands upon thousands of pounds are such well-known pieces as "The Messenger Boy," "The Circus Girl," "The Toreador," "My Girl," "Our Miss Gibbs," and many others too numerous to mention.

He was for some time actively employed at the theatre as producer. One evening, during a rehearsal of "The Orchid," he was talking to me, and some men were still working on the new building, when we heard one shout out: "Here, come back you! Come and put this fire out!" Mr. Tanner, quickly on the alert, hurried inside and inquired: "Fire! Where's the fire?" "Upstairs," was the answer, "and it's got to be put out at once!" Without inquiring further Mr. Tanner rushed back to the stage-door, and, smashing the glass of the fire extinguisher case, pulled the handle which lowered the safety-curtain, and then turned on the sprinkler. The water poured down on to the stage, and into the orchestra, giving Ivan Caryll and the instrumentalists a good ducking before they had time to escape.

If Mr. Tanner had only stopped to inquire he would have found that it was only the foreman giving orders for a fire which had been burning in a brazier upstairs to be put out before the men knocked off for the day. I could not have prevented him from doing what he did, because I had stepped out of the office to ask what it was all about, and during my few moments' absence the mischief was done.

Our orchestra was a cosmopolitan crowd—French,

The Gaiety Stage Door

German, Belgian, Italian, Swiss, and Russian, and I had never before heard the effect of solid out-and-out cockney curses rendered into seven different languages. It was more instructive as regards profanity in foreign countries than a whole course of Hugo or a week-end in Billingsgate.

If J. T. had not been such a highly popular man he stood a chance of getting himself thoroughly disliked by all and sundry—including the cleaners, who had an awful job after the deluge.

CHAPTER XX

THE LADY BOUNTIFUL, MAURICE FARKOA'S SLIPS, A DUET SPOILED, IRVING'S BUTLER, GRACIE LANE'S INTERVIEWER, FLORENCE LLOYD'S COMPLIMENT, THE FIVER ON THE WHEEL, AN ACTOR IN PAWN, W. S. GILBERT'S LESSON.

ONE of the prettiest stories I ever heard concerns a lady who was then our principal dancer and became the rage of London. It was very close to the Christmas holidays (for other people that is, not for actors and actresses), and down in the East End the poor urchins were gathered round the shop windows, gazing hungrily at all the toys displayed. There was a dazzling array of dolls in the window of one, while in the next sweets were temptingly displayed. The poor, ragged little girls were feasting their eyes upon the dolls, while the boys were feasting, in their imagination, upon the sweets.

While they were thus gazing and lounging, a cab, containing an evidently well-to-do young lady, came along. It stopped near the group of children, and this young lady leaned out of the cab window and watched for a moment or so. Then she beckoned to one of the kiddies to come to her. After a few words with him, she descended from the cab.

The group of human flotsam and jetsam must have thought a fairy had really come into their midst, for she took them into the shop and treated them all to dolls, penknives, sweets, and other things dear to the hearts of children; and then a very touching incident occurred. One child, more wan and starved-looking than the rest, asked if he might have the money instead of the good things, and a question or two brought from him the explanation:

"I want to take it home to my mother because she has nothing to eat, and she's crying!" The lady took the little chap into her cab and drove to his home to see if his

The Gaiety Stage Door

story were true. Alas ! it was. The boy's father was dead—the poor woman was ill with bronchitis and was absolutely starving. Is it necessary to say that very soon a doctor was summoned, the larder filled, and that for one little den in the land of slums despair made place for comparative happiness ?

This fairy in real life was Miss Loie Fuller, one of the daintiest dancers that ever graced the stage ; but beautiful as she was in herself, and in the spectacular dances she presented on the stage, nothing can eclipse the beauty of her that evening when she played Lady Bountiful way down East.

Maurice Farkoa, who was known for his distinctly original style both on the stage and concert platform, and whose laughing songs were a perfect joy, was born in Smyrna, but he used to say that he had not the slightest idea as to what he really could be called. His father was French, his mother was English, and he was born in Turkey. It does not much matter what was his nationality, for he was undoubtedly a brilliant performer, and he claimed England—and particularly London—as his home.

It was George Grossmith who got him his first theatrical engagement, and that was with my dear old "Guv'nor," George Edwardes. He was engaged to play a part in "The Artist's Model," but it was a near thing whether he ever played in it or not.

He knew little English, and at one rehearsal he made a terrible *faux pas*. Quite innocently he said an appalling thing, so appalling indeed that I cannot repeat it here. George Edwardes and Mr. Tanner, when they had done trying not to laugh, looked rather serious and said they were afraid that he would not do yet, as his English was really too bad, in more senses than one. However, they

A Duet Spoiled

decided to make his part as plain and simple as possible, and to give him a chance, because his singing, or rather his rendering of a song—half sung, half spoken—was truly delightful. He made a very big success right away from the first night onward.

I am sorry not to be able to tell what his awful mistake was, but here is an example of Maurice's mistakes in English which *is* printable. One day he went into a shop to buy something for one of his nieces. As a guidance, the polite shopman asked : "How old is the little lady, sir?" Maurice meant to say : "Five and a half," but what he did say was "*half-past five.*"

Maurice Farkoa rejoiced in laughing songs, and he literally laughed his way through life.

Writing about slips of the tongue reminds me of a humorous incident. One evening the two singers Ada Crossley and Andrew Black were singing a duet, and one of the lines allotted to Mr. Black ran : "With thy hand within my arm." Mr. Black duly sang it (or thought he had), but to his great surprise Miss Crossley did not proceed with her part. On the contrary, she stood there apparently labouring under strong emotion. "Go—on. Go—on! What's the matter?" said he, *sotto voce*; but Miss Crossley could neither "Go on" nor reply; and there was no disguising the fact that she was giggling convulsively.

To save the situation Mr. Black sang her lines for her. Then it came to a part where they had to harmonize, and gifted artiste that he was, he could not manage both. Still she stood giggling, and presently losing all control of herself, she rushed off the stage followed by the utterly bewildered Mr. Black.

With some justifiable heat he demanded to know "What

The Gaiety Stage Door

on earth was the matter ? ” It was some time before she could reply, owing to her own unrestrained laughter. The explanation was that Mr. Black had inadvertently rendered the line “ With thy hand within my arm ” as “ With thy *head* within my arm,” and the picture this conjured up in Miss Crossley’s mind of herself with her head “ in Chancery ” being vigorously pummelled by Mr. Black had been altogether too much for her equanimity.

Now that I am on the subject of intimate stories about some of our great people, I must mention a few concerning Sir Henry Irving. There was one occasion when he rather seriously hurt his knee, and the doctor told him that it was essential that he should lie up for a time, and take plenty of rest, and be as quiet as possible. Shortly after the doctor had gone, a visitor called. The faithful butler had his instructions, and said that his master was not at home. “ Not at home ! ” said the visitor in great surprise. “ No, sir ! He has gone to Brighton,” said the butler at random. The well-dressed visitor pulled out his watch and considered for a moment : “ Brighton ! I have just time to catch the next train down ; I know his hotel there.” Away he went upon his fruitless errand.

The visitor was Sir Edward Ponsonby, and his message was from King Edward VII, who was then Prince of Wales.

Sir Henry Irving’s handwriting was execrable, and only people who were very intimate with it after long experience or an expert graphologist could decipher it. When he was on one of his American tours he sent some friends a piece of notepaper on which were found some indecipherable hieroglyphics. After long struggles with it his friends sent the paper to a chemist, and he, like a true Yankee, unwilling to lose a money-making opportunity, “ made up ” the prescription in more senses than

Gracie Lane's Interviewer

one. It was not until Sir Henry asked them how they had enjoyed the play that his friends discovered that the strange writing was meant to be an invitation to the theatre.

Rising stars in the profession naturally love to see their names in print as often as possible, and the ordeal of the photographer and the interviewer is a very pleasant one—there is no difficulty in getting just what they want, but this wears off in time, and the interviewer becomes less and less welcome, until at last he is avoided as much as possible.

Miss Gracie Lane made a mistake once in this respect, and she confessed to feeling very embarrassed when she discovered it. She was playing in "The Little Minister" in the provinces. One night a mild, pale-looking gentleman called at the theatre and asked to see Miss Lane, and as she was just going on the stage she invited him to sit in her dressing-room for a little while until she returned. She meant to give him just a moment or two and get rid of him.

When she came back she started straight away without giving the visitor an opportunity of introducing himself. "I suppose you have seen 'The Little Minister' before. I hope you enjoyed it?" "Oh, yes—very much indeed," replied the gentleman.

"Don't you think it is an awfully pretty piece?" she asked. "Well, yes, I do," was all he would say. Then she asked: "I suppose you saw it at the Haymarket?"

With just a touch of amusement in his face he replied: "Oh, yes; you see, I wrote it." It was Sir J. M. Barrie who had come to offer his congratulations, and whom she had never met before.

Without wishing to make any comparison between two such artistes as Vesta Tilley and Florence Lloyd, there is no

The Gaiety Stage Door

doubt that the latter was exceedingly skilful in the art of making up, and she looked for all the world like a swagger young blood when giving her male impersonations.

Just before one of our companies was being sent on a tour of the States and Colonies they—or rather all the ladies of the company—went to be photographed.

They retired to the dressing-room and changed into their stage costumes, Miss Lloyd, of course, into her young Johnny's. Then they all went into the studio, and the photographer took them in turn, singly and in small groups ; until at last, after a solid two hours' work, one of the ladies asked : "What about Florence Lloyd ? When are you going to take her ?" The photographer did not understand what she meant. "I thought I had taken all the ladies. Whom have I left out ?"

Florence Lloyd answered in rather a hurt voice : "Me !"—"You !" exclaimed the astonished operator, and then his remark made ample compensation for the artiste's wounded feelings : "A thousand pardons," he said apologetically as he approached her in wonderment : "I thought you were some young swell who had come in with the ladies." Surely no one could take offence at such a compliment !

I remember an occasion when one of the most extraordinary bits of luck happened to one of the members of our orchestra. Their "Ghost" (or pay) does not walk in the night time as is the case with actors and actresses ; it is a daylight ghost, and the hour for it to walk is noon. The incident I refer to happened during "treasury call," and Johnny Reinders was busy handing out the packets.

It was my usual time to depart for lunch, and one of the men, a cornet player named Hicks, was just coming out, so he invited me to join him in a little refreshment.

The Fiver on the Wheel

Instead of going "round the corner" to my usual haunt, he had to meet a man, and we crossed over the road to the "Bell." Mr. Hicks was examining his packet to see if, by any wonderful mischance, he had been over-paid, and among his money was a five-pound note.

By some mischance—one which I am certain would never happen to me—he threw the fiver away, and started to fold up the envelope, when the driver of a lorry just behind us shouted to us to get out of the way. We jumped aside, and he drew the lorry up at the corner, where we were making for the *Morning Post* building.

Hicks having discovered his mistake said quickly: "Jupp, I've thrown a fiver away; it must be just about here!" We had only got as far as the corner, and as the traffic was being held up by the policeman on point-duty, we went back in search of the note, but it was nowhere to be found. Nobody had crossed the road immediately behind us, and as it was a quiet, rather still day, it ought to be somewhere on the road close by. We enlisted the services of some of the other members of the orchestra, and we spread out in extended order, and made a systematic search from the stage-door right across the road, but in vain.

The note had completely vanished. This was a very distressing thing to happen, because, in any case, no matter how well one may be paid, it is not a thing calculated to cheer one up. He took the affair in the only way possible, philosophically; although he called himself some very pretty names—not exactly drawing-room language but ingenious, and we continued our way to the "Bell."

Now it was a good hour afterwards when we returned from lunch, and I met Hicks again, who was on his way back to the theatre, still hoping that the note might have

The Gaiety Stage Door

been found inside the hall or passages. When we got to the corner of Exeter Street, we were held up for a few moments by the heavy traffic coming from Kingsway. I noticed that that same lorry was standing at the corner of Exeter Street and being loaded up with papers. What ever it was that inspired me to connect that lorry with the five-pound note I cannot tell, but something impelled me to inspect the wheels. The note had been thrown down in the road, and this lorry had come up immediately behind us.

The wheels must have passed right over the note, and there being some remains of wet tar still in patches on them, the note had been picked up, for there it was, sticking on to the front wheel. Those men had been working at that cart for all that time, not dreaming that a fiver was staring them in the face.

There is a story I should like to tell, and for which I can vouch, although, like many another good story, it has been attributed to dozens of actors ; yet I know that this is the genuine one, and no doubt the foundation of the others so closely resembling it. It has to do with our old friend "Uncle," of the Pawnbrokers' Union ; but the chief actor in it was a man who at one time had the whole theatrical world before him with every possibility of fame and fortune.

Now, we have all heard of extraordinary dealings with "Uncle," such as borrowing money on pet dogs, cats, and parrots—it has even been declared that babies and their nurses have been "pledged" during a run of bad luck at Monte Carlo, only to be redeemed of course when the marvellous change in the luck came.

The actor I am writing about is still playing in the West End. He was, and always will be, a brilliant actor ; but

An Actor in Pawn

certain little idiosyncrasies have prevented him from scaling the topmost rung of the ladder, and he still remains "nearly there."

The time I am writing about saw him a young, handsome, and extremely popular actor in the provinces, but such was his extravagance that about the middle of the week he was always "broke" and had to apply to the manager for a "sub." This became so regular with him that the management decided that a stop must be put to it.

When next he asked for the loan of a fiver he was politely but firmly refused. Arguments, appeals, and even threats were equally unavailing. He swore that if the fiver was not forthcoming in ten minutes he would refuse to play that night. This had no effect though, because the manager knew that with all his faults the actor was a gentleman and too good a sportsman to do anything so contemptible. He went away. Passing along the street he came to a big pawnbroker's, and then the idea came to him which gives rise to this story. He entered the shop and the proprietor was there. Recognizing the popular young actor, he greeted him most affably.

"Ah! I am glad you know me," said the young hero, "because I want to ask you a question, and this makes it easier. Tell me; do you think I am worth five pounds?"

The pawnbroker laughingly confessed that he didn't quite understand the question.

"It is simple enough. Do you consider that I am worth five pounds? because if you do I wish to pawn myself for that amount. All you have to do is to make out a ticket, pin it on to the lapel of my coat, and send your boy with the duplicate over to the manager of our company and tell him that if he wants me to play to-night he will have to come and redeem me."

The Gaiety Stage Door

The pawnbroker, who evidently had a sense of humour, did as suggested.

It certainly was successful, but the manager got a bit of his own back, because he didn't redeem his leading man until the very last moment, and that trick was never played again. To spend about seven hours in a pawnshop was worth more than a wretched five pounds!

W. S. Gilbert used to tell that his first short play, called "Dulcamara," was written for Mr. T. W. Robertson, brother of Mrs. Kendal (Madge Robertson), and he took it to Mr. Emden, who was then Mr. Robertson's manager. He was naturally very anxious to know what his opinion of the playlet would be, and was greatly relieved when Mr. Emden said: "This will do. How much do you want for it?" This was indeed sudden and Gilbert could only stammer out, "Thirty guineas." Mr. Emden closed the leaves of the play and said: "Make it pounds and I will take it. Gilbert eagerly assented to this proposal. "Now," said Mr. Emden, as he handed the cheque for thirty pounds over, "let me give you a piece of advice. Never sell such good stuff for thirty pounds again."



W. D. Disney.

MISS KATE VAUGHAN

face p. 29

CHAPTER XXI

THE FAREWELL TO THE OLD GAIETY, FREE REFRESHMENTS, THE PROGRAMME, "THE LINKMAN," THE FINAL SUPPER, THE AUCTION, HOW A SONG WAS BORN, LAST-NIGHT SUPPERS, SUNDAY ON A SIDING, IN THE GAIETY RESTAURANT.

FAREWELLS are always sad functions, even if it be only to one's cook, and the farewell performance at the old Gaiety Theatre was twofold. It was not only the last night of a very popular and exceedingly successful play, "The Toreador," but the absolute farewell to the best-loved theatre in the whole world. "The Toreador" could be revived, but the theatre was to be demolished, and that was what was in the minds of all in that building that Saturday night, July 4, 1903.

And not only in *their* minds but in the minds of the thousands of play-goers who had striven in vain to gain admission on that last night. Those who were fortunate enough to be there had thoroughly earned their reward, for the great majority—gallery-ites and pit-ites—had taken up their positions on the previous night after the show was over, and waited patiently all through the long hours until daybreak, and still on through the long day until the evening.

George Edwardes knew this would be the case, and with his usual thoughtfulness and kindly consideration had arranged with Lyons' to have waiters supply them with whatever was wanted. Free, of course. There was an excellent trade done by out-of-works taking up a person's position and holding it while the owner went for a wash and brush-up, or a drink, or any old thing to relieve the strain of waiting.

What a sight it was all that day. That part of the Strand and Wellington Street looked as if it had suddenly organized a special holiday on its own account, for there

The Gaiety Stage Door

were amusements of one kind or other going on all day long, and if the patient and happy devotees gave a coin to every itinerant musician or acrobat who came round with the hat, it must have been an expensive day—but there you are! They were out on a holiday and they meant to enjoy themselves. It was to be a day of memories—a day to dwell on in the future when their beloved theatre was no more.

When the doors were at last opened in the afternoon (several hours before the show was timed to begin) the people went in, in a very orderly manner—no crowding or hustling—each one recognizing that his neighbour had waited as long as himself. An orchestra played all the tunes of former successes and the audience sang them lustily. These songs represented a succession of plays stretching over thirty-five years—from the old burlesque to the advent of the now popular musical comedy.

It will be of interest to recall some of the great people who had made fame and fortune at that grand old theatre. There was Nellie Farren, the brightest boy-girl or girl-boy that ever graced the stage since the opening of the theatre in 1868. She remained with Mr. John Hollingshead for eighteen years—and when Mr. George Edwardes came upon the scene signed a contract to continue with him.

The one and only W. S. Gilbert had his first comedy played at the Gaiety, and its one fault was that it was pronounced to be “too clever by half.” Then in 1869 that fine comedian Mr. J. L. Toole made his appearance at the Gaiety, and he played there, on and off, for many years. With him was his lifelong friend, Henry Irving.

Those are only four of the famous names associated

The Programme

with the first days of the historic house—Meyer Lutz was the musical director and Robert Soutar (husband of Nellie Farren) the stage-manager. Mr. Farren-Soutar, the well-known actor of the present day, is their son. Mr. Charles Santley (later Sir), the great English baritone, sang in Opera there ; and the very first combined work of Gilbert and Sullivan was played there.

Later on we get Edward Terry, Kate Vaughan, E. W. Royce, Marian West, and Alma Stanley all in one caste. Also a young lady who was the subject of more gossip, more paragraphs, and more discussion than any other person of that day. This was Connie Gilchrist—a girl of sixteen at the time, and later the Countess of Orkney.

Then came John Dallas, Willie Warde, Arthur Williams, Harry Monkhouse, and the great Fred Leslie. These were all associated with George Edwardes ; and Maud Hobson and Hayden Coffin remained for many years under his management. Fanny Leslie, Marion Hood, Letty Lind, Ada Blanche, E. J. Linnen, Cyril Maude—what names to be included in one caste !

Such were the associations to be severed on that last night.

The programme arranged for this farewell performance was Act 2 of "The Toreador," by J. T. Tanner and Harry Nicholls, with music by Ivan Caryll and Lionel Monckton ; to be followed by "The Linkman or Gaiety Memories," written by George Grossmith. The introduction of "The Linkman" as a supplement or postscript was a happy idea, cleverly carried out. Its Gaiety memories enlightened the younger members of the vast audience and brought back fond memories to the older ones.

The auditorium had been decorated lavishly and garlanded with beautiful flowers which hung in baskets all

The Gaiety Stage Door

round the theatre, their perfume filling the whole building. There were no late-comers, for who would miss a moment of that farewell?

The house was packed to overflowing, but the London County Council did not interfere or forbid it on such an exceptional occasion. The musicians begin tapping on their instruments.

This is the moment the audience have been waiting for. Mr. Ivan Caryll comes through that little door and is greeted with a thunderous outburst of cheering. Picking up his baton, he starts the opening music of the second act of "The Toreador."

As the play went on an unusual lack of enthusiasm was somewhat noticeable. The explanation was soon manifest. The audience were too full of emotion to demand encores.

The first half of the programme passed amid a sort of sorrowful composure, but as soon as the curtain went up on "The Linkman" and Fred Wright, junior, started by pasting a bill on Teddy Payne's back, bearing that comedian's name in large letters, that awful feeling of not knowing whether to laugh or cry was dispelled by a roar of laughter, and from that moment the whole house gave itself up to a night of wild enjoyment.

George Grossmith had written "The Linkman" in such a manner as to introduce the leading characters from all the former successes, but his lines were not strictly adhered to, as artistes would come on the stage and say pretty well what they liked so long as it was in keeping with the scene. And then again, the heartiness of the reception they got, as each one made his or her entrance, was quite enough to drive any "lines" they may have hurriedly studied out of their heads.

The first scene was the Stage-door of the Gaiety Theatre,

“The Linkman”

and Robert Nainby for the nonce was Stage-doorkeeper, and if ever I had behaved as he did, I should have been promoted to principal comedian instead of guardian-in-chief of the magic door. And Connie Ediss, as the wardrobe mistress, would have got the sack on the spot, for she seemed to have forgotten the duties of that important lady, and instead of being staid and strict, made the house roar with her gags.

The second scene was the Green Room of the Gaiety Theatre, and in this were to be met all the celebrities of former as well as present days. Phyllis Broughton and Alma Stanley only appeared for a moment, but they were determined to be there at the last, as they had no intention of being forgotten. What a reception they received!

It was almost royal in its heartiness. A thing that gave great delight was the “Merry Family” quartet—Nellie Farren, Kate Vaughan, Edward Terry, and E. W. Royce—which brought back recollections of twenty-five years before, when it was all the rage. Royce made a brief speech at the end, and when speaking personally said: “It is just thirty-one years come October 2 since I first trod these boards. You cheered my faltering footsteps then: you receive me in the same way now.”

Letty Lind and Charles Danby sang the well-known duet, “Listen to my tale of woe,” out of “Cinderella up too late,” and it seemed just as fresh as ever. Florence St. John sang, and for this very special occasion Miss Florence Collingbourne and Ethel Hayden (Mrs. George Robey) emerged from private life to say good-bye to their dear old home. Lionel Brough told some stories in his inimitable style; and Connie Ediss, with Arthur Williams, gave a scene from “The Shop Girl.” Hayden Coffin sang the song that made him famous, “Queen of my

The Gaiety Stage Door

Heart" ; and Seymour Hicks, "Her Golden Hair was hanging down her Back."

The climax of the fun was reached when the famous "Pas-de-Quatre" was performed—only doubled—by Misses Evie Greene, Edna May, Ethel Irving, and Hilda Moody, who had arrived from their different theatres and were partnered by Teddy Payne, George Grossmith, Harry Grattan, and Fred Wright, junior. They were all attired in imitation of the originals. This was greeted with the utmost enthusiasm, and their weird and wonderful antics caused uproarious laughter.

"The Linkman" being concluded, the audience knew that the more serious part of the evening had arrived, especially when the whole company—greatly swelled by artistes from other theatres—stood massed upon the stage, evidently expectant of the next movement. An instant later Sir Henry Irving, accompanied by George Edwardes, appeared, and amid perfect silence Sir Henry made a speech deeply touched with feeling, and John Hollingshead came just in time to hear the kindly allusions to himself and receive a hearty handshake from the illustrious actor who had once been a member of his own company. "Auld Lang Syne" was sung—the solos being taken by Florence St. John and Charles Hayden Coffin, the whole house standing and joining in the repeat.

Then began the demand for a last word from all the popular folk on the stage, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the audience could be induced even to move, much less go out. The attendants felt awkward in trying to get the people away—it seemed like telling one's brothers and sisters to go home after a family gathering. The electricians effectually did it by gradually lowering all the house lights and then putting them out one by one, so that



MISS CONNIE GILCHRIST

W. J. D. D.

1895-1896

The Final Supper

in semi-darkness there was a general move and before long the old house was empty.

But only as far as the auditorium was concerned, for behind the scenes all was activity. The stage-hands had struck the scene, and were putting the final touches to another "set" preparatory to the supper and dance which were given to artistes, staff, and guests.

The company took all sorts of trifles as souvenirs of the old home, but George Graves, G. P. Huntley, and Jack Fraser, who had arrived from the Prince of Wales' Theatre, where they were playing in "The Schoolgirl," thought of the baskets of flowers adorning the house, and they were soon at work getting them down and presenting them to the delighted girls. I know that some of those baskets are in use now, and are regarded as the most valuable possession in flats or villas.

It was a beautiful morning when we broke up and went home, and coming out into the broad daylight made the happenings of the previous night seem more like a dream, but putting my hand into my great-coat pocket and grasping the neck of a quart bottle of the "bubbly stuff" reminded me that I had been presented with a souvenir.

The mention of "bubbly stuff" reminds me that the term originated from "The Shop Girl" and was used by Miss Connie Ediss, who, as a sort of Mrs. Malaprop, referred to champagne by that name, and a Dalmatian dog as a damnation dog. A brooch she described as being composed of Hammersmiths and Samfires.

From that time onward we had a very busy month connected with the disposal of all the goods and chattels, furniture and fixings of the old theatre, and the New Gaiety being almost finished, every hour was fully occupied.

I remember an incident at the Auction Sale, and an

The Gaiety Stage Door

attempt to do us down, which didn't come off. The stair carpets had been sold, and the buyer's men were taking them up and rolling them down each stair as they were released. I happened to come out of the general office which was on the Dress Circle level, and saw one of these men wrench off a brass gas-bracket and place it inside the carpet. With another turn it was concealed. This rather interested me, and I thought it worth while to look on. When the carpet came in line with the next gas-bracket, that was also wrenched from the wall and put inside the carpet. On reaching the landing half-way down I thought it time to join him, and went straight down. Just at the bottom I pretended to slip and collided with the roll of carpet. Straightway down the stairs tumbled the lot, and out came half a dozen brackets.

I don't remember apologizing for giving him the extra bother of re-rolling his carpet, but I *do* remember gathering the gas-brackets up and taking them into the office. It was not worth while making a scene, and I just let him get his carpets up, which he did in double-quick time, and clear off.

They were selling the wardrobe on the stage when I went down, and I looked on as a few lots of skirts and things were being sold. One lot was a bundle of sixty white petticoats, and the bidding was awful. Somebody had the temerity to start it at two shillings, and it went up in sixpences. At five shillings they only represented one penny a garment, so somebody was getting a bargain. The lot was knocked down for ten shillings, and the auctioneer asking as usual "What name?" great was my astonishment when a voice said "Jupp!"

I hadn't made a bid, and had no thought of making one, and certainly not for a bundle of petticoats; but George

A Vanished Carpet

Edwardes, who was standing by, said : " Well, I'll be d——d ! Fancy Jupp buying that lot. What on earth is he going to do with all those ? Up against Morris Angel, I suppose." Whether it was a joke or a mistake I didn't know then, but I promptly paid the ten shillings and that made the buyer disclose his identity.

I said : " Give me fifteen shillings and they are yours." He paid the quickest five-shilling turnover I ever made.

But I had a commission to bid for one of the pianos—there were three, but somehow or other they were missing from the building, and were never traced. Perhaps the carpet merchant knew something about them ! Which reminds me that when the New Gaiety was being furnished, an enormous crush-room carpet was brought one day. It took six men to carry it, and they must have taken it in through one door and out of another, because, although it was signed for, it was never seen again. How careless some workmen are ! Yet it was rather a big thing to mislay.

I had strange emotions on the first day I took up my duties at the stage-door in the New Gaiety. I had such fond memories of the old house that a certain resentment filled me for a little while.

A story comes to my mind about a well-known song writer, Joseph Tabrar, author and composer of " Daddy wouldn't buy me a Bow-wow," " Ting-ting," etc. One day he called at the stage-door and said : " They've done it on me, Jupp. They've taken my living away from me—taken my piano for a paltry debt of five pounds. Could I see Mr. Edwardes ?" I told him the " Guv'nor" hadn't arrived yet, so he sat down in the hall and started his lamentations again.

Just then a barrel-organ started outside, and he became

The Gaiety Stage Door

thoughtful. When the grinding ceased, he asked me if I minded him writing in my office, and pulling out a sheet of music paper rattled off note after note on it. About half an hour afterwards he stopped and, looking up, said : " When Mr. Edwardes comes, tell him I want to see him about a new song—one that will fetch all London ! " I did as he asked, and the " Guv'nor " told me to show him in. He bought the song, and gave it to Connie Ediss to sing. It *was* indeed a winner. " That's what I want to know " was the title of it, and was encored nightly. Joe Tabrar got his piano back !

Speaking of authors, I don't suppose there are many people who know that the famous play " One of the Best," which was one of William Terriss' great successes, was written by George Edwardes and Seymour Hicks. I remember them discussing it in the office, and my being there gave them the name of the humorous character " Private Jupp," played by Harry Nicholls. My name brought me a nice present in the shape of a heavy gold ring. Mr. Hicks said : " We're going to christen one of our characters after you, Jupp—hope you won't mind—and I want to make you a present. What about a gold ring as a memento ? " Of course I accepted and went to Lewis and Salome in Cranbourne Street and got a beauty, which I wear to the present day.

It was not only on the last night of the old Gaiety that Mr. Edwardes gave a supper on the stage followed by a dance. This was done at the end of the run of every piece, and was attended by all the company and their chosen friends. The stage was cleared by the stage-hands (who were also guests at the supper), and in a few moments presented the appearance of as inviting a dining-room as could be found in any of the leading hotels. With appro-

Last-Night Suppers

priate scenery and the lighting effects which can be obtained in any well-appointed theatre, the result was most picturesque, especially with the last final touch which flowers and ferns always lend.

During these preparations the artistes would don their evening dress, for that was always worn on such occasions, and very soon the festivities began.

It was by no means a bread and cheese and beer repast, but champagne and quail on toast, with everything that was in season, and preferably expensive luxuries that were not in season, for George Edwardes was a connoisseur and gourmand with a reputation that even Col. Newnham Davies might be proud of. This happening on a Saturday night, as a matter of course, and the majority of the company living somewhere outside of London, arrangements were generally made for their accommodation at hotels ; but I don't know how many availed themselves of the opportunity to sleep in the beds provided, for I never remember any of these functions finishing up until about six or seven in the morning, and even then card parties would be in full swing.

There was no occasion for a tearful farewell, because we were just like one rather big family and we should most probably all be together in the next production, which was generally all ready for rehearsal before the old one was taken off.

I remember a Monday morning after one of these occasions. I was at my usual post—the stage-door; for no matter whether the theatre be closed or not, that door is never closed and I carry on just the same. Two very washed-out-looking members of the company appeared and in a very weak and soulless tone asked if there were any letters.

The Gaiety Stage Door

"What's the matter? You don't seem very chirpy this morning," I said to one whose expression would scarcely give credence to his reputation as a comedian.

"Chirpy? Look here, Jupp, when we left the party about 4.30 yesterday morning we drove over to Waterloo to catch the first train up to Wimbledon, but what with the excitement of the last night of the show and then the supper party we must have been dead beat, because the next thing we knew was that we had passed Wimbledon and been taken on to Windsor, where we were backed on to a siding still fast asleep.

"Fancy being stranded on a Sunday afternoon in Windsor of all places and in evening dress! We were dying for a drink, but we dared not show ourselves in such a get-up. Imagine it! I wish it had been only imagination, but when I looked at Arthur it was only too true. You never saw such a sketch in your life. Oh! Arthur, I never thought you particularly good-looking, but yesterday you looked the limit.

"Well, Jupp, we had to stick in that infernal railway carriage until it got dark, and then of course we were free and able to walk into the nearest hotel without any embarrassment. I have never tasted nectar, but if it is anything like that first whisky and soda last night, then the gods must be happy indeed. Now do you wonder why we are not feeling quite the real thing this morning? Come on, Arthur. Let's go to Short's and have one."

The Gaiety Restaurant, which was next door to the theatre and looked like a part of the building, was famous in those days for its grill-room. At the luncheon hour you could see dozens of the famous men connected with the arts and professions gathered together in little groups

In the Gaiety Restaurant

at their own favourite tables. It seemed to be such a perfectly kept place and so scrupulously clean that one would never have suspected what afterwards proved to be its real condition. When it was finally closed up and there were no caretakers on the premises the truth came out.

Our stage-manager, Mr. Dodson, who was popularly known as "Doddy," told me that he had seen two or three big rats running across a beam close to one of the windows as he passed. There was nothing particularly startling in this, but he thought there might be some fun to be got out of it with a good dog. He and I went along to the side door and quietly unlocked it. Passing through, we made our way to the grill-room.

We could hear the rats squealing and scampering about, so as noiselessly as possible we crept towards the folding-doors and gently opened them. The room had been originally covered with an enormous green carpet, but what we saw was a living mass of dark brown, and scarcely believing our eyes, on closer observation this brown mass proved to be not hundreds but thousands of rats.

The building had been closed up for over a fortnight, and these verminous rodents were ravenous and the green carpet had almost disappeared. It was an appalling sight, and an involuntary cry from "Doddy" startled this horde. There was a mighty stampede, and it was miraculous how they disappeared so quickly. So quickly indeed that when they were gone and the room left bare it seemed like some hideous dream, but the condition of the carpet brought us to realize that we were wide awake.

Now comes the sequel. Our fireman's dog was at the stage-door with me, and when "Doddy" and I went to the grill-room poor old "Rags" must have followed us, because

The Gaiety Stage Door

it was missing all that day and night, and when we paid another visit the next morning, as soon as we opened the door, there in the passage was what remained of the poor dog—only two hind legs. Around him lay between thirty and forty dead rats, so he must have had a severe fight before they finally overcame him.

CHAPTER XXI

A THOUGHT READER, THE "GUV'NOR" ASTONISHED, GEORGE EDWARDES' GRIMSBY FRIENDS, A QUIET TEA, IN THE DARK, "DOPE," A LADY OF TITLE, BASIL HALLAM, ACTORS IN KHAKI.

THERE are many brilliant people who believe in spiritualism, in fortune-telling, thought-reading, and the occult in general, and every one is permitted to have his or her opinion provided always that they allow others an equal right to their own opinions ; so I will say nothing about the following story except that it is true.

There was a man who called himself Professor Kahn, Thought Reader, who had become a celebrity among that class. He called at the stage-door one morning, and presenting his card, asked me if he could see Mr. George Edwardes. I took the card in to the "Guv'nor," and he instantly stopped in his work and said : " Oh, yes ! Show him in, Jupp." Then he spoke to our manager, Mr. Marshall, who was going through some papers with him, and said that he would like him to remain and hear Professor Kahn, whom he had met a few evenings previously. He said that this man had performed some really astonishing feats of thought-reading, but now he was going to put him to a test.

I showed the wizard in, and was about to leave, when the "Guv'nor" said : " All right, Jupp ; you may stop here." So I remained and heard what took place. The "Guv'nor" invited him to demonstrate his powers. Professor Kahn said : " If you will think quite seriously on one subject, and not let your thoughts wander from it, I think I shall convince you that your thoughts are laid bare to me." This was an interesting beginning, and the "Guv'nor," smiling, agreed to do so. We were requested

The Gaiety Stage Door

to suspend work in order not to distract the "Guv'nor's" mind in any way, and the business began.

For a few minutes it was stupid, sitting there quite still, while the dear old "Guv'nor" kept his mind on the one subject he had selected, but that feeling of foolishness was quickly cast off when the Professor noiselessly rose from his seat and, approaching Mr. Edwardes, gazing intently into his eyes all the while, said: "Yes, Mr. Edwardes, I will tell you what will become of her, if you will write the lady's name on a slip of paper and keep it in your closed hand. I don't wish to see the name—I will read that for myself from your own thoughts; and when I know whom you are thinking about I will tell you what will become of her, for that is what you were wondering in your mind."

Greatly astonished, Mr. Edwardes hesitated to write the name, but Professor Kahn reassured him by saying: "Please write it, Mr. Edwardes—I promise you that I shall be discreet. I will also write it down as soon as I know it, and then you will believe in my powers."

Mr. Edwardes wrote down the name of a lady in whose career he was taking a very great interest and whom he esteemed highly. Then he closed the paper in his hand and looked at the Professor. There can be no possible doubt that, up to that moment, the latter had not the slightest knowledge of the written name, yet after a long gaze into Mr. Edwardes' eyes he said: "I know the name, sir—I will write it for you."

He hastily scribbled on a slip of paper and handed it to Mr. Edwardes. "I will not ask you if that is the name because I am *sure* it is, and you might think that I felt in doubt if I did ask you." He was perfectly correct. Mr. Edwardes' expression had changed from quiet amusement into one of almost fearful wonder.

The "Guv'nor" Astonished

"This is marvellous, Professor. It seems unnatural that one should be gifted as you are, but there is one thing of which you cannot be sure, because it is not an accomplished fact yet, and that is the lady's future. You were quite right when you said that I was wondering what would become of her, and now you have correctly written her name down. Now then, *What will become of her?*"

The extraordinary part of this story is that Professor Kahn not only said that she would marry a military man but gave the name, and his prophecy has since come true.

When Mr. Edwardes had said good-bye to the Professor, the manager and I went out of the office. The Thought Reader said to Mr. Marshall: "You don't believe in me, sir—I can tell that; but if you will allow me, I will convince *you* also that I am no charlatan. Tell me, Mr. Marshall, do you remember what the takings were last night?"

Mr. Marshall smiled superciliously and replied: "Since I am manager of the theatre, of course I know!" The Professor smiled also, but with confidence. "Will you be so kind as to just let your mind dwell upon those takings and I will tell you what they were." This was indeed a test of his powers, and Mr. Marshall said: "Go ahead: I will think of the exact amount and give you a fair chance." The reader may think that I am romancing when I say that Professor Kahn told him the exact amount, but it is true.

I was the only one remaining with him; and as he had made me very interested, to say the least of it, I asked him if he could tell me what I was thinking about if I concentrated in the same way that the others had.

His reply was very much to the point: "No, I could not read your thoughts because you have not the slightest

The Gaiety Stage Door

faith in me ; but I will tell you also that I *would* not attempt to read your thoughts for the all-important reason that I am sure you have no money." I wonder why they all seem to know that ?

Men who come from the provinces to London and become successful in whatever walk of life they may have chosen, always have a secret corner in their hearts for the town or village in which they first saw the light of day. Is it not made quite a feature in the papers that " Lord So-and-so " visited his native town and laid the foundation stone to a building, or unveiled a new pump in somebody's honour ? And then is given a verbatim report of his speech in which he tells all the inhabitants how proud he is to know that he is one of them—that he can claim relation, as it were, with every one of them.

So it was with George Edwardes. His native place was Grimsby, where his father held a high position in the Custom House, and anyone coming from there who had even so much as spoken to one of the " Guv'nor's " family was made welcome.

I remember one occasion, and I don't think the two gentlemen concerned will have forgotten it. It was one Saturday when a big football match was being played at the Crystal Palace, and all the world and his wife were up for a week-end.

About six o'clock that evening, just as I was preparing to go out for an hour between the matinée and evening show, these two men presented themselves at the stage-door and asked if Mr. Edwardes was anywhere about, and if so, would I let him know that two friends from Grimsby would like to see him. I told them that he had been gone some time, but was sure he would be pleased if they would come back about half an hour before the evening perform-

A Quiet Tea

ance began. You will wonder why I am giving all these seemingly small details, and I hasten to explain that these, and one more small item, led to all the trouble that was to follow.

The other small item was that they asked me if I could recommend them to a quiet place where they could get a light tea. I thought the best place they could go to was Lyons' Café, which was just round the corner in the Strand, and as I was all ready to go out, I offered to conduct them.

As I do not frequent tea shops unless by doctor's orders, I was unaware of their hours for closing, nor did I know that they were earlier on a Saturday than on any other day. However, I took the men round and left them there. From that day to this I have never seen either of them, but I have heard what became of them.

I told Mr. Edwardes of his two friends from Grimsby coming to see him, and that I had taken it upon myself to invite them back. He said he was pleased that I had done so, and finding that a private box would not be in use that night, he reserved it for them. But, as I have let it be inferred, they did not put in an appearance. What happened was this.

They ordered tea and eggs on toast, and the waitress said she did not think there was time for that order, but she would inquire. While she was away they thought a wash-up would fill in the time, and they went below. It appears that one of them slipped and turned his ankle under him. By the time they had washed and brushed up, the man who had slipped found that he could not walk, and then did a very unwise thing in the circumstances. He took his boot off and bathed his foot, which, of course, swelled up very quickly. While all this was taking place the waitress had returned to tell them that it was too late

The Gaiety Stage Door

to get eggs on toast, and finding them gone thought they had gone elsewhere.

Ten minutes later the place was closed, and in darkness ; but the two visitors from Grimsby were still down below. The injured man found that he could not possibly get his boot on again, so the other one said he would send for a taxi-cab. When he opened the lavatory door he was greatly astonished to find the place in darkness. Thinking it might be only the light in the passage that had gone wrong, he struck a match, and seeing the stairs, groped his way up. The match went out, and then he began to realize that the whole place was in darkness. Then his mind recalled the waitress saying that she didn't think there was time to get their tea ready, and the truth of their predicament dawned upon him.

"Hi, Horace ! Do you know we are locked in ? They've all gone home, and the whole place is in darkness. Come up ! Oh, blazes ! Of course you *can't* come up. *Now* what's to be done ?"

He went below again and the situation was discussed. The front windows were not accessible on account of high glass partitions, and there was a gate about nine feet away from the front entrance, but it was securely locked, so there was not much chance of attracting the attention of passers-by. It was bad enough in any case, but when one was practically a cripple the outlook was not promising.

The only thing to do was to keep on striking matches as near to the windows as possible, and in that way attract somebody's attention, even if it happened to be a policeman. Then the horrible thought came to them that if it *did* happen to be a guardian of the peace, they would undoubtedly be mistaken for burglars, and more than likely spend their week-end in a cell. Well ! as they were

Out at Last

quite innocent of any felonious intent and could easily clear their characters, they decided to run the risk, and the very fact of their deliberately making their presence known would go to prove their *bona fides*.

The uninjured man climbed over the iron gate, and stood close to the door, keeping out of sight until a policeman came along ; then he knocked loudly on the door and struck a match. The policeman saw him at once, and went up. Signalling that he wanted to speak through the letter box, he told his tale in as few words as possible, and asked if there was any possibility of getting out again.

The policeman passed word from beat to beat, until it reached the station, and from there the inspector came down to investigate. With the assistance of the *sound* man an entrance was effected from the back of the premises, and then the whole thing was explained.

They had to spend the whole of Sunday in London, not exactly under arrest, but certainly without complete freedom, and it was not until they had made an appearance, in camera, before the magistrate, that they were allowed to return to Grimsby.

They enlisted the services of a solicitor, and by his aid succeeded in getting compensation for the inconvenience and loss of working time through the negligence on the part of the restaurant staff in not making sure there was nobody left on the premises before locking up.

As I have said before, I have never seen either of those two men since, so I presume their interest in football played in London is confined to what they can read about it in the papers !

Much publicity has been given of late, exposing the iniquities in connection with "Dope," and the terrible case

The Gaiety Stage Door

of poor little Billy Carleton will no doubt be fresh in everybody's memory. In her case there were no signs at all of this most pernicious habit, and she used to go about her professional business as if she were still hanging on to her mother's apron-strings. It is very difficult to detect the effects of cocaine until a post-mortem examination is made, and then of course it is too late. There are many prominent men in the scientific world, as well as legal lights, who believe in the innocence of Mrs. Maybrick. There are women who drink Eau-de-Cologne and are seldom suspected. It is well known that a wee nip of methylated spirits has quite an exhilarating effect upon people who know its qualities and the amount to take, and its effects are less injurious than two or three whiskies taken in different houses.

In respect of this taking of drugs, I remember a sad case. She was a young and beautiful girl in the chorus. She had a splendid voice, and was evidently possessed of natural histrionic ability, so much so that she was given the position of understudy to our then leading lady. She rehearsed the part for a week, and the stage-manager was delighted with her, and expressed the opinion that if anything went wrong with the principal lady, he would put this young girl on with the greatest confidence.

One morning during the understudy rehearsals the stage-manager—Mr. Dodson, whom I have frequently mentioned—called her aside and asked her if she were feeling ill. In a dazed sort of way she admitted that she was not quite up to the mark and thought it would be better if she were excused for that morning. He naturally let her go.

In the evening she seemed to be quite well again, but when it came to rehearsal on the following morning, she

Laudanum

appeared to be worse. She was half dazed again, but her articulation was far less distinct. Mr. Dodson let her off again; but as it happened every morning afterwards for at least a week, and yet she always appeared quite herself at night, he began to have his doubts about her illness, and wondered if it were not the after-effects of a late night.

It was only natural that he should wonder at such a promising girl suddenly falling in this extraordinary manner. He and I were great friends, both in and out of business, and he asked me if I had noticed Miss C—— lately; in short, if I thought she was a girl who had taken to drink. This suggestion of his brought back to my mind a morning when this unfortunate young girl had told me a secret.

She had suffered for a long time with internal pains, and had started taking just a little drop of laudanum every now and then to ease them. This proved to be so effectual for temporary relief that she had continued it, and although the pains returned with greater force, she managed to dull them by greater doses of the drug, until at last, she avowed, she could take sufficient laudanum to kill ten people. I wondered if I ought to tell this to "Doddy." I decided not to, and simply said that as far as I knew she was never likely to give way to drink in the common vulgar way. "Perhaps the girl is seriously ill and won't tell anybody. Why don't you talk to her and ask her to tell you straight what is wrong?"

That same night she came to the theatre in a far worse state than she had ever been in—intoxicated in the real meaning of the term, for she knew quite well what she had to do but couldn't do it.

Her friends in the dressing-room did their utmost to get her dressed in her stage costume and make her face

The Gaiety Stage Door

up, but by then she was too far gone to go upon the stage, so she was left in the care of the dresser. She had not the slightest appearance of being in a drunken condition, and yet she was incapable of behaving in a sober manner as far as her actions were concerned. A doctor was sent for. He said that she must be sent home at once, as she was suffering from the effects of some kind of poisoning which at that moment he could not determine. The doctor's orders had to be obeyed, especially as he was our own theatre doctor and had the interests of all our artistes at heart.

She protested in as forcible a manner as she was capable of, and seemed to have a very strong reason for not going to her home. However, she was taken to the address we were in possession of, and then her real identity became known. She was a lady of title, and had given the address of an old nurse of hers. She was taken in and attended to, but as the place was not suitable for such a case, she was sent away to a real nursing home. There she died.

You remember Basil Hallam, the light comedian who became popularly known as "Gilbert the Filbert, the Colonel of the Knuts." After the War had started, letters and post-cards he received by almost every post from young women and others urging him to join up, were such as would disturb even a conscientious objector, but as he had done his very utmost to join up, it was painful. The Army did not want him, but the Stage did, and he had been told that he would be of more service at his profession than in khaki. If those misguided young women had only taken the trouble to inquire about a man before attacking him, a tremendous lot of injustice would not now be recorded to their discredit.

Basil Hallam was positively driven into active service,

Basil Hallam

for he succeeded in getting into the Balloon Service and went out to France as an observer. An eye-witness, Mr. J. Edward Fraser, who was for a great number of years principal baritone at the Gaiety, Prince of Wales, and other theatres under my "Guv'nor," George Edwardes, has told me how he died. He was in charge of the guard attached to General Walker at a little village named Bus, in the neighbourhood of Arras, and on the evening of the tragedy the guard reported that an observation balloon had got loose and was drifting towards the German lines. It was true; but it was too late to arrest its progress, and then it was that Basil Hallam did the splendid thing that was his last act. He quickly gathered up all the documents that were in the basket attached to the balloon and threw them overboard so that they would land in our lines, and then, while there was still time for him to escape, he jumped out.

In ordinary circumstances he would have landed in safety, but the parachute failed to open, and poor Basil Hallam crashed down to earth and was killed instantly. He was buried at Couin, and when Jack Fraser visited the grave he read the correct name on the little wooden cross : "Captain Basil Hallam Radford."

Next to him lies the body of a private soldier, and the grave still farther on is that of Lieut. Kellett, son of the General in Command of the Sportsmen's Battalion, 24th R.F., to which Jack Fraser belonged.

Basil Hallam's death was witnessed by members of his own profession, for the Sportsmen's Battalion were stationed at Bus, and included in the guard, in addition to Jack Fraser, were several other actors. Leigh-Ellis, brother of that brilliant musical comedy artist, Gracie Leigh, was one, and Edward Dunstan, well known as a Shakespearian

The Gaiety Stage Door

actor, was also present. Little Teddy Rutherford, Gerald Ashford, and several other actors were the unhappy eye-witnesses of the fate of "Gilbert the Filbert."

The Sportsmen's Battalion was well named, for in addition to actors there were many prominent men in the sporting world. Members of the Surrey, Middlesex, and Essex County Cricket clubs joined it, and it would have been a simple matter to call out an English eleven from the rank and file. There was also an International team at either "Soccer" or "Rugger," and their transport officer was no less a horseman than Stanley Wootton.

One of the greatest aerial feats of the war was the work of a gallant young man who first joined the Sportsmen's Battalion as a private, and afterwards went into the Flying Corps. This was young Lieut. Warneford, V.C., who attacked a Zeppelin on his own initiative and succeeded in bringing it to grief. He went up single-handed to a height of 6,000 feet in the neighbourhood of Bruges and Ghent on June 7, 1915, at early dawn, and fired at it until he had set it ablaze. For this he was awarded the Victoria Cross and the Croix de la Légion d'Honneur. He met a glorious death through his victory. When he was buried with full military honours the firing party was supplied by the Sportsmen's Battalion.

The first actor to be killed in the war was that splendid character-comedian, Lionel MacKinder, husband of Gracie Leigh. He died singing. It is generally understood that he was the life and soul of his comrades, and when they were "up the line" his cheery disposition had a stimulating effect upon all near and around him. The man with a ready wit and the courage to exercise it during a hail of fire from the enemy could inspire his comrades with an optimism that was practically the equal in effect as sheer

Meeting Death with a Song

bravery. It is not the man who knows no fear that is the truly brave man—it is he who, in his secret heart, is honestly afraid, but has sufficient pluck in him to refuse to turn back and goes forward until the end. Lionel MacKinder was singing a cheerful song to enliven not only his comrades but himself, when suddenly the song came to an end.

CHAPTER XXIII

A RARE GIFT, THE OFFICER'S TAXI-CAB, A PIECE OF MELODRAMA, A 1914 DISAPPEARANCE, THE SUSPICIOUS RETURN, AIR RAIDS, THE BOMBS IN WELLINGTON STREET AND ALDWYCH.

OF all the gifts that have been laid, figuratively speaking, at the feet of an actress, surely the famous Parisienne dancer Mlle. Régine Flory can boast of being the recipient of the most unique.

One who is the happy possessor of numerous motor-cars does not find much novelty in the acquisition of yet another one—nor does a much-bejewelled lady attach much value to an additional diamond pendant or so. But something extremely rare and very difficult to get, such as a bunch of genuine four-leaf shamrock or the eidelweiss, is prized, and held in much higher esteem, no matter what its intrinsic value may be.

So it was with Mlle. Régine Flory. The time I am writing of was during the early days of the War, and the French dancer was appearing at the Gaiety in a piece called "The Beauty Spot." One night there came to the stage-door a long, lean, café-au-lait coloured man, but without any of those distinguishing marks on the forehead which denote the Indian of rank. He was just an ordinary man without the least pretension to any particular caste, so I wondered when he asked if he might be permitted to see Mlle. Flory.

I told him that I would send his name in to her if he would give me his card, but he didn't possess such a thing. "She does not know me, but will you tell her that I have been sitting in the theatre every night since I arrived with my ship, and to-night I have brought her a present if she will see me?"

Of course I did as he wished, but I wrote a short note

A Rare Gift

letting her know what sort of man her visitor was. She sent down word by her dresser that she could not possibly see anybody unless by arrangement. He said: "Will you tell her that I want to see her very much indeed? I have watched her dance every night and I must know her. Will you give her this present from me and ask her when she will speak?"

The dresser said she could not take any present to her mistress without permission, and left him without any further parley.

He evidently could not understand that he was not wanted, because he merely smiled at me, and, placing a large cardboard box about the size of one to hold a pair of boots on my desk, said: "You keep him safe—much big present for Ray-Sheene. Ali Shon bring him again to-morrow."

I felt the box and found it was very heavy. I shook it, but it appeared to be solid. When Régine Flory was going out of the theatre that night I showed her the box, and told her that this Ali John would bring another for her on the following night. "But Meester Zhupp, I not know eem—I not know any Indian man. I no want present. Maybe it no good."

The next night the swarthy gallant presented himself and placed another heavy box on my desk. I told him that I did not think it was of much use trying to see Mlle. Flory unless he got a proper introduction, and even then he must have a justifiable reason for seeking her acquaintance.

He called every night for over a week, and at last he said that this would be the last visit, as he was sailing for the River Plate on the morrow. How that chap pleaded for her to come and speak to him, even if only for one moment!

The Gaiety Stage Door

Knowing that strange things have happened through a want of just a little care, I had made up my mind that nothing should happen in this case. I told him he would have to go away and not bother any more. Then, remembering his offerings, I took them from under my desk and told him to take them away with him. He glanced in open-mouthed astonishment.

“She has not taken my presents? Oh, I have run such risks to get that for her, and she has not even looked at it. Oh, send her that one I brought to-night—it is very special, and tell her, if she will not come to speak to me, to please give me a photograph to keep me company when I am away at sea.”

I persuaded him to go away for an hour, and in the meantime I would do what I could for him.

He had not been gone long when Régine Flory's dresser came down on an errand. I told her to take that last box up and ask her mistress to open it and examine the contents, as I felt sure it was intended to bring her great pleasure.

I told her that Ali John seemed genuinely upset when he found that she had ignored his gifts, and that he declared that he had risked a lot to get it for her. I must confess that he had made me feel quite curious about it, and I did not forget to mention the request for a photograph, as this would be his last visit.

A very few moments afterwards the dresser came down in a very excited state, and said that Régine had changed her mind and would see Ali John for a moment after the show.

When I told him that he was to be rewarded at last for all his patient perseverance he positively swelled with pride. “Ah!” he exclaimed, “then she has accepted my present,



MISS NELLIE FARREN

face p. 320



Reward at Last

eh? If she had done so at first I should have been happy many days ago."

When Régine came out that night I could not refrain from asking what all those boxes had contained, and what wonderful magic they possessed to make her so suddenly break down all the barriers of convention. With a new and brighter light in her ever beautiful eyes she replied, as she waved a large photo of herself in the air: "Oh, Meester Zhupp, it ees too wander-fool—wanderfool! Sugaire—how you say?—sugar!—ceeps of sugaire! Vraiment! Where is thees Meester Alee Shon?"

So that was it! Well, it certainly was something to get excited over in those bitter days when an all-wise and discerning Government rationed each person to about an egg-cupful for a week.

Ali John got his desire in the shape of a signed photo and the memory of a lovely woman's smiles and words of gratitude to keep him company, while Régine Flory, with all her costly jewels and other possessions, gave one the impression that she had suddenly awakened from a wonderfully sweet dream and found it had all come true. In one sense it had.

During the run of "The Sunshine Girl" we had a charming girl whose name was May Sarony. She was a real type of the thoroughly decent girl to be met with on the English stage. When her husband elected to give up his position in the City and "join up," she applauded and made him feel that she would always be at his side wherever he might be sent, Flanders or Far East.

As time went on his letters became fewer and fewer, and instead of the weekly account of his doings would come the aggravating field post-card; but she always kept up her spirits, and so long as these conventional tidings arrived

The Gaiety Stage Door

she knew that he was still carrying on and doing his real bit.

There came a silence for quite a few weeks, and the brave little woman began to ask me what I thought was the matter. I told her that in my opinion nothing was wrong, otherwise she would hear about it without so long a delay. There was no other reply to give, and as an old soldier I gave her the benefit of long experience.

She took heart once more, and waited patiently. At last there came another field card with everything scratched out except what had to be taken as a message. "Have been wounded. Have been in hospital. Have been discharged. Am coming home." I may say that there was a very happy (if somewhat tearful) reunion between May Sarony and her husband. He was a Captain in one of the London infantry battalions and had got his wounds at Carnoy on the Somme during the taking of the second line of the German trenches in September, 1916. He was no longer fit for active service, and eventually got his discharge from the Army.

Upon his return to civilian life he found there was no occupation for him in the City with the firm he had been formerly with and for which he had done his best. It was a fortunate thing that his wife, May Sarony, still remained at the Gaiety, but even that rankled in his mind. His wife keeping him when he should have been given his old job back again! It was intolerable. Yet, what could he do? He confided in me.

"Jupp, old man, I can't stand this any longer. I'm going to get a taxi-cab of my own with the little money I've got left, and you can easily put me on to some of your wealthy clients during the day. May need not know anything about it. I'll tell her I've got back into the City,

The Officer's Taxi-cab

and that will explain my absence during the day. Will you do this for me, old man?"

Naturally I agreed, and as he truly said, I could always put him in for the best jobs that were going. He started in business with his well-appointed taxi-cab; neat little curtains in the windows, and a small bowl of flowers hanging on each side gave the vehicle a *distingué* appearance. As time went on he grew bolder, and when May Sarony had come into the theatre he would resume his business, always waiting in the vicinity of the stage-door for one of my "specials." May never suspected what her husband was really doing for a living, and I enjoyed being in the innocent deception.

One night two of our girls had special permission to go to a charity concert to give an original turn, and they asked me to get them a nice turn-out to take them along. I did so. It was my fellow-conspirator of course, but unfortunately one of the girls could not go, as she had suddenly fallen ill, and in her place May Sarony elected to go. I told him quickly about the alteration, and said he had only a few seconds to make up his mind what should be done. As it happened there was an old friend who also had a taxi plying for hire, and seeing him standing outside, I hurried out to him, dragging my friend with me. "Here, Val, I want you to change cars with this gentleman for a little while—there's no time to explain now. I'll tell you about it when you get back. Do as I ask you."

I knew that my word would be good enough for him, so the change over was made, and when the ladies came out all was nicely arranged.

They got back about an hour before our show finished, and were able to go on with their usual business. Sufficient

The Gaiety Stage Door

explanation was made to Val, and my officer friend took his car back to the garage with evident relief.

It was not to finish there, though. May Sarony and her friend came to me after the show and asked if I could find the man who had driven them to the concert, as it was most important that he should search his car immediately. The other girl had lost a diamond hoop, and she felt sure it was in the car because she had pinned a few flowers in her blouse with it just before getting in, but it was missing when she got up to her dressing-room. I told them that I would find him without any doubt, and was relieved when they went. I telephoned up to the garage where my friend put up his taxi and was fortunate enough to find him there. He had just arrived. Upon searching the car he found the hoop, which he brought down to me the next day. The girl was so delighted to get her jewel back that she said that I was to send the driver in to her and she would reward him. She never could understand why that reward was never claimed.

There have been hundreds of extremely dramatic incidents related in connection with the War, but the one of which I am writing now would supply enough material for a first-class melodrama. The first act of it took place at the Gaiety Theatre in the year before the War. We had among our choristers a young man who had a particularly distinguished bearing and manner. He spoke and behaved like a man of gentle birth and good breeding. At that time we thought the world was at peace, and certainly to all appearances it was, so that no one outside the Secret Service would have suspected his neighbour of anything sinister in any of his actions. This immaculate young man was an accomplished linguist, and in addition to five Continental languages, which he spoke fluently, he would have a long

A Piece of Melodrama

yarn with me in Hindustani. He was a most entertaining young man.

When the Tango dance was at its worst and making the witless prove to the world how bankrupt they were as regards brains, this young fellow took it up as an additional source of income, and in company with one of our girl choristers obtained engagements for week-end visits to Brighton, Folkestone, and other seaside places on very excellent terms. His favourite place was Folkestone. He became very well known there.

There was one thing that I did notice, and that was that regularly every week-end a letter came from Germany for him. There was nothing unusual in letters arriving from the Continent or abroad, but it seemed curious that he should receive these so regularly, because there was not the slightest noticeable trace of anything un-English about him, neither in his speech, appearance, nor general behaviour. He used to have such long yarns with me that I took the liberty of asking him about his German letters. He said they came from his wife, who was also on the stage and doing a tour of the Continent. I asked him if she was an Englishwoman, and he gave me a look which I didn't understand then, but now of course is quite understandable. He said she was Scotch, and had a very strong accent which was not easily understood by people even of her own nation unless they came from the same Highland district. This entirely unnecessary and extremely elaborate explanation only made me curious to meet her.

A few weeks afterwards he said that his wife was returning to England, and he would try to get her into the chorus along with him. Eventually *two* ladies came along with him, and if ever two typical German women were in demand

The Gaiety Stage Door

there would be no necessity to seek farther than those two.

A curious thing was that that same week-end a letter arrived from Germany in exactly the same handwriting, so I twitted him on the fact that his wife was still writing to him although she was back again with him. Then he told me that the letters came from his people, who were very wealthy, and that he himself was a German Count.

He took an empty flat in Brixton, and furnished it on the hire system. He succeeded in getting one of the girls, whom he introduced as his wife, into the chorus, and things went on all right until the rumours of war began. Without any word of warning or notice of leaving, his wife suddenly absented herself from the theatre. At first he said that she was ill, but as no doctor's certificate was forthcoming in accordance with the usual contract, her name was removed from the company. I asked him why he didn't get a doctor to certify as to her illness, and then he said that the truth of the matter was that his wife had run away with another man and, as he believed they had gone to Germany again, he intended to follow her, declaring that he would shoot her as soon as he met her.

I did not believe a word he said, and told him so. I went farther and accused him of being a spy, and after weighing different facts and contradictions, I had come to the conclusion that the two women were also spies.

The very next day he was missing from the theatre, and at night I had a visit from a detective, who wanted to know all I could tell him about this man. It appears that he had sold all of the furniture which he had hired, and left the flat owing the rent. I told the detective all I knew, and furnished him with the German name he alleged was his correct one—Count Rysbach. That same night

The Suspicious Return

Charles Russ, who was the stage-manager of the Apollo Theatre, rang up and asked me if I could get hold of Rysbach, as he wanted to speak to him on a matter of importance.

I told him of Rysbach's disappearance, and then learned that Russ had lent one of his evening-dress suits and a leather trunk to him about three weeks previous to then, and although Rysbach had promised to return them within the week, he had not done so, and Russ particularly wanted them.

War broke out a week later, and all the world knows what took place then.

I had forgotten all about Rysbach and his two women friends until one day, towards the end of 1916, he presented himself at the stage-door. All my old suspicions came back to me, only much more so, when I noticed how immaculately he was dressed. Shining silk hat with a perfectly fitting morning suit and yellow gloves, he presented a picture of Peace in Piccadilly. Instantly I felt up against this man, not really on account of what I knew against him, nor because of my former suspicions, but because of some instinctive dislike.

He was most affable, and pressed me to go out to lunch with him. Now, greatly as I disliked the man, something within me prompted me to accept his invitation. I asked him, during lunch, how he had managed to get over here, if it were true that he was a German Count. I wanted to know why he was not serving his own country, instead of being here in the midst of the enemy. This he tried to pass off with another lie, declaring that he was only fooling when he said he was a German Count.

"I have just come over from Switzerland, where I have been doing some writing, and when the war is over I hope

The Gaiety Stage Door

to get a play of my own produced. I have really come back to try and get into the dear old theatre again."

He told me that, owing to the War, he had not put any money in the bank, but had kept it about him. As proof of this he showed me a huge roll of notes, and in his trousers pockets he had literally handfuls of gold. Gold had been called in then, and yet this fellow had this great quantity on him. I asked him if he remembered what I used to call him in the year before the War. He smiled in a grim fashion.

"Yes, Jupp, I remember ; but you must drop all that nonsense now that we have this terrible war on. You know it is a very serious thing to accuse a man of being a spy."

I told him straight that I felt convinced that it was true ; that I had suspected him long before a whisper of war had disturbed the public mind, but now I was sure, although I confessed that I could not furnish any proof. I think that must have been why I accepted his invitation to lunch. I wanted to talk to him. I wanted to hear what he had to say about himself, but most of all I wanted to tell him what my real opinion of him was, and it came out in no unmistakable manner.

"I know it is a serious matter to accuse a man of being an enemy spy, but you will find it to be a damned sight more serious to have it proved against you, and I intend to do my utmost."

He was livid with suppressed rage, and said that if I dared to repeat such an unfounded accusation he would prosecute me.

Prosecute me ! I was willing to take all chances, and said :

"Shall I call a policeman now ? I am perfectly willing to face the music, if you are. Even supposing that you

A Tip to the Police

are not a German, you have told the most infernal lies ; and don't forget that the police would like to have a chat with you about that furnished flat which you skipped away from. And now I come to think of it, if you have the least bit of decency in you, go to Charlie Russ and recompense him for the dress clothes and portmanteau he lent you, but which you never thought of returning."

Then he tried the soft soap game.

"Oh, my dear old boy, I'm so glad you have mentioned that. Do you know, I had forgotten all about it. It quite passed out of my memory. If I still had those things in my possession they would have kept my memory fresh, but they were stolen from the hotel at Folkestone the day after I had used them. I've plenty of money, and will call on Charlie and ask him how much I owe him."

I told him that I should have a little better opinion if he did so, and added : "When you have done that, go straight away to the nearest recruiting office and join up. If you do *that*, I will make a handsome apology for all I have said."

I was determined to follow the matter up, and pretending to admit that my accusations were unjust, I got him to go back with me to the stage-door. Arrived there, I got on the 'phone and rang up the Apollo Theatre. As luck would have it, Charlie Russ was on the premises, and I told him that an old friend of his would like to say "how d'you do" to him. Then I handed the receiver to Rysbach and said : "Now is your chance to put that matter right with him. Tell him you will go up right away and square up."

While he was on the 'phone I went out and told the special policeman who did duty at the theatre, in as few words as possible, exactly what the position was, but

The Gaiety Stage Door

impressed upon him the necessity of preventing him from getting away again. If he would just follow him and make sure that he really did go to the Apollo, I would guarantee that the rest of the business was properly attended to.

This only took a few seconds, and when I returned to the stage-door Rysbach was still talking to Charlie Russ. I heard him promise that he would be up at the Apollo within half an hour. "Our friend Jupp and I are just going into Short's to get whatever our obliging Government will permit, and I will come straight away."

Then he rang off. We went round to Short's wine lodge, and there I pretended that I had left my money in my other coat and went quickly back, but taking good care that our own special policeman kept a watch over him. I telephoned to the police station in Bow Street, and reminded them of the Brixton flat incident. I told them that the man was with me and under observation, and that they had a case against him even if my suspicions could not materialize into a more serious charge. I also informed them about his debt to Charlie Russ, and that he was going up to the Apollo Theatre to discharge it.

I was told afterwards what took place when he got to the Apollo Theatre.

"Mr. Rysbach, aren't you the man who had a furnished flat in Brixton in 1914, when you were engaged at the Gaiety Theatre?"

That was sufficient! He was taken to the station and detained there while the police went to his lodgings in the neighbourhood of Russell Square. After a thorough search had been made a quantity of valuable papers were discovered which went to prove beyond all doubt that he was indeed acting on behalf of the German Secret Service.

Air Raids

Then he was formally charged on that count, the other matter being waived.

There were a great many cases of espionage then, and what with the war news and my own occupations I did not notice what the result of his trial was, but one day an old friend of mine came to see me. He was in khaki and had just come over on leave from France. Tom Bashford was his name, and he had the rank of quartermaster-sergeant.

He had a *Daily Mail*, which he had been reading, and asked: "Do you remember this chap, Jimmy? It says he was once employed at the Gaiety Theatre." Then he showed me a photograph on the back page, along with half a dozen others, all convicted of espionage. They had been found guilty, and some had already been shot. Count Rysbach had been sentenced to death, but the sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. The two women whom he had brought over were proved to be in the Secret Service also, but they were safely out of reach. All the mystery of his letters from Germany and his weekly cheque was cleared up, and I was thankful that, although too old to join up, I had done a little bit for the old flag.

The first air raid I experienced was in 1915. The actress, Miss Gladys Ffolliott, used to come now and then and sit in my own particular office at the stage-door "to have a chat with Shamus," as she always calls me. On this occasion we were discussing the War, and Gladys said that that was just the sort of night the Germans loved for an air raid—moonlight.

It could not have been more than about a quarter of an hour later when—Bang!—a bomb exploded outside the Lyceum Theatre, wrecking some of the dressing-rooms,

The Gaiety Stage Door

while almost simultaneously another bomb crashed down outside the "Old Bell" public-house at the corner of Exeter and Wellington Streets. This second one burst a main gas-pipe underground and caused a tremendous fire. A young girl who was walking towards the "Old Bell" at the time was blown to atoms. There were a great many people killed at that corner—fourteen of whom were carried into the public-house—but the poor girl's body was scattered far and wide. The "Old Bell," the Victoria Club, and Lister's barber's shop were in ruins.

One of our electricians, Dave Patton, was blown from the saloon-bar entrance right down to the front entrance of the Lyceum Theatre and was killed, and one of our errand boys, whom I had sent over to Shortland's for a sandwich, was also killed.

This all happened in a few seconds. Our cellarman, named Withers, who was with Patton at the "Bell," had his left leg and right heel blown off, and his left arm, which was merely hanging by a bit of sinew, had to be cut off as soon as he was taken to Charing Cross Hospital. His was a miraculous escape from death, and the doctors said they had never met such a plucky young man before. He is now driving a milk cart at Bristol.

Our call-boy, young Jimmy Wickham, had a narrow escape. He was going on an errand, and had just reached the Strand Theatre, which is opposite the Gaiety, when a third bomb fell (the three fell in quick succession), and the concussion absolutely threw him into the vestibule of the theatre. He was also taken to Charing Cross Hospital, where a piece of shrapnel as big as a florin was found to be lodging over his heart. He was in hospital for a long time, and when King George heard of the cases, he visited the hospital and gave instructions that, with the doctor's

The Bombs in Wellington Street and Aldwych

consent, young Wickham was to be served with whatever he wanted.

George Grossmith sent a very substantial cheque to the hospital. Wickham still wears that piece of shrapnel, mounted in gold, on his watch-chain ; why, I don't know.

Now let me come back to where Gladys Ffolliott is sitting in a chair at the stage-door. As soon as the first explosion was heard I told her she had better get inside the theatre. No sooner had she disappeared than the door was blown open, and a huge piece of shrapnel lodged itself in the wall just behind the chair in which she had been sitting. I was thrown back, and the hall was filled with smoke.

The bombs were still falling and crashing around, but I had to let the awful smoke out, so opening the door again I found Harry Powell—another of the Gaiety staff—outside in an exhausted condition with blood pouring out of his leg. Fortunately a rescue party had arrived upon the scene, and they took him to Charing Cross Hospital, where he remained for twelve months.

What a marvellous escape for Gladys and me ! The shrapnel riddled the wall exactly where we had been, and if I had not moved when persuading her to go inside, it must have got me.

CHAPTER XXIV

FILM WORK, JUPP AS LORD KITCHENER, AN IMPROMPTU POSE, A FILM ON THE RACE-COURSE, THE HORSE THAT WOULD WIN, THE CONFIDENCE TRICK, JUPP GOES ONE BETTER, THE SPRY WAITER, CLEARING A BAR, EXPENSIVE FREE LUNCHEONS, A VISIT AFTER TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS.

ONE morning as I was going through the letters, I found one was from Fred Raynham, who is now a well-known cinema actor. He had been engaged at the Gaiety for many years, but when the film business became an established calling worth following, he took it up and soon got his foot firmly planted on the ladder of fame. This letter was an intimation that he would call on me that morning and asking me to luncheon with him, as he had a proposal to make.

He came about noon, and we went round to Short's and afterwards to luncheon. Then he asked me if I could manage to get away in the afternoons to do some film work.

I told him that I could always manage a few hours, but must be back for the theatre in the evenings. I knew that I could do anything in the way of horsemanship or swimming stunts, and rather hoped that that was what he wanted, but when he told me he would get me to play the character of Lord Kitchener I thought less of my abilities.

Although I had had well over thirty years of close connection with the stage, I had never actually appeared in any of the plays, and as for using grease paint I knew as little about it as a jelly-fish knows about snipe-shooting. He soon laughed away my hesitation, and in the end it was arranged that I should be at Waterloo Station the following afternoon. When I got there Fred Raynham took me into one of the side streets and said: "You'll see

Film Work

a bit of the film taken from here, but for goodness' sake don't get in front of the camera. You are not in this scene."

Then a few instructions to the operator, the blowing of a whistle, and the show started. It was an episode of the War. A window near the roof of one of the houses was thrown open, and the head of a most palpable and unmistakable German spy appeared. His eyes searched the sky, and then with a very exultant expression on his diabolical face the window was closed again.

In a few seconds the man reappeared on the roof. Again he searched the sky. He began to signal with one hand as if calling somebody to approach. Shortly afterwards a carrier pigeon flew towards him and settled down on the roof. He began unfastening the message which was attached to the pigeon's leg.

Then a British officer came in front of the camera and so took part in the scene. He looked up, and seeing the man and pigeon with an expression which plainly showed that he had expected it, went hurriedly into the house.

Looking up again towards the roof, I saw him reappear and go stealthily towards the German spy. He pounced upon him, and then began a really wonderful struggle, and I began to get that sickly feeling as they fought and wrestled dangerously near the coping.

Every second I thought they would crash down to the pavement below. As they fought on and had just got to the very brink, the whistle blew and the operator stopped turning the handle of the camera. Then one of the tricks of the trade was shown to me. The British officer remained in exactly the same position he was in when the whistle blew, but the German spy rose and went away. In a couple of seconds he came back and placed a dummy figure

The Gaiety Stage Door

made up and dressed exactly as he was in the arms of the Britisher.

The whistle blew again, and the handle was turned once more. The struggle was continued, and it looked exactly the same as before. Then came the thrilling part. Nearer and nearer to the edge of the roof came the struggle, and just as it appeared that the two must inevitably topple over, the Britisher with a last mighty effort got a grip on the dummy figure and threw it crashing to the ground below. Now you know how it is done! It was a fine bit of work, and Fred Raynham told me that it had taken a lot of rehearsing in the studio before it was ready to "take."

The next morning Fred called at the stage-door, and said he would wait for me as we had to go down to Esher and we might as well go together. A few moments later a man drove up in a motor-car and came to see me. I had known him for a long time, and always thought he was a German. He had only called to take me round for an appetiser. So he, Fred Raynham, and I adjourned.

When this man learned that we were going to Esher he offered to drive us out there in his car, and then the idea struck Fred that he might be able to make use of both him and his car. We were going down to the studio at Esher, and he could easily fix him up with the uniform of a British officer, and the part he would have to take in the picture would only be a trivial one. Yet it would be one that would stand out very prominently.

He was both amused and interested at the suggestion, and being a man of independent means and his time being his own, accepted the offer.

When we arrived at the studio he was soon dressed up in full uniform, and then a short rehearsal followed of

Jupp as Lord Kitchener

the scene he was to take part in. Edmund Payne's son was to be a German spy escaping on a motor-cycle, and all the other had to do was to chase after him in his car. This spy had to be taken alive so that valuable information could be got out of him. A well-directed shot had to burst the back tyre of his cycle and then under cover of a revolver the arrest would take place. It struck me as being rather a Gilbertian situation.

Here was a German playing the part of a British officer, and an out-and-out English youth acting as a German spy. Still, it didn't matter, it was carried out successfully, and then Fred Raynham called me and said: "Now, Jupp, old man, I shall want you. Come with me and I'll fix you up as Lord Kitchener, and where's Richards? Oh, there you are, Richards; you come also. I want you to be Lord Grey!"

It was surprising the resemblance I had to the great Field Marshal. Just a few touches here and there with a lining pencil, a dab of powder to tone it down, and when I was dressed in the uniform I very nearly saluted myself when I looked in the mirror. It was supposed to be the trial of the spy of the roof episode, and the other of the motor-cycle incident. I remember that the chief thing I was told not to do was to look at the camera, and I wish they had left that bit of advice out.

Until they mentioned it I never thought of doing so—I was far too interested in the scene—but the moment he had said, "Now, pay attention to the evidence that is being given, and take a keen interest in it, but whatever you do, don't look at the camera," that did it.

I understood that all was done correctly, but I had a fearful job to keep my eyes from taking a stealthy glance, and I learned afterwards that this added to my expression

The Gaiety Stage Door

and made it turn out well. As a matter of fact I was complimented on my acting and accused of being a good understudy to Ananias when I declared that it was my first experience on the films.

After this scene there was a bit of an interval while the "floor" was set for another scene, and as there was nothing in the shape of spirituous liquor to be had on the premises, I asked where the nearest hostelry was. It was about a quarter of a mile down the road, so Lord Grey and I went off in search. It was a very quiet and almost lonely part, so we didn't trouble to change, and went off just as we were. Arriving at the inn, the thought of money came into our heads. I had left all mine in my private clothes, and all Lord Grey had was twopence in his waistcoat pocket which he had kept on to fill out his tunic. To go back was too much fag, so Lord Grey and Lord Kitchener had to content themselves with a half of "four ale" each, much to the amusement of the locals.

When we got back to the studio there was a genuine military officer talking seriously to Fred Raynham, and I heard him say, "I am sorry—but it cannot be permitted. You will have to cut that part of your film out!"

It appeared that they had been "tapping" the wires and intercepting messages under the guidance of an expert and the military authorities had got to hear of it. They said that this action being shown on the screen to the public in such a masterly manner might easily teach some genuine spy how it was done. From that point of view they were quite right, and the "tapping" was promptly cut out.

The next time I appeared in a film was quite impromptu as far as I was concerned, and I didn't even know anything about it until it was all over. It happened on George Edwardes' birthday, and some fellows had made arrange-

A Film on the Race-course

ments with a firm of film producers to "take" an advertising stunt. The part I appeared in was the last bit of all. It was an advertisement for a newspaper, and a tall girl from the Gaiety, Miss Prudence O'Shea, had been got up most elaborately in a costume made up entirely out of copies of the paper. The effect was very striking and most original. They had taken her in a taxi-cab to the post office in Oxford Street near Tottenham Court Road, and "posted" her to Mr. George Edwardes, care of the Gaiety Theatre, Strand. The only thing I knew was that a special messenger arrived with this Miss O'Shea and delivered her to me. She had an enormous label with the name and address on it. This was stamped and marked "express" just as an ordinary parcel would be.

There was a large crowd collected round the stage-door curious to see what it was all about. There was nothing for me to do but accept this human parcel, and as I knew her well, I let her come in. Then I noticed that several operators were turning their handles of the cameras and guessed that it was some advertising business. I suppose it had its effect, and it certainly caused some amusement when I took her in to the "Guv'nor's" office and told him I had a "parcel" for him. She said, "I've been sent to wish you Many Happy Returns of your Birthday, Mr. Edwardes," and promptly kissed him.

He did the only thing a nice man could do—he took her out to luncheon, but not until she had changed her paper costume for another one less conspicuous.

The most enjoyable time I ever had in film work was a three days' visit to Lingfield race-course. There were 400 people taken down, all experienced men and women in film work, and they had to represent different types to be found at all such race meetings. There were ten horses

The Gaiety Stage Door

already on the course, and jockeys had been engaged to take part in the jumping which had to be filmed.

I ought to explain that there were no real races on, and apart from the company there was no one else. A real race would not be anything like so effective as those arranged for film purposes. In this particular play one horse had to win by a length, and it was evidently an important thing that it should come out on the screen as nearly a length as possible, and, oh ! the trouble there was to get it. It was not only a trouble, but became extremely funny. There was one horse which evidently misunderstood the plot of the play and thought it was racing in real earnest.

It absolutely refused to be beaten until it was so terribly handicapped that to win was impossible. The finish of the race was tried eight times, and this exceedingly game horse had to be started back and back until, as I have said, the winning horse just won by a length. If they had had to go any farther this splendid creature would have won again easily.

It was too late to change over and let this horse be the winner in the picture, because the other had figured in lots of previous scenes, but it was the first time they had taken the finish. How we laughed as this lovely thing came flying up and beat the others to a "frazzle." It seemed to take a personal interest in the race, and no matter how the jockey tried, it positively refused to be "pulled."

I only wish the horses I occasionally put a bit on would be as sincere and conscientious in their work as this one. I might have more faith in horseflesh than I have at present.

Of all the rogues knocking about the West End of London, perhaps the most pernicious are those engaged in the confidence trick. The thing I cannot understand is

The Confidence Trick

how they manage to hoodwink their victims. One reads in the papers of visitors from the provinces or abroad being done down for large sums of money, and in nearly all the cases the victims prove to be men who have, until then, been considered to be astute men of business.

There was one case I remember and in which I took a part, but only very much in the background. A solicitor friend of mine had come up from Liverpool on some business, and, as was his usual wont, called to see me. It was just a few minutes before my lunch time, and I asked him if he would go into the Dutch bar next door and wait for me.

He did so, and in a few moments I joined him. I found him in company with four of the most plausible rogues to be met with on this side of the prison bars. I knew them all by sight, and they knew me. I could tell the names of three of them, but if they read this they will remember the incident, and that is quite sufficient for me.

They edged off a little as I went towards my friend, so, calling for a drink, I quietly asked him if they were friends of his or if he knew anything at all about them. No! he had never met them before—they had asked him to join them in a drink, and had only been talking about racing. It appeared that the jockey who was to ride a certain horse had told one of them that he couldn't possibly lose the 3.15 race that afternoon. I asked him if he had parted with any money, and to my astonishment he said he had only put a couple of pounds on with them. Here was a case in point. I know for an undeniable fact that my friend was a really clever solicitor, and by no means a "mug," and yet these fellows had charmed two pounds out of him.

I said nothing at the moment, but did not wish to lose

The Gaiety Stage Door

sight of these men, so invited them to drink up and join me in another. This they willingly did. Then I asked to be excused a moment as I had forgotten to leave a message at the stage-door. Now I must explain that we were playing a piece in which a lot of bank-notes had to be used, and these were really a wonderful imitation of the genuine flimsy ; but on reading the printed matter it was found to be nothing more than an advertisement for our show. But folded up in such a way as only to show the amount (they were in fives and tens) they looked exactly like the real thing. I went straight to my desk, and getting a few of these, folded in the correct way, I got one of the stage-hands to go into the Dutch bar and ask for me. They would tell him that I had just gone out, and that he would find me at the theatre. I instructed him that he was to say that he had just come from the stage-door, and the telephone bell had been ringing for quite a long time, so he had taken the receiver down himself.

The message was for a Mr. X of Liverpool, a friend of Mr. Jupp's, so he must find him if possible. This, of course, would get my friend away to answer the telephone, and I could play my trick on the four sharpers without them suspecting me. It worked well, and when he came I beckoned him to come right inside, and then I hurriedly told him what I proposed doing, and if it were worked properly it would be a bit of fun; and at the same time give these fellows reason to think a little less of their astuteness.

I got him to put his notes—of which he had quite a few—into another pocket, and substitute them for my “prop” notes; and quickly I got him to rehearse a little speech which he was to make when next we joined the gang. I would go first and he could join us a few moments

Jupp Goes One Better

after. I went back casually, but not seeing my friend, asked one of the four where he had gone. They told me he had been called up on the telephone. "Haven't you seen him? He went to the stage-door." "No," I replied, "I went to leave a message which was to be delivered in case I was out, and have fixed it up all right; he and I are off for a little luncheon."

Then my friend came in, and I admit that he proved himself to be no fool after I had opened his eyes. He appeared to be quite excited and said: "Here, you boys, what do you think I was wanted on the 'phone for? The very thing you mentioned to me. A pal of mine in Liverpool, who knows Jupp also, and knowing that I was up here, 'phoned to give me the very same tip that you've just given me. I'm going to have a plunge on it!" Then he pulled out his wallet and counted out five of the "dud" tenners. "Here, give me that couple of quid back, and put this on for me. Three-fifteen the race is, so there's any amount of time."

Turning to me he said: "You have a bit on, Jimmy." I said that I had no money for horses, so he pleasantly said: "All right, old man, you can stand in with me." Those notes looked absolutely perfect, and the trick worked well; they were only casually glanced at, and the two pounds were returned. This was a real case of cheating cheaters.

After another round we had a bottle of "bubbly," then my friend and I went off to lunch. That horse is still running in search of the winning post, and I wrote and told my friend of the sequel. The next day I went into the Dutch bar about the same time. There they were, the four of them, so I casually remarked, "That tip of yours went down, I see!" What a look I got in return! It

The Gaiety Stage Door

was a mixture of all the emotions except love and kind regard. As a last shot I said, "And I was to stand in on that bet too!"

That same Dutch bar was a very popular place in those days, and must have been a veritable gold mine to the proprietors. It was frequented by men of the neighbourhood, all of whom were in good positions and able to spend plenty of money. It was one long bar without any partitions, so that there was no distinction between the customers. It was all saloon-bar trade, and there were no hangers-on of the "sponging" tribe, for even these "tricky" people were very profligate with money—other people's money it is scarcely necessary to mention.

There was one time I remember. There were four of us at the time—Jacques Grebé (Ivan Caryll's understudy as conductor, and almost his double); Johnny Reinders, the leader of the orchestra; Sinclair Mantell, the pianist and chorus master of the theatre; and myself. I have known of some very clever bits of legerdemain, but the following is just about the limit. We were having our midday libation and Sinclair Mantell had paid. Jacques Grebé asked us to have another, but I protested that I wanted to pay, as I should have to get off after that.

Then Grebé said: "That's all right, Jimmy; just have this one and go off if you must; but let me pay because I want some change. I've only a few coppers and a fiver which I've just been paid at the theatre for some 'scoring' (music) I did. I must get some change."

So I gave way. He was wearing his great-coat, and it was buttoned up. He had only received that fiver about a quarter of an hour before, and had put it in his pocket-book in his inside pocket and buttoned up both his coats, yet when he looked for the note to pay for the

The Spry Waiter

drinks it was gone. So I did pay after all. Poor Jacques never got that fiver back, and in those days it represented quite a good round solid sum.

There was another occasion I have good reason to remember, because I took an active part in it. I must preface this story by mentioning that we had among our small-part ladies at the Gaiety a particularly attractive girl named E—— L——. She had an ardent lover in the person of a Mr. Bee, and he and I became good friends.

We used to frequent the Dutch bar while he was waiting for Miss L——, and kept it up after he came into the huge fortune and married the girl. The occasion I am writing about was when they came back from a trip on the Continent and took a suite of rooms at the Waldorf Hotel almost opposite the Gaiety Theatre.

He called at the stage-door as of old, and we adjourned to the Dutch bar. He called for drinks, which the girl served, and while he was getting his wallet out to pay for them, she went to the other end of the counter to serve another gentleman ; we were well known, so that was all right. He put a ten-pound note down, and as we were having short drinks he called for a repetition of them. The girl was still engaged, so we went on with our talk. He was telling me about something of interest that had happened at Monte Carlo. He had his back turned away from the bar, and I saw one of the waiters coming towards us, dusting the counter on his way. He picked up a waste-paper basket and dexterously flicked the ten-pound note into it. At that moment the girl came back and said, "Same again, Mr. Jupp." I nodded, but kept a close watch on the waiter. He put the basket down and went on with his dusting.

She brought the two Martini cocktails and waited for

The Gaiety Stage Door

payment. "I put a ten-pound note down just a moment ago, miss." The girl of course had not seen it, and looking about the counter and on the floor around her said: "I'm sorry, Mr. Bee, but there's no note anywhere about here, and I haven't a ten-pound note in the till."

It was time for me to join in, so I said, "It is quite right, miss, I saw Mr. Bee put the note down on the counter"; then I called the waiter up—"What did you do with that note when you were dusting here a moment ago?" His child-like innocence was delightful to see. "Note! Mr. Shupp! I haf not seen any letter or note of any kind 'ere."

"I don't mean a letter, I mean a ten-pound note"; then turning to the girl I asked her to let me have the wastepaper basket. She handed it up and I said, "I will show you what you did with it," and promptly produced the note. I did it in such a manner that all could see it lying there before I touched it, and if any further proof were necessary one had only to look at his face. It is a pity that these fellows don't study acting and facial expression a bit. But for the good of the public it is just as well that they don't.

When the manager of the place came in, I thought it was only right to tell him what had occurred, so as to put him on his guard. It proved to be the means of the waiter being caught in another attempt to appropriate money. The manager told me afterwards that if I had not given him the warning as to this man's propensity, he might not have suspected him.

It appears that the following day he was down in the grill-room and a gentleman came up and said: "Mr. Benoli, I have just this moment dropped a five-pound note. I got it out to pay for my lunch, collected this

Clearing a Bar

packet of papers I had been looking over, and came to the cash desk. Now, between that table and here I must have dropped it, but it is nowhere to be found. As you see, there are no customers at the table between the cash desk and my table, so where can it have got to?"

That same waiter was in the room, and remembering what I had told him the day previously, asked the gentleman which waiter had attended on him. He pointed our alien friend out, so Mr. Benoli called him over. On hearing his name he said, "Yes, sir," and turned his back for a second, and Mr. Benoli saw his hand go up to his mouth. "Come here at once; I want you!" he ordered.

The fellow came, and Mr. Benoli asked him a lot of questions which necessitated him speaking in more than monosyllables, and his speech gave him away. It was smart work on Mr. Benoli's part to get him to speak such a lot, because a mere "yes" or "no" would have been easy; but when one has to offer an explanation in lengthy terms, the speech is affected when one has a five-pound note in his mouth. He was dismissed on the instant. Mr. Benoli told me that even if he had not seen his hand go up towards his mouth he would have had him searched; but if the fellow had had a little more time to screw the note into a little ball he might have got away with it.

While I am on the subject of roguery I must tell of a most surprising case in which I was the innocent cause of clearing a crowded bar, and also of the means of making a lot of men give signs of a very guilty conscience.

The Gaiety was closed for rehearsals of a new play by Paul Reubens called "The Sunshine Girl." This play had for its scene the well-known model village belonging to Messrs. Lever Brothers known as Port Sunlight, some-

The Gaiety Stage Door

where on the River Mersey, just outside Liverpool. Just as "Miss Hook of Holland," by the same author and composer, was all about liqueur and cheese, so this new play was all about soap.

I had the evenings pretty much to myself during those rehearsals, and one of our musical directors, Harold Lonsdale, asked me if I would go down to Deptford to see a mutual friend. We went, and later on a visit to the music hall was suggested. So we went to see the great Lafayette.

Now it appears that there had been a great fire in Deptford at some big soap works, and not only had a tremendous lot of damage been done, but a huge quantity of soap had been stolen. Indeed, so much of it had disappeared that the wonder was how the thieves had ever got away with it. Enough soap had been stolen to keep the faces of all the inhabitants of that vast neighbourhood clean for the rest of their lives. The connection between this fact and our new play will be seen when I get a little farther into my story.

After the first house of the music hall was over, Lonsdale, his friend, and I adjourned to one of the hostelrys close by for a drink. This friend knew that I was at the Gaiety Theatre and asked me :

"What's this new thing you are on, Jupp? All to do with the soap business, isn't it?"

Now this to me was a perfectly innocent question to ask, and I replied in an equally innocent manner, quite unconscious of the interpretation that would be understood by those people standing round in the bar. If the theatre or the play had been mentioned, the whole thing would have been made clear to the listeners, but just those plain and uncompromising questions and my equally non-committal answers had a disastrous effect.

"Yes," I said. "That's our new job. Soap—soap—"

Expensive Free Luncheons

tons upon tons of it ; nothing but soap, and we've got a lot of extra men on it too."

In a very brief space of time after I had made that remark, the bar was almost entirely cleared. The landlord called our friend aside and asked him who I was. He told him that I was the stage-doorkeeper of the Gaiety Theatre.

"Don't tell me any of your lies now ; do you think I don't know a 'split' when I see one ? Besides, he's given his game away by admitting that he was on this soap business."

My friend was inclined to take it as a joke, but the landlord made him realize that it was anything but funny to him.

"Look at my bar—it was full until you brought those fellows in. Now it's empty. The 'boys' tumbled at once as to who and what they are by their remarks. For the love of Mike take them out and don't bring them in here again. My customers don't particularly want to be acquainted with them !"

Then the whole thing became clear to him, so he brought the landlord over to us, and I very quickly convinced him as to my real identity. It was noticeable that in another few seconds the place was full again, just like a quick-change scene, and their fears and misgivings were soon dispelled. I made as much a joke of it as I could, and with the accompaniment of "What'll you have ? No ! you have one with me," the incident came to a satisfactory close—at closing-time.

It was during the rehearsals of "The Sunshine Girl" that a clearance of quite another kind occurred. The Dutch bar next door had always provided a light lunch free, something after the style of the American houses (Mancunians will remember the free hotpot and stew one

The Gaiety Stage Door

used to be able to get at Cox's bar in the "dear dead days beyond recall"), and during the rehearsals this free lunch was very much appreciated by our chorus boys and girls.

Now rehearsals of this kind are not of frequent occurrence, because our plays generally had a long run, seldom less than eighteen months, so it was a new experience for the management of the Dutch bar. They had ham and tongue, pressed beef, two or three kinds of salad, various sandwiches, and of course biscuits and cheese. When our boys and girls were told about it and invited to partake of their hospitality they naturally did so, but the first day proved that the only thing that was able to withstand this great onslaught was an eighty-pound cheese.

So the next day greater provision was made. Towards the end of the first week it became a matter of course (excuse me, these things will slip out!). Unfortunately the receipts were not in proportion to the outlay, for it must be understood that, as the choristers were not paid for rehearsals in those days, the chance of a really good lunch for the price of a glass of bitter was not to be missed.

The play was at last produced, and the Dutch bar came back to its old appearance, and the manager's brow cleared. He had stuck to it all through like a good sportsman, but he must have given a sigh of relief when this awful pressure ceased. He pointed to the remains of one of the great cheeses and said: "That's all that's left out of four of them, Mr. Jupp. Ah, well! they are good boys and girls, and I am glad their hard work is finished. I do hope the piece is a success and will have a record run."

I could not help laughing heartily at that last remark, but I knew he did not mean it in the way I had taken it. Still, he enjoyed the joke himself when I pointed out that he had very good reason to wish the piece success and a long run.

A Visit after Twenty-seven Years

It has been said that liars should have good memories, but without wishing to cast the slightest reflection upon my own very truthful calling, I certainly think that one of the essential attributes of a stage-doorkeeper is a good memory. He frequently has to cast his mind back into the past to find a connecting-link between an incident of the years gone by and one of the present. Fortunately, I have an excellent memory, and especially for faces. If I have really known people, it matters not how changed they may be, I will not fail to recognize them, and this leads up to a little story.

One morning a lady and gentleman called at the stage-door in company with a tall young man of about twenty-five years. I was going through the morning post-bag at the moment, so I just glanced up in an inquiring manner, but as they did not seem in any hurry to tell me their business I went on with mine.

Then the lady said: "I couldn't come up to London without calling—I wonder if he is here now?" I knew the voice at once, and leaving my letters looked at her. She was about fifty years of age, with hair fast turning grey, but I knew her face as well as if she had only left us the day before. I supposed I must have changed, because it was only my greeting that convinced her that I was the "he" she had referred to.

"How do you do?" I asked. "Heavens! how many years is it since I last saw you?" Then she recognized me. "Well! well! it is Jupp! How are you, Mr. Jupp! Let me introduce my husband." He was a doctor somewhere in New Zealand, and they were on a visit to England with their only son. "Do you mean to say that you remember me, Mr. Jupp? Why, I am old and grey now!"

The Gaiety Stage Door

“Remember you! Of course I do,” I said. “Let me see now, it must be over twenty-five years ago. You were in the chorus with us, weren’t you!” I did not put this as a question, but as the assertion.

“That’s quite right, Mr. Jupp—twenty-seven years ago to be exact.” Then it came back clearly to me. “Why—yes, I remember, you went away with the Gaiety Company on a tour of the world, but you got married and remained out there.” “Splendid!” she cried. “This is the gentleman I met; he was a young doctor then, and we were married just before the company left for home. I have never been over here since until this trip, and our boy here is turned five-and-twenty.” I was puzzling hard to remember her name, but it had escaped me.

She asked me if I could remember it, and I told her that that was what I was striving to bring back. “Just give me the initial letter of your Christian name, and see if I can recall it.” “M,” she told me. “That’s it,” I cried, “M. I am delighted to see you again, Maggie Roberts! Do you know, I believe I have a photo of you on the wall somewhere.” I had a very fine collection of photographs of theatrical and other celebrities on the walls of the stage-door entrance, and it formed as interesting a collection as could be found anywhere.

When I said this the son said: “Where? I should love to see a photo of mother as she was when a girl.” He began to search for it, but nowhere could it be found, as it was not autographed. However, he found one that took his young fancy. “By Jove, that’s a sweetly pretty girl. What a lovely smile she has!” I went over and looked at the photo. It was that of his mother.

12/2/74

1101
27

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY
