

TRYING FOR THE STAGE.

HOW A YOUNG WOMAN FINALLY BECAME A CHORUS GIRL.

DISCHARGED AFTER ONE WEEK.

The Amusing Struggles of an Ambitious Girl Who Was Stage-Struck—No Boom for Her at Any of the Big Theatres—A Song and Dance at a Bowery Museum and a Chance at Last with a Burlesque Show.

I am an American born and was brought up to be a lady. After starting with tom-boy tactics in a country home, even at the early age of eleven I could make people laugh, and can do so still. I used to get up characters that brought tears coursing down the minister's cheeks, and the neighbors would all drop in for a laugh.

One day I was offered a part in a burlesque on "Ivanhoe" to be given in a private house. I was Rebecca, the Jewess, and the Ivanhoe I loved is now a professional and took a leading part in "The Henrietta." I gave the burlesque in my own house afterwards and made \$40 gross result for the working girls' vacation fund. Then I grew more mad and practiced five hours a day for five years, till last Spring some people thought I could write, so I wrote a letter for THE WORLD and made several dollars, which I spent on tickets for the opera "Oolah," where the light of a new ambition flashed athwart my fevered brain.

I wanted to be a chorus girl and with the chorus stand, a lone-light on my forehead, a fortune in my hand! So I wrote to Francis Wilson on the subject. He tried my voice in the Broadway Theatre and advised me to write. This simply fired me afresh. I did write to every dramatic agent in the directory and to all the managers I could think of, and applied for admission to the Madison Square School of Acting. I received replies, kind and firm, from Mr. Daly down to Harry Miner. Dennis Thompson made an appointment to meet me at the Academy of Music, Mr. Sothern at the Lyceum, Mr. Booth's manager at the Broadway Theatre and Mr. and Mrs. Escal's manager at the Fifth Avenue. I have the letters now. Mr. Wilson Barrett offered me a part in the chorus of "Candide"—if I had acted before—and Mr. Arthur E. Chase gave me an old lady's part in Booth's company.

Sometimes I had learned a part assigned me by Bencicault's secretary, but didn't go to the school again, because I wanted to sing in comic opera and very nearly joined the chorus in the "Pearl of Police" and "The Arabian Nights." Mr. Duff tried my voice next, and said he would "let me know," which means technically, "You're no good." Mr. Daly wrote if he had a vacancy he might give me a trial, and Tony Pastor was the most encouraging of all. I told him I had been in the Casino chorus, because somebody told me I must be, as no manager would take a beginner. Mr. Pastor said he could do nothing for me.

Then I wrote him I had lied, and he wrote back if he could do anything for me he would. He sent me to a variety agent, and said I was "doing right and would get there yet."

About this time I met Mr. Bencicault's secretary on the street, and he told me to "get on the stage at once, whether as Lady Macbeth or a tight-rope walker—anything for a beginning." Then I met Walter Hubbell, tragedian. He said it was "all luck, and talent don't count for much." I began to feel like a disabled puppy among a flock of sheep. Francis Wilson had told me it was almost impossible to get a foothold in the profession, and I was simply bound to do it or die, so I wrote to Mr. Edmund C. Stanton about joining the ladies in German opera, but that fell through too and there wasn't a ray of hope.

I was being treated then by Dr. Wm. A.

Dayton, who had the chair of etiology in the Post-Graduate School and is one of the "lights on the ear." He threw a light on my path that started me for life by simply suggesting that I should sing the "Teach Duet" with some contralto. I forthwith found the girl, bought wigs, made the costumes and saw a museum in the Bowery. It was clean and respectable—remarkably so, indeed, for a museum. I walked up to the proprietor at his desk and revealed my intention. He wavered. I said we would sing for nothing, and then let him keep the equilibrium of ~~the~~ till he felt the truth. He said we might rehearse for him, and after six rehearsals a lady singer took ill, and we gave the "sale of woe" for two performances and got an encore.

My knees trembled visibly, but I got through, and so did the other girl as Marie Jansen. I had the proprietors' permission to sing Wilson's topical song, but felt too shaky for a solo. It made it worse to see how I scared the audience. I saw one man get up and go out, and the manager looked a trifle nervous. But what "took" was our little dance at the end of the song. But it is all over now, and though the stage manager did ring down the curtain on our second encore and told us we were two rehers for the audience, I bear him no grudge. I think so myself. We went from the museum to a variety agent's office, and just fell into our luck on the spot.

The manager of a burlesque company happened in and we offered ourselves as specialty artists, showing photographs of Francis Wilson and Marie Jansen in the "Teach Duet." He said we might sing in his company, which was going on the road in two weeks. We rehearsed from 10 to 2 every day, and the "Teach Duet," after one trial, was bounced from our repertoire. The manager said if we would join the chorus he would let us try our "specialty" later on. It was no use refusing the first real opening I had ever had, and I was back on my laurels, because they might not bear the strain.

We had very easy choruses to learn, and by adaptability I managed to ease the strain of ungeniality. It was not quite so easy, though, to pack my trunks and take my life in my hands, with only a step-scheme and a burning ambition for support. My mother helped me get ready, and I believed in my power to resist evil and achieve my aim. So I left secret. The company marched through the streets of our first town and piled into a boarding-house opposite the theatre, where three and four in a room, we awaited the evening's event. There was an exciting time trying on costumes, etc., in the theatre that afternoon. We had our Grecian robes, g-ollets up the side, and soldiers' coats and burlesque dresses all to get ready for instant use. The scramble was over just in time for a hearty repast and a worse scramble in the dressing-rooms. Five in a room and no window.

The swearing and tearing ended in a rush for the stage. I flew up the stairs and thumped my brains against the floor above with carry emphasis, and arranged my rig, trembling like a terrier as the stage manager said, "All ready." He looked at me and said, "You are frightened to death," and then the other manager said, "If she's scared take her right off." I was so angry at this it took away my nervousness, and the curtain rose revealing a packed house. The chorus, everything, seemed a dream, and I went through the performance like a machine—no fear, no feeling, no anything—and so it was very night. The audience appeared like a great painting and I felt like a photograph.

We were hired the first night, and by the Saturday matinee there were only fifteen or twenty people to see us. It was a one-week stand. I was discharged rather unwillingly—my father having had a little interview with the manager—and with my work's salary returned. A sudden and wondrous girl, to the forlorn home of my family, where I am now looking in obscurity.

Famous Lovers of Cats.

(From the Philadelphia American.)

Fussy has been the pet and favorite of some of the greatest personages. Mahomet chose rather to cut off the throats of his robe than to disturb a cat lying among upon it, and his followers, who have no more objectionable term than dog for the Christian, admit it into their mosques. Dante and Petrarch each had a fondness for them, the great Bocheben had a pet cat, and Cardinal Wolsey placed his dear him on a chair while exercising his judicial capacity; the learned Sir Isaac Newton had a pet cat and kitten, and the worthy philosopher for their convenience had two holes cut in the door, the larger one for the cat, the other for the kitten. Mounigne, too, was not too witty nor too cynical but the fringes of his cat would amuse him. To come down to later days, Ellen Terry loves to drape herself with her cats and to amuse herself with their mad careers. La Belle Stewart, criticized by Pope in the last "Diss and under a college of a cat," was a famous beauty of the reign of Charles II, who left annuities to several of her friends on condition of maintaining and caring for her cats—a delicate way of providing for some respectable old ladies.