

LA CAGHOUGA.

BY MARY FRANCES BIGELOW.

**A** FEW months ago Miss Laura Popham was a dancer. Now she is a saleslady, and may daily be seen behind a counter in a well-known dry goods store, in the shopping district bounded by Broadway, Sixth avenue, Twenty third and Fourteenth streets.

She is very pretty and rather out of the common. If she chances to wait on you, you will probably notice her pretty face and her oddity. She is bright, smiling and attentive. She asks your wants and tries to fill them. She does not appear annoyed if you interrupt her conversation with the young lady standing beside her, nor does her manner grow frigid and haughty if you suggest a less costly line of goods than that before you. The chances are that you will find what you want, if she waits on you.

As to her looks, she is rather small, and her complexion is perfect.

Her hair, which is bronze-brown and wavy, is always drawn back from her brow and knotted high on her head, and she is fond of tying a bit of blue ribbon about it. Perhaps from this description she may be discovered.

Six months ago when she was a dancer she was known to the profession as Lollipop. That was her stage name. She had an occasional engagement and was not very particular as to where it was. She danced for money, but also for love. Dancing was a passion with her, but the fact was not enough to make her a great dancer. She was useful, and her pretty, dainty little steps served to fill in odd spaces in a variety program very acceptably. Her dancing was never coarse—it was not even daring—and a week was usually the limit for which she was engaged. She was in no sense a drawing card, but she always danced as well as she could and was entirely reliable. In passing it may be said that Lollipop was as good as gold. When her week's engagement had passed she would go home and practice new dances till she had another chance, dancing from morning till night. She was always trying to do better work, and to her mind the thing most desired was to be a great dancer. That was her idea.

When the management of a certain roof garden announced that an engagement had been made with the famous Spanish dancer, Sun and Moon, Lollipop was filled with joy. She had no engagement herself. Sun and Moon would dance every night for a week—perhaps longer. Here was a chance to see, to study, to "get points," to improve her own work. Lollipop resolved to see Sun and Moon several times, always supposing that she found her worth the study. Lollipop thought that a great deal could be learned from seeing good work done by recognized artists. She was full of notions of this sort.

On the first night when Sun and Moon appeared, Lollipop went to the roof garden. She was escorted by a young man who wanted to marry her and who considered it a piece of folly for her to study the dancing of Sun and Moon, or of anybody else. In his opinion and in his own language Lollipop herself was "out of sight" of every dancer living, or dead for that matter. Lollipop did not agree with him and his flattery made no impression upon her whatever. However, the young man, whose name was Sam, was perfectly willing to take Lollipop to see Sun and Moon dance, and together they went to the roof garden.

Sun and Moon did not appear until late in the evening and the performance preceding her dance was mediocre. There were two dancers, and these afforded Sam an opportunity for some comparison, favorable of course, to Lollipop, who gave him to understand that his total ignorance of the subject deprived his opinion of all value. He clung to it, however, with considerable courage.

Sun and Moon's number had at last been reached. There was a sharp click of the castanets and the first bars of the coming dance. It was the *Cachouga*, and Lollipop was radiant. It was the dance she had most longed to see. She hoped to do it herself some day, perhaps, and here was a rare chance for seeing how it might be done. "Though of course," Lollipop reflected, "every dancer has her own ideas. Sun and Moon's may not be just like mine, but how interesting it will be."

Now Sun and Moon, in white and gold, walked on to the stage very quietly, but she walked like a goddess, or at least as a goddess should. She came forward to the footlights and acknowledged the greeting of the house. She smiled a little, and stepped back a little, and Lollipop saw that the Sun and Moon was beautiful. She felt,

she could not tell why, a sudden curious sinking at her heart. She almost knew then how it would be. In another moment she did know, absolutely.

Sun and Moon flung her arms upward. They were bare and rounded, and the red castanets in her firm white hands marked the rhythm of the dance. There was a swift springing motion, now forward, now back, now to one side, now the other, the lovely arms flung row over her head, now swiftly lowered almost to the ground. The supple waist, now swaying, now bending, backward, forward; the rapid feet moving with perfect precision, and underlying every motion of the beautiful form made one feel the sense of strength, of vitality, the grace and power of some wild creature bounding in the freedom of the forest. Sun and Moon threw her head backward, and the white throat quivered in the light. She tossed her arms again and curved her wrists—bewitching coquetry in every gesture. She invited, welcomed, banished in a flash of time. She swept in swift graceful curves around the small stage, like a bird on wing; she stopped in full flight, and on tip-toe stood motionless, a vision of statuesque grace and sumptuous beauty, every line a delight to the eye; her face was now that of a siren, now that of a merry child. Was ever such beauty, such matchless grace, such poise, such art?

A few minutes only—the dance lasted no more—but Lollipop had time to more than "get a point," to learn a whole lesson!

Sun and Moon was recalled. She danced again. Then Lollipop rose.

"Let's go, Sam," she said.

As they went down the stairway leading to the street, Sam spoke to Lollipop, and she turned upon him with a sharp exclamation:

"Keep quiet," said she.

"What's the matter?" said he.

But Lollipop did not reply, at least not just then. But presently she said slowly and in a strange voice:

"Sam, I'm done. I'll never step on a stage again."

"What's that for?" said Sam. "I think I see you stop dancing!"

"Dancing!" cried Lollipop. "*Dancing!* I've never danced. I've capered, and hopped and skipped and made a fool of myself; but as for dancing! Don't talk to me, Sam Martin, I'm done!"

Sam noticed then that her cheeks were wet with tears, but he made no comment, which showed him to be possessed of a little wisdom. Lollipop bade him good night pleasantly enough, and decided that she must have been tired.

A few days later Sun and Moon received a package containing a pair of dancing shoes, somewhat worn. Not understanding the gift she was highly offended, and threw them away; and thus ended Lollipop's career as a dancer.

She readily found employment as a saleslady and does her very best to be a good one.

HOW OLD ARE YOU?

It should seem that the age of any person would be positive and definite to the person himself as well as to his associates. It would appear to be a fact palpable and unmisapprehensible, for we take note of every year, month, week, day that passes over our heads during our early lives. One's age is supposed to be something that one always knows and never forgets. Nevertheless, no one knows, or ever can know, it is needless to say, the date of one's birth. We are compelled to rely on what we are told; but our confidence in the telling is implicit. We have more faith in what we have heard than in much that we see. We are not only present at our birth, we are the principal part of it. Without us, it could not have been; we are not merely the center of the event, we are the event itself. And yet we are completely, irretrievably ignorant of everything appertaining to it. If somebody had not informed us of the circumstance, should we ever have suspected it?

How do we know that we have been born at all? Have we any notion who we are? By hearsay only; and hearsay is not evidence. Can we be in the least sure that we are we? May we not be somebody else? How should we feel if we were somebody else? Portentous suggestion! Dreadful doubt! What a thrilling tale might be written of a man who was not himself, but another man; or of a woman that had failed to be born? How very often people say that they don't feel like themselves. In all likelihood their feelings are correct. They are not themselves: they are other folks. That is what ails them. The ailment may be peculiar, but it is widespread. Who is not acquainted with hundreds of such cases? Cases of obvious misfit, in which the bodies and the souls are inharmonious; are