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PUNCTURING THE STAR AS THE STAGE HAND-VIEWS THE STAGE IDOL.

By THOMAS GRANT SPRINGER
ILLUSTRATIONS By R. G. VOSBURGH



"They're not artists," he said contemptuously; "they're actors."

I WAS WAITING for the Star with all the timidity of a High School girl expecting a note from the callow youth. The Star was busy twinkling and the Doorkeeper took my card, eyeing me with evident suspicion as I stood clasping my manuscript as a nervous "Johnny" on his first visit "behind" might have held a bouquet intended for the prima donna.

"What's your business?" he asked gruffly.

"I'm just looking for a friend."

The Old Doorkeeper grunted: "Well, you're in the wrong place to look for a friend," playing upon the word with the ease of a comic opera comedian. I took this for a cue and laughed. Evidently I missed the cue, for he frowned. "I mean you can't see him here. There's no one allowed to receive in the dressing room."

"Not even the Star?" I ventured.

"Nix," was the gruff reply.

"I suppose I can wait here till he comes out," I suggested.

"He won't be out for an hour," he replied in a discouraging tone.

I waited a moment for an invitation to occupy the vacant chair beside him, but as none was forthcoming I seated myself without it and offered my grudging host a pluperfect perfect. He eyed it as suspiciously as he had me, put on his glasses and carefully examined the decorative band, sniffed at it with a cynical elevating of the ridge of skin from which time had plucked his eyebrows, then submitted it to the ordeal of fire until he had almost obscured the obtruding sign: "Positively No Smoking." My faith

in the sun-kissed lotus weed of near Havana had not been misplaced. Through its beautifying vapor his rugged features softened like a New England landscape seen through the mist of an Indian summer afternoon. I staved timidly to make conversation. "I suppose you've seen a great many artists?"

He nodded slowly. "I certainly have. I've seen the best of 'em for the last forty years. Why I was head stage carpenter at the old Union Square when Jim Bounder was the artist, him that afterward did all the transformation drops for Colonel Mapleson."

"I don't mean scenic artists," I interrupted, "I mean real artists, you know—stars."

He eyed me with puckered brows a moment, then snorted: "Them! they're not artists," he said contemptuously; "they're actors."

"But surely," I started to protest, "people with the artistic tempera-

ment —"

HE CUT me short with a grunt.

"You got it all from the front," he said. "The only real artists in this business are the 'grips.'"

"Grips?" I queried.

"Sure, us, me, the stage hands," he specified as if instructing a child. "We're the real fellows that hold the lookin' glass up to nature; the actors are only the ones that make faces in it. As for that artistic temperament business, well, maybe that's as good a name for it as any, I dunno. It reminds me of Henry Miller one time when he was rehearsing 'The Devil's Disciple' out in 'Frisco, him in the title role, o' course. You know there's a thunderstorm in it and so Miller's down in the orchestra doing his own storming and he's got his bull pup setting in the aisle alongside of him. Of course, the storm don't suit him—Miller I mean, not the pup—and when the noise is so loud he can't voice his objections and get 'em over the foots he looks around for some-

thing he can get over and the only thing that's not nailed down is the pup. Well the first thing we know here's the pup sailing right through the back drop like he was shot out of a gun and the storm stops so Miller can stage his. While he and the stage manager are

doing a heart-to-heart, a 'grip' named Doyle picks up the pup who's so scared by his aviation stunt he can't move.

"What do you call that," asks Doyle.

"That's a case of artistic temperament," I says.

"Doyle looks at the shivering pup a minute and then he says, kind of speculatively: 'Well, it's the first time I ever seen it in the flesh.'"

"Arnold Daly was another one with a temperament, and there never was a stage carpenter that could suit him. He was strong on realism, and one time while I was serving a term with him I had to stage a scene that had a bower of roses in it. Well, I made as fine a picture as you ever saw, but when it came to dress rehearsal do you think I was right? I should say not. He took one look at that rose bower and then he started in.

"Say, those tissue paper rosettes look about as much like the real thing as you do like an artist," he raved. Well, I picked one of 'em off and stuck it under his nose.

"You're criticising God, not me!" I yelled, for I'd spent forty dollars 'prop' money on real roses and I'd like to know who was the artist that time."

"Yes," I interrupted, hurrying to the defense of cherished idols, "but those were exceptional cases."

THE Old Man took a long puff and favored me with a tolerant look. "Oh, I dunno!" he continued slowly; "I could go on tellin' you exceptional cases all night. Now, there was Louie Mann; he was another one the realistic bug had bit so bad he had a continual case of the itch. He used to make me so mad I wished he'd get a suicide scene, for I was sure he'd introduce enough realism into it to get over, once and for all. He was staging a play that had a safe in the first act and I says to myself: 'I'll give you one to crack all right.' Well I went to the safe people, promised 'em program notice and finally got 'em to send up one that took a four-horse drag to haul and about fifty men to wheel into position. Louie was late for the last rehearsal and we were all set when he showed up. He took one look at the safe setting there in the half light and told me it was about strong enough to hold my reputation as a stage mechanic. After he had kicked verbally till the air was full of red dust he went over and, putting his realism on a firm footing, landed on the safe. Well my reputation was a whole lot safer than Louie's toe, for he broke it at the first joint and it took two doctors to set it and



My reputation was a whole lot safer than Louie's toe

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