

outside New York; but it is equally true that a large majority of them come from small towns. To those who have lived so far from the place where theatricals is a business, the stage has the additional charm of mystery. New Yorkers, thanks to the enterprising press, are pretty well informed about the inner workings of the stage—wind machines, snow storms, drifting clouds, *etcetera*. But to the provincial these things are still marvelous, and the mysterious has ever held, and always will hold, a strong fascination.

The young person who aspires to be an actor is always met with the advice of the old-timer: "Don't."

"Then, if it is so inadvisable for me, why don't you give it up?" is the poser that the youngster hands back.

This brings up another phase of the matter, and it is hard to answer the question: Why do actors remain on the stage, when they invariably advise others to keep off? For the successful actor, the reason is patent; but why does the non-successful actor stick to the stage, which he abuses and tells every one else to keep away from?

IN the case of most of them, it takes some years for the glamor to wear off, and the stern business side of the profession to show itself. Again, it takes a number of failures to convince an actor (some are never convinced) that he is a failure. Should that time come, the actor feels that he is too old to "rub out and start over." Generally speaking, he was not a good business man in the first place—that may have been the reason for his adopting the stage—and the short hours to which he has been accustomed in the theater have unfitted him for the daily grind of almost any other occupation he might turn to.

Fists of Clay

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up the street, the leaden-eyed guide silently waiting. The Kid took his station at a discreet distance behind them. They moved on, and he followed with the air of a dog bent on being adopted.

"Gee, she ain't got no business out wid a crooked, dopy mutt like dat," the young mitt artist muttered protestingly to himself. "I wouldn't trust him wid an empty growler," and thus justified his trailing of her with his protective intentions."

The guide turned off the narrow street into one of the black, ill-smelling alleys opening on the burrows that, to the curious, form the most alluring and ominous section of Chinatown. Miss Wright balked. "Gracious, Gladys!" she exclaimed at the Stygian darkness, made doubly repellent by the smells which assailed them. "We can't go into such a place!"

"Here's where ye see d' pipe-hitters an' d' fan-tan games," said the guide in an assured, raucous voice.

"Come on, Hilda," urged Gladys, groping for her companion's arm and dragging her along. "We are out to do the thing, and here you are afraid the moment we step off the beaten track."

"But it's so awfully dark, Gladys!" was the timid demurrer.

"DEY'S light in here, ladies," and the guide opened a small door in the angle of the wall where a dim gas jet illuminated a nondescript interior with a feeble, unhealthy glow. The timorous Hilda slipped fearfully through the opening, Gladys followed her laughing, and the guide closed the door behind them, fumbling with the bolt that shot into place with a grating jar. Gladys surveyed the narrow passage in which they found themselves with a contemptuous wrinkling of her dainty nose. The wood-boxed walls were covered with ancient newspapers, yellowed with

The saddest cases are those who refuse to be convinced that Nature never intended them for the stage. They believe in themselves, believe that they have never had their chance; and there are always others who believe in them, and encourage them in their hopeless fight. Then, too, they know of numerous cases where the "part has made the actor," and they hold on, living in the hope that "next season" will see the end of the long lane, and bring the part that will place them "where they belong" in their profession. To the great majority, "next season" is the tomorrow that never comes; and so they go to their graves, firm in the belief that only an unkind Fate has cheated them of their due, and prevented their illumining the stage with their unsuspected genius.

SO, there you are! If you wish to be admired; if you desire an easy life; if you want to travel and to see the country—go on the stage. You may get the vanity knocked out of you by harsh stage managers and unfeeling, facetious dramatic critics; you may not find the life as sunshiny and rosy as it looks; you may see more of the country than you wish, and find it less interesting than you anticipated. You may discover that you have chosen a precarious means of livelihood; but you will never lack for variety, and you will not die of ennui. You will run against a new snag every season, just when you begin to flatter yourself that you "know the ropes"; but you will find that they manufacture a new kind of rope every year in the theatrical business: sometimes the ropes are knotty, and sometimes they break and drop you with one of those dull, sickening thuds that you read about in novels—but that is an entirely different story.

dampness; the air, heated by the flaring gas jet, was sickeningly warm and moist. Just beyond, the passage turned sharply and the angle but half concealed a second door.

"Dey's always t'ree or four doors," the guide explained, answering the inquiring glances of his charges. "So if d' cops start t' raid a joint, d' chinks is gotta chance t' git away while dey breaks 'em down. Great scheme, ain't it?" and he smiled an unpleasant, twisted smile that gave them a vague sense of apprehension.

"How interesting," rejoined Gladys, "but we are anxious to see what lies beyond. Will you please go on."

"I'll go on," he said with a wicked grin, "dis is far enough fer youse."

"What do you mean?" demanded Gladys quickly, and Hilda shrank to her, trembling and thoroughly alarmed at the sinister expression of the guide.

"I mean youse'll pass over dat purse an' git back where youse belong, an' damn lucky youse git out dat easy." The fellow swaggered toward them threateningly.

Hilda fled back to the angle of the passage and threw her weight against the inner door only to find it stout and resisting, then turned with a sudden shriek as she saw the guide, with a malicious light in his little porcine eyes, force Gladys against the wall, endeavoring to grab her purse which she held behind her with both hands.

The answer to her cry was a crash on the outer door that startled all three. Then the guide, leaving Gladys leaning white and trembling against the wall, rushed at Hilda where she crouched against the inner door blocking his escape. Suddenly the violent impact of a heavy body on the outer barricade snapped the lock with a crash that drowned her second scream as the guide grappled her. Simultaneously Kid Brady had thrown her assailant from



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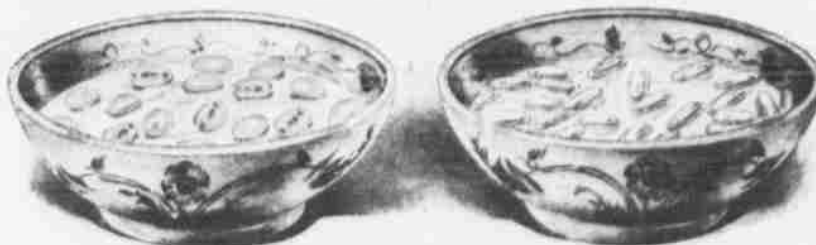
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