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## Eggs in the Vaudeville Basket

By George M. Cohan

THE MOST amazing thing to a manager is the utter lack of comprehension on the part of applicants of what professional work really means.

applicants of what professional work really means.

When I was writing vaudeville sketches, I used to get letters from young fellows in country towns who wanted to go into vaudeville. For some unaccountable reason, they figured out that that was the easiest way to break into the entertainment business. As a matter of fact, they were choosing the very toughest end of it all. In vaudeville, there is no stage manager to tell one what to do and how to do it. He must rely entirely upon himself. Furthermore, he must do his own booking, get his own transfer agent to take care of his baggage, negotiate his own railroading, and even pack his own properties. In fact, he has a thousand and one troubles to divert his mind from his proper business. It never seems to dawn upon the aspirant that it's much better to get into a great organization, where there's somebody to attend to every problem for him, and where he has a chance to learn the details of stage craft.

A clever vaudeville man, to begin with, must have a good act, and if

A clever vaudeville man, to begin with, must have a good act, and if he be unknown, be must know how to talk his act to the managers. If to talk his act to the managers. If he employs an agent, he is at a disadvantage, because these persons work for the management of the theaters. Furthermore, the vaudeville man must remember that he comes out on to the stage with nothing behind him, practically no properties, no chorus girls to divert attention. The eyes of the people are centered on him. He must do it all. It is by far the most difficult business in the world to succeed at, unless one is very talented.

One often hears the question:

One often hears the question:
"What has become of such and such a vaudeville team? I saw them

when they first went on, and they seemed very promising."

The answer is: "They did n't survive—did n't have merit enough. The hook got them."

The "hook," though a cruel instrument of humiliation, is, useful. It enables the public to pick its favorites before they are engaged. On the other hand, many a good man gets a chance before the great jury of the people that the short-sighted manager might not have given him.

Where do the actors go to who disappear? The papers constantly remind us of tens of thousands of stage

appear? The papers constantly remind us of tens of thousands of stage folk who are unemployed. A vast army of these lose their jobs during the summer months and, becoming disgusted, go into other kinds of work. But the tendency of managers to run late into the season and to open early in the tall, the increasing number of small watering places that have theaters for the summer months, and the establishment of a great number of stock companies in the towns throughout the country, have not only reduced the number of people to be thrown out of work, but have given opportunities for summer have given opportunities for summer jobs until better things turn up.

When you ask where stage folks go to when they disappear, please to remember that some of them die. Others drift from the great metropolitan centers out through the country and never reappear to their old admirers, though they may for years play outer circuits.

play outer circuits.
It is amazing to think what a vast number of actors retire to small farms and succeed. Many superan-nuated ones start dramatic schools, while others make a business of stage managing amateur productions for church benefits and the like.

The young lady who thinks herself dream usually has large awakening possibilities.

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