

The Player Comes to Town By Frederic J. Haskin

New York City, Aug. 16.—This is the height of the theatrical season in New York. Not the theatrical season as the public knows it, with mobs around the box offices and the newspapers full of pictures and criticisms, but the most important season for the players themselves, when, carefully toileted and prepared, they make their rounds of the various theatrical agencies in search of contracts.

Stars who hold a secure position in the theatrical firmament may be seen driving their roadsters and pet bull dogs along the familiar Fifth avenue; ingenues with Mary Pickford curls and black velvet bonnets are to be found making surreptitious selections of gowns on Fourteenth street, while Broadway teems with chorus girls.

Girls with naturally yellow hair, girls with artificial yellow hair, girls with black hair, red hair, brown hair, pale green hair—girls of every type of figure, coloring, complexion are to be seen on Broadway now, wearing that look of self-conscious unconsciousness characteristic of the foot-light favorite. For no actress, whether she be walking down the street, buying a pair of shoes or sipping a claret lemonade, ever quite loses that feeling of "the audience."

Stars and Chorus Girls Soon.

Six weeks more and most of them will be gone. Then you will still see stars and chorus girls on Broadway, but they will be only the few that are in the shows which remain in New York; the rest will be out on the road. But now, if you want to obtain a glimpse of the theatrical profession in the glory of its most elaborate habitments, climb up on top of a Fifth avenue bus on Sunday afternoon and watch the long leisurely parade of afternoon promenaders. Here, in a frock coat and silk hat, white carnation in his buttonhole, comes a popular musical comedy star, whose talent in dancing and love-making has thrilled every matinee girl from New York to San Francisco. In the middle of the block he lifts his hat, grins and throws a kiss to a gray-clad young

lady in a yellow car, who owns a good-sized farm on Long Island, but who still enjoys the distinction of being America's most popular woman comedian.

Next come two shimmering chorus girls on the arm of a prominent vaudeville idol, while behind them are a well-known ingenue and an old lady who draws a fabulous salary in character parts. So the procession goes. Tragedians, clowns, vampires, ingenues, leading men, "butlers," characters, chorus girls all occur on one stretch of pavement.

August the Busy Month.

August is always the player's month in New York. It is the month when most of the contracts are signed, when new plays are rehearsed and when new costumes are bought. Managers, agents, both theatrical and press, boarding house keepers, hotels, dressmakers, milliners, wig shops, hairdressers, manicurists and ready-made wear shops all prepare for the large influx of players. For, while the tired business man and the matinee girl are frolicking away the hot summer holidays at fashionable summering places, the players are spending their vacations hunting jobs.

"I've been invited to spend two weeks with a friend of mine who has a swell place on Long Island—married a guy with money—but I can't leave New York," a chorus girl was heard to remark in a cafe the other day. She was having lunch with a young man who looked as if he might be a struggling artist or musician, and, incredible as it may seem, they were both taking nothing more wicked than club sandwiches and ice tea.

"Why— isn't the railroad operating as usual?" asked the young man.

"It ain't the fault of the railroad," said the chorus girl, smiling. "It's that piece of cheese who calls himself an agent. I've been up to see him five times, and he won't let me know whether I'm going to get a contract or not. And I've got to have next season's contract tucked in my glove before I leave New York, or there may not be any next season for me."

Usually, even with a contract in her strong box, it is impossible for a girl to leave New York. She has got to be on hand for rehearsals, and, although they may not start for a month, she is afraid to go away for fear they will decide to begin them immediately. Maybe, they do start the next week. After that every day for four weeks in succession she must appear at the theater at 10 o'clock in the morning and work until 6, sometimes 9 o'clock, at night, with nothing but a sandwich and a glass of milk to keep up her endurance. This is if she is a chorus girl, of course. If she is a star, or if she has "arrived" in any other kind of a part, things are made easier for her.

A star may hold a scene back for a whole hour, and the manager will smile sweetly at her when she appears finally on the arm of a prominent brewer who is backing the show— which effort makes him all the more irritable and exacting with the chorus.

The chorus is to blame for everything. If the lyrics are not good, it is because the chorus does not know how to sing them; if a scenic effect is out of harmony, it is the fault of the chorus—they did not stand in the proper places; if anything goes wrong from the star's best song in the second act to the proceeds of the box office, it is blamed on the chorus. For all this weight of responsibility the chorus girl gets from \$20 to \$25 a week, from which she must pay for her clothes and her board, including hotel and railroad expenses if she goes on the road. If anything happens to the production her contract is immediately void. She has to pay her own fare home. Moreover, the four weeks she has spent in constant rehearsing are absolutely wasted. Thus she is practically compelled to contribute capital—in the form of her time, which is worth money—to an enterprise in the profits of which she has the smallest share.

Burden of the Failures.

Only one play out of seven in New York succeeds definitely. Two out of every three are failures. While the chorus girls stand the brunt of these ill-tempered failures, all the players run the same risk concerning the success of the play. They cannot collect anything on their time if the play "goes under." Everybody agrees that this free rehearsal system is most unfair. It is a system that was started

fifty years ago when almost every play staged was a success, but has been continued down to the present day when the actor faces entirely new conditions.

Another unjust feature which the player must face is his contract. That important document, which keeps so many of them in New York during this month, protects the producer beautifully, but the player literally not at all. A man may have a contract to play a certain part in a certain show, for example, but let the management decide, it does not want him and he is dismissed usually with two weeks' notice—sometimes none at all. On the other hand, if a manager decides he wants to keep a man after his contract expires, he usually does so, not by means of the contract but by a black list, the threat of which is enough to keep a player in one company for years.

Recently, and comparatively suddenly, the player has come to realize that his own position is distinctly on the same plane with that of the hock-carrier, if not a trifle worse. One does not hear so much talk about art and artists now in New York, and a great deal more about organized labor. Not long ago, a number of vaudeville artists, newly acquired members of the Federation of labor, were able to obtain a few concessions by going on a strike. It made a tremendous impression throughout the profession. This summer, while the player is waiting with his usual impatient patience for a contract, he is a shade more independent. With him it is now a case of "not that we love our art less, but that we love our freedom more."

Welch Loses Injunction Suit on Garbage Question

John W. Welch, proprietor of a string of restaurants, lost his injunction suit against the city of Omaha, which he brought in an attempt to prevent Carl Sorensen, official garbage collector, from hauling refuse away from the eating houses. Welch said the garbage was worth \$12,000 a year to him to feed hogs with. Judge Troup, sitting in equity court, denied the injunction and dissolved the temporary restraining order.

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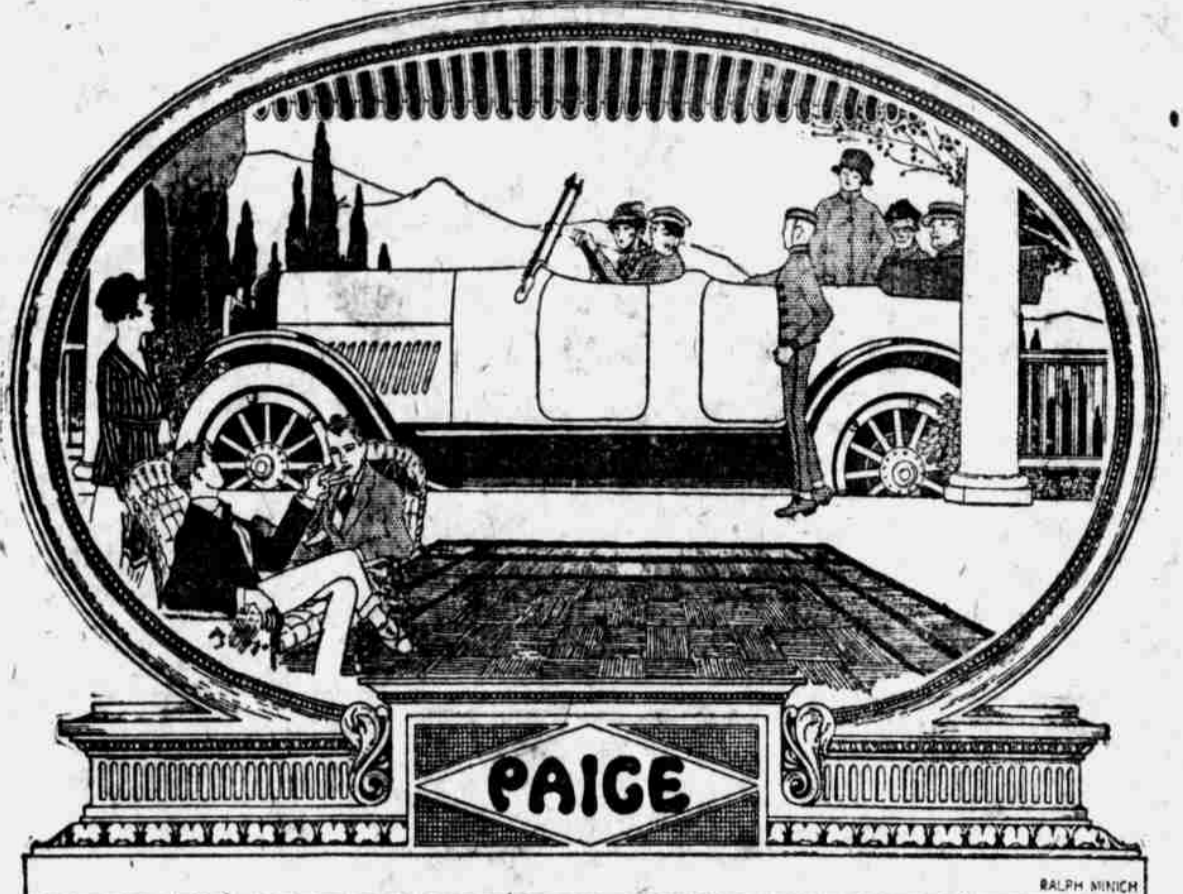
K. C. Resident Declares Omaha Beautiful City

"One of the most beautiful cities in the United States." This is the comment upon Omaha by a long-time resident of Kansas City, who has been in every leading city in the country. He has spent some four weeks in Omaha and will be here until the last

of September and says that he has no reason to change this first conviction.

He had not seen Omaha in twenty years. He goes on to say that the art of man could not have devised a more attractive topography than Omaha has naturally and the hills and valleys might be coveted by many another western city. In fact, he illustrates his thought by saying that Chicago would give millions to have

just one of our hills. Our natural forests, our magnificent views, and our splendid drainage, all go to make Omaha an unusually attractive city in which to live. He thinks, as do many others who come from other cities to Omaha, that the Omaha people do not sufficiently appreciate the wonderful advantages of their location and its topographical advantages as well.



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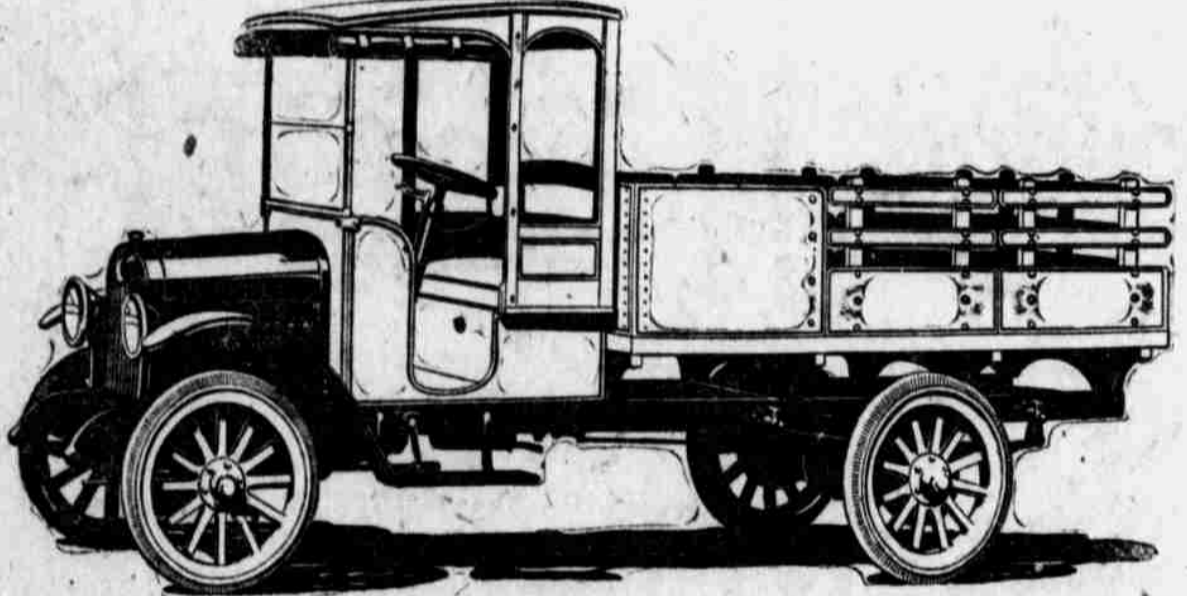
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