

Mr. Light's \$50 and Up Footlight Star Factory

"Want to Be a Maude Adams? Certainly!—A Mantell or a Booth?
Of Course!—Even a Bernhardt? Easy!" But the Versatile
Mr. Light Must Now Explain to a Federal
Court Just How He Hoped to Make
Good His Promises

ARTISTIC, talented, refined ladies wanted by Alexander Light to study, rehearse and play parts in his Shakespearean repertoire; evening rehearsals; good salary after professional tryout in May for the right character; send references. Apply by letter only, care The Coming Show Magazine, Hotel Savoy, New York.

A FEW weeks after this advertisement had appeared in certain New York papers two men presented themselves at the desk of the Savoy and inquired for Mr. Light. They were Inspector Honvery, of the Postoffice Department, and Detective McGlynn.

Mr. Light appeared in a cutaway coat, lavender striped trousers, a silk hat, pearl-gray spats. He carried a silver-headed cane. His walk carried on the best traditions of the school of the elder Booth.

The two approached him. "Mr. Light?" they asked.

"Yes, gentlemen, I am Alexander Light—say, rather, Alexander the Son of Light, for that is the English of our ancient Armenian name. But you have the advantage of me, sirs."

Thus spoke the majestically stepping person in measured, sonorous tones.

The two men had the advantage of him, correctly enough. They told Mr. Light so. They informed him that he was under arrest.

Certain "pupils" of Mr. Light, in fact, had made complaint to the authorities that he had promised to turn them into footlight stars for a minimum price of \$50 up to a maximum of some hundreds. This, they said, he had guaranteed to do in a few months. They had paid their money, but still were far from stardom. Indeed, they had never even gotten behind the footlights in any capacity. They wanted the police to find out why. Hence the encounter of Messrs. Honvery and McGlynn with Mr. Light.

Mr. Light did not get excited or protest his innocence or depart from his attitude of immense calm, and by these tokens Inspector Honvery and Detective McGlynn say they suspected that he had been arrested before. This, they allege, Mr. Light admitted. He informed them, they say, that he had been arrested on similar charges in St. Paul, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Chicago and Boston. His real name, he said, was Gadzakian.

While investigating the complaints against Light the authorities found a typical case of his methods of instruction, they say, in the experiences of Miss Sibyl Hall, of New York. Miss Hall is a clever, good-looking girl of fine antecedents; she is a painter of considerable skill. Her mother, the widow of the late Charles Mason Hall, is the author of a volume of poems now in process of publication, and Miss Sibyl's sister is a musician.

"We live a quiet, rather secluded life," said Mrs. Hall, "and the idea of fraud never occurred to us. Mr. Light advertised for 'artistic, talented, refined ladies,' and we reasoned that a man who laid stress on refinement must himself be refined. Besides, he wanted players for a Shakespearean company. We would not have considered an advertisement for chorus girls, but Shakespeare—that was different."

"So we decided to answer the advertisement. Sibyl wrote to Mr. Light that she thought she would prove worthy of his training, and that with enough practice she might eventually be able to play a small part in his forthcoming productions. Sibyl thought it was audacious even to mention herself to such a great personage as we thought Mr. Light must be, but everyone always said Sibyl had talent."

"After the letter was mailed Sibyl said she wished she hadn't written it. She said that she would not get an answer; Mr. Light would not even consider such a novice. She thought she was foolish even to think of it!"

"So we were astonished, embarrassed, when Mr. Light himself made his appearance the next morning. He wore a silk hat, cutaway spats, cane, boutonniere—he was very imposing. Sibyl was fussed, as she called it, to think that the great man had called upon her in person, and so soon after she had written the letter!"

Mrs. Hall and Miss Sibyl received Light. "He was very elegant and leisurely," Mrs. Hall continued, "and he delayed mentioning the object of his call while he made pleasant remarks about the weather. Then, as Sibyl was speaking about something or other, he interrupted."

"Ah, that voice, Miss Hall; that charming, bell-like voice. Marvellous, simply marvellous! I think—yes—I feel sure that after a course of lessons with me

An Unusually Striking Picture of Alexander Light, in the Character of Hamlet, the Melancholy Prince of Shakespeare's Tragedy.



One of Mr. Light's students in an attitude almost as pensive as that of his "Hamlet."

you could take the part of Viola in "Twelfth Night"—your voice is so wonderful; so musical. Music—that is it! Music, ah—for what says the Bard of Avon—"If music be the food of love—play on!" cried Mr. Light to our surprise," said Mrs. Hall. "As he said this he stood with one hand in his hair, the other making remarkable gestures."

"Then he told us of his successes and of his plans. He was to give a public recital in June at the Plaza Auditorium, he said, and after that his company would present a repertoire of Shakespearean plays on Broadway. Such pupils as he did not keep in his own company he would guarantee to place with other managers. He showed us a copy of his magazine and we were impressed even more."

"Miss Sibyl will need a set of books on dramatic art," he told us. "Fortunately I have these books with me." Then he pulled them out from beneath his coat-tails with a flourish. He learned I had another daughter and he wished to teach her also. But I told him my other daughter was too young. Then he brought up the question of money."

"There will be expense," he said, "but that must be expected. The books, tuition, costumes and other incidentals will amount to at least \$500, but in a few months Miss Sibyl will be earning more

Miss Louise Chase, Mr. Light's Wife and Partner and Author of the Poem, "Empty Sox."

than this in a single week." And then, somewhat hesitatingly, he asked for an advance payment.

"I explained that my income was received at lengthy intervals and that it would be inconvenient to give him a check for the total amount at that time. He was very obliging; \$150 would do for the present, he said. I replied that I would give him a check for that amount, but that I would date it a week ahead, so that my funds in bank would not be overtaxed. He accepted graciously and began to discuss arrangements for the first lesson. He wanted Sibyl to come to his apartments at the Hotel Marseilles at 8:30 the next evening. I said I would go with her as chaperone. Mr. Light said that it was not necessary, as his wife—Miss Louise Chase—on the stage—would be present. He showed us Miss Chase's picture in the magazine and a verse of hers, which read:

EMPTY SOX.
A tramp stood on a byway street
One cold December night,
The snow was thickly falling
The ground was covered white,
The Christmas bells and chimes rang out
And everyone seemed glad,
But that poor tramp kept standing there
And cried and looked so sad.
I touched him on the shoulder
And said, "Cheer up, old chap!"
'Twas then he spoke through tears to me,
"Well, I don't give 'er rap.
It's not for me I'm crying,
I'm used to only knocks,
But the little hearts will
Break at dawn over empty sox.
I've been a tough guy all my life
And hit the bottom rocks,
But nothing ever hurt, sir,
Like my empty Christmas sox."

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"If Music Be the Food of Love—Play On!" Cried Mr. Light, to Our Surprise," Said Mrs. Hall.



Another Pupil Whose Costume Hints a Tragic Role, but Whose Smile Doesn't.

"While I was reading this Mr. Light asked for five dollars in cash in addition to the check, and before we knew what had happened he was out of the house with the five dollars and the check for \$150."

"At the appointed time we went to the hotel, and after waiting an hour or more were shown to Light's apartments. There was another girl there—to whom we were not introduced. Mr. Light seemed anxious to get her out of the way. After a time the other girl left, and Mr. Light, after reciting part of Hamlet's soliloquy, complained that the hour was late and that he was tired and suggested that the lesson be cut short. We went away more suspicious than ever."

They did not know that the other girl—Mabel Smith, the proprietor of a specialty shop on West Forty-eighth street—also had a complaint to make. "Just before the Halls came Light had been trying to get me to cash the check for \$150 which Mrs. Hall had given him and which had been refused at the bank because it was dated ahead," Miss Smith says. "I waited downstairs to warn them against him, but they got away."

The Halls broke with Light after this. But Light finally met his Nemesis, the Federal authorities say, in the person of Adolph Reitelmeister, of No. 85 Throop street, Brooklyn. Reitelmeister had been a newsboy and had acquired some little money.

"I went to high school, and among other things won two medals for fencing," Reitelmeister says. "I also obtained a one

year's scholarship at Harvard College and was ambitious to take up playwriting as a profession. I thought that some actual stage experience would be valuable as a help in my college work. Light got me to give up my course at Harvard and considerable money before I became convinced that I wasn't getting anywhere. Then I got after Light."

"Light used to tell his male pupils that fencing was a great thing in Shakespearean roles, and he would then give us what he said was instruction. He did not know that I knew anything about fencing."

"So one day, after Light had given me three lessons of five minutes each, and each consisting in the recitation of bits of Shakespeare by himself, he said that the time had come to take up fencing. I had just been waiting for this chance. I slipped the button from my foil and went at him. In a few moments I had him running around the room in terror. Of course, I did not want to injure Light, so I just jabbed the foil into the tender parts of him."

"But this was not getting my money back."

The Federal authorities allege that they found sixty of Light's pupils who are ready to testify as to what he promised them and what they failed to get. They could have rounded up more, they say, but they thought sixty enough. The sums the Shakespearean teacher secured from them range from \$50 up to \$500. A Federal Grand Jury found an indictment against him. He has given bail in \$5,000 and is awaiting trial.