

THE ROAD TO FAME

By ALBERT HIGGINS

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It was Grandma Foster who was to blame for it. She came on a visit to her daughter, Farmer Stebbins' wife, and found her niece Hattie teaching the district school and engaged to be married to a worthy young man named Hiram Ball. Miss Hattie was fairly educated, fairly good looking and very well contented with her life.

Grandma's coming, however, started the fires of ambition. Once during her long life the old lady had attended a theatrical performance. It was in the town hall of her native village. The play was "Uncle Tom's Cabin," of course, and the company was made up of barnstormers, but it was a great play, and it made grandma, who was only a little girl then, thrill from top to toe.

Soon after her arrival at the Stebbins Hattie walked across the veranda in a way that made the old lady exclaim:

"Bless my soul if that don't remind me of Ophelia in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.' You've got her walk to perfection. Child, have you been practicing for the stage?"

"No, grandma."

"But the way you just turned around, your looking back at me with your head over your shoulder, your smile, the way you stick up your chin, all remind me of Ophelia. You could step right on the stage and play the character."

That was the beginning. Grandma announced her great discovery to her sister and brother-in-law and advised them to put Hattie on the stage at once; but, meeting with decided opposition, she said nothing further to them. Many were the councils held between her and the niece, however: It had been forty-two years since grandma had seen the historic play, and what she couldn't remember she imagined. Within a week she had decided that Hattie could not only play the part of Ophelia, but of little Es-



"BLESS MY SOUL, IF THIS DON'T REMIND ME OF OPHELIA."

degree, Marks and even of Uncle Tom himself. She couldn't fail to be the whole show, and in four weeks she would rise from "Uncle Tom's Cabin" to Shakespearean plays. The old lady believed what she said, and the young lady believed with her. Hiram Ball tried his best to open his fiancée's eyes.

"Your grandmother is a fool!" was his blunt way of putting it. "Because you can smile and giggle is no sign that you would make a great actress. You just give up the idea and settle down and behave yourself."

"Mr. Ball, I permit no one to speak disrespectfully of my grandmother in my presence," replied the young lady, with freezing dignity, as she took three strides to the east and then turned about and took three strides to the west.

"Little Stebbins, don't make a jay of yourself. You'll never be an actress any more than I'll be Cicero. It ain't in us."

"Speak for yourself, Mr. Ball. My resolution is taken. It is irrevocable. Nothing that you can say will shake me in the least. Destiny calls me."

"What do you mean to tell me that you are going to be silly enough to go on the stage?" he shouted.

"Remember when you are addressing varlet!" she warned as she drew herself up.

"By gum, but you have gone crazy! That old grandmother of yours ought to be ducked in the goose pond. What does she know about acting?"

"Enough, sir! Here our paths diverge. From this hour we are strangers."

"Then go right along and make a fool of yourself!" called Hiram as she turned away.

When the grandmother was informed of the insidious remarks of Mr. Ball she held out new encouragement. She discovered new things to found new predictions on. The very way that Miss Hattie climbed a fence, fell down on the lawn or ran into a clothes-line proved to her that the girl was born for the stage and had been molding in obscurity.

The district school was continued, and nothing might have come of the talk but for the week's holiday in September to give the carpenters time to make some repairs. Grandma had gone home, and now Miss Hattie went over to the county seat to visit a girl friend. She and Hiram had been "out" for the last three months. Instead of moping and sorrowing and breaking his heart he had again called her a jay and continued his business of buying butter and eggs for the market.

A theatrical company playing "Did She Love Him?" had struck the town and excited the people. The actors and actresses had snatched about the street and been the object of all ob-

servers. There was talk of a "tremendous cast" and a "carload of scenery." There was talk of a "farewell tour" and "tremendous applause." The play had run several hundred nights in New York and the same in London, and its author had received over a million dollars in royalties.

Miss Hattie Stebbins had determined from the first to join the company. She met the manager in a grocery where he had called for crackers, cheese and herring, and to her intense joy, he was looking for a young lady to play second lead. Her salary would be \$25 per week. Her part would be to hold up the train of the leading lady's dress as she entered the parlor, trim two lamps and ask the leading lady if she should turn the cat outdoors. The manager could promise her no more just at present, as the leading lady was insanely jealous of her part, but later on there would be a change.

It was agreed that Hattie should leave when the company did and make her first appearance at the next town. She doctored her friends and was at the depot as the company made ready to depart at midnight. It departed in the caboose of a freight train. The manager explained that they preferred to travel that way in order to view the scenery.

There were five actors and three actresses. The actors were gallant enough, but the actresses held aloof and threw out insinuations and made Hattie feel as badly as they could. There was sleep that night for all who sat on the floor. In the early morning the company rolled into its next stopping place, and the manager took the upper rooms at the village inn. These included the carret. He did this, he explained, on the ground of health. He borrowed Hattie's watch that day and forgot to return it.

She went on in her part that night. She had studied it for hours and was letter perfect. She fell over on her entrance, and she fell over another on her exit, and though the actresses sneered and wanted to know if she thought she was in a cabbage patch, the manager took her aside and said he never saw such acting by an amateur. She had only to keep on and fall over four chairs to bring four rounds of applause from the audience. He wound up by borrowing her breast-pin.

For a whole week Miss Hattie Stebbins played second lead and rode from town to town in cabooses. For a whole week the actresses showed their jealousy of her. Sometimes enough money was taken in to pay the bills and get to the next town. Sometimes the printer and the landlord were held up by promises. Sometimes the audience numbered fifty people, and the applause that went up the manager called "positively tremendous." Sometimes only half a dozen people sat around and wondered what it was all about.

Miss Hattie had two gold rings, and he manager borrowed both of them. She loaned two or three of her dresses and a hat to the actresses in the hope of getting into their golden opinions. She learned to enter and to exit, and if she fell down she learned to fall gracefully on her shoulder. The manager assured her that the pinnacle of fame was not far away, and everything looked rosy, when she awoke one morning to find the company gone and to learn that the landlord was holding her for the bill.

Luckily her father arrived at that juncture. There was no scene. She did not fall into his arms. She had had acting enough. He simply took her home, where she found Hiram waiting for her. He had been biding his time, and there was no scene with him either. He simply remarked that if she had got over being a jay he would like to revive the marriage question, and an hour later a female head was resting on a manly shoulder and gazing up at the new moon with dewy eyes. After a long while Hiram gently asked: "Dearest, what does varlet mean? You know you called me one."

"It's—it's some kind of an animal, I guess, and I'm sorry," she replied as she snuggled closer.

Adam Knew the Flood Was Coming.

An apocryphal book called the "Lesser Genesis" and well known to the early Christian fathers tells a wonderful incident in the life of Seth, the third son of Adam and Eve. When the goodly Seth was about forty years of age, he was "rapt" up into heaven by a trio of angels and there told and shown what was in store for mankind. Among other things, the coming of the great deluge was made known to him, as was also the coming of the Saviour. When he returned to earth, Seth told his parents what had happened and of what he had seen and heard concerning the future of the human race. And Adam was much grieved when it was made known to him that the world would be destroyed by water on account of the wickedness of his own children, but a great peace and calmness came over him when Seth told how the face of the earth would again be repopulated. . . . His joy was exceedingly great when Seth related what was in store in the coming ages, and he was particularly glad to know that redemption should finally come through Jesus, the Christ.

TRAVERS & CO.

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The mercantile house of Travers & Co., New York, had a branch in Paris for twenty years, when Travers himself, after looking over old accounts, noticed something wrong.

The next steamer sailing for Havre carried with her Thomas Agnew, the firm's bookkeeper. He was provided with all proper credentials, and his instructions were to give the Paris books a thorough overhauling. He was to interview the head of the French firm first. This he did soon after reaching Paris.

"I hardly expected you, but I am glad that you are here," was his greeting. "It is true that the business has fallen off, and it has been a source of anxiety to me. We seem to be doing as much as ever, but the sales show less and less. I cannot suspect any of the employees. The bookkeeper is the only one who could juggle the fig-

ures, and he is pretty tight. He has been with us for ten years past and is as steady as a church. I might as well suspect myself."

"Nevertheless, if there is anything wrong it must be in his department," suggested Agnew.

There were two or three interviews, and then it was suggested that Dubois, which was the name of the bookkeeper, be given leave of absence for a couple of weeks. He refused to take it. Then Agnew called for instructions and was told to go ahead. He was taken to the office and introduced and his errand stated. To his agreeable disappointment Dubois gave him a cordial welcome and offered every assistance in his power. He would be only too glad to have his books looked over and verified. His frankness and eagerness were a set-back to Agnew, but a day was appointed for the commencement of the work. No man could have set out to render himself more agreeable than the French bookkeeper did. He first invited Agnew to his home to dinner. It was a modest little cottage, plainly furnished and evidently economically managed. There were a wife and two children, and the family appeared to be happy and contented.

Agnew had made up his mind that Dubois was certainly living on his income and was a man of steady habits when his wife happened to mention during the momentary absence of the husband that she would be entirely happy if Claude did not have to remain at the office so late three or four nights in the week. As a matter of fact, the office always closed at 5:30 p. m., and Agnew was made uneasy by the remarks. Dubois made arrangements to show the American certain sights the next evening, and they were together for several hours. At a cafe where they stopped for a last drink Agnew, who had taken very little during the evening and who called for a milk glass on this occasion, suddenly found the room whirling round and round with him and finally pitched forward, on the floor and became unconscious. When he came to some time during the next day he was ill and found that he had been robbed and was clothed in the garb of a workman. He was also a prisoner in a cellar so dark that he could not see across it. There were a pitcher of water and a loaf of bread beside him. He drank of the water and slept for hours.

When he awoke again the effects of the drug were gone, and he explored his prison, to discover that it had only one small window, and that looked out on a back yard and was heavily barred. There had been stairs leading up to a door, but they had been removed. So sounds reached him from above, and the noises from the street were muffled.

An hour later a man thrust a ladder down and brought more bread and water. He was armed with a knife and refused to answer any questions. The American coaxed, threatened and tried to bribe, but the man was firm. Three times a day for the next ten days he brought bread and water, but never anything else. Then one evening he left the ladder behind him when he ascended, as if by an oversight, and after waiting for an hour Agnew crept up, to find the door open. He had no trouble in leaving the house, which was without tenants and situated in a slum street. The man hadn't a penny in money, and his suit was old and ragged. When he accepted a rendezvous he was ordered to move on. He moved on and told his story again and again and at length was arrested and locked up. In the morning the police judge was about to commit Agnew as a vagrant when he asked that the head of the firm be sent for. This was done, and of course the prisoner was soon at liberty. He could not guide the police to the street where he had been held prisoner, but a visit to the home of Dubois explained everything. He had abandoned his family eight days previously in a day or two it was shown that for five years he had maintained three separate establishments, and in two of them he had passed for a single man. Instead of being a man of steady habits, he was a regular roamer. Instead of being a man of probity, a brief examination of his books showed that he had stolen \$30,000 from the firm in six years. Had an expert been put on his books at any time his frauds must have been discovered in half a day.

It took the police a couple of weeks to secure a clue, but the eunzebler was finally followed to South Africa and up the country to the diamond mines. When arrested he was all bravado, but three days later he committed suicide under the officer's nose, and the case against him was closed.

M. QUAD.

Still to Let.

"That house that you finished a few weeks ago is the biggest of the lot," said the real estate agent. "Perhaps that's why it's so hard to find a tenant."

"Yes," answered the builder, "it's last, but not least."—Lippincott's.

A Different Medium.

Higgins—That pretty little sculptress I met at your reception the other evening completely turned my head.

Miss Peachley—Indeed! I knew she modeled in clay, but I wasn't aware that she worked in wood.—Chicago News.

Left on His Hands.

Gabbie—That's a queer sort of ring for you to be wearing. It isn't suitable for a man at all.

Lovett—Think not? Well, I tried it on a girl, and she didn't seem to think it suited her either.—Philadelphia Press-Tribune.

The Modern Way.

First American Father—I hear your daughter is going to be married.

Second American Father—So I understand.—Judge.

Superstitious.

"I fine you \$12."

"Make it thirteen and costs, Judge; thirteen is an unlucky number."—Harper's Weekly.

Another Thing.

"I hear Starbuck took a new play out for a run. Did it strike 'em?"

"No; he beat it."—Boston Herald.

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