

Unsung Heroes of the Theatre



THERE are many persons in the show business who never appear on the stage. They are the unsung heroes of the theater of whom the audience see or hear little or nothing at all. They endure most of the hardships incident to the business, yet they are never permitted to bask in the limelight.

Who are they? They are the stage hands, electricians, the maids and valets of the stars, ticket-takers, box-office clerks, scene-shifters, ushers, dressers, stage-door keepers, and last, those individuals whose job it is to keep before the public the names and faces of the players by whom they are employed, keeping themselves the while more or less in obscurity—the press agents.

The thrill of the show business affects the life of every person connected with the theater. Once bitten by the microbes of the stage, these individuals are doomed to live in, by, and for the theater. It is their bread and butter, and try as they may to tear themselves away from its gripping fascination, they seldom make the break.

Take, for example, the stage-door man, who represents perhaps the theater's saddest story, says the New York Times. While he receives a wage which is not out of proportion to the service he renders, he has long hours, and sometimes is forced to work seven days a week. His chief consolation—and an important one in the show business—is that if he proves himself capable, which is not difficult, he may be assured of steady employment in season and out.

Fortunately, all stage-door keepers are not married or have families to support. They tell the story of the door keeper said to be worth \$20,000, who worked his ten hours or more a day and never offered the slightest hint of his somewhat comfortable circumstances. The average door man is either old or crippled. Consequently the task of holding the fort by the stage door where he can read his newspaper and smoke all day long without being disturbed too often is as comfortable an occupation as he could hope to find anywhere.

Consider, next, the dressing maid. She is taught soon enough to bear the brunt of her mistress' temper. While the star by whom she is employed may be thrillingly happy today, the maid has learned from experience to be always on the lookout for some mishap, which, however slight, will alter her employer's feelings completely.

The maid of almost any theatrical celebrity is to all appearances one of the happiest and most punctual persons in existence. She is a quiet and efficient worker and learns quickly enough the necessity of not missing either performances or cues, always preparing in advance for the next change of apparel.

Most maids and dressers are expert with the needle and often inherit the discarded but still serviceable gowns which their extravagant employers have abandoned. There is a New York dancer who is far from the ranks of stardom but still affluent enough to employ two maids and a chauffeur. When things go wrong backstage she may be heard to shout and scold them with a thoroughness that halts at no form of expression.

And yet, for all that, she is ordinarily quite a pleasant being, and the two maids have been with her for years. Stage managers, too, are outside the theater picture. And yet, like the maids and valets, they live in a world which revolves upon every whim of some temperamental star or producer. When the sheets are tailed it will be seen that they also contribute largely to the success of the people and productions which they are working for.

The average stage manager has gone through several years of preliminary training before he reaches his station, a training that may include in its schedule anything from having been a call-boy to a playwright who is trying to earn his keep between the gaps of his various produced works.

The stage manager is, of course, an important cog in the theatrical machine, really a minor factor in the life of a production. The stage director, a more important person, for having produced and staged the play, teaches the stage manager exactly how the lines are to be delivered, and after that the latter must see to it that no alterations are made.

Occasionally the stage manager may be asked by the show's owner for his opinion concerning the selection of an understudy. But, all told, he will ordinarily be found backstage looking at his watch, taking note of certain times, seeing to it that every one is ready for the next cue and everlastingly "shushing" loud talking.

Sometimes it happens that the stage manager has time to play a small part in the production. He may have been an actor once himself, and he is still useful because he does not suffer from stage-fright. There are even stage managers who are ex-producers, having previously lost in their own theatrical gambles.

The lot of the understudy is more often one of promise than of fulfillment. But the odds are usually worth taking, for there is the eternal hope that some time she will be called upon to assume her superior's role. One such chance may decide a whole career, and in this fashion many a player on Broadway today has earned her first chance.

The man in the box office prides himself upon his ability to understand human nature. He is a shrewd gentleman and occasionally may sell an orchestra seat to a person who feels he would prefer to sit upstairs. He knows, for instance, that there is a difference in the technique of selling tickets to men and women. He knows the laws, rules and regulations for both.

Ticket-takers and ushers may be combined as perhaps the most detached employees of a theatrical or-

ganization. Few of them undertake their jobs as their sole means of support. It is thus no great worry to them when a production shuts down. Among ushers there are college students, and young women, married and unmarried. Their hours of work are short, and they have plenty of spare time for themselves. Ticket-takers in the daytime have been known to be letter-carriers, store-keepers, students and even clerks.

Although this list of unsung, unrecognized heroes of the stage might be continued indefinitely into the outlying branches and offshoots of the theater there is one more person who cannot be neglected here, namely, the press agent.

There are all sorts of definitions concerning a press agent. At a meeting of the board of directors he may be fraternally called a publicity director. In social intercourse he may be referred to as a press representative, and the managers, too, usually have their own quaint descriptions of him. Even the detached observer must admit that, while his inventiveness is astounding, his work is not always appreciated, for, like other human beings, the press agent sometimes errs and when he does there is a price to pay. If he "pulls a stunt" that is pure fake, dramatic editors and city editors learn to classify him properly and it is a long time before he can come out of his hiding place to face them again with another idea for publicity.

On the whole, his is perhaps the most fascinating function of the long list of persons who attach themselves to the show business. He interprets to the outside world the lure of working behind the scenes among painted and powdered troupers, beautiful chorus girls and principals of every rank.

A successful press agent is among the world's most indefatigable and resourceful beings. His statements to the paper are, as a rule, couched in picturesque and sometimes illuminating language, and he leaves many an editor gasping and guessing as to whether or not he is telling the truth. He is not necessarily a pillar of veracity nor is he likewise at all times a pillar of the lesser falsehoods. There are those who believe that the press agent is one of the most important factors in the production of a play. He can ruin a good one with stupid publicity and sometimes he can "make" a bad one through intelligent planning.

Neglected Studies
There is a lot of trouble in this world because some men think they have learned finance before they have learned simple arithmetic.—Acheson Globe.

is record was on the frigate Prince Royal, launched in 1698. The Prince Royal carried on its bow a huge and elaborate representation of the ill-fated son of King James I on horseback.

Unkind Thought
Maud—"That man over there has been staring at Reggie for quite a while. Wonder who he is." Marie—"Where? Oh, he's a celebrated mind reader." Maud—"Must be on his vacation."—Boston Transcript.

a marker is sometimes put into a jack pot, another jack not being in order when the deal passes to the player having the buck.—Pathfinder Magazine.

These Better Days
It is irksome, of course, when your host insists on showing you how many stations he can get on the radio, but think of the days when the visitor to the family circle was expected to admire the portraits in the photograph album.—Boston Transcript.

Violin of Glass

Attempts to make violins from a material other than wood have all failed until recently, when a German glass blower who is also a village musician in a town in the Rhenish-Gebirge, has succeeded in making one of glass. The inventor's name is Bartel Hoellerlein, and Reclams Universum (Leipzig) speaks of his invention as follows: "One can really use the expression

'a crystal-clear tone' in reference to this instrument. Before this violin is played it must be 'blown,' so to speak. Herr Hoellerlein is about to blow a double-bass viol, which will be presented to the Provincial museum at Breslau."—Literary Digest.

Peculiar Figurehead
The cumbersome old warships of several hundred years ago carried the most resplendent examples of prow carving ever known. Perhaps the handsomest figurehead of which there

On Exchange List

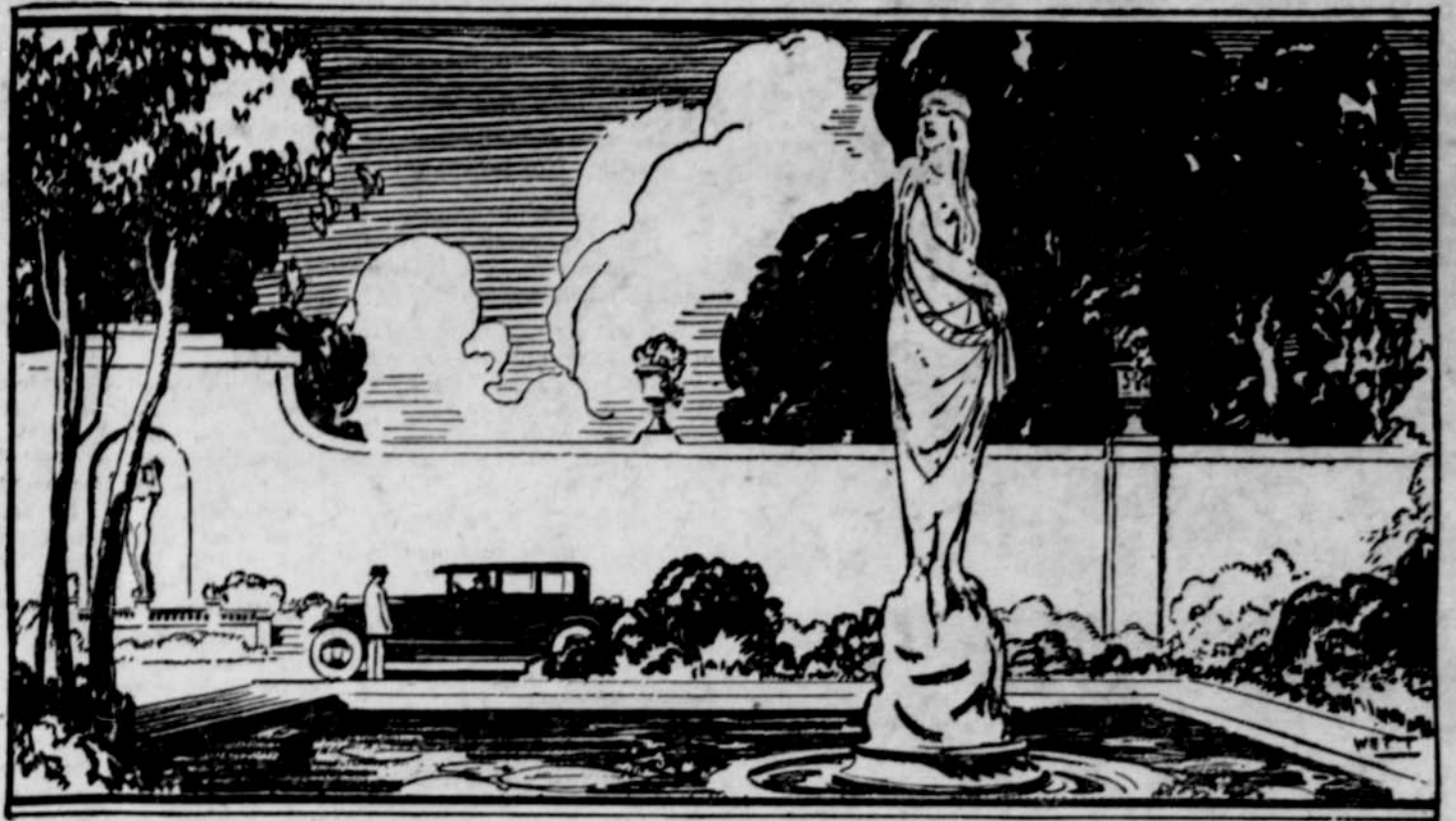
In a single issue of a New York tabloid we note in the classified ads that one citizen wants to exchange two diving suits, "good for deep-sea work," for a raccoon coat; another would welcome a radio in return for a policeman's hat and raincoat, and a third wants to exchange a muscle builder for a ukulele. Of course there's the young lady who wants lessons in ballet dancing in exchange for office work.—Collier's.

"Passing the Buck"

This expression, which means shifting responsibility, is supposed to have originated in the card room. In various card games a counter or marker is placed on the table before one of the players to remind him of his turn to deal. This marker, which is to prevent mistakes as to the position of the deal, is called the "buck" and is passed from player to player as the turn to deal goes around. In poker

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Wedding Bells

Cortlandt Bleeker said at a wedding breakfast in Lenox: "Most of us are disappointed in love—I mean after we get married. "Marriage is the beginning of a woman's life and the end of a man's. "Marriages are made in heaven, though we have all seen brimstone matches, too. "Marriage gets easier after the first twenty-five years. "It makes no difference about your choice—marry whom you please, you'll discover you've got somebody else."

The Air

"What did you do with that announcer, Doris?" "I tuned him out."

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MINING—I NEED PARTNERS with some capital to help reopen a Gold Quartz Mine and four courses Gold Placer Claims. G. A. Von Krusen, French Gulch, California.

W. N. U., San Francisco, No. 33-1926.

Blind Girls Show Skill With Needle

A dress show remarkable in several ways was staged at Bush house, Strand, W. C., where the first free public exhibition in London of the handicrafts of the blind was displayed, says the Westminster Gazette. Dainty frocks were shown, but the girls whose clever fingers made them never saw them. Some of the girls are deaf and dumb as well as blind. Their work is so good that it sells on its merits in the best salons of Paris and London.

In the Rue de la Paix, in Bond street, Regent street and Oxford street women are unknowingly buying the work of these afflicted girls and praising the perfection of the articles and the "extra finish."

Each girl is responsible for a garment throughout all its processes—from the yarn to the completed parts. The wages are higher than those paid in factories where the employees are sighted. Between 300 and 400 garments are turned out a week.

Relic of Old Race

Remnants of a race believed to have existed in Florida 2,000 years ago have been dug up in Broward county in that state. Near a burial mound was discovered an idol, 35 feet tall, made of sea mangrove, or "wood eternal," as it is called by those who regard it as nondeceivable. The features, seemingly those of a female, were carved from shells. They were of the Mongolian type. The body was fashioned from wood. Scientists found the burial mound about 500 yards from the Atlantic ocean. It is one of the highest spots of the country and the site of the first white settlers who came to Florida.

Giant English Ox

England has always been famous for her pure-bred cattle and sheep. Nearly 300 years ago huge oxen were produced there. In his diary, Evelyn speaks of an ox that was nineteen hands high and four yards long, and that was in 1649. It that date Leicestershire sheep had already obtained a great reputation and fetched big prices. The marvelous sheep of New South Wales, one of which recently yielded forty-five and one-half pounds of wool at a clip, are of purely British descent.—Capper's Weekly.

Indians Increase

The Department of the Interior says that the Indian population is approximately 350,000. This represents a gain during the past 12 years of almost 10,000, while during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1925, the increase was 2,693. These figures apply strictly to the United States. Alaska, with a large Indian population, is omitted.

It's a short road that has no road-house.

Calamity is virtue's opportunity.—Seneca.

Get Along Without Water

Most rodents, including rats, are thirsty creatures. The only animals living in very dry places which seem able to do entirely "without drink are snakes and reptiles. In the cold desert of shifting sand in K-shgar there are no reptiles, and not even a fly. But the Afghan boundary commission found swarms of lizards and a new and venomous species of adder in astonishing numbers in the awful desert of hot shifting sand at the corner where Persia, Beluchistan and Afghanistan meet.

None Whatever

"Do not write for money," a famous literary man advises. However, it is no use showing this to our wives who are going away for the summer.—Boston Transcript.

Money occasionally makes a fool of a man by helping him break into society.

Rare paintings are well done.

Emigrants Seek Cities

In 1920 there were about 14,000,000 foreign-born persons living in the United States and of this number more than 10,000,000 lived in the cities and large towns. Of this latter number more than 5,000,000 entered the country after 1900, while only 1,410,000 of those entering went to the rural sections.

For economy's sake, why not buy a vermicide which expels Worms or Tapeworms with a single dose? Dr. Peary's "Dead Shot" does it. 372 Pearl St., N. Y. Adv.

Chewing Gum

America's chewing gum bill in the last year was \$80,000,000, exclusive of the cost of gasoline necessary to remove it from the trousers.

With Her Fingers Crossed

He—"But you promised at the altar to obey me." She—"Of course, I didn't want to make a scene."

Go to a friend for sympathy—to a pawnbroker for a loan.

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