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# The Advocate

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## WHAT SORT OF PEOPLE ARE SHOW FOLKS?

By JAMES A. JACKSON

James A. Jackson, Business Specialist of the United States Department of Commerce, was once an Editor on the staff of The Billboard; and his business tours enable him to continue his friendly contacts with show folk, thus keeping fresh his observations of the people he knows so well and whose vocation he loves.

### The Habits, Home Connections, Religious Inclinations of the Traveling Entertainers Disclosed

The Truth About Much Misunderstood Stage People!

**W**HO are show folks? Where do they come from? And how do they live? How should one regard them socially? Are they "all right"?

These are typical questions that have been propounded to the writer many times by those who are merely curious; others inclined to be prudish; and still other people who have a subconscious mental reservation that in an attempt to prove the character of people of the theatre that the chance for an acquaintanceship with sporting and romantic possibilities will be forthcoming.

Since the latter idea is prevalent it is a pleasure to make whatever arrangements and co-ordinations of movements are needed to create the opportunity for this person to meet a number of selected people of the stage and platform and some musicians from the pit, or some people off of the front door, the mechanical side of the amusement world together with one or more from the allied occupations.

There is a certain uncanny sort of devilish joy to be taken in witnessing the metamorphosis of the notions of a man who thought he was going to meet a group of sublimated Tenderloin characters only to painfully learn that he is being subjected to a careful scrutiny himself by active advocates of the higher life. One feels gleeful as he shows up the poor mental and moral stuff of which this type of mankind is made of through the machinations of those for whom he had previously held small esteem.

Any theatrical Editor or Agent; in fact, anyone with an extensive acquaintanceship in the show world, is able to do that nasty-nice trick, by virtue of the fact that show people, like all people, differ in type. There are as many gradations among them as may be found in any classification based upon occupation, which, indeed, is no barometer to the inner characteristics of human beings.

Some of our most brilliant barristers are atheists. Bank presidents have been found to be rakes. Society women with every favorable influence have been social derelicts; and hoodlums have become leaders of men in high finance. So much for occupations as measures of men and women.

To those who have regarded show people as a thing apart, let us pass the information that there are two hundred thousand people of all nationalities and nativities engaged in the 26 different phases of show life in the United States. Nearly twenty-five thousand of these are of our social group, speaking racially.

There are about 14,000 musicians among us. Perhaps half of these are professional and the others semi-professional in that they earn part of their incomes at other vocations.

Vaudeville, musical comedy, burlesque and the drama furnish the livelihood for about 3,500 people. These are more or less interchangeable positions inasmuch as, for us, necessity precludes one always remaining in his or her preferred field of endeavor. Race restrictions compel our artists to show a certain degree of versatility.

The motion picture lots and studios employ about six hundred persons. More than two-thirds of these are in California and down on Long Island, New York, doing "atmosphere" and "mob" stuff, or servant and savage characters with white picture concerns. Those same con-

cerns employ about as many more as personal servants to stars; in dressing rooms, as wig trimmers, dressers, etc., not a few are actually stars. Miss McKinney, Clarence Muse, Stepin Fetchit, Dan Haynes, Farina and Noble Johnson are of this calibre.

Colored cast picture companies, of which there are but three at present, average a continuous employment for less than a hundred persons. These three are the Micheaux Film Company of New York and Chicago; the Norman Film Company of Jacksonville, Fla., and the Colored Players Film Company of Philadelphia.

These are what remain of more than twenty such enterprises that have come and gone since Hunter Haynes, known in Chicago as a razor strap manufacturer, went to New York and started the pioneer picture producing business that employed a colored cast.

There are more than 250 concert artists, vocal and instrumental, perhaps half as many touring individuals and groups who play under auspices; that is, they play churches, lodge halls, school houses and such places, under the promotion of a local organization that sponsors the engagement and sells the tickets. A dozen more are somewhat promotional in character.

They individually, or in groups of two and three, enter a town and train local talent for shows, pageants, celebrations and dramas. All of these are show people, and this latter group are the instrumentalities for the recruiting of much new talent to the previously named branches of the business.

Then comes the outdoor world with its twenty odd minstrel shows, more than a hundred plantation shows with carnivals, a score of medicine shows, a dozen circus side-show bands, a half hundred novelty acts and freaks, its animal trainers and caretakers, the several hundred decorators and concessioners, without whose sales no holiday, convention, anniversary or celebration would be complete. These, perhaps, total approximately two thousand more show folks. Motion picture scenario writers, laboratory employees, operators, photographers and a few other technicians account for a couple hundred more.

There are more than a hundred very active show people engaged in the business angles—owners, managers, advance and press agents, general agents, promoters and billers. There are known to be more than a hundred colored bill posters in the country, some of whom carry Union cards.

Then, to go back within the theater walls, we may take cognizance of the stage managers, electricians, property men, programmers, ushers, cashiers and ticket takers. These add eighteen hundred to the list of those to whom show business is a means of livelihood.

Outdoors again, we are confronted with the promoters and directors of a hundred fairs and more than thirty parks and similar amusement

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GLADYS SCOTT, versatile and specialty dancer at Canton Palace in New York. Behind the beautiful face and figure is a simple dignity and modesty that those on the other side of the footlights are wont to believe are not there.



JESSIE ALLISON, pretty daughter of the late Charles Allison, for thirty years the treasurer of New York's largest congregation.



ETHEL MOSES, beautiful daughter of Rev. Moses, a New York Baptist Divine. Miss Moses has been many times acclaimed one of the most beautiful girls in America.