1970

Three Mormon Actresses: Viola Gillette, Hazel Dawn, Leora Thatcher

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THREE MORMON ACTRESSES:

VIOLA GILLETTE, HAZEL DAWN, LEORA THATCHER

A Thesis

Presented to the
Department of Dramatic Arts
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Mavis Gay Cashler

May 1970
This thesis, by Mavis Gay Cashler, is accepted in
its present form by the Department of Dramatic Arts of
Brigham Young University as satisfying the thesis require-
ment for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date

Chairman, Advisory Committee

Member, Advisory Committee

Chairman, Major Department
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My appreciation I extend to my mother for hours of unselfish help and support, and to Richard Parkinson for my strength and inspiration.
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INTRODUCTION

That man is concerned about himself is solace enough to bear existence. We probe; we must. We are afflicted. This innate curiosity welded fast to being may indeed define humanity, for it is in the groping that existence is ignited; when quest is crushed, humanity ceases--it is a symptom of impotent man to search no more.

The Mormon culture especially, has focused and funneled this curious pursuit of facts through revelation we have harnessed the instinct for knowledge and channeled it into a blueprint for salvation.

It is the intent of this paper to reconstruct the lives and careers of three Mormon actresses--Viola Gillette, Hazel Dawn, and Leora Thatcher, to partially fuse past and present, to focus and funnel and fulfill a part of our curiosity for the past. However, microcosmic this thesis, it is not only a thrust into the past to assuage this obsession of humanity--but an obligation as a Mormon, to search and structure being.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The BYU library contains an amazing dearth of information concerning all three of the actresses. Hazel Dawn is the only one listed in Who's Who (1916-17), and The Reader's Guide and other general reference books list only a handful of articles, most of which are unobtainable in the library. The Utah Historical Society has a newspaper clipping file of Utah performers. The Church Historian's Office in the Presiding Bishopric's Building in Salt Lake similarly offers limited information, patriarchal blessings, and listings of family organizations. The Pioneer Memorial Museum of Salt Lake houses George D. Pyper's scrapbook of Utah performers which contains many newspaper clippings. The Bountiful Arts Guild, of which Viola was a former president contains a brief biographical sketch of her life and her funeral services.

While many people in Utah were acquainted with the three actresses, they knew little of their careers. The most valuable source of information available is the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts which contains an abundance of newspaper clippings from all over the United States as well as Australia, England, and Canada.
PART I

VIOLA GILLETTE
CHAPTER I

MORMON HERITAGE

Viola Pratt's grandfather Orson Pratt, was the first pioneer to set foot in the Salt Lake valley, and she was one of the first girls to go out of the valley to meet national fame. In 1904 the Boston American remarked that "Viola Gillette, the statuesque beauty in the big production of 'Mother Goose' is the only actress of note in this country, and possibly in any other, who is a pure descendant of the first founders of the Mormon Church, and the only real Mormon girl on the stage." The only other Mormon actress claiming seniority to Viola was Maude Adams, and Viola was at least the first Mormon girl onstage to sing her way to fame—beginning as the New York Times noted, "a glorious period for Utah actresses!"

What a lot of talent comes from the far western state of Utah! We have Maude Adams at the Empire, Emma Lucy Gates at Carnegie Hall, Viola Gillette at the Casino, Hazel Dawn at the Amsterdam, Margaret Romaine at the Metropolitan, Ada Dwyer at the Belasco, as well as others whose names are on the way toward Broadway lights. Is there something in the Rocky Mountain air to produce so many artists? 2

1 "Pretty Actress is of Mormon Blood—Viola Gillette, Statuesque Beauty in 'Mother Goose,' Child of Apostle," Boston American, 1904.

Perhaps one impetus to Viola's success was her background; both her grandfathers were Apostles of the Church. Her father, Milando Pratt was the son of Orson Pratt, who was the first person of the first pioneer company to make his way into the Salt Lake Valley (and claimed the honors of "apostle, pioneer, missionary, educator, editor, lecturer, debater, orator, legislator, philosopher, mathematician, author, astronomer, and expounder of the Gospel of Jesus Christ").

He also claimed the distinction of the largest family of his clan with ten wives and forty-five children. Viola's other grandfather, Charles C. Rich, was also a pioneer apostle, who, holding a Spanish grant and title to 77,000 acres of land, founded, among other cities, San Bernardino, California, and became its first mayor. He also had a large family of six wives and fifty-one children. The power of her relatives in number alone kept her well supplied with an audience.

I may add that 'business' in various parts of the world was materially assisted during these tours by my relatives. They always come to look at their 'acting relative' when I am in town. As I have fifty-two uncles, you may imagine that I have some cousins in this world, and they never missed a chance to hear and see me, because I was always looked upon as the stray member of the flock, who has no far forgotten herself as to become an actress.


Her description of a Salt Lake performance indicated the strength of these relatives:

On one side of my family I had fifty-two uncles and aunts and on the other side forty-one. And then there were many cousins. Unless you know your Salt Lake directory, you can have no idea of the possible voting strength of one's cousins. I accepted relations in squads. I erected whole kindergartens, primary, grammar, and high school classes as twigs or branches of my family tree.

The night we opened, I looked out across the footlights upon three full rows in the orchestra, made up entirely of uncles and aunts. The dress circle was full, every seat being occupied by a relative. The second cousins had gallery. Even then some of my connections were disappointed, and to be sure that all of our tribe got a look in on their relative, the management gave two family matinees.

This may seem like an exaggeration, but it is not. If anything, it errs on the note of conservatism—for at an anniversary gathering of the family on my mother's side, 15,000 attended.

Ibid.
CHAPTER II

BOUND FOR STARDOM

Viola Pratt was destined early for the stage. She made her debut at the old Salt Lake Theater while still in pigtails, singing in a children's production directed by Evan Stephens of the Tabernacle Choir who rightly discovered her.

George Pyper noted that she graduated from the University of Utah, and while there, taught a class for the deaf: "She says it was some time before she could overcome the habit of talking with her fingers." Viola's sister Leonie Bergener related that she learned the deaf language when she was fifteen, which provided her first income to further her intended career.

The man who had the school was deaf and dumb (as was his wife.) The school evidently did not make money so the man in charge left for another city to try to make a living for his family. Viola heard that his family was in dire circumstances and she learned that they were living in Bountiful. Viola got a ride to Bountiful and found the family. She was appalled at their poverty. She made arrangements with a farmer neighbor of the poor family to rent his load of hay and horses. She drove up to the family's yard, ordered the woman and children to put all of their furniture and belongings and them-

---

selves on the hay and she drove them to her mother’s home in Salt Lake City. Her mother took all of them into her large home and they lived there until the father returned, got a job, and could take care of his family again.

Many years later when Viola was visiting New York she went to Radio Center to purchase a hearing aid for herself, and when she came out of the building she saw two deaf and dumb men walking down the street talking to each other in sign language. Viola was lonely and followed them for a few blocks enjoying the conversation.

Viola also taught music in the elementary schools in Salt Lake before turning to New York. In an interview she related the extent of her job: “I was teaching simultaneously in ten different schools. I gave a half-hour lesson at one, then got in my buggy and drove to the next, until I had covered all ten.”

She also sang in many local concerts and some of the local opera productions, notably The Daughter of the Regiment, The Bohemian Girl, and La Traviata, as well as being a member of the Salt Lake Concert Company, the “Sweet Singers of Mormondom.”

There is no weakness in the entire company, every member being a finished artist. Viola Pratt, the contralto, has a glorious voice, so full and of such great register that the room was filled with beautiful sound....This most excellent company is deserving of all the good words that have been spoken of them, and their tour throughout the country should be a continued triumph.

7 Bergener, Leonie. Notes from an interview by Lucy Taylor of the Monumental Arts Guild.

8 Fisher and Bliss, op. cit.

9 “Concert at Saltair,” clipping from the Utah Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.
She practiced daily with J. J. McClellan at the Tabernacle organ, and Evan Stephens urged her to go East and study under the great voice teachers. But perhaps the most immediate reason for her departure to New York was because she fell in love with a man of a different religion of whom her parents were very much opposed. Finally her mother asked her father to take Viola to New York for three months so she could study voice and piano, and perhaps by the time she returned, she would forget about her love for this mining man. She raffled off her horse at $1.00 a chance to help obtain funds to finance her trip East. (The young couple who won it later wrote that "it seemed thirsty for education--it turned in at every schoolhouse in Salt Lake City.")

Her father took Viola and Ruth Eldredge to New York, Ruth to study drama, and Viola to study music, in hopes that Viola would be so much in love with her musical career that she would forget about marrying the man she had left behind in Utah.

When she reached New York, she read in a newspaper that a church on Fifth Avenue needed a contralto singer, and told her father she was going to audition for the church. He tried to discourage her, telling her that they were in a

Fisher and Bliss, op. cit.
large city where beautiful trained voices were available in abundance, but Viola insisted and went to the church for an audition. She sang a simple hymn, "Just as I am," and was picked as one of the three finalists, who were tried out before the Chairman of the board. Viola passed the final audition and sang at the church for several years while she was studying, and her earnings helped to pay for her living costs and music lessons. (Her sister noted that the Chairman of the board who picked Viola to sing was the brother of the man who shot President Garfield).

Leonie Bergener related Viola's first impressions of New York:

Viola was a naive, happy person and loved to walk up and down the streets and observe everything that was going on. One day she saw a sign on the side of a building which said 'Take One--10 Cents' and by the sign was a live bird. Viola dropped a dime in the slot under the sign, picked up the bird and went dally down the street with it. In a few minutes a policeman caught up with her and said 'The merchant back there says you stole his bird.' Viola said 'Oh, I didn't steal it; I dropped my money in the slot where it said 'Take One--10 Cents'. The policeman then explained to her that the sign referred to fortunes and not to the bird. Viola took the bird back and returned it to the merchant.

Her first contact with New York was indeed a world of naivete:

As I recall it now, my ambition in life was to have a beautiful pink silk dress, wear an aigrette in my hair

11 Bergener, op. cit.

12 Ibid.
and sing at concerts. Yes, and I recall that I wanted my accompanist at the piano to be a gentleman with a goatee. As it happened, I did sing in a few concerts, but I felt the musical comedy stage calling me. It didn't take long for me to forget some of my ideals about music. For example, I thought when I first went to New York that I would never venture to the footlights unless I sang such roles as Marquerite in 'Faust,' or Leonora in 'Il Trovatore.' It didn't seem possible that there could be such a thing as art connected with anything that wasn't grand opera. But I outgrew that period. And I sang and sang in operettas and musical comedies, going pretty well all over the world, because I made professional tours of Australia and South Africa, as well as back and forth across this country. I played everything from 'Little Buttercup' to 'Martha' and I traveled in about every sort of way from camel back to private Pullmans.  

After Viola had been in New York for some time, she wrote home telling her mother that she had decided not to marry, that she was going to make singing her career. She also wrote to Mr. Gillette, her mining man, and told him the same thing. He immediately sold out all of his mining properties and holdings in the West and went to New York. There he wooed Viola and won her consent to marry him. Viola wrote her mother and told her of her change of heart and sent her the money for a ticket to New York to attend the wedding, which took place in 1896.

And it was not long before Viola Gillette became "the toast of Broadway." She received a coveted role in

the opera Patience that was performed precisely four years from the day she left home to begin her professional career. At that time she was comparatively unknown, but with her role in Patience, she became "the acknowledged possessor of a voice that promised to make her famous." The competition for the role was numerous, and her selection was a real achievement. The Deseret News proudly stated:

It will be pleasing information to the wide circle of friends and admirers of Miss Viola Pratt to learn that she has scored another vocal triumph in New York. The Garrick Club of that city recently decided to give the well-known opera 'Patience' in the Metropolitan Opera House for the benefit of the New York University. The foremost singing masters of Gotham were invited to furnish their best contralto voices at a private test before the club and other friends in the opera house, which has a seating capacity nearly three times as large as the Salt Lake Theatre. More than three hundred aspiring singers responded to the invitation. Out of these, twelve were chosen for the final test. Among this number was Miss Pratt. The test was a most crucial one and the music rendered that which falls to the part of Lady Jane. Each competitor did her best and all were warmly received. When Miss Pratt stepped from the stage a perfect shower of congratulations followed and manager Ruskin shook hands with her saying that her voice was one of marvelous power and richness and that it was distinctly heard in every part of the great building, but that a decision could not be given that evening. The judges, however, soon agreed upon the merits of the respective voices and the next morning Miss Pratt was notified that she had been selected to personate Lady Jane, and she was almost overwhelmed with the welcome tidings.

"Utah Talent Comes to the Front," Deseret News, 1896.

Ibid.
The New York Herald further indicated the success of her achievement:

Miss Pratt has been having much success in New York of late, her most notable piece of work being in the opera of 'Patience' which was given last Thursday night for the purpose of aiding the athletic interests of the University of the city of New York, which has just entered into its new building overlooking Washington square. It was justly termed a social event. The heads of the Gould and Vanderbilt families united with many of the most prominent men and women in society and in educational circles as patronesses and patrons of the entertainment.

The Metropolitan Opera House is the largest theatrical building in New York City, but on this evening it was completely filled with the highest class of theatre-goers. Only the fact that it was Lent prevented a display of dress. The house was decorated with the college colors and the fraternity banners. Miss Pratt had perhaps the most difficult part in the opera, that of Lady Jane, the spinster, who strikes statuesque attitudes, rolls stupendous words from her tongue, and sings wailing songs in very low tones. The other parts could be taken without much acting, but that part required a great deal of ability.

Miss Pratt acted well and sang well. Her voice completely filled the opera house, better perhaps than any other soloist. She was recalled for her solo, and duct with Dant-thorne, and provoked laughter and applause all through the play. She made a very good impression, and though all the principal players were very good, she might be said to have done better than any of them.16

W.S. Lamoreaux similarly lauded her abilities:

Utah should feel proud of the success her young artists are gaining and be ever ready to herald the triumph. The honors already won by a certain charming young woman, whose name is so well known at home, are just beginning to be showered upon her. One of four

16 New York Herald, from a clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.
musical aspirants lately visited New York and heard
Miss Viola Pratt sing 'Just as I am' and other songs,
says, 'You can't afford to die till you have heard her
wonderful rendition of that song.'

George Sweet (her teacher) says she's the best con-
tralto in America now and will soon be an example to
the entire world. Her voice is the richest kind of a
mezzo soprano with wonderful compass, is extremely
powerful, and her sombre tones are sweet as the whis-
perings of angels.

The Musical Courier, the leading music journal of
America and one of the foremost in the world, paid 'our
own Viola' the following highly complimentary notice:
'Miss Viola Pratt, the new contralto, sang 'Just
as I am' by H.P. Canks as a solo. Miss Pratt's voice
is exceptionally beautiful and she is studying to make
it as valuable as it ought to be. 17

She received further honor when selected in 1897
from a number of fine vocalists in New York to sing at a
private concert in Washington given by President McKinley
and the cabinet in honor of the Austrian Ambassador. In a
letter to her parents she described the evening:

Now I must tell you about the concert given by
President and Mrs. McKinley and the cabinet in honor of
the Austrian ambassador. It was a very select affair,
three hundred invitations being issued to the senators,
etc. Huberman, the wonderful boy violinist was there,
and so was Scharvenka, the pianist, and I was fortunate
each to be the soloist. Everything was glorious! I
was treated like a queen. President and Mrs. McKinley,
many of the senators, and all the diplomatic corps
were there. The concert was a very fine one and I was
highly complimented on my singing and the papers spoke
very nicely of me. The next morning after the concert
there came to my hotel a small package and a note from
the wife of the Austrian ambassador asking me to accept

17 Lamoreux, W.S. "A Utah Girl," clipping from the
Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.
the enclosed as a token of her 'esteem and love and appreciation of the pleasure she had received through my beautiful singing.' I opened it and was indeed delighted to find a very handsome gold bracelet with the date of the concert engraved on the inside.

About nine o'clock she sent her elegant carriage around to the hotel and gave me a lovely drive all over Washington. At noon I had luncheon at the White House. Mrs. McKinley is a very sweet, lovely woman, but so delicate and frail.

"A Singer's Success - Miss Viola Pratt's Washington Triumph in a Private Concert," clipping from the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.
CHAPTER TIT

FARE ABROAD

In 1899 Viola became internationally known when she joined a company under the direction of Frank McKeon to present a series of the late Charles H. Hoyt farces in Australia. During this period she was "loaned" to the Australian managers Williamson and Busgrove to sing Allan-a-Dale with the Royal Opera Company in Sydney. In the Green Book, February 1914, she told of her problems in rehearsal on board ship on route to Australia.

The fact that I am on the musical comedy stage today is due to my utter lack of theatrical experience at the time I was accepted for my first engagement. It happened thus:

I was singing in choir and doing such things in Salt Lake City, when one day Mrs. Fred Stone arrived at our house in a terribly upset frame of mind. It seemed that she was under contract to go to Australia with a company to produce a new play there, and the thought of doing all the way thither across the Pacific alone terrified her. We had always been great friends, and she begged me to go with her, saying that if I did, she would guarantee that I got a part in the company.

I agreed readily enough, being lured as any young girl would be by the prospect of going on the stage, and when I appeared before the director of the company and my voice had been tried out and found satisfactory, I was booked to go to Australia with the rest.

As an after-thought the director asked: 'Of course you are experienced?'

'Oh yes, certainly, I replied brightly, and went my way.

I embarked with Mrs. Stone on the ship all right, and after we had been out about a day and had got settled on third class, I received a letter.

'Really, I think I must have acted like a lunatic from the director's point of view. After I would sing a line, there would be a line on the side directing, for example, 'go down C.' I never paid the slightest attention to this or to 'go up F,' or F.D.E., or E.F.8. either,
for the simple reason that I didn't have the slightest idea what any of them meant.

After a few rehearsals, the director caught me wandering about the stage aimlessly after having a song and called out: 'Here, Miss Gillette, what are you meandering around the stage for that way? Don't you see that in your part it says 'Go down C' after that song?' Having no idea what he meant I made a feeble effort to parry fate and said 'But I don't see anything to go down and see.' Whereupon he flew into a rage, refused to go on with the rehearsals unless I were eliminated from the cast and swore that I was making fun of him.

In my fright at this sudden development, I blurted out the whole truth of the matter and confessed that I didn't know a single thing about the directing because I had never rehearsed for a production before in my life.

After a few subsiding outbursts from the director following this confession, he quieted down, and since he was up against the dilemma of either teaching me how to do my work or else throwing me into the Pacific, he decided to make the best of it, and by the time I landed in Australia I was all ready to go on the boards and 'do my durnest as a regular actress with the rest of them.'

And since that time I have often found that the sublime nerve which ignorance and inexperience give has proved a great asset in my work, time and time again. Frequently I have done things out of sheer inexperience, that I would not have dared to attempt if I had realized what I was doing, that have brought down the house and become the events of a performance. 19

A Sydney newspaper of November 27, 1899 told of her success after her shipboard apprentice period in the musical Robin Hood:

The distinct success of the evening, so far as the members of the cast were individually concerned, were made by Miss Carrie Moore and Miss Viola Gillette, the latter of whom will be remembered in connection with Mr. O'Conner's 'Stranger in New York' Company... Miss Gillette's Allan-a-Dale in appearance would have

satisfied even that severe critic of outline, Mr.
Mantilini. She acted far better than the work of the
librettist deserves, and she used her voice with judg-
ment so as to fairly deserve the friendly encore she
got for her first solo, and to demand the encore for
her second song, a delicious 'Song of the Bells' in
the third act.

The Daily Telegraph of Sydney of the same day was less
enthusiastic for the production, but offered equal praise
for Viola:

Each one of the many important persons in the cast
seems to 'come on' mainly for the purpose of introducing
a solo, so that the story gets small and disjointed
opportunity, and the onlooker soon discovers that he
is lending his patronage to a glorified vaudeville
entertainment. That it is glorified is unquestionable.
The hordes of milkmaids, archers, soldiers, villagers,
and the rest who throng the stage in gorgeously varie-
gated costumes...took a most enthusiastic call; all
indicate an indomitable intention to please, surprise,
and amuse....

Miss Viola Gillette, the third of a triumphant
trio, made a handsome Allan-a-Dale, acted with fine
skill, and for her solo 'O Promise Me,' gained an
almost violent encore, the backing sentiment of which
was increased when a miniature American flag was handed
to this clever lady from the United States....Encores
were so numerous and peremptory that the performance
lasted till very late.

The New Zealand Times, January 17, 1909 described
an even more elaborate performance of another production,
A Trip to Chinatown in which the opera house was richly
decorated with red, white, and blue, potted plants and
ferns, the Union Jack, and the Stars and Stripes entwined
with "United We Stand," and "Good Luck to our Boys," and
"God Speed the Contingents," interspersed above the proscen-
ium. The decorations also included an elaborately betrimmed
and brilliantly lighted Governor's box, and the performance boasted a spectacle—and crowd to match the decor—all of which preceded the production:

At seven o'clock a crowd began to gather in the streets, anticipatory of the contingent's arrival. There was also a large crowd awaiting admission to the Opera House itself. Indeed, such a rush occurred when the doors were opened that several people were knocked down and one young woman was somewhat seriously injured. . . . At eight punctually, his Excellency the Governor, accompanied by Lady Ranfurly and suite. . . entered the vice-regal box.

Immediately the band struck up 'God Save the Queen' and at that moment the curtain arose on a scene which at once touched the hearts of the audience and earned their sustained plaudits. For there, standing right before them, on a stage arranged to represent an African scene, was a detachment of khaki-clothed New Zealand boys—a portion of the contingent itself—in full war equipment. In the front was a Maxim gun; flanking the warlike group was a row of mounted troopers, and the men stood armed and prepared as if to meet some potent yet invisible foe.

The effect on the audience was magnetic. First they joined in the singing of 'God Save the Queen,' as with one mighty voice, and then cheer after cheer went up on every side. Immediately the background of flags was drawn aside, and there pedestalled, and appropriately attired, were Britannia (represented by Miss Allene Crafer) and Columbia (impersonated by Miss Gillette.) Another outburst of cheering followed, and as soon as order had been partially restored, Mr. R. Stewart recited some lines of welcome—especially written for the occasion—in a vigorous and dramatic manner winning a hearty round of applause.

The audience, taking its cue from the band, then vociferously sang a verse of 'Soldiers of the Queen' At this stage of the proceedings the pit was seen to be crowded to suffocation, so much so that even standing room was at a premium. There was some disposition to rowdiness, but this was suppressed after a flashlight photo of the proceedings had been taken by three photographers from the stage.
And only then did a *Trip to Chinatown* begin.

The *Musical Record*, January 1900 told of the degree of success Viola attained while in Australia, stating that "Viola Pratt Gillette has been singing her way into the hearts of the people of Australia with such effect that they are loathe to part with her!"

Williamson and Musgrove, the leading managers of Australia prevailed upon her to remain another season.... This is not a compliment to Mrs. Gillette alone, but to the United States. It is a source of gratification that our American artist should be winning fame abroad and establishing reputations that reflect credit upon their native land.

That Mrs. Gillette is creating a most favorable impression is shown in the title 'The Antipodean Queen of Song' that has been conferred upon her, and the fact that she has been selected to do chief parts in the leading musical productions of Australia's musical season.

On March 16, 1900, the *Deseret Evening News* welcomed her home with the statement that "Mrs. Gillette is now on her way to New York to join her husband with whom she goes to Cuba, though she has an offer from J.C. Williamson, the chief operatic manager of Australia to return to Melbourne in July." However, upon returning from Australia, she found that her marriage had deteriorated. Viola was preoccupied with a career which her husband opposed, and his interest turned to sugar cane and grapefruit in Cuba. Through his financial interests he became heavily dependent on Viola's increasing income, which was largely invested in his business schemes, and the matter of providing family revenue reversed
itself. Viola's sister indicated that they agreed to separate, but Gillette refused to give her a divorce for many years. Viola averred that she was deserted by her husband July 6, 1906, and she filed for divorce on October 26, 1909. Lula Bell Wilding, a friend of Viola's sister noted that after the divorce he went to Cuba to live and had no money except what she gave him.
CHAPTER IV

THE LEADING BOY-GIRL

Returning from Australia in 1901, she joined Alice Beilson and toured the United States and London, appearing at Hatfield as Pomdon in *The Fortune Teller*, and Marie in *The Singing Girl*, and appeared in the first of her famed "boy roles," playing Prince Charming in *Sleeping Beauty* and *The Beast*, which led her to be dubbed with the title of "best boy-girl of the stage." However successful Viola was, the production as a whole was met with mixed emotions. The *Los Angeles Courier*, December 28, 1913 was less than kind:

The traditions of old Drury Lane and the familiarities of Broadway are joined in the fairy extravaganza which Elau and Erlanger have transported from London to New York. The mating is not a happy one, as was noted at the Broadway Theatre last evening...The result was disastrous to the illustrated recital of the nursery tale of 'Beauty and the Beast.'

Another paper admired the elaborateness of the production, with little praise for the acting other than Viola's:

There was much to admire in the spectacular incidents—several superb groupings, one with a myriad of ballet girls in beautiful costumes of nature's flora—daisies, pink roses, violeias, primroses and holly berries, and the seven aerial dancers in dainty furs type—flying winter, hovering above; another with a multitude of lords and ladies in snowy white countermatching in the converging rays of fierce white light;nimble

Clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.
dancing by tiny fairies and still tinier Cupids, and finally the extraordinary palace, with its mosaic of amber and crystal, its dome rising up into the skies, its massive candelabras, its curving stairways, its three fountains, all aglow with refulgent color. To the eye all this was most satisfying. But it was only the general effect that told.

Detailed, the Spectacle was not up to date. The mechanical tricks were not novel, the dancing was stiff and devoid of grace, the women lacked beauty of face and the children seemed to shiver and shrivel in their wrinkling cotton tights. It was a far cry from the beauty shows, the vim and zest of the girls, the gorgeous earbs, worn with chic and the consciousness of triumph, which distinguish the several displays along Broadway.

The tinsel, the showers of gold, the prismatic jets, the spangles, were all there in the primitive forms of the 'Black Crook' and the 'White Fawn'--as if thirty odd years had added nothing to the art of stage spectacle...

Such of the immortal who had individual roles, lacked energy--with a couple of exceptions--Viola Gillette, who had some snap as Prince Charming, and Phoebe Coyne, who was most vociferous as the witch-broomstick...

Playing the role of a boy with its costume complications--notably a change from the floor-length dress--made it difficult for Viola to make up her mind to appear in tights for the first time:

The company was rehearsing in London when the time came for the first dress rehearsal. The day before the opening, Prince Charming balked. She went to the wedding scene in enormous topped boots, instead of the dainty costume of Prince Charming, and when Mr. Erlanger told her she could not be married in top boots, she gave as an excuse that the property woman had not sent the costume. Investigation proved that she had 'fibbed' and the truth came out. Miss Gillette protested that she knew there was something wrong with the suit and declared

"Was Spectacularly Fine," clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.
that she never, no, never could appear in it.

'It'S too late to put anybody else in the part,' said the manager. 'Go put the suit on and I'll tell you if it's all right.'

Miss Gillette obeyed, and when Manager Erlanger saw her he cried: 'It's great! You will play boy parts all your life.'

'And I suppose I'll have to play what they want me to,' said the actress.

Viola confessed her own version of the problem:

When I first walked up the side street and turned the knob of a stage door, I felt wicked, and when I found myself in a dressing room, or perhaps it would be better to say an undressing room, it seemed to me that I was headed straight for perdition. Just how far ahead perdition might be I did not know, so I went very very carefully.

Once actually a member of the dramatic community, I was cast for a dramatic role, and perdition seemed further away. Then when I was called upon to wear tight-fitting bodice, shoulder straps, a belt, a sword, and hurry up it's time for you to go on, old perdition came back.

I've worn tights so much and other things so little that when I'm at home and slip into an ordinary morning gown trimmed with a yard or two of Baby Irish and maybe sometimes Swiss, it weighs me down like an automobile coat or a kimono made out of a seamless Wilton rug.

I experience many embarrassing and distressing nights when I first wore silk fleshings. I was self-conscious, also I was more or less chilly. I could not help feeling as if I had been surprised in my boudoir or as if one side of the room had been removed and there was no place to hide and no way to escape.

Not knowing what to do, I appealed to my old singing teacher. She told me to forget that I was wearing tights (just as if it were possible) and keep my mind on my chest, and the audience would pay less attention to my general appearance and more to my voice.

I suppose she was right, but even to this day I'm not entirely sure. It cannot be that everybody is so

clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.
interested in a rangy contralto voice that the singer's near costume is wholly ignored, or that the actress thus attired escapes comparison with the recognized standards of physical perfection. Nature having endowed me with certain definite lines, I always feel that the opera glasses are not picking flaws in the detail of the stone work of the castle walls or noting the regularity of the pickets on the garden gate. 24

When Sleeping Beauty and the Beast went on tour, Viola's clothes again became a problem of public concern when the baggage got lost and she was without clothes, with the glaring headline, "Miss Gillette Is A Prisoner--Forced To Stay in Her Room at Hotel Through a Cruel Porter's Negli-
gence--Has No Clothes In Which To Appear Off the Stage:

Miss Viola Gillette, Prince Charming of the 'Sleep-
ing Beauty and the Beast' is a prisoner in her room at the Claypool Hotel, and has been since her arrival Sun-
day evening.

Two nights she 'sneaked' out of the hotel and went to the theatre entrance by the back way, but the remain-
der of the time she has 'laid low' in her room. It is all on account of the neglect of the porter who handles baggage in a hotel in Syracuse, N.Y. where the company played last week.

For three whole days the charming prince has been without sight of her trunks. And everything she owns, except, perhaps, a toothbrush, is in one of those trunks left behind.

For comfort in the sleeper a gorgeously embroidered dark blue silk kimona was carried in the grip, and it supplies the only available raiment for the pretty singer, except a white shirtwaist and summer skirt, which she declares is 'not fit to be seen.'

The state of the summer gown can be understood when it is known that it withstood a day's travel.

Miss Gillette is a most attractive woman and cannot endure the thought of appearing in a smudgy white shirt-
waist suit. In her mind's eye she can see people turning up scornful noses and saying:

'Oh is that Miss Gillette?' Miss Gillette, beautifully

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gowned, is accustomed to admiration. But Miss Gillette in soiled clothes—Never! 'I'll stay right here in my room until after dark, and that's all there is to it,' announced the actress positively.

Meanwhile the company baggageman has lost two nights' sleep and the railroad agents the same. The telegraph wires have been kept hot and still the whereabouts of the trunks remains a mystery.

The evening of her arrival, Miss Gillette, with a mind above black-streaked shirtnawaists, braved the dining room for dinner. She went away back and sat down, but presently the other principals of the company began to file in.

The ladies were all arrayed in handsome evening gowns, and each took occasion to stop at the unhappy Miss Gillette's table and stare at her dress. 'Why, what's the matter?' they inquired in chorus. 'I did not answer at all,' said the actress, 'but since then I have been running up hotel bills by breakfasting and dining in my room.'

Her next role was again a "boy-role" in Mother Goose. The extent of her popularity was indicated by the myriad of fan-mail she received during this production. One columnist noted that "Being one of the most circumspect young women on the stage, she is the recipient of countless notes asking for appointments with admirers, which she either tears up, leaves unopened, or gives to her dog to eat." He told of one particularly loyal fan, "a foreign nobleman, in whose veins flows blood of a deep ultramarine blue, and whose love for Miss Gillette is, at present, the all-absorbing passion of his ardent young life!

In vain he has written her notes begging that she dine

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clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.
with him. Finally she received the last appealing note from the baron, in which he said: 'Adored One--I am dying for love of you. Do not be cruel. My heart is bursting with the intensity of my passion. You are killing me by inches with your cold disdain. Lode star of my existence, I cannot sleep at night for love of you.' Noble girl! She sent a special messenger to the baron's apartment with a twenty grain sulphonal powder.

One of the oddest she received was printed in the Boston Evening News, from a local poet who evidently found in the fair Viola a theme for rhyme and rhythm, and the harp of Apollo, slumberous since the days of Byron and the Maid of Athens has again been awakened:

Listen to the harp:
Violet Gillette! Violette Gillette!
You stole my heart and have it yet--
And yet, you bet, I am in your debt.
Violet Gillette! Violet Gillette!
If you have that heart you may keep it, pet,
For I owe you that and the rest of me yet.
But oh, Violet! Violet Gillette!
If that poor heart from your keeping you let--
I will jump in the river and, maybe--get wet! 26

The Deseret News pointed out that this was an eventful production in more ways than one: "She was a member of the 'Mother Goose' company playing in Chicago when the theater burned down with such a terrible loss of life, but fortunately she was not in the cast that night." 27


27 clipping from the Utah Historical Society.
CHAPTER V

THE GIRL AND THE BANDIT

Her next appearance in The Girl and the Bandit with Frank L. Perley's Opera Company gave her success a new dimension. It was in this production that she met her second husband, whom she married December 24, 1919, Mr. George J. MacFarlane, a young Canadian baritone and discovery of Mr. Perley, who, "when the Boer war broke out, was a member of the Canadian mounted police, went to South Africa, and returned with a D.S.O. after his name. He sang in the cathedral in Montreal. Mr. Perley heard him, and the young man has won an enviable position in the ranks of the really excellent singers."

The Girl and the Bandit was extremely well received, and called by one newspaper "all that could be desired;"

"The Girl and the Bandit" was presented at the opera house last night, giving theatre-goers one of those treats seldom met with more than once or twice in a season....The piece is strongly impregnated with romance and dramatic action calling for extraordinary talent on the part of the principals. Miss Viola Gillette, the prima donna, is a handsome woman, graceful and natural. She is a fortunate possessor of a strong, sweet voice and her numbers were well-received....

Mr. Perley has authorized the announcement that he has closed negotiations with M. Barrie, the famous English author, to write the libretto of a comic opera in which he will star Viola Gillette next season.

It will be an operatic version of Barrie's most famous story, 'The Little Minister,' and will be called 'Lady Babbie.' 29

It was especially in this production that Viola's figure was acclaimed as impeccable. Review after review made special note of her physical endowments. The St. Paul Dispatch noted that "Miss Viola Gillette, again the star, affords the best reason for the bill. Her engaging countenances, her fine figure, her powerful soprano of gratifying depth and sweetness, supply an independent and sufficient pleasure." An Eau Claire paper went to even further depths to praise her beauty:

One of the chief delights of the evening was in the leading character, Viola Gillette, a lady of transcendent charms, and one of the handsomest women, and most beautifully developed, that ever appeared in Eau Claire. The audience fell in love with her at once. Who can blame them? They saw a nice pair of bright eyes, and a grand and majestic woman and they bowed down and worshipped her. If Titania fell in love with an ass or Pygmalion went crazy about a stone, who will find fault with poor weak mortals here for paying adulation to one so gifted by nature as the heroine of the play.

Miss Gillette is indeed a charming lady and is eminently deserving of a better portrait than our poor pen can make. She is a remarkably handsome woman, and looks handsomer off the stage than before the footlights. She stands before us now the picture of health and beauty,


the light falling upon her Grecian shaped head and upon the most brilliant white neck in the world. She is a blonde beauty, her eyes are a deep blue, her hair auburn, waving with rich undulations over her shoulders, her complexion as dazzling white as snow in sunshine, her cheeks a compound of the lily and the rose, her lips crimson. Her mouth might be too large for a goddess in marble, but not for a woman whose eyes were fire, whose look was love, whose voice was sweetest song, whose shape was perfect symmetry and whose every motion was dignified and graceful.

Miss Gillette has a very beautiful soprano voice, full of force, sympathetic and of remarkable range and volume, the sense of beauty and tenderness and sweetness was such as to completely carry the audience away. Her every appearance evoked a story of applause, nor could subsidence be hoped for until the demands for an encore were complied with. 31

Another article, titled "The Perfect Prima Donna," gave her equal acclaim:

The perfectly formed woman is much talked about and much written of, and has caused much discussion because she is a rara avis seen infrequently. Ever since the days of Phidias the lines of his masterpieces of art have been accepted as indicative of the perfect feminine form.

In the various departments of papers devoted to women readers, rules have been laid down as to what exercises to take to gain flesh, or remove it, as the case might be; how to obtain a graceful carriage, to increase or diminish one's stature, and the like, but after all there is only one who can do this and produce the feminine form divine in all its beauty--Nature herself.

In the person of Miss Viola Gillette, prima donna of the Perley Opera Company, the press agent declares has been found the perfectly proportioned woman. Without going into the scientific details, it might be said in a general way that a woman's stature should be eight times the length of her face. Miss Gillette fulfills

31 "Light Opera at the Grand Triumphant Presentation of 'The Girl and the Bandit' Last Night - Viola Gillette Scores a Success - Play Gives the Most Unqualified Satisfaction," Eau Claire, clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.
this requirement to the fraction of a hair. On the same plan that twice the span of the wrist is the size of the neck, then twice around the neck should equal the circumference of the waist. Give a sculptor or an artist any of these dimensions and he will give you an exact reproduction of the form of the person whose wrist measurement was given, provided they are perfectly formed individuals. 32

The Louisville Herald's description of her, however, probably came closer to the truth about her figure: "Miss Gillette, the prima donna, is a large young woman, who, if she was on the burlesque stage, would be called 'statuesque.'" 33

The same article criticized the production:

This libretto has all the inanity of the conventional musical comedy and a peculiar and abysmal stupidity all its own. "The Girl and The Bandit" is a revised version of what was originally known as 'A Venetian Romance' which failed of success, and the revised version is no improvement. With a cast of good people it is conceivable that the production in its present shape would attain some popularity...as it is it is stupid and tiresome, the few bright spots being insufficient to atone for the nearly three hours stretch of dullness in book and score.

Viola, nevertheless thought it was a success, and in January of 1907 purchased the rights of the production from Frank L. Perley to present the opera on tour under the auspices of the "Viola Gillette Opera Company." 34

The troupe


33 C.D. "Maucauley's 'The Girl and The Bandit,'" Louisville Herald, January 22, 1907.

toured Louisville, Milwaukee, St. Paul, Chicago, Indianapolis, and Salt Lake City. On its tour to Salt Lake City, the newspaper sounded enthusiastic:

Lovers of first class comic opera will surely take advantage of the opportunity offered them and secure seats for the Viola Gillette Opera Company, who will present the newest and biggest success at the Salt Lake Theatre commencing next Tuesday. The beautiful and accomplished prima donna contralto Viola Gillette heads the list of comediennes and comedians, and is surrounded with a chorus of beautiful show girls. The organization comprises seventy-nine members. Its embellishments are elaborate and its musical numbers are of so catchy a nature that everyone who visits the playhouse will carry away some pretty airs from among its half a hundred numbers to be hummed or sung. 35

35 "Drama - Viola Gillette Opera Co.," Salt Lake City, Utah, clipping from the Utah Historical Society.
CHAPTER VI
THE PROBLEMS OF FAME

Between the time she played in The Girl and The Bandit and took it on tour with her own company, she joined the Savage Grand Opera Company, and appeared on tour singing roles of Ortrud in Lohengrin, Nancy in Martha, Stephano in Romeo and Juliet, the Countess in Olivetta, and title role in Carmen. An embarrassing complication occurred while singing the part of Ortrud: "At the conclusion of an act she was to fall dead, but she got the wrong cue and died too early with the result that the whole company of eighty or so had to exit over her dead body." In an interview for a feature article on her life she told of another situation that occurred in the pre-zipper era when tightly fitted dresses were often fastened by means of strings which crossed between brass hooks at the back of the dress:

On this particular occasion, the strings were too long, and were dangling conspicuously as she went out onto the stage of the huge Chicago Auditorium Theater. One of the men in the cast noticed her predicament, and thought he would help her by tucking the strings in, unnoticed by the audience. But just as he took hold of the string, she stepped forward--thus untying the bow. 'It isn't exactly fun to feel your dress slowly coming off when you are onstage with a couple of thousand people watching you, especially when you are playing the lead.' During the rest of that scene, Viola Cillette played her role as it had never been played before. She kept one hand

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tightly clutching the neck of her dress, and faced
the audience squarely, not daring to turn. 'It was
pretty awkward,' she recalls, 'but at least it was
better than giving Chicago theater-goers an unscheduled
strip-tease.' 37

During this period she was often in the headlines
for reasons other than her roles in the theatre. Since
the automobile was still a novelty, for example, she made
the headlines when she rented a car to take her mother sight-
seeing while visiting New York. After riding around for
awhile, she decided that she wanted to try driving:

Anticipating a liberal tip the man at the helm
quickly set the gear at slow speed and exchanged seats
with Miss Gillette. For a time all went well and as
she was doing so nicely, she was permitted to continue
down Wisconsin Street ...

The snow was falling and the wind blowing a gale
at this particular time which prevented the chauffeur
from hearing the warning bell as sounded for the opening
of the Grand Avenue bridge. The machine was at
this time entering upon the bridge slowly. As it began
to rise with them, the machine, although still under
pressure, began to slide backwards and did so with safety.
Miss Gillette sat helpless. Her mother leaped from
the rear and stared in perfect amazement. George MacFar-
lane, the young baritone of the company who was also in
the rear seat, was the only one in possession of his wits.

To a news reporter Mr. MacFarlane remarked with sin-
cere regret: To think I went along with the party, wish-
and praying that a slight accident would happen so that
I could act the part of Hero; for you know I am the vil-
lain in the play, and to think I found a rival in the
lift-bridge. The beastly thing rose up in front of us,
and prevented an accident. I wish it had been a draw-
bridge. 38

37 Fisher and Bliss, op. cit.
38 "Viola Gillette Plays Chauffeur," clipping from the
New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.
Viola again made the news in Atlantic City when at a dinner and John A. Manz, treasurer of the Atlantic City Brewing Company announced that he was trying to get a well-known balloonist to come over from Coney Island and make an ascension, and this occasion, prompted by a statement by Mr. MacFarlane ("That would be a cheap way for you to get to New York, Miss Gillette," said Mr. MacFarlane, "All you would have to do would be to sit still like a bird in the bottom of the basket...") merited a huge picture of Viola in the local newspaper, with the caption "She Says She Will Sail in a Balloon From Atlantic City to New York Tomorrow--if the Balloonist Hired By Brewer Will Take Her," and an article covering a good part of a page. Perhaps one indication of success is that no matter what the excuse, the newspapers will write a story about it.

The Milwaukee Morning Telegraph similarly attested to her fame:

Viola Gillette, the actress, is ahead ninety pairs of gloves as a result of the Michigan victory over the Wisconsin team at Ann Arbor yesterday. Miss Gillette played at Madison that night before the Wisconsin team started for Michigan, and laid a wager of a signed photograph of herself against a pair of gloves with each member of the team who would play, taking the Michigan end. For every two points that Michigan scored more than Wisconsin, she was to get one pair of gloves. Fifteen men took the chance, and Michigan scored six

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"Balloon Tempts Viola Gillette," The Morning Telegraph, Milwaukee, August 20, 1906.
times two points. 40

The most sensational piece of unwarranted gossip came from Chicago with the daring headline, "Fushimi Ransoms Bride - Buys Release of Actress Who Will Wed Jap War Hero:"

An American bride, postwar reward for valor in war is the gift the mikado, through his kinsman, Prince Sadarura Fushimi is about to bestow on Major Sayasha, hero of the capture of 203-Meter Hill. The romance had its beginning in Manila, where Miss Viola Gillette was stopping on her way to fill an operatic engagement in Australia. It will have its happy termination in Chicago, where the actress is now playing. She is under a five-year contract with Frank Perley, theatrical manager. That contract has stood in the way of her marriage to the soldierly Jap whom she met and learned to love when he was studying American army methods in Manila.

But Sayasha is a prince of the blood in his own land, and his gallantry before pert Arthur won him the promise of any reward he chose to ask of the mikado. Sayasha asked for Viola Gillette, and by way of granting the request, Prince Fushimi, under imperial orders, last week negotiated the actress' release from her contract and will pay over to Mr. Perley the $15,000, agreed on as the price of Miss Gillette's liberty to wed. 40

CHAPTER VII

THE BEAUTY SPOT

In 1908 Viola and George MacFarlane turned to Vaudeville, appearing in a musical playlet Accidents Will Happen at the Garrick, and in a production MacFarlane wrote, called Musical Nonsense, which they presented on tour. Though MacFarlane's nonsense was met with mixed reviews, most thought the music was excellent. At the Colonial in Norfolk, their act was considered the most outstanding:

The mocking-bird of musical comedy, as beautiful Viola Gillette is known everywhere, has entered Vaudeville for the season, and after a triumph in the North she comes to the Colonial next week as a headline feature, having associated with her the celebrated star of comic opera, George MacFarlane. Next week they will present 'A Little Musical Nonsense'...and it promises to be the singing treat of the season in Norfolk. 41

Viola's next role, also with George MacFarlane, was perhaps her most daring, especially considering her Mormon heritage, which was aptly exploited by the newspapers:

From a Mormon choir in the mountain-walled capital of the Latter Day Saints in Utah to the prima donna role in 'The Beauty Spot' is a far cry. Mormon elders, white-bearded and wondering-eyed, go to see Viola Gillette whenever they have the opportunity. They cannot forget that her grandfather, Orson Pratt, showed Brigham Young the way to Utah. Miss Gillette has more than 2,000 relatives.

"Both of my grandfathers were old school Mormons,'

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said Miss Gillette... 42

The Toledo Times similarly alluded to her Mormon background:

Viola Gillette, whose beauty is something to gush about, and who is starring in 'The Beauty Spot' with Jefferson de Angelis this season, contended last Sunday night that she supposed she might be a very wicked person to 'act out' on Sunday night. 'At least I should be if this were not a Sunday night theater town,' she added. That sounded like pure sophistry to me and I said so, whereupon Miss Gillette said that some things could only be explained that way. 'In New York,' she said, 'The Beauty Spot' would have to be a sacred concert or I should be compelled to let my understudy sing. Only I have no understudy,' she concluded plaintively.

I should think she wouldn't have. It would be a person of assurance indeed who would undertake to understudy for a raving beauty like Miss Gillette. In the course of the conversation, however, she admitted that she wasn't as good as she supposed she should be, considering her Puritan ancestry, even in a no-Sunday-theatre town. 43

Again at Christmas she made the news because of her Mormon ancestry:

Unique in the history of stage folks' Christmases is the last one that Viola Gillette of 'The Beauty Spot' now at the Lyric Theatre, spent at her home in the bosom of her family. Miss Gillette comes of one of the oldest Mormon families in Salt Lake City, her grandfather being the friend and follower of Brigham Young and the first white man to plant 'The Stars and Stripes' in that Mormon city... A few years ago when Miss Gillette was starring in the West, she found herself during Christmas week

42 "Viola Gillette, 'The Beauty Spot' Prima Donna, a Mormon Girl, Boasts of 2,000 Kinsmen," clipping from the Utah Historical Society.

43 Toledo Times, clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.
in the city of her birth. Pleased with the idea, she
planned a huge family reunion and Christmas party, and
not being able to keep track of her many kinsfolk, she
wrote to the head of the family and told him to invite
them all to her hotel and also to buy presents for them
and have the bill sent to her at the theatre.

This was the crowning mistake of her young life as
subsequent events proved. Arriving in Salt Lake City
on Christmas eve, the bewildered and horrified actress
found among other letters awaiting her at the stage door,
a staggering bill from the leading department store of
the city for miscellaneous articles. Not one of her
family had been forgotten by the thoughtful head of the
family. After the performance that night when she ad-
journed to the hotel where she had planned to have the
family Christmas party, she thought that a convention
had arrived in town and was making the place a headquar-
ters. As soon as she had left the desk, the clerk
whispered something in the ear of a grizzled old citizen
and as he signaled the assembled guests, a mighty cheer
went up. The actress began to feel very proud of her-
self—her fame as an actress had reached Salt Lake City
and its citizens were giving her the reception that her
talents deserved. Then the grizzled old leader of the
crowd stepped forward and bowing low, exclaimed: 'Cousin
Viola, your family welcomes you home.' And all of the
welcoming party had come for Christmas dinner.

"That The Beauty Spot was her most risque role was
indicated in several reviews, and as stated in the Phila-
delphia Telegraph, "as far as morals go, it is not altogether
free from maculation, though any underlying innuendo is sub-

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45

udy suggested and not vulgarly forced on the public."
The story itself was racy enough for most reviewers to include a synopsis of it in their comments. The Chicago Tribune vividly exploited its sensationalism:

The wife of a general is so vain of her beauty that she lets an artist persuade her to pose for a painting of a woman at her bath. The work is to be shown on a social occasion at a seashore resort. Much curiosity has been aroused by its title 'The Beauty Spot,' and rumors of its audacity. It is brought into the garden of a hotel. The cloth is removed. The general's wife has not seen it complete. In expectant elation tinged with apprehension, she is the first to look at it. A naked woman sits in a graceful attitude, life size, life tinted, life lovely; but what is that spot on one leg just above the knee? A birthmark, commonly called a mole if on a man, but a beauty spot if on a woman. At sight of that she wobbles dizzyly, lets out a moan of horror, falls half-fainting into the arms of the artist, and begs him to hide the picture which she has expected to be glad of. 'What's the matter?' he asks; 'Isn't it true to the original?' 'Too dreadfully true,' she gasps, 'You have produced the mole on my knee. My husband will know by that spot that I posed for you. In heaven's name, take it away and paint out that wrack positive.'

The exhibit can't be postponed; but the artist and four friends try to save her from the husband's frenzy and hastily move the big framed canvas aside with its back to the thronging guests, on the pretense of varnishing it, and go to work with their brushes. A little later it is turned around to general view. No longer is the beautiful woman naked. She is so wrapped in a clinging white cloth as to make a modest yet enchanting figure. But why call it 'The Beauty Spot?' someone asks. The antithesis of the title is in plain sight, someone else remarks. The lady now is seen to be feeding with a lump of sugar, a mouse that sits on her knee. One kind of a mouse is a mole; another kind of a mole is called a beauty spot; and the artist had painted a nun. The husband laughs with his wife over his belief that the joke is a secret between themselves. 46

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"'Beauty Spot 'Too Dreadfully True' To Life," Chicago Tribune, April 18, 1909."
The Chicago Tribune further related the daring nature of the production:

That incident indicates more of plotted story in 'The Beauty Spot' than song and dance plays made in America commonly contain; but don't conclude from that the show belongs to the class lately complained of for gross indecencies. The woman of the picture is shown alive in Viola Gillette, in a long cloak, which she opens to display herself in a skin-tight surf costume; but the excuse for that--I don't say it is a good one--is to lead up to the exact copy of the faultlessly molded Viola in the painting brought out later. There is no other undraped actress, although some are in no danger of tripping on too long skirts, but nothing to scold about what is said or done. 47

A review of the show at the Garrick went into even further detail regarding the nature of the production:

The women swamp everything else and are the boldest, most presumptuous rakish crew ever exploited, even counting the Ziegfeld army of figurants. They look superb in the glad embroideries, strip affairs and modish frocks in which they proudly flounce around and occasionally a bunch of squeaks proclaim that they earn their hire by vocalizing as well as grinning toothsomely, pulling their skirts skin-tight, wearing stunning diamonds and doing credit to both jeweler and milliner.

Perhaps the splendid animal spirits of the people employed in the piece speed the show into an enjoyable freshness and a kind of musical rumpus which is attractive....Viola Gillette, in costumes which were blinding in their glory and exciting in their scantness and beauty, sang 'Nichette' and if the mole was upon her knee anybody could have seen it so far as Viola's artistic modiste could assist in the view. Miss Gillette sang several capital songs with her usual excellent style and big soprano voice, and though she had little acting to do, being most of the time hustling in a dressing room somewhere, she was most acceptable as a songstress and imposing figure and good looks and dignity under

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47 Ibid.
rather difficult circumstances. 48

The same review afforded a glimpse of the pictorial splendor of the stage productions in 1909:

Nothing more sumptuous in the matter of grouping girls, trailing, marching, dancing, and maneuvering of professionals and ballets in huge crowds has been accomplished with more success than Frank Smithson achieves in 'The Beauty Spot.' The two scenes though completely blotted out by the firmament of jewel-bedecked women and parade of glossy arms, twinkling slippers, floating and flying spangled scarfs and startling lingerie, were handsome scenes, glaring and flashing scenes, but unique and well-painted.

Another review, however, criticized the plethora of sensational sexual nuances:

...a large amount of the osculation might be eliminated to the betterment of the show. So might the Dance Parisienne, which may go on Paris boulevards, but would bring out the park police if attempted in a Minneapolis park. 49

48
Amy Leslie, "Garrick's New Show 'The Beauty Spot' Gorgeous in Attire, Stupid as To Humor, Gay in Dance," clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.

49
CHAPTER VIII

GILBERT AND SULLIVAN

In June 1912, Viola and George MacFarlane signed a contract with Shubert and Brady for the theatrical season of 1912 and 1913 in which they were to both perform in the Gilbert and Sullivan operettas Pinafore, Patience, and Pirates of Penzance, specifying employment for at least twenty-five weeks, at a salary of $500.00 per week, $300 of which went to Mr. MacFarlane, and $200 to Miss Gillette, with an agreement that they would again be engaged for the theatrical season of 1913 and 1914.

A review in the Times Democrat, April 7, 1912 told of their performance of Pinafore at the Dauphine, coming from a prior engagement at the Casino Theatre in New York, running for 150 nights to "success hitherto unknown in the history of that playhouse, which holds a record for remarkable business. The same has been duplicated in every city where it has been seen since then." A review in the same paper the following day lauded the production as a success:

Elaborate stage settings, a male chorus such as has rarely been heard in the city, and an all-star cast of principals combined to make the production of Pinafore at the Dauphine Theater last night one of the most successful of the season. It probably was the best performance of the ever-popular Gilbert-Sullivan operetta ever given in this city, for never has there been such

50 "Elaborate Revival of 'Pinafore' at Dauphine Theater This Week," The Times Democrat, Detroit, April 7, 1912.
an aggregation of comic opera stars at one time.

The success of the show led to a tour to San Francisco, for which they left New York July 19, 1912 with three pullman cars and four baggage cars to carry the company of nearly 120 players for their first appearance outside of New York. The San Francisco Chronicle ran a huge article on Viola stating that "Miss Gillette was successful from the first and has won for herself the adulation of the foremost musical critics of the country."

The following year the New York Telegram reported that their production of *Iolanthe* was so successful that "even if the organization of singing actors known as the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company had done nothing but their revival of 'Iolanthe' they would have won a considerable debt of gratitude....After the lapse of years the wit is still incomparable and excels Bernard Shaw's at its best."

51 "At The Theatres: Splendid Revival of Pinafore By Aggregation of Comic Opera Stars at Dauphin Theater," The Times Democrat, Detroit, Michigan, April 8, 1912.

52 "A Former Member of Bostonians Will Make Bow to Court Audiences," San Francisco Chronicle, July 28, 1912, p.23.

The *New York Herald* was equally complimentary:

In a day when 'Baby, look a-heah, baby, look a-theah' sounds the top note in librettos and a weird combination of sound, borrowed from everywhere passes for music, the revival of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Iolanthe,' sparkling with real wit and with a score that is full of genuine melody comes like a refreshing draught of pure spring water to those who have been long athirst. 54

Musical America exclaimed: "In its revival of 'Iolanthe' at the Casino Theater, New York last Monday night, the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company accomplished the most creditable and artistic feat that has distinguished its career." 55


CHAPTER IX

HOP O'MY THUMB

Carl Van Vechlen remarked in the New York Press that "English pantomimes and plum pudding usually both make their appearances in the holiday season and bear a resemblance--they are both tasty or lie heavy on the stomach according to the person who partakes of them," a statement which helped account for the variety of comments on Viola's next production, Hop O'My Thumb, which opened at the Manhattan Opera House on Thanksgiving, 1913, considered one of the popular Drury Lane pantomimes:

Many elements go into the making of an English Pantomime. There are about equal parts of fairy tale, low comedy, dancing, elaborate scenery and singing mixed up together, not to speak of the tableaux vivants which frequently occur. There is always a 'principle boy' who is always a young lady with an attractive figure; and there is always a 'principle girl' whose purpose in her stage life is to give the aforesaid boy someone to sing songs to. 57

Hop O'My Thumb in name and scenery was undoubtedly a Drury Lane production, but in few other respects. The Evening Post remarked that it had been thoroughly Americanized and varied little from the common Broadway burlesque:


57 Ibid.
As might be imagined, the net result is an entertainment in which British and American ideas are strangely mingled, not always with success....Probably the most approved scene was that in the Garden of the Living Statues. A prettier picture than that of the big ballet posed in groups resembling Dresden China, all in pure white, has rarely been seen on the stage, and when Hilario brought them to life with his magic branch, their dancing left little to be desired. The DeSerris troupe of one hundred dancers, and the graceful figures and movements made a charming spectacle. 58

While the reviewer complimented Viola, he was critical of the production:

Viola Gillette's prince left nothing to be desired, especially in the way of personal charm. Most of the songs and jokes were of the common Broadway farce variety, and absolutely out of place. At times they bordered on vulgarity. With radical compression of the text, and interpolated specialties, 'Hop O'My Thumb' may meet with the success due to its beauty as a production. 59

As with most of her performances, the gossip columnists found another sensational story in Viola, this time to praise the tango, the latest daring dance, with the headline "Tango is a Blessing Says Viola Gillette," an article so ludicrous that it is quoted in its entirety; had Viola even made such a statement, it seems hardly possible that she could have rambled for so long:

The tango is a blessing, just as others call it a curse, according to Miss Viola Gillette, the charming Earl of Hilario in 'Hop O'My Thumb,' at the Manhattan Opera House, New York. 'It is ridiculous to protest

58 "Hop O'My Thumb," The Evening Post, New York, November 28, 1913.

59 Ibid.
that the tango and the rest of the new dances are harmful,' said Miss Gillette yesterday in her dressing room, just after her famous 'Moon Song,' 'when it is bringing to American women the one thing they have never had—beautiful feet. For ages and ages, it seems to me, the English, the French, the Italian, all have laughed at the American women's feet.

Not alone on the ground of their size, but because it is generally admitted that the feet of the women in this country are the most neglected, most abused and least beautiful of any in the world. Tight shoes are, of course, the primary cause of these defects. It is undoubtedly true that at least eight of every ten American girls ruin their feet before they reach the age of seventeen or eighteen. Nothing is taught them regarding the importance of caring for their feet. There is no stress laid upon it, and mothers permit their daughters to decide that question for themselves. The consequence is that before they have passed out of the 'silly schoolgirl' stage their feet are squeezed out of shape, almost beyond redemption.

Now all this is changed. With the coming of the tango, the maxixe, the turkey-trot and the other never and sprightlier forms of dance, it has become absolutely necessary that the feet be in perfect condition. Tight shoes are impossible. The feet must be free, must be well-cared for, if a girl is to enjoy any of the so-called 'violent dances,' and there has been growing up an irresistible demand for a shoe that will be dainty and yet comfortable. Chiropodists all over the country will tell you that scores of women and girls are caring for their feet with deadly earnestness, where one did so before the advent of the tango. On every hand you hear the ardent devotees of the dance declaring, 'I must have my feet in perfect condition in order to enjoy the tango.' A visit to the chiropodist is becoming a daily necessity and constant bathing cannot be neglected.

It is inevitable that healthy, well cared-for feet will do much to improve the beauty of the face. Tight shoes are invariably inseparable from a frowning, worried expression. One deep little wrinkle, at least, on the brow of a good-looking woman can usually be traced to a pinched, smothered, uncomfortable foot. These wrinkles are getting fewer and fewer as the craze for the tango spreads, and it won't be long before love of the new dances becomes synonymous with a graceful, easy carriage, and the comfortable, satisfied expression of the woman whose feet, one of the most important parts of her whole body, are in the condition they should be.
So I say the tango is a blessing. If it does nothing else, it is teaching American women to care for their feet. It is giving them exercise that is usually badly needed, and is helping to improve their looks. If that isn't the function of a blessing, what is? 60

Also in 1913 Viola played another boy role, that of Captain Pipp of the Thessaleau army in a new musical

Lieber Augustin at the Casino. The World called it a lavish production in which expenditures were extravagant:

The Shubert's have been profligate in staging it, apparently saying, 'Zip, goes another thousand,' with the greatest nonchalance....The lavish expenditure has not stopped with the material side of the operetta, but has extended to the cast, which includes many of the excellent company and chorus seen in the Gilbert & Sullivan revivals of the last three years. There is George MacFarlane, with his sonorous voice and pleasing presence, which makes up for his limited ability as an actor; Arthur Cunningham and his polished acting, and Viola Gillette, lending her shapely legs to a boy's role. 61

Another New York review said of Viola's contribution:

"Viola Gillette beautifully fills the part and costume, especially the latter, of Captain Pip of the Thessaleau army." 62


61 "Hopper At His Best Carries New Comedy," The World, September 7, 1913.

CHAPTER X

THE MIDNIGHT GIRL

In 1914 she left the "boy roles" and became the "Midnight Girl" at the Tulane Theater in New Orleans, again appearing with George MacFarlane. The New Orleans States had mixed reactions of the show:

After fifteen minutes of scattered effort Sunday night 'The Midnight Girl' got the range at the Tulane Theater and began to score. This slow getaway presented a serious handicap that was only overcome by the work of Viola Gillette in the title role, by Madison Smith, who plays opposite, and by the comedy work of Ned Monroe....While the performance was not unusually sparkling it was good entertainment and seemed to please the first-nighters. One surprise, agreeable or not, according to the point of view, was the fact that Viola Gillette doesn't look a bit like a Midnight Girl. She is pretty, of the fresh, wholesome type, and has gentle, almost timid ways, decidedly foreign to the raucous-voiced cabaret singer, and gives the impression of having earned her gay appellation rather by waiting up for some midnight boy. 63

Her costume in the production received a three-line headline and picture, covering a large part of a page, stating that "She Wears 18-Karat Hosiery--They Cost Just $150 Per Set--Pays $25 A Pair For Lace Ones:"

Yes tis true that Miss Viola Gillette...wears on the stage hand-knitted stockings made of the precious metal. Every thread in them, except the heel and toe, is gold spun so fine that an American eagle would furnish more than enough metal for a pair. But it isn't the material that makes them cost $150 per set, but the workmanship, for it takes the cleverest fingers to fashion the extravagant notions and such fingers command exclusive wages. And then there is duty for eighteen karat stockings made in Paris, and you know what a heart Uncle Sam has for the

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63 "Comedy Is Clean In 'Midnight Girl,'" New Orleans States, August 26, 1914.
intimate dainties that the fair sex love to purchase abroad. For the other costumes, Miss Gillette has stockings without any thread of gold in them--hand made and embroidery inserted in filmy gossamer silk--that cost $25 a pair, including duty, of course. 64

CHAPTER XI

LATER ROLES

In 1916 she appeared again with George MacFarlane in Heart O’The Weather for perhaps the first time in straight dramatic work without singing, and in September of the same year in What's Your Husband Doing? in another non-musical role. 1917 found her cast in yet a different role, as reported by the New Jersey Star:

Viola Gillette has sent out an SOS call from her home at Stony Brook, Long Island. The Utah contralto having sung for the entertainment of the men of the battleship Nevada, she has undertaken the work of providing for the Christmas celebration of the men of the big ship, one thousand of them. Contributions will be thankfully received. 65

Louise Holt indicated the success of her campaign:

Miss Gillette...has installed a knitting machine and in her spare moments knits for the Red Cross. This is not her only Red Cross activity by any means. She has taken a course in nursing in Washington, for which she received a diploma, and she is prepared to go to France when she is needed. At a recent benefit concert given in New London, Conn., she netted more than $1,000 for the Red Cross while every sailor of the battleship Nevada received a Christmas gift through her efforts, and there are 1000 of them. Since the beginning of the war, in order to give her time to Red Cross work, Miss Gillette has been appearing in vaudeville in New York and vicinity. 66

New Jersey Star, November 24, 1917.

In 1923 she appeared in *Caroline* at the Ambassador Theater, and in 1924 at the Summer season of Poli's Theater again with DeWolf Hopper in *Pinafore*, a role she had played many times before.

In 1927, Al Jolson assembled a special company of *Big Boy* for a long run in San Francisco, with Chicago, St. Louis, Denver, and Salt Lake City to be played on the way to the coast. Viola had the part of the grande dame, or the owner of the racing stables. Virginia Hall, one of the members of the cast reminisced:

We all called her the mother of 'Big Boy,' which was the name of the winning horse. She wore a snow white wig and looked very beautiful and very handsome, but she no longer sang so I never heard her famed contralto voice.

My part was that of the ingenue or the usual sweet young thing. Many of my scenes were with Viola. One opening night, Viola realized I was very nervous, and as it happened, I stood by her during my first number. Her confidence in me and a touch of her hand pulled me through.

From that evening until the day she died, we maintained a very close relationship. A number of years after the Jolson show we had an apartment together in New York. Viola, herself was one of the warmest personalities I have ever known, with a wonderful sense of humor--almost a devilish sense of humor--but never mean, and always so reassuring to be with.67

The *Salt Lake Tribune* commented on the final production

Mr. Jolson sprang a surprise on Miss Gillette on the closing night. As he was preparing to sing his famous 'Hammy' song, the comedian glanced over his company of

ninety people and spied Miss Gillette, dignified and stately in a white wig and handsome gown. Approaching her he rubbed his black face makeup over her face, converting her from an aristocratic matron into a black-faced mammy and then sang the song 'My Mammy' to her. 68

During this engagement, she lost her husband, who was buried February 27, 1932:

When moving pictures became popular, Mr. MacFarlane became a producer. He had gone to Hollywood one time to preview one of his productions, when--ironically--he was killed by an automobile while crossing the street to mail a letter to his wife. 'I was on tour with Al Jolson and his troupe when I received word of my husband's death,' she recalls. 'Al sent me to California imme-

mediately, paying my expenses and my salary while I was there. I can never forget his kindness--it was one of the many little acts of generosity which made him a great person.' 69

She further related, "But that ended my career. I had no heart to go on." Viola died on Easter Sunday, April 1, 1956, having returned to Utah to retire quietly. However, until her death, she remained active, serving as vice pres-

ident of the University of Utah Emeritus Club, and President of the Pountiful Art Guild, a quiet, generous, well-loved person. A cousin, Benjamin Rich paid a fitting tribute to her at her funeral service:

68 "Salt Lake of Opera Fame Is Spending Summer Season With Parents In This City," Salt Lake Tribune, July 17, 1927.


70 Ibid.
My father loved her and so did everybody who knew her. I don't think I ever knew a woman who had such wonderful traits of character. She was beautiful to look upon, she had a sweet musical voice. She was kind—she was dignified. She was honorable and she had a personality that impressed itself upon everybody who knew her. She had a very remarkable career. She was one of the early glamour girls of Utah and the glamour girl of the Rich family. She helped her father and mother and their family for many many years. Her career as a vocalist extended over a period of nearly forty years. She started her career about the time of Utah statehood. For many years, upwards of ten or twelve years, her name was on the marquees of the leading theatres of Broadway in New York. She was the toast of Broadway and she was voted the most beautiful woman on the American stage....After her husband died she wanted to come home and be with her own people and she lived in this community for over seventeen years before she died.
"A Former Member of Bostonians Will Make Bow To Court Audiences," San Francisco Chronicle, July 28, 1912.


"A Singer's Success--Miss Viola Pratt's Washington Triumph in a Private Concert," clipping from the Utah Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.


"At The Theatres: Splendid Revival of Pinafore by Aggregation Of Comic Opera Stars At Dauphin Theater," The Times Democrat, Detroit, April 8, 1912.

"Balloon Tempts Viola Gillette," The Morning Telegraph, August 20, 1906.

"Beauty Spot 'Too Dreadfully True' To Life," Chicago Tribune April 18, 1909.


Bergener, Leonie. Notes from an interview by Lucy Taylor of the Bountiful Arts Guild.


"Comedy Is Clean In 'Midnight Girl,'" New Orleans States, August 26, 1914.

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Deseret Evening News, March 16, 1900.


"Drama--Viola Gillette Opera Co.," Salt Lake Tribune, 1907, clipping from the Utah Historical Society, S.L., Utah.

"Elaborate Revival of 'Pinafore' At Dauphine Theater This Week," The Times Democrat, Detroit, April 7, 1912.

"Everybody Was There--All of Viola Gillette's Salt Lake Relatives At Christmas Party," clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.


"Hop O' My Thumb," The Evening Post, New York, November 28, 1913.

"Hopper At His Best Carries New Comedy," The World, September 7, 1913.


Lamoreux, W.S. "A Utah Girl," clipping from the Utah Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.


"Lieber Augustine A Hit--New Casino Comedy Abounds In Fun and Harmony," September 8, 1913, clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.

Musical Record, January 1900.


New Jersey Star, November 24, 1917.

New Zealand Times, January 17, 1900.


"Salt Laker Of Opera Fame Is Spending Summer Season With Parents In This City," Salt Lake Tribune, July 17, 1927.


Toledo Times, clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.


"Was Spectacularly Fine," clipping from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts.

PART II

HAZEL DAWN
CHAPTER XII

THE TALENTED TOUTS

Hazel Tout, born March 23, 1891, came from a gifted family. Her father, Edwin F. Tout, was born in Neath Wales of Mormon converts who came to Utah when he was fifteen. He developed a magnificent singing voice and he and his brothers became very well known throughout Utah for their outstanding musical talents.

All six of the Tout children inherited their father's musical ability. Nannie, the oldest, was the first to gain recognition. Hazel commented on her productive family:

Nannie was a child prodigy with an outstanding singing voice. She made many appearances throughout the state, and was very well known. She was eleven years old when Sir Hubert Parry, head of the Royal College of Music in London, heard her sing at some big event in Salt Lake City. It is said he stood up and with tears in his eyes said, 'I have never heard anything like this in all my life--oh please give this voice to the world--don't keep it hidden here in the mountains.'

Right then and there, my father decided he would do just that. Nannie was graduated from high school when she was sixteen, and my father thought the time had come for us all to leave for England. So my parents sold some of their properties, and we left on the great adventure. The relatives thought we were crazy. Nannie was immediately granted a scholarship at the Royal College (the first American so honored). She performed her first opera when she was seventeen years old at His Majesty's Theatre and went on to be quite famous in London, Italy, and Germany. She had an outstanding career.

Grace, my second sister, had a lovely voice, and was a good musician, but she fell very much in love, married young, and never became professional.

Time passed, and Margaret, the third child,
developed a very beautiful voice. She studied in London and Paris, and in time landed a contract with the Opera Comique in Paris. By that time I was a big success in New York, so the family moved here to be with me. Margaret terminated her contract and came along with them. Her first engagement in New York was with the Shuberts in a light opera. This was followed by several others, then she was sent for by the Metropolitan Opera Company who signed her up to a long contract. She was a great success in Opera and concerts. 71

Of the three remaining in the family, Eleanor became an actress and performed with Hazel in several productions, Edwin Irvin, who had a fine baritone voice and played the cello, became a mining engineer, and Edwina, with a coloratura soprano voice has done concert and radio work.

Max Mann in his column "Going Hollywood" noted that:

There's nothing super-duper about the Tout family--except the amazing way each member of the family carved a niche in the celebrity world.

The average celeb of world fame--is a bit conscious of it. But not Hazel, nor her famous sister Margaret Pomaine of Metropolitan Opera renown.

Perhaps that's because so many of their sisters were famous right along with them....All of the other five sisters reached top success on the concert stage, or in movies. 72

An indication of their abilities appeared in a Salt Lake paper titled "The Gifted Tout Family To Appear At Tabernacle:

71 All comments by Hazel Dawn are from letters she sent to the writer.

72 All quotations not footnoted are from clippings from Hazel's own personal collection, or from the New York Library and Museum of the Performing Arts, neither of which contained complete source information. All available identification of sources is included.
The members of the Tout family, who have acquired a wide fame in England since they left Utah, are to appear at the Salt Lake Tabernacle. The company includes not only Miss Nannie Tout, whose previous success in Utah is well remembered, but her sister Maggie, who as a soprano and cellist has made a fame equal to her sister's. The Manchester Guardian already stamps her as one of the world's greatest singers, and says she has a marvelous voice. The third sister, Miss Hazel Tout, is a violinist. The fourth, Miss Grace Tout, who is also an accomplished musician, is still in London. The father of the family, Mr. E.F. Tout, is a tenor singer, who will appear with his daughters, and who is managing their home tour.

Their program at the tabernacle will be made up of vocal and instrumental numbers, trios, duets, solos, violin, and cello solos, and the feature of the evening will be the rendition of a selection from the famous oratorio of the 'Creation,' by Miss Maggie Tout and the full Tabernacle Choir.

After the Salt Lake concert they will return to England to continue their musical studies.
CHAPTER XIII

DAWN OF A STAR

Hazel’s first appearance was in a musical comedy called Dear Little Denmark at the Prince of Wales Theatre in London, in which she played the part of the second lady and was also the understudy for the leading woman. The London Times gave her the following review: “We must not omit to mention a pretty American newcomer in the person of Miss Hazel Dawn, who has a voice that experience and a few more years of training may render remarkable. This little lady is a discovery and must not be lost sight of.”

Nor was she lost sight of; when the show closed after a long run, she was cast in The Balkan Princess at the same theatre, and then at Daly’s Theatre in Dollar Princess. Hazel recalled:

While there I was seen and heard by the composer Ivan Cary who was about to produce a play in New York, a musical called 'Gay Claudine,' and he cabled Klaw and Erlanger the producers in New York and said that he had found in his opinion the girl for the part. They cabled me a contract, and I left for New York. In those days I was very fair, with golden hair, and an English complexion. When I auditioned for Klaw and Erlanger on my arrival, Mr. Erlanger climbed up over the footlights onto the stage, looked me over, pinched my cheeks and said 'My you are just a little pink lady, aren't you.' Then he turned and said 'That is going to be the name of the show,' I became the 'Pink Lady' and was lucky enough to be a big hit in a big hit.

Her prelude to success required a name to match such possibility. She reminisced as to how she became
Hazel Dawn

Paul Rubens was an outstanding musician, and also playwright. He had a very beautiful home in Kent, England, and used to give fabulous week-end house parties. It was at one of these parties I was a guest at that they decided to arrive at a stage name for me, as they did not like the name of Tout. It was about three weeks before the opening of 'Dear Little Denmark.' Now Hazel was a name almost unknown in England at that time, and everyone who heard it raved about it. Well it was very late and there were about twenty people in the party all 'feeling good' so they started to name me. Some were simple, and some were very funny. The Dawn started to break, and came through the windows when Paul's sister Margaret Burlinson suddenly said 'Hazel Dawn.' They were all delighted, and agreed it was the loveliest and most euphonious name they had ever heard. So that is how I got my name.
CHAPTER XIV

THE PINK LADY

When Hazel was picked for The Pink Lady she had never played a leading part, and ended up a newcomer in the title role. Cosmopolitan, October, 1913 noted, "The roseate 'Pink Lady' Hazel Dawn, seemed to come suddenly out of the sky—where roseate dawns usually do come from in fact. No one in New York knew anything about her at her debut in the piquant music-farce which McLellan and Caryll transmogrified from the French..." Nevertheless, her popularity was immediate, and "Smiling dawn soon became radiant morning, in the full sunshine of popularity, yet with dewy freshness still undimmed..." Hazel stated that "I'm not a star yet, and I don't wish to be before my proper time," but the newspapers considered her already "the newest star in the theatrical firmament;"

'It feels like--like what?' Miss Hazel Dawn mused, with her dainty, carmine tinted nail upon her lip.

'Like the sun in your eyes?' suggested one who was privileged to 'interview' her. They were talking of the sensation of being a newly risen star.

'It feels like trying to draw a ton of coal'

'That isn't difficult, given enough horse power.'

'But it is when you have only girl power.'

'Still you wouldn't go back to ye olden days.'

'When only men were stars because only men were players?' she responded, 'No, that wouldn't be fair--

to the public. Men are seldom good to look at, you know. And if by chance they can pass muster, their clothes are ugly. No, for pictorial effect, at any rate, I admit the woman star is necessary.'

'But why the simile of the ton of coal?'

'The ton of coal is the symbol of responsibility.
And responsibility means taking the blame. When I was only one of the members of a company, I had no acquaint-
ance with worry. I had a good time. Going on the stage at every performance seemed just a jolly frolic. And every week was pleasantly punctuated by the pay envelope. However the play went nobody ever said anything to me about it. They just talked of my little part. Those were happy days.

But when you are a star, you learn to spell respons-
sibility, and bear it. Whatever goes wrong the star is always blamed. But she doesn't get the praise. If the play succeeds, it is because the play is good. If the production fails, it is because the star is bad. Out there in the lobby the pulse of your play is beating. It is the box office receipts. Then there are countless details to which you never gave a thought before that you are consulted about. It won't do at all to say 'I don't know anything about it and don't care.' You must know and care, because you are the star. Then you are expected to be different than you were before. But I'm not. My attitude hasn't changed a particle. That would be the acme of silliness. For instance, I love my chorus, and if you question it, I think you would find it liked me.

The girls call me Hazel.' Gasp at this audacity, ye stars of another generation, particularly ye stars of Shakespeare. 'And I call them by their first names. They call on me in my dressing room and we talk over the production. I shift part of the responsibility on them when my shoulders are tired, and they let me, the dears. In spite of all the customs in Christendom, I'll always be one of the girls.'

The girl, because of the color scheme of pink and blue and gold that Nature has given her, has been dubbed Lillian Russell II, and makes light of her beau-
ty, as all beauties do. But it seems not a pose with her. You see we measure our attainments by our ambitions, and there was a time when she was a girl with skirt to her knees and with sunny hair in braids to her waist, like any small Gretchen in Munich, when she heard 'Tris-
tan and Isolde; and wanted to become an opera singer. Her teacher tailors measured her voice, and discovered that it was of a size for comic opera alone. In view of that decision it has not unduly elated her that she has been elevated to stardom and been ranked as 'the most beautiful woman in New York.'

She doesn't mourn the grand opera voice that doesn't exist. No healthy girl of twenty-three could
long mourn anything. But she regrets it. 'I'm proud to be a star,' she said, 'but mark it right down in your head—I see you don't use a notebook to scare a girl's ideas away—that being proud and being vain are as different as the climate of the North Pole and the Equator. Being proud is being gratified that a manager and the public have faith in you and that your family thinks you have done it credit. Being vain is being empty headed, having a vacuum where sense ought to be. If one happens to conform to line and color canons, a girl should be grateful, but she shouldn't be elated... and a girl has only to look about her and notice the change the last five years have made in faces dear to her to know that her bloom of youth will pass as quickly as the memory of last summer's flowers.

One sensation about being a star is that, come what may, you must keep on being one. You cannot skip or slide back into your formerly happy obscurity. You must keep on, whether you like it or not. And there comes the most solemn thing about being a star. Your duty to your public. I have heard that Richard Mansfield said that audiences always seemed to him to be great black beasts that he was feeding, and that sometimes, where he had no more to feed it, it would turn and rend him. A horrible conception, I think. The audience aroused my maternal instinct. It seems to me a child that wants me to tell it a story. I must amuse it. With the last drop of blood in my body and the last nerve in me I will try. Consecration to your mission of entertaining—that is being a star.'

However difficult her newly found position, the reviews of her performance indicated she was indeed a celebrity:

'The Pink Lady is the newest of the Spring tonics and the only one that leaves a pleasing taste. If you wander into the New Amsterdam weighted with 'that tired feeling' the Cary-McClellan offering quickly lifts it and sets the pulse of the young Spring stirring in your veins.

Hazel Dawn, in a pink and silver gown, especially when she was leading Frank Lalom a chase about the stage, her violin playing the lure, justified her symbolic name. Her fresh young voice further emphasizes her wise choice of a name when she forsok the unpoetic
name of Tout... for there is the freshness of the lark's greeting to the sunrise in her singing voice.

She was even voted the "mascot" of both West Point and Annapolis at their annual football game in Philadelphia. Sidney Fields commented on the event:

Producer Erlanger would not cancel the matinee to let her attend the game. But when the show came to New York the West Point Cadet Corps showed up at the New Amsterdam Theatre, and after a violin solo they all threw their hats in the air and onto the stage.

'Like at Commencement,' Hazel says. 'And in each hat was a card with their names and where they could be found. Of course I didn't see any of them. I had a mother and father who guarded me like the German army.'

On tour in Montreal, the critic lauded her with highest acclaim:

The approbation that greeted 'The Pink Lady' at His Majesty's Theatre last night was universal, and with good reason, for it is easily the best musical comedy that Montreal has had the pleasure of seeing for a long time.

The music, the costumes, the stage settings, the plot and the company leaves so little to be desired that it would be unjust to try to pick flaws in the production....

Miss Hazel Dawn in the title role revealed the secret of her popularity. Strikingly pretty, she has in addition a strong personality and a good voice. She surprised such of the audience as did know her by revealing herself as a clever violinist, and without question the most striking scene in the piece is her playing of 'Beautiful Lady.'

Hazel was indeed an accomplished violinist, and commented that "I had studied the violin for years, and with a father who made us practice at least two hours a day, you know I played well." Originally, the violin part was assigned to
a professional violinist, but one day during a break in rehearsal, Hazel quietly picked up one of the musicians' violins and started playing. The director was so impressed with her ability that they wrote her playing into the show. "It was a sensation," she noted, "and soon boosted me to stardom. I played this show for three years, and one of those years in London, where I was welcomed back royally. I shall never forget the pleasure of that night. I was given an ovation, and after the performance I had to hire a moving van to take my flowers from the theatre to the hotel."
CHAPTER XV

THE DEBUTANTE

The Little Cafe followed The Pink Lady and was hailed by many as "one of the biggest musical comedy successes in recent year," but the subsequent production of The Debutante in 1914 was even more successful:

Hazel Dawn came to us last night at the Knickerbocker Theatre as a vision of all that is lovely. She is now a star, having earned the advancement since her famous days in The Pink Lady. Miss Dawn has improved—vastly so—since we first beheld her at the New Amsterdam Theatre. There is the same personal charm, an abundance of vivacity and an air of refinement is noticeable in her work, with a much finer regard for the musical portion of the programme, for it is in her voice that an advancement has been made. She sang her numbers with charming effect. In her dance movements as in her action she is graceful and charming, noticeably so even above the veritable army of young, pretty and graceful girls of her company.

As composer Victor Herbert said in his curtain speech: "The Girl from Utah' has gone: the real girl from Utah has arrived:"

Some have stardom thrust upon them and some achieve it. Miss Dawn has achieved it. Her career has been a short one, tis true, but she is a superior person and has used her own intelligence and accomplishments to reach distinction without relying on personality alone. For one thing, she is an accomplished violinist, of which she makes good use on most occasions. But she is more than this. She is an actress. She has expression. Her face is the frontspiece of an inhabited brain. And she is as pretty and dainty as the prima donna of a musical comedy should be.

One reviewer elaborated on Mr. Herbert's compliment:
He said a great many more things about Miss Dawn—enough to have completely turned her pretty head, but Utah heads are not quite so easily turned, it seems, for although the audience apparently agreed with everything Mr. Herbert said, Miss Dawn took it all very simply and with the utmost naturalness. If there is one pose we have all come to dislike it is that of the tearful-eyed actress who bows her thanks in jerks. So we were grateful to Miss Dawn because she showed no signs of trembling excitement. There was so much opportunity afforded her, too; for wasn't the occasion her debut as a star? Miss Dawn accepted the approving verdict of herself with beautiful dignity. She didn't even clasp her hands, nor fling out her arms beseeching ly to the applauders....

Perhaps her before-the-curtain manner will exert a beneficial influence on other singing and acting luminaries, who really don't know how to behave when bowing to an audience, anymore than do the majority of speech-making playwrights, of whom the latest example was Irving Berlin....

She is certainly slender enough to make other women wonder what she does to have such a figure. Very few of our actresses can wear a gown which is so narrow and so curveless as that pink one in which Miss Dawn completed her conquest in the last act. It was an Empire model and worn without corsets. What are we coming to? The waistline is getting bigger and bigger.

Two women with old-fashioned ideas of small, pulled-in waists and bulging hips entered a Broadway car the other day, and immediately were stared at as if they were curiosities—relics of a day that is gone.

Miss Dawn made her first appearance in a blue dress, but the pink one convinced us that 'The Pink Lady' title would cling to her. I tried to decide whom she resembled as to face, and finally concluded that Irene Bentley was the nearest. I changed my opinion, however, when I caught a glimpse of Miss Bentley later, for her face has become rounder and she could never wear the debutante's pink gown—even if her husband did write the libretto. In summing up Miss Dawn's charms, I shall repeat a bit of conversation which was carried on by two of my friends, one of whom remarked upon Miss Dawn's beautiful teeth. 'With teeth like that,' he said, 'all she has to do is smile.' 'Her teeth have nothing to do with it,' indignantly replied the other. 'That girl has intelligence. You can see it in her eyes. She's no doll. Why, she would be a success if she never opened
her mouth.' Imagine a prima donna of a musical comedy who didn't have to show her teeth! But he meant it. Some time I am going to ask Miss Dawn what she thinks of the play 'Polygamy?' She comes from Salt Lake City, you know.

Another review offered equal praise:

Of course everybody who saw 'The Pink Lady' will remember the vision of loveliness in pink. Last night Miss Dawn was no less exquisite in her billowy blue. Her ethereal beauty is the spring-time incarnate. Her voice has gained in both power and expression since last I heard it, and was delightful last evening in her...numbers...

In choosing 'The Debutante' for the first presentation of his new star, John C. Fisher has shown great business astuteness, for it exactly fits the girl's youth and blond loveliness.

She even merited a ten line headline by one reviewer:

PERSONALITY OF
ACTRESS HAS
AN ATTRACTION

Hazel Dawn Captivates In
Private Life Even as
on stage

THE GIRL IS NATURAL

Footlights and Applause of
Admiring Theatre Goers
Do Not Spoil Her

The personality of an actor or an actress off the stage away from the glare of the footlights and the artificial atmosphere which throws a glamour over them, has for me a special interest.

I was curious to see if the charm of Hazel Dawn as the 'Debutante' could be eclipsed by the Hazel Dawn in private life, and when the opportunity presented itself to meet her, I gladly availed myself of the pleasure.

She is captivating, and that word seems to include a great deal. She is natural and unspoiled, full of life and enthusiasm and ambitions. She talked freely
of her stage life, and one felt that it was all absorbing.

I asked what interested her most apart from her
profession and she responded with a joyous laugh. 'My
family. There are six of us, five girls and one boy and
we are devoted to one another. When I once start talk-
ing about the family I am sure to bore someone.'

One critic felt that the production of The Debutante
stirred the question as to Lillian Russell's successor:

Is there already a successor to Lillian Russell in the
public admiration she so long enjoyed? Is there already
another to carry on the traditions of pink and white
beauty, of rosy loveliness--Henry James called it rosy
brun when talking about Peter Paul Rubens--so long
associated with the name of Lillian Russell? This
question came to the mind of the spectators at the Knick-
erbocker Theatre last night, watching the youthful love-
liness of Hazel Dawn. The beauty has all the old
familiar Russell characteristics, pink, blue, and yellow.

Hazel's own reaction to this comparison was
explored in the New York Herald with the headline "Haunted
With Her Beauty, Miss Hazel Dawn Admits It's Next Best to a
Voice:"

How do you imagine Miss Hazel Dawn felt when she
saw herself described in public prints as the legitimate
successor of Miss Lillian Russell in the line of beauty?
It happened early on Tuesday morning, for on Monday
night Miss Dawn, much heralded for her blonde beauty,
had for the first time in her career felt the thrills
of being a star in Broadway, appearing as Elaine in the
'Debutante.'

'If you promise not to print it, I'll tell you just
how I felt about that 'Lillian Russell Junior,' Miss
Dawn said to a reporter for the Herald in her dressing
room last night. On his promise that he wouldn't, she
continued--

...Well, before I knew what had struck me I grew
three inches in height and my circumference expanded
and my millinery now fits tighter than ever before.
Can you blame me?

The reporter gazed at the vision of loveliness
poured into a glittering beaded frock of hues that outshone the rainbow, her head encased—tightly en-
cased, one should say (clearly showing the effect of the praise) in a beaded Juliet cap, all crowned with a halo of a bird of paradise feathers. He gasped and concluded that no one could blame any one for anything.

'And now that I have told you how I felt, I want to tell you what I said when I read that exalted statement. I said:—'Well, what a wonderful thing my 'makeup' must be!'

Don't believe her, gentle reader. The reporter was as close to her as you are to this newspaper, and, believe him, she just said that 'make-up' speech to hide her real sentiments, for she is more beautiful than she is painted. Leaping lightly from the subject of 'beauty' to that of 'stardom,' the interviewer brought the inevitable question to the open. 'Have you sensed a new happiness in having been elevated to stellar honors, Miss Dawn?'

'...Everybody is so lovely to me and so sympathetic. Mr. Victor Herbert, the composer, who is conducting his operetta now because the conductor was taken ill—well, Mr. Herbert is an angel of an Irishman and his music is a dream to sing. He has been kindness itself to me. He said words of encouragement when my cold seemed to take the spirit out of me. So has everybody else been kind, and I think perhaps it will be wonderful to be a Broadway star; that is, after I lose this cold and forget my responsibility.

But speaking of weight and responsibility, feel the weight of my beaded cape!' The reporter did, and the weight was too much, he thought, for one of the fair sex to bear.

'Did you know that I once had ambitions to sing in grand opera? No? Well, I did. I was a kid then and we were living in Munich. It was then I heard my first performance of 'Tristan and Isolde.' Goodness! I did not come to my real senses for about two weeks. At the end of that time I mapped out my own grand opera repertoire in which I was going to sing the 'leads,' and this included 'Lohengrin,' 'Tannhaeuser,' and all the rest, you know. For months I was in my seventh heaven of hope and delight and then—'

'And then?' echoed the reporter.

'And then one little thing stopped me from carrying out my dream scheme. I did not have the voice.

'Too bad,' remarked the sympathetic reporter.

'Yes,' reported the fair Miss Dawn. 'But if you cannot
be a grand opera star, there is some consolation in being a 'Lillian Russell junior.' If you can't be great, be beautiful,' laughed the new star as she winked one eye and hurried out to sing...
CHAPTER XVI

CENTURY GIRL

Hazel's role in *The Debutante* was a very heavy singing part, almost like opera, and with eight performances a week, she soon damaged her singing voice, so when the show closed she went into the movies, performing in *One of Our Girls*, and *The Heart of Jennifer*, both of which enhanced her popularity. One reviewer said of her first production:

Hazel Dawn makes her kowtow before the camera in this four-reeled feature from the Famous Players Film Co's shop....When it was suggested Miss Dawn be placed under contract some of the wise ones remarked that 'it wasn't in her' to do anything worthwhile in pictures. They said she was cut out for musical comedy, and that was all there was to it. This 'Girl' picture fools them all and demonstrates beyond all doubt that Miss Dawn, once she cares to give up her stage work, can step right out before the m.p. camera any old time and keep working. She makes an attractive looking picture actress in addition to playing a role with credit.

*The New York Herald*, June 10, 1914 noted:

Hazel Dawn, of 'Pink Lady' fame, does much more than look pretty in front of the camera. She acts in a most fetching, animated fashion, thus making the best of natural charms that are in no wise diminished by a suit of pajamas, a quite practical gymnasium costume, a natty pair of riding breeches, topped by a tight fitting coat; or the less revealing folds of an evening gown. Whatever the decorative adornment selected by Miss Dawn, and she pretty nearly runs the gamut of feminine attire, the audience has a delightful picture of wholesome young American womanhood, fully qualified to show foreigners a fair sample of 'one of our girls.' When Bronson Howard wrote the play, which now is revived in film form, he must have conceived a heroine not greatly unlike Miss Dawn. She suggests the spirit, vivacity, and perhaps best of all the independence that
is supposed to distinguish the American girl from her less assertive European sisters.

No less praise was given of her work in The Heart of Jennifer.

The performance of Hazel Dawn in 'The Heart of Jennifer,' released in five parts by the Famous Players...is just what might be expected from this good player. There is one phase of Miss Dawn's work, however, that stands out. It is the interpretation of a woman who may be described as a thoroughbred--a woman of breeding--who understands men and also how to handle them. If she is embraced by a man repellent to her she throws no fit. She easily and with perfect poise pushes him from her; the face reveals no measure of the inward tumult. The same dignity characterizes the work of Miss Dawn in the sterner moments of real tragedy. If there be restraint in the situations of seriousness there is a corresponding wholesomeness and spontaneity in the lighter moods.

Hazel noted that:

Adolph Zukor had just formed 'The Famous Players' (that later was known as 'Paramount'). He signed me up with Mary Pickford, Marguerite Clark, and Pauline Frederick--we were his four stars. I was in the movie two years, and when my contract was up I went back to Florenz Ziegfeld (who owned a third of 'The Pink Lady') to star in a big musical he was putting on called 'The Century Girl.' This show had a remarkable cast--Elsie Janis, Marie Dressler, Frank Tinney, Leon Errol, Sam Bernard, and many others. The music was by Victor Herbert and Irving Berlin. My voice had returned somewhat by now and I was 'The Century Girl.'

In the Sunday Star-Ledger July 25, 1964, she reminisced about Century Girl:

Ziegfeld persuaded me to leave pictures to do 'The Century Girl' for him. And nobody ever gave an actress a better entrance. Many of the famous women of the ages were represented in the show and they paraded on stage one by one. Then I came up through a trap door at the top of the grand staircase, as the 'Century Girl.'
dress was designed by Madame Lucie (Lady Duff Cooper) and I had on everything but neon lights.

A review in the *Evening World* indicated the extent of the spectacle:

Woman, lovely woman, descended a staircase with the rising curtain at the Century Theatre last night and instantly made 'The Century Girl' a feast for sore eyes. Later in the evening, or early this morning—for the performance kept most of us up until 1 o'clock—Frank Tinney remarked that he had heard the place was haunted. You may well believe that it is haunted by beauty.

For this happy state of affairs on Central Park West, thanks are due to Nature, greatest of artists; to those born showmen, Charles Dillingham and Florenz Ziegfeld...

Another reviewer had completely differing sentiments regarding the production, but offered equal praise for Hazel:

'The Century Girl' had its premiere at the Century Theatre last night and this morning, closing at 1 o'clock or after. The length of this performance brings to mind the famous matinee premiere of 'The Daughter of Heaven' at the same theatre, which lasted until 7 o'clock. One man was a true prophet when he remarked just before the third act began after midnight: 'The afternoon papers will score a 'beat.'

If the brilliancy of the performance had been equal to the brilliancy of the audience, which seemed to be comprised chiefly, in the orchestra, of Metropolitan Opera House box holders...then 'The Century Girl' could be said to surpass anything of its kind ever produced. Unfortunately this fair and dainty maiden instead of sprinting ambled on and on and sometimes just dragged herself along. No doubt, inside of a week the tempo will be quickened and the weak spots eliminated. Then, one will not feel as though one were at a cricket match—lots of class, but little ginger and no pepper.

The score of principals carried the show on their two score of shoulders. There was a sprinkling of handsome show girls....But where was that wonderful beauty chorus one heard so much about beforehand? Cherchez les femmes, for they were not on the stage of the Century Theatre. Indeed the chorus girls were in no way extraordinary either as to looks or performance.
...A bright figure in this musical entertainment was Hazel Dawn, who was as beautiful as were the costumes and the Urban scenery, which is saying a great deal. She sang prettily duets with Irving Fisher and posed, a vision of loveliness, in the centre of the chorus.
CHAPTER XVII

UP IN MABEL'S ROOM

Ward Morehouse in "The Play's The Thing" noted that when the Broadway director Al Woods saw Hazel Dawn perform in The Pink Lady he was so impressed with her that he said during the intermission, "I don't know what they're paying that girl, but anytime she wants to work for Woods she can do so at $1,000 a week." And within a few seasons, Hazel got that contract for performing in the riotous farce Up In Mabel's Room, where she didn't have to sing or play her violin, but had another big success.

That this was a risqué farce and more daring than most was obvious in its very title, as Amy Leslie pointed out in the Daily News, August 12, 1919:

Naturally a farce with so scarlet a title is not for those of toppling morality and insensitive minds, but nobody can be other than driven to hilarity of a wholesome sort by the antics of the clever players concerned in elucidating 'Up in Mabel's Room.'

However, many a newspaper's eyebrow was raised in reviewing this production, in spite of the Detroit Free Press's assuring statement that society was finally emancipated:

There was a time, say a couple of decades ago, when an audience would have gasped its way through the three risque acts of 'Up in Mabel's Room'... But on February first of this age of shock-proof morals, the assembled through experienced nothing but hysteries. All the gasping was done on the stage side of the footlights.
The Detroit News, January 21, 1919, was one of the completely favorable:

The great American farce, this time entitled 'Up in Mabel's Room' is holding forth at the Carrick this week, and because the last farce one sees is always the funniest, I can assure you that this concoction by William Collison and Otto Harbach is the funniest ever— as funny, perhaps, as 'Fair and Warner' and 'Parlor Bedroom and Bath' rolled into one, for that is precisely where the three acts take place, wherein half a dozen harassed principals endeavor by turns to capture or shake a certain chemise. The white porcelain which gleams in the background of the third act is a new touch—and just about the limit. Will we ever see the heroine actually under the shower?

There is of course only one farce plot now popular—the illumination of something inimical to the marital happiness of somebody. This involves a man's getting into the sleeping quarters of a pretty but innocent girl not his wife, while the audience sits on the edge of its seats shivering for fear what 'may' happen but never does.

It's all to be found in 'Up in Mabel's Room. And the cast is made more interesting by the fact that Hazel Dawn, beauteous blonde of many pleasant shows is the young lady who disrobes and retires before the audience—that is, disrobes after the manner of stage ladies, which means that she substitutes one set of garments for another quite as concealing as the first....

Of course the whole proceedings is on a plane that is impossible for the prudish mind to contemplate. The assumptions are far too intimate. Marital infidelity is treated not so seriously as some might demand, but once accept these basic conditions and the rest is irresistible. It will be equally funny to your grandmother, your granddaughter or your best girl—provided only they are of the right sort.

There is just one puzzling thing about the show. At a certain crucial moment Hazel Dawn disrobes to the point of showing the much-discussed chemise, and we find it to be a mother-hubbardly sort of garment reaching her ankles. But when the thing begins to be snatched about from hand to hand it is of only the regulation dimensions. Why and wherefore the change?

The Cincinnati Inquirer of January 25 was more con-
servative in its reaction:

When a large audience will sit patiently for more than an hour, waiting for the curtain to rise, as the audience which filled the Lyric last night did in an amiable manner, it deserves to be rewarded. 'Up in Mabel's Room'...seemed ample reward once it got started, for the big crowd laughed and interpolated suggestions now and then in a manner which demonstrated quite clearly that a 'good time was had by all.'

That was the acid test. The company was delayed by railroad conditions and the curtain rang up fully an hour after the scheduled time. But nobody seemed anxious to leave because most everybody was eager to see and learn just what happened in Mabel's boudoir.

Plenty happened there, as is generally the case in good farces. And 'Up in Mabel's Room' is a good farce in spite of its name. It may not be Sunday school entertainment, perhaps, but it is extremely funny. Its situations are hilarious, its lines now and then broad enough to suit even the burlesque patrons and its performance by the members of the company excellent.

Whether everybody wants to see just the kind of entertainment it provides is another matter. There will be some, even in this modern day, who would rather not sit through a performance of this kind, for whom the theater still remains a little more than this farce presumes it to be and who have, possibly, a sense of self respect and a little delicacy of feeling left. For them 'Up in Mabel's Room' will be a thing to be omitted. But those who care not about these things and who will laugh at anything without blushing, will find this farce a toothsome morsel of indelicacy.

Not that any of us are prudes. No, no. Not in this advanced day, But some of us may feel just a little ashamed when we catch ourselves laughing as the play proceeds. It may be that some of us are growing sensitive. At any event, 'Up in Mabel's Room' will jar many an old stager, who will wonder what is coming next in the theater.

Fred J. McIsaac had an equally mixed reaction of the show, titling his review "Mabel, Naughty Girl, is at Park Square!"
In the state of jubilation of the audience which assembled for the premier of 'Up in Mabel's Room,' at the Park Square last night, Webster's Dictionary would have been voted fine entertainment, and 'Damaged Goods' a cheerful comedy.

An A.H. Woods farce full of bed chamber, bathrooms, pajamas, and French lingerie would naturally strike such an audience as the last word in laughter, and so it did. The audience laughed long and loud and shamelessly. The police were so busy quelling the celebration without that everything went in Mabel's room, and lines so broad they passed the limit of suggestion kept the house in an uproar all the time.

To say that this is a clever farce wouldn't be truthful. It is what might be called a machine-made farce, constructed to be as shocking as is consistent with safety. For the sake of a naughty situation the probabilities are continually violated, and some of the lines would have gone well in burlesque before it re-formed.

Funny, certainly it is funny. When you don't care what you do, you can always get a laugh. Holding up pink silk chemises, slips, nighties, and knickers are sure fire laugh getters a la farce. So is a man under the bed, a lady disrobing, and being intruded upon in a bathroom. Given a bunch of people as clever as the cast of 'Up in Mabel's Room,' anything can be made to go....Interest is continued in the last act by Mabel, who wanders around the house in pajamas with the utmost indifference, retiring to a bathroom. People insist on talking to her while she is bathing, so she obligingly opens the door and lets the audience have a peep at the upper part of her, which is, of course, unadorned.

It is what Mr. Woods would call a 'very spicy farce,' and best of all, everybody in the cast is really perfectly innocent as can be demonstrated to any city censor or police official who should be misled by some of the lines and situations.

While reactions differed regarding the ethical nature of the production, all seemed in agreement as far as Hazel's beauty was concerned, and many unusual accolades were offered in her praise: Amy Leslie, for example, called Hazel "graceful as a spruce tree in a gale, crisp, intelligent
and a beauty..." The Detroit Free Press called her "a freshly complexioned, golden-haired, pearly-teethed and smiling star." Ashton Stevens found a "sudden likeable quality in Hazel Dawn that is more than opulent beauty, more than a speaking voice with a taking glint of metal in it:"

She is casually charming—which is to say her charm is casual rather than calculated. She is informal without kittenishness, with a certain dignity—she's easily and graceftilly poised. And she never sacrifices a word or a move to the glorification of her personal blandishments. No beauty could be more human and still be a beauty.

Another found in her "feminine immortality," from her every ribbon and sleeve, to the very hue of her wardrobe:


No! They sit about in shadowy nooks with rapt and strangely joyous looks, at last desirous of repose, designing their infernal clothes.

That is the impression of feminine immortality one gets listening to Hazel Dawn's rapturous and poetic descriptions of the gowns she had designed all out of her own cute blonde head, and the fun she had in doing it.

Miss Dawn, minus song and fiddle, is now playing in the prettily-yclept farce 'Up in Mabel's Room,'... after an absence from the stage of several years. 'Not that I've given up my musical career,' protests Miss Dawn, 'but just to see if I could do it.'

She does it fascinatingly, and not the least fascinating part of her performance is her wardrobe. Of the ravishing gowns she wears in the play, two are her own creations and one is the fruit of her suggestions. Here are her descriptions:

A tea gown of salmon color, cut from a single piece of chiffon. The four corners form the foot of the gown
and are finished with large gold tassels. A handsome
gold embroidery in a chrysanthemum design gives an
elegant finish.

Pajamas—trousers of lemon meteor are caught at
the ankles with a small wreath of hand-made flowers.
The jacket made of silver lace, is sleeveless and
has a girdle of silver ribbons with a careless bow
of long ends.

A breakfast jacket in purple chiffon velvet, with
sleeves finished long with jade silk tassles, A tucked
shirt in a soft, lilac motoor completes the costume.

'But the gown I'll never forget,' says Miss Dawn,
'is the one that really helped me to a career. It hap-
pened in London. You know, although I was born in Ogden
Utah, in the shadow of the Rocky Mountains, I've spent
nearly as much time agroad as I have in this country.
When I was a little girl my parents took me to London.
Every summer I'd make the long trip back to Ogden and
then return to Europe....I studied singing in London
and Paris and then came...'The Dollar Princess' and
the fateful gown. I was playing a small part and
understudying Lily Elsie, who is one of the great musi-
cal comedy favorites over there.

I had designed and just received a new gown which I
intended to wear at a very elaborate affair. It was a
dream of dreams. The body color was pink, with a shi-
mering net of moonlight blue covering it. It was made
with a tunic effect, the lower part of the tunic being
embroidered with moonstones, and was finished off with
a girdle containing all the pastel shades of the rain-
bow from lilac to rose pink.

A few hours before the performance word was received
that Miss Elsie was sick and I must go on in her place.
Of course an understudy is always panic-stricken at these
crucial moments. Then I thought of the gown. What an
opportunity.

I had hardly reached my dressing room after the
performance when in rushed Ivan Carryl, the composer of
'The Pink Lady,' which had just been accepted for a
New York production for Klaw and Erlanger. 'You're
just the woman I want,' he exclaimed. 'I've just cabled
New York that I've found 'The Pink Lady.' A few days
later an answer was received from Mr. Erlanger: 'Bring
her along.' Of course it was the gown, Mr. Carryl hinted
as much. And 'The Pink Lady' made my career.
In spite of all the gushing tributes, an occasional critical review appeared. The Cleveland Press was one of the few that discussed more than the prima donna's beauty, or the risque nature of the plot:

Up in Mabel's Room is a farce by the columbus druggist, Wilson Collison....It's a saucy title. I don't know what it indicates to the reader; to me it indicates that there will be numerous comic misunderstandings, and that nearly every individual in the plot will be of exemplary character. I draw that conclusion from acquaintance with a dreary succession of similar farces including 'Parlor, Bedroom, and Bath.'

'The title means no more than if 'Othello' were renamed 'Up in Desdemona's Room.'

Mabel's room style of plays inspire much eyebrow lifting, but a much fairer mark for anathema is the sort of play which is not farcical but sentimental.

A sentiment is an idea linked to an emotion. Emotion can make acceptable an idea which otherwise would be rejected. It is in a sentimental scene or play, not in a farcical one, that a hero is made a rascal.

All comedy is a form of ridiculous or criticism of those who fail to conform to some accepted standard. Comic criticism may be misdirected. But it is not easy to see how it can be 'unwholesome.'

The old prejudice against it was that it condoned by mild ridicule what should be belabored with vast indignation, or bitterly discountenanced.

In nearly all recent farces the critical ridicule has been aimed at persons who get into difficulty through condemning others on inadequate evidence. That appears to be the point in the farce 'Up in Mabel's Room.'

A pink chemise is the motif of 'Up in Mabel's Room.' There's a legend that the garment which wins little or notice in a shop window, is of tremendous potency when dangled at arm's length between the thumb and first finger on the stage. The average playgoer would go about as far to view that as he would to view a red flannel shirt. But the legend persists in this farce from the drugstore at Columbus.

The farce may be unworthy. If so, that won't be because it is a farce, or because a garment of any tint whatsoever is exhibited in it.
Also during the production of *Up in Mabel's Room* came the famed coast to coast actor's strike for better treatment from the managers. A Chicago paper noted that "musicians and stage mechanics employed at six downtown theaters went on strike in sympathy with the actor's strike."

Hazel received much publicity during the strike. One paper noted that "Miss Hazel Dawn thinks it is 'just lovely to be in court.'" A Chicago paper commented on the trial:

Hazel Dawn, one of the stars of *Up in Mabel's Room* Company at Woods' Theater, was questioned today when Master in Chancery Sigmund Ziegler resumed the hearing of testimony in the injunction suits brought by Chicago theater managers against the Equity Association of Actors and Artists to prevent the closing of additional play houses by an extension of the strike. The court room was crowded by actors, actresses, theatrical managers and lawyers when the first witness was called to the stand.

In reply to questions by Attorney Levy Mayer who appeared for the theatrical managers, Miss Dawn said she had signed one of the Equity Association's contracts with A.H. Woods to take effect October 31.

'I do not consider that I have a contract, however, because it has been rendered void by Mr. Woods' actions,' the witness said.

She testified that she received a salary of $500, a week, a maid, and traveling expenses.

Attorney Mayer then asked the witness what causes had led her to go on a strike with other members of the company last Saturday night which resulted in the closing of Woods' theatre. Miss Dawn, after a moment's reflection, declined to answer the question on the ground that her replies might incriminate her when the contempt of court charges are heard August 26.

Hazel's own version of the trial was more exciting than the newspapers indicated:

Actors were treated in most cases like 'dogs,' no dignity, buy a lot of your own clothes, and I myself have
played nine performances a week, being paid for seven, and the rest went into the manager's pocket. Well the managers said the actors would never stick together, but we did. I was playing 'Up in Mabel's Room' at the time in Chicago. We walked out in the face of an injunction and we were arrested and had to go to court. We were the only show from coast to coast, incidentally that was arrested. Equity sent two actors out from New York to look after us--Grant Mitchel and Burton Churchill. They told us if we were called to the witness stand to try to get into the evidence that the actors had asked for arbitration, and that ex-President Taft and some other outstanding statesman whose name I can't remember, had agreed to act as arbitrators.

Now the managers had acting for them one of Chicago's outstanding lawyers by the name of Levy Mayer--he was a man of great presence and personality. The actors had a poor little nobody who was dying on the vine. It was simply impossible to get the arbitration evidence in--every time Levy Mayer blocked it. The judge was so biased in favor of the managers it wasn't funny. Grant Mitchel called New York and told Equity what happened, and that he was sure we were all going to jail. Equity told them to let the lawyer we had to go, and get the best they could find--the sky was the limit.

The next day when we were dismissed for lunch, a great surprise awaited us on our return. When we walked in, there sat Clarence Darrow ready to defend the actors.

My sister Eleanor was in that show with me, and she is a person who requires a lot of sleep, and I'm not. This night I could not get to sleep, and I had run completely out of reading material. All I could find was my Equity contract. For the first time I thought I'd look it over. On reading it I noticed that in one of the articles it said that if the contract was violated by either side, it would become null and void. Well by a happy fluke I was called to the stand the next morning. Levy Mayer waved my contract in front of me and asked if that was my contract. I answered 'I have no contract.' He said 'What do you mean? Is this your signature?' I said 'Yes sir.' The judge spoke up and asked me to explain myself. I then said, 'One of the articles in that contract says if it is violated by either side it becomes null and void.'

Mayer grabbed the contract and the judge said 'Give it to her--let her read it aloud. I started to look it over and the judge said 'Miss Dawn we haven't got all day.' I am very fortunate in one thing in my character--when I'm under pressure I'm at my calmest. So I answered that 'I can't read it till I find it.' So I took my
time, and when I found it, I read it aloud. Mayer grabbed it, and while he was reading it, I got in the desired evidence.

All the actors stood up and cheered me. The judge nearly broke his desk rapping for order. Mayer said I opened Pandora's box and out wriggled an eel. After the session was over, both Clarence Darrow and Mayer asked me where I got my courtroom experience. When I told them I had never been in a courtroom before in all my life, Darrow patted me on the shoulder and said 'Girl, you are in the wrong profession. You should be a lawyer.' After it was all over I was the 'fair haired child' with all the actors in Chicago and New York.
CHAPTER XVIII

SHE'S A "MORMON"

The Equity trial, as well as giving Hazel much publicity for being a star witness, also covered the fact that she was a Mormon. The Chicago Herald offered one of the many comments concerning her religious beliefs:

Our tryst was in the courtroom. Hazel Dawn was sure she'd be there, a.m. or p.m. up in the chambers of the master of chancery, where 'Up in Mabel's Room' players were being tried for contempt and sabotage and desertion and failure to provide and cruelty to managers and I nor they know what else.

'I live there,' she said; 'I only go out for my sleep.' So I got up early and went a-courting for the queen of the strikers. She was there, of course; she had been being there so constantly that court couldn't go on without her.

Levy Mayer was suavely engaged in baiting a witness for perjury when I caught Miss Dawn's eye. She was sitting in the front row of the jury box with her beautiful sister and the not quite so beautiful Walter Jones and other associates....She tiptoed out of the jury box and led me far back to the jury room, where I closed the door and she said I could smoke.

'You may smoke,' she said. The italics were hers. I asked her about them and this is what she said, with fire in her hazel eyes:

'When the master gave us a brief recess yesterday a reporter wrote that this was to give the actresses a chance to go out and smoke cigarettes and tell stories. Disgusting! It inferred nothing but dissipated women and lewd stories. It carried levity too far. There has been too much newspaper levity concerning the strike, It's serious. You know this strike's serious...Do you know what those frivolous newspaper stories have done?'

'Well, they've taken the actors off the first page.' 'They've done worse than that to me. Read this letter that just came.' I read it. This is what was written to Hazel Dawn in an un rakish feminine hand: 'Your conduct is unchristian and unladylike. The good American woman uses chewing gum instead of tobacco. You ought to join
the Anti-Cigaretts and take the Keeley cure.'

'And I've never had a drink in my life and never smoked a cigarette in my life,' Hazel Dawn passionately declared. 'Nor my sister either. There's only one woman member of our company who ever smokes or drinks.... Not but what some of the very nicest people on and off the stage do. But the rest of us don't. And that letter shows what the public is led to believe of us through alleged comic reporting.'

The Advertiser, March 20, 1921 more elaborately discussed why she had never taken a drink or smoked:

Meet the dazzling Dawns--Hazel and sister Eleanor. They're the prettiest little Mormons that ever came out of the West. They're the two best ads Brigham Young ever had. If they started an exodus from Boston to Utah they'd have an army at their heels.

They're the genuine article, too, these charming little exponents of Latter Day Saints. Their convictions are honest, and they glory in their faith. Just listen to this if it's proof you want;

One-tenth of their incomes they contribute regularly and cheerfully to the support of Mormonism.

And listen to this. Neither of the girls has as much as puffed a cigarette in all her life. Moreover, they've never tasted a cocktail. Being good is part of their religion. Tobacco and wine are taboo. They observe the law in letter as in spirit.

How many prima donnas has the American stage who have never smoked? How many girls in musical comedy would disdain a perfectly safe but terribly expensive cocktail? Perhaps there are, but the managers never heard of them.

It's a shame you can't hear Hazel when she's going strong. Aided and abetted by Eleanor, she'd make a preaching Mormon elder sound like a soap box orator. She's eloquent and forceful, and best of all, she's sincere. So is Eleanor.

A year or so ago I interviewed Mrs. Lulu Loveland Shepard, an anti-Mormon crusader, a woman whose allegations were too startling to print. Yesterday I recounted the choicest of her stories to the indignant Dawns.

'Said we women couldn't go to heaven, did she, unless we were married?' exploded Hazel. 'Well I'll give Mrs. Shepard $1,000, if she can prove that any such
bunk has ever been a principle of our faith. I've heard her little fairy tale before. She's the person who asserts that every Mormon man thinks he's going to have a little heaven all his own--a private paradise to which he may call his wives for all eternity. She declares all women who have no mates to summon them heavenward must sleep, in accordance with our belief, through all the ages.

Well, Eleanor and I aren't married, and we're not worrying any. Neither are our sisters. And confidentially, we're all 'getting on.' Father's a Mormon elder, and he's not fretting any about the curse of spinsterhood that we've elected.'

The girls were in their room at the Touraine dressing for dinner. Eleanor was fashioning a little frock of velvet, applying the finishing touches as Hazel talked.

"That awful woman tells another silly untruth," she declared. 'She says we wear a mysterious woolen undergarment, embroidered with secret insignia, and guaranteed to keep off the devil. From the time we first put it on until we die we can never be without it. Before taking it off we start putting on another so that the devil will not get us. Now I'm as strict a Mormon as any of them--and look at me," Eleanor slipped off her pretty negligee. Silk and more silk, with never a sign of woolen nor embroidered insignia--nothing beneath the silks but just Eleanor.

'All that insidious propaganda about polygamy is quite as ridiculous," said Hazel. 'I think half the world is honestly convinced that harems are part of our religion. Let me quote from our Catechism: 'We believe that marriage is ordained of God; and that the law of God provides for but one companion in wedlock, for either man or woman, except in cases where the contract of marriage is broken by death or transgression; consequently we believe that the doctrine of plurality and a community of wives are heresies, and are opposed to the law of God.

Polygamy among the Mormons is practically unknown today. In a few aged families the youngest of polygamous wives are in their seventies. If a man committed bigamy he would be excommunicated from our church and turned over to the authorities for penal servitude.

Anti-Mormon crusaders may say we're only sort of half-way Mormons,' commented Hazel, 'and don't know what they're talking about. If any of them tell you that, you might tell them that our father--Edwin Tout--has been sent three times on proselyting missions to
Europe. Our brother had prepared to enter Tech, when he received a summons to preach our faith through Canada. He gave up college and proclaimed Mormonism until he was accepted for Uncle Sam's air service. Proof of the stalwart convictions of our proselyting elders is the fact that they receive no remuneration and travel at their own expense for a period of three years.

The Journal History File of June 26, 1926 at the Presiding Bishop's Office revealed on page 4 another equally fervent affirmation of her faith with the headline "Hazel Dawn Tells New York Girls About Word of Wisdom:"

Deseret News readers will undoubtedly be interested in the following article which appeared in a recent issue of the New York Sun:

Miss Dawn is a Utah girl who has made an enviable reputation as a musical comedy star. Her comments to a women's club, where she was guest, were reported as follows by the Sun, under the caption 'Hazel Dawn Has Never Tasted Tea or Coffee:'

The scene was a friendly gathering room of a woman's club which shall be nameless. The members had invited a young woman of the stage to address them upon any subject which she wished. The affair was informal, highly so. Members sat about in easy attitudes, some of the ultra young women were puffing cigarettes.

The young woman who was acting as a sort of informal chairman of the small and select gathering arose to introduce the visitor.

'I am sure that all of us have heard of the wonderful 'Pink Lady,' she said. 'This Pink Lady made a sensational stage debut some seasons ago. Today the little 'Pink Lady' is appearing in a great, modern revue, still in a leading place. She is just as lovely now as she was in "The Pink Lady." Miss Hazel Dawn was "The Pink Lady." Miss Hazel Dawn is now the leading woman in 'The Great Temptations' at the Winter Garden. I am going to ask Miss Dawn how she manages to be prettier today and fresher than she ever was. Miss Dawn.'

Miss Dawn came forward at the end of the room.

'Do you really want the truth?' she asked. 'Yes, yes,' came in an eager chorus from the members of the club. Miss Dawn appeared to hesitate. 'I am your guest,' she
said, 'and I would not for worlds appear to be critical of my hosts. But if you want the truth I will tell it to you.'

'Yes, yes,' said the audience. 'Well, then, here it is,' said Miss Dawn. 'Never in my life have I tasted tea or coffee. I have never smoked a cigaret. Perhaps I had better not continue. I do not mean to criticize.'

'Go right on, Miss Dawn,' assented more than one woman, including the chairwoman.

'Well, then, I have never taken a drink of gin, whisky, a cocktail, or any other stimulant,' went on Miss Dawn. 'You see, the matter is just this: I am actuated in my personal conduct by my religion. I am a 'Mormon,' just as my brother, my sisters and my parents are, I attend our 'Mormon' religious services here in the East every day of worship and always whenever I can when I am traveling over the country.

The conduct which I have outlined to you as mine is simply in accord with what is known among us 'Mormons' as 'The Word of Wisdom.' The Word of Wisdom admonishes us not to take any stimulant into our systems, not to do anything that will injure or impair in its tendency either the mind or the body. It is the same with food. We are not to eat merely for the taste, but for nourishment. So having been taught the real values of life we do not crave stimulation or excitement. Simple pleasures are ours.

Of course, anyone will agree with me that the 'Word of Wisdom' is really the word of wisdom. It has not only been sound common sense as a basis, but the best of hygiene. So if any one will live according to the 'Word of Wisdom' he or she will not be ashamed to say, just as I do: 'Yes, it was in 1912 that I made my debut in New York in 'The Pink Lady,' and it is now 1926.'

One woman after another pinched out her cigaret and threw the remaining fragment away.
CHAPTER XIX

GETTING GERTIE'S GARTER

Up in Mabel's Room was the first of many productions in which Hazel worked under the direction of A.H. Woods, having played for him for six years in one farce after another. The next production, Getting Gertie's Garter, a companion farce to its predecessor, (only it was not a chemise this time, but a garter) was another success. Hazel was again the subject of many newspaper articles. The Houston Herald, March 27, 1921 offered another tribute to her beauty with the headline "SHE'S PRETTIER OFF THAN ON THE STAGE--You Wouldn't Think That Possible After Seeing Hazel Dawn in 'Getting Gertie's Garter:

I probably have more nerve than any other woman in the world,' remarked Hazel Dawn, whose delightful impersonation of Gertie Darling, the much-harrassed heroine of 'Gertie's Garter,' makes plausible most of the innumerable complications of that merry farce.

'Nerve is a wonderful asset and I have every reason to thank the fates who bestowed my ample portion,' con-tinued Miss Dawn, for I assure you that I have often had need for it, especially at the time, when, with just five months' stage experience--and the magnificent total of 17 years upon this planet--I took the lead in 'The Pink Lady'--and incidentally got away with it....

Golden hair, a perfect pink and white complexion and dark-blue eyes--so dark, indeed, that they seem almost brown at times--form a combination, in conjunc-tion with the delicate oval of her face, which makes one wonder why, with so much beauty to her credit, Hazel Dawn should have so many other assets as well--looming large among which is a personality that no 'regular' person could resist.
The Boston Traveler, March 15, 1921 noted that though Al Woods picks her for the heroine parts of his risque farces, she lives in quite a different world than many believe, with the headline "Plays Leads in Risque Farces, But Doesn't Drink or Smoke and Loves Her Family!"

'I suppose all those people out front think we're the wildest women in captivity back here.' In this friendly manner Hazel Dawn greeted the writer after the last act of 'Gertie's Garter' yesterday afternoon. As a matter of fact, it was the remark of one in the audience that sent me backstage to explore.

'I wonder what she's like off stage--she's lovely on the screen,' said an unsuspecting and curious matinee girl sitting right before me.

The final curtain had just lowered and the company was still assembled on the stage....I stood aloof taking in the 'side show' when a tall, dark, handsome person approached and said solicitously; 'Waiting for someone?'

'Yes, your sister,' I answered, recognizing the speaker at once as Eleanor Dawn, brunette sister of the fair Hazel. 'I'll call her. She's watching the exhibition dancers.' And with courteous regard, Hazel Dawn appeared on the scene immediately.

'That was Eleanor, my baby sister, who told me you were her,' she said leading the way to her dressing room.

'First time you've been together?'
'I'll tell you something funny about her,' she said, getting so deliciously confidential I felt the privilege of long acquaintance rather than a few minutes. (That's one of Hazel Dawn's charms--her exquisite friendliness.)

'Do you remember 'The Pink Lady' she went on.

'Who doesn't?'

'Well, I was so hysterically enthused about my success in that piece I sent for Eleanor when she was only 14 and brought her here to put her in the chorus. Mother and father were away on a trip at the time, and I thought it would be fine. Poor Kiddie was only in the chorus two days when the Gerry Society got after her and, of course, they sent her back home to school.'

'Do you still play the violin?' I continued, forgetting all about 'Gertie,' and reminiscing back to 'The Pink Lady.'

'No, it's mildewed,' she said, 'but if they ever revive
that piece and put me in it—and if they don't I won't be responsible for what will happen—I'll get it out and practice it for a couple of months.'

More trivia was expounded in the *Boston Herald* that merited a six line headline plus a picture of Hazel—

"GERTIE'S LOST GARTER NEARLY HALTED PLAY: Frenzied Hunt Behind Curtain When Hazel Dawn Missed Vital 'Character:"

Gertie lost her garter. This would appear to be a private matter except that Gertie is the heroine of the play at the Plymouth Theater, and the situation was no garter, no play. 'Honi soit qui mal y pense.' Hazel Dawn, the heroine of the drama, discovered that she didn't have the garter about five minutes before she was supposed to go on and display it last night. The garter is lost and recovered and recovered and lost again all through Al Woods' cultural entertainment. But this loss was real.

'Where's my garter?' cried Gertie in a frenzied sotto voice from her post on top of a staging which from the front looks like the second story chamber of an attractive bungalow.

Everybody who wasn't on at the time began a mad search for it. Walter Jones looked through all his pockets and discovered several glass receptacles, but no garter. There was less than two minutes before Miss Gertie gave the exposition.

When everyone was in despair, Bert Harrison, the producer, suddenly observed a stage hand who was wearing sleeve garters.

'Gimme one of those,' he demanded, grasping the article. 'What's going to keep up my sleeve?' demanded the stagehand indignantly. 'The union rules,' replied the stage manager, as he triumphantly proffered the garter to Gertie.

'That's no good,' said Miss Dawn. 'There has to be a lot of jewels on it.'

'Who's got some jewels?' demanded the stage manager, grasping at pearl necklaces, rings, and other ornaments worn by other women members of the cast.

'Needle and thread,' he demanded. In a second he had sewn on a lot of jewels including an honest to goodness platinum pendant which Adele Rolland happened to be wearing. 'Gertie made her entrance wearing a garter, just
in time, but the rest of the evening Miss Rolland spent her time watching earnestly the progress of her pendant from hand to hand, hoping against hope that it would come home all O.K. It did.

In the future there will be a regular understudy for Gertie's Garter at the Plymouth.

When a critical review appeared, its rarity was almost a novelty. The Chicago Journal, April 12, 1921, was one such rarity, providing a contrast from the usual "sweetness and light," headlining with "Gertie, Gertie, Shame On You!"

In their new play, a fragrant farce modestly entitled 'Gertie's Garter,' Wilson Collison and Avery Hopwood reveal the delicate touch of the pile driver, the nimble wit of the fretful porcupine, and the inventive genius of the missing link. They have provided players with a means for extracting from the human voice all the noise the eardrum can endure, and they have given them to speak many insinuations which you, no doubt, have hoped would never be put into a play.

They have written a farrago of vulgar nonsense which can make no claim whatever to be regarded as an entertainment, and at the Woods Theater last night there was but a slight indication that anyone was deluded with the idea that pleasure was present.

The only time during the evening when humor showed itself in the slightest degree was when Dorthea Mackaye, emerging not unscathed from a compromising situation, presented a comic picture of beauty in distress, and by the assumption of a forlorn aspect and an air of reckless daring, readily indicated her possession of a sense of fun. The others toiled in vain.

It was evident that had Miss Mackaye been given anything but the most arrant nonsense out of which to summon pleasure she would have succeeded. Though miserably equipped by the authors, she still was able to overshadow all others in a cast which included as its featured players, Hazel Dawn and Walter Jones. Miss Mackaye had, however, many things to say which would have shocked a wooden Indian.

Miss Dawn, remembered as the owner of the pink slip
in the farce called 'Up in Mabel's Room' would appear to represent in the new piece a bride troubled on her wedding night by the ownership of a garter which she is endeavoring to return to its donor.

Like the pink slip of blessed memory, the garter refused to be returned, and it passed from hand to hand, with other secrets of ladies and misses' wardrobes—as they say in the ads—compromising all who touch, see, or have report of them.

As the gartered bride Miss Dawn has little more to do than to race up and down stairs, advertising in ascension and descension spring styles in hosiery. The exactions of the farce fall, rather upon Miss Mackaye, who acts, disrobes and otherwise demeans herself in a manner mistaken by the authors to be comic, in a haymow, and behind a battery of slamming doors.

In nearly all her scenes Miss Mackaye is paired with Lorin Raker, who in this play is the loudest small actor in captivity. In other plays, where soft pedaling has been regarded as essential, he has been a capital young player.

It is usual to farces produced by A.H. Woods for actors to hide in clothes baskets or under beds; in this one they conceal themselves in barrels, clocks, trunks, automobiles, ancient carriages, closets, and under the hay. An actor concealed in a clothes basket has not been funny since Falstaff was rolled into the river, and actors finding eight hiding places in 'Gert-ie's Garter' are eight times as unfunny as one actor hidden in a clothes hamper.

Gertie's Carter seems to suggest that the corset, garter, and underwear drama has gone to seed. It's about all in the title.
CHAPTER XX

EAST OF SUEZ

When Hazel started doing farce, some people wondered if she had lost her voice, but she assured readers of the Boston Herald, March 27, 1921, that such was not the case:

Hazel Dawn is a firm believer in the wisdom of a many-sided career, a conviction which she has exemplified in the most practical manner by several seasons of work in the 'movies,' followed by a career of straight farces, with never a chance to show that she can sing. 'Some people wonder if I've lost my voice,' Miss Dawn confided, 'but I assure you that I haven't, and next season all the doubters will realize it, too, for Avery Hopwood has written a play especially for me, with a number of songs interpolated and a chance to play the violin, as well. The proper opportunity, in short, to show the public a goodly number of my accomplishments! Not all of them, though,' Miss Dawn hastily added, 'That wouldn't do at all, for I'll surprise them all one of these days by playing tragedy, for example, just to show that I can!'

And she got that opportunity in Somerset Maugham's play East of Suez:

Tonight at the Shubert Belasco Theatre, 'East of Suez,' W. Somerset Maugham's sensational melodrama of the orient will enter the second week of its engagement in Washington. 'East of Suez' inspired by the Kipling verse, evolves the tragedy of a half-caste woman whose English husband tries to raise her to recognition by the white colonists of China. It is grimly relentless in its depiction of the hopelessness of such a mésalliance, and artistically logical in its final tense denouement. Hazel Dawn's impersonation of the Eurasian girl has been declared a revelation.

The Washington Post, April 16, 1923, confirmed that
she realized her goal:

Hazel Dawn's impersonation of the Eurasian woman is a treat for those theatergoers who have seen her talents confined to musical comedy or frothy farces. Miss Dawn in a big emotional role carries the responsibilities of the principal character in the play, and by fine acting gives the big moments of the drama commanding power.

Despite the more serious nature of the production, the usual sensational review was ever-present:

Is it or is it not right, ethically speaking, for the smartest writer of smart comedies in the world to turn right about face and write a melodrama? 'Why not?' you ask. 'Ask the critics,' comes the answer quick as a flash.

Well, anyhow, as Mr. Potash says, the critics have decided that when a bright, polished fellow like W. Somerset Maugham turns around and writes bright, polished melodrama like 'East of Suez' something has been committed which is at least arson or 'lesc majeste,' if not grand larceny. Anyhow, it's all right.

Having now deftly and ingeniously informed the reader that W. Somerset Maugham's chinese melodrama 'East of Suez' is a great success at the Delasco, we part the purple curtains and introduce Hazel Dawn.

If there is anybody in Washington who does not know that Miss Dawn is the star of 'East of Suez' and that her performance of the tempestuous half-caste heroine is one of the most colorful pieces of acting of the current season, that reader or that person is immediately asked to stop reading this fine composition and betake himself to the sporting page. But—and this we are willing to maintain against anybody but Kemal Pasha—there is no such person.

Following East of Suez, Hazel again had an opportunity to play a "heavy dramatic role" in a new play called

Guilty:

Energetically sewing a great steel buckle onto a rather tiny slipper and at the same time reciting dramatic lines from a dog-eared manuscript book of amazing proportions, Hazel Dawn looked quite the busiest little
person we have encountered lately when we visited her yesterday at her hotel.

Plunged from a New York temperature of 7 below into Baltimore's sunny clime last Sunday she immediately began rehearsing for her new play, 'Guilty,' in which she will appear next week at the new Lyceum Theater. She can't afford to let spring days dull her energy, she avers, seriously, for there is only one week to learn the part and it's of a sort entirely new.

'I've always had to play in light comedies and farces before,' she said; 'they suit my disposition. I think Mr. Woods put me in this rather for a joke. It's a heavy dramatic role and I know no one expects me to make anything out of it, but they promise me that if I do as well in it as I think I can, I can play it in New York....'

An ability to weep copiously whenever necessary is an asset Miss Dawn is counting on to help her in her dramatic part. 'I can cry whenever I want to,' she declared beautifully, 'I learned it in the movies, and I don't need anything to help me. I can get myself so worked up it positively hurts.'

'Yes,' we agreed, politely, 'but how are you going to get that twinkle out of your eye?' 'I don't know,' was the reply, 'but I'm trusting it won't show out front.'
CHAPTER XXI

BACK TO ZIEGFELD

Hazel remarked that "My voice was pretty good now, so I went into two or three revues, the first one, Nifties, with Sam Bernad and William Collier, and then Keep Kool, a series of twenty-four scenes with numerous songs sprinkled through them," of which the Morning Telegraph noted of Hazel's contribution: "Hazel Dawn is radiant and beautiful as ever. She revives memories of the golden days of 'The Pink Lady,' with her violin." Following Keep Kool came Great Temptations, called by Percy Hammond "the biggest and the best of the Shubert Winter Garden Shows," and Hazel "as gorgeous an example of revue stagecraft as these venturesome eyes have ever beheld."

Ziegfeld then contacted her again for "The Follies."

William F. McDermott commented on the production:

The accommodating maestro of 'Ziegfeld's Follies' seems to have taken seriously the frequently proffered advice of some of his critics that he throw away $200,000 of silks and satins and buy a few jokes with the money. At any rate the new 'Follies' available at the Ohio this week appears to be a little more modest scenically than its predecessor, and a good deal funnier....Hazel Dawn continues to show her turn for adept characteristics which should have got her a job in the more solemn drama long ago. She could outplay, I venture, Jeanne Eagles as Sadie in 'Rain.'

Katharine Lyons of the Boston Traveler, February 2, 1925,
noted that Hazel was "back home" in this production, headlining with "Hazel Dawn Returns to 'The Pink Lady' Theatre!"

It is 12 years since 'The Pink Lady' was all the rage in Boston. Hazel Dawn has come and gone many times since those days, but not until she returned with the Ziegfeld 'Follies' did she come back to the Colonial Theater in which she became so famous. And last Monday night when she went to the stage entrance she found her old friends backstage—the electrician who operated the lights, stage hands shifting scenery, and the doorman who greeted her with, 'Well, if it isn't the little pink lady herself!'

She recognized the first violinist in his same place in the orchestra pit and noticed some new gray hairs, and when telling about it all said: 'I wonder if I've changed too.'

We were breakfasting in the late forenoon at the hotel and as Miss Dawn entered the dining room wrapped in a luxurious sable wrap she did not go unrecognized. 'There's Hazel Dawn,' said more than one person as she glided by the tables to her own. Blonde locks creeping out underneath a close-fitting belt hat of rose hues enhanced the pink and white complexion which made her seem just what the doorman had called her.

'Seems impossible to get a part like 'The Pink Lady' when one has been on the stage but three months,' she said, comfortably obliging the questioner by reminiscing back to those memorable days when her name glittered in lights and Harvard students bought front rows over and over again to see their favorite.

She had reached stardom before she was 20 and though she escaped the long and hard apprenticeship of others she has not missed the heartbreaks and discouragements that come and go in the stage profession even after one has achieved success.
CHAPTER XXII

AND FINALLY A NEW DAWN

"Two things I have promised myself," Hazel told Katharine Lyons of the Boston Traveler, February 7, 1925, a dramatic role and stage retirement after I marry. Right now I have no immediate prospects of either, but I shall never remain on the stage after I marry and I shall never quit until I have done some real dramatic work."

Three years earlier she was even more adamant as to her career intentions, as recorded in the Post-Enquirer of Oakland, March 24, 1922, where the headline emphatically stated "OPERA STAR DESIRES MORE FAME BEFORE SHE MARRIES!"

Blase old thoroughfare and all that it implies, was wondering at an old romance--eleven years old, to be exact.

It's a stage romance. Broadway is used to them. Usually they're fast--and furious. They start that way. Sometimes end that way.

But this one is so different that even Broadway's nonchalance is ruffled.

Eleven years ago in a little Mormon meeting house in Ogden, Charles Gruwell, wealthy mine owner, heard Hazel Tout, a wee slip of a girl, play a violin. He danced with her and a few days later when she left for the East she knew that he loved her. She was on her way to London to embark on a career. 'I have so much to do before,' she replied when he asked her to marry him.

'But always remember that I am waiting,' he replied. And so in the course of her career she became Hazel Dawn. Her managers saw to that and eventually she appeared in New York in 'The Pink Lady' as the 'Pink Lady'....

Gruwell waits confidently and Broadway also for the result of this unusual love affair. Out of the West came Gruwell, and again he pleaded his suit. But Hazel had not achieved her ambition. She had had im-
portant parts but she was determined to be an out and out star.

His were repeated visits to New York. Always he came backstage after the opening of the play she adorned. Always he characterized her and her performance as divine. Occasionally Miss Dawn would exclaim: 'Why are you always about?' petulantly perhaps, but then as he pressed his suit she would weaken. 'I know you have waited a long time,' she granted. 'But wait a little longer. I have not quite made good. Let me become an established star.' And so Gruwell is still waiting, patient, confident, uncomplaining.

And still keeping him waiting, she bought a ranch in Arizona:

Miss Hazel Dawn has stood the Gentiles as long as she can; not that she has a thing against them, no, no. But, to use a simile, she's like the girl who went to heaven and discouraged the guides by failing to enthuse, saying, while it was very nice, it wasn't Boston! Miss Dawn is a Mormon, and would with Mormons foregather. So she has quit, wholly, tetotally and forever, her foot-light career and bought a ranch near Mesa, Arizona in the heart of a great Mormon colony.

Nevertheless, her patient lover finally won out, and in 1927, sixteen years after she met him, Hazel married Charles Gruwell. She had a son, and a daughter, Hazel Jr., who followed in her mother's footsteps on the stage. Carol Taylor in the New York World Telegram, October 4, 1948, told that "Another Hazel Dawn Rises Over Broadway--Famous Pink Lady's Daughter to Make Stage Debut At 18:"

In 1911 the toast of Broadway was a pink and white and gold beauty named Hazel Dawn. She burst into fame as the Pink Lady in a musical comedy at the old New Amsterdam Theater on 42nd Street.

Tomorrow we'll see a new Hazel Dawn, Hazel Dawn Jr., like her mother, will make her Broadway debut at 18.

Today the young actress skipped eagerly through the stage door of a theater on 44th Street, where she is rehearsing the ingenue lead in 'My Romance,' an operetta
due October 19 at the Shubert.

Hazel Dawn Sr. trotted in behind her. They stood poised side by side for a moment. The daughter, fresh and pretty as a posy; the mother, still gay and animated, handsome but middle-aged now (And she's the first to admit it.)

Hazel Jr. recited humorously: 'People come up and say, 'You're Hazel Dawn's daughter?' Then they look me up and down... Sometimes they register horror, sometimes surprise. Sometimes they really think I look like her!''

She does. Both even have the same reddish blond hair and hazel eyes. Hazel Jr. put in impishly: 'But I like to say I have a little bit of green in mine.'

She touched her tip-tilted nose. 'It's not a bit like hers. I have a ski jump!''

That's Hazel Jr. As different from the usual simpering ingenue as Shakespeare is from soap opera. The girl even has a sense of humor!....

Mama's just as excited about her daughter's imminent debut. 'Oh, honey,' exclaimed Mrs. Dawn. 'I'm just living again! It's just wonderful to smell the greasepaint.'

But she looked about her somewhat disdainfully.

'This is not my theater,' she sniffed. 'We had 10 times more fun and 10 times more glamour. You don't see stage door Johnnies lined up. You don't get flowers at every performance.' She finished emphatically: 'And believe me, it's true. I used to get them.'

Mrs. Dawn is Hazel Jr.'s best press-agent. 'I think she's got so much more than I ever had,' she said. 'I had the life and the animation. But she's got so much more depth than I ever dreamed of. She can act, and it's in her singing voice, too. She breaks your heart when she sings.'

Hazel Jr. gently spoofed her mother at this outburst. But she did admit shyly: 'Believe it or not I wrote.' She's actually finished three novels....

Daughter said she's very proud to be known as Hazel Dawn Jr. 'But most of the time,' she admitted, 'I feel I'm walking in mother's shoes or something.'

Her mother considered. 'It might help her and it might hurt her.' She winked. 'But besides, honey, I've got one foot in the grave. I can't go on forever. She'll inherit it. She'll be just Hazel Dawn.'

Mrs. Dawn's husband, Charles Gruwell, a mining engineer, died eight years ago.

Grace Grether in the *Tribune*, October 17, 1948 also
It is not only of late years that Utah has sunned itself in the reflected glory of its sons and daughters who have made good in arts and music, stage and opera. Those who remember back to 1912 still talk of Hazel Dawn who was the toast of Broadway then as The Pink Lady of a musical comedy at the old New Amsterdam Theater.

She was 18 with red gold hair and hazel eyes and a lush beauty which crowded the stage door with admirers and emptied the florists shops. She went from one musical comedy to still more and her cross-country tours piled up acclaim....

Meanwhile, the older Broadway has been rubbing its eyes the past few weeks. It was seeing double. It was seeing two Hazel Daws dashing in and out of managers' offices and rehearsals. The two Hazels just laughed, and the original Pink Lady went right on with the job of seeing daughter and namesake off to a flying start on the Metropolitan stage.

Back again in grease paint atmosphere the Pink Lady recalls old triumphs. She makes no bones about her 50-years-plus. She is handsome, vivid, and the two resemble one another in startling fashion.

Hazel Jr. has a devastating sense of humor and is not nearly as excited over her debut and task of carrying on her mother's fame as is Hazel Sr., who thinks her child has all the oomph necessary plus a singing voice that will carry her far. If she measures up to the proud record of its Pink Lady, Utah will be satisfied.

The original Hazel as well as Hazel Jr. co-starred together in a production inspired by herself years before, when she was a Ziegfeld star. Elliot Norton in the Boston Post, July 2, 1948 recounted Hazel's stage return:

The theatre is still a magic land where dreams of eager girls come true. After 20 years in retirement, Hazel Dawn, toast of Broadway in 'The Pink Lady' which thrilled Broadway and Boston in the years before World War I, has returned to the stage in a play written by Ruth Gordon, whose career she inspired.

Hazel Dawn, Jr., now 18, is co-starred with her mother in 'Years Ago,' which reports with warm humor the struggle of Ruth Gordon, at 16, to break away from
her home in Wollaston in order to go on the stage and emulate her heroine, Hazel Dawn.

Hazel Dawn Jr., who was not yet born when the incidents of the play took place in 1912, plays the role of Ruth Gordon. Her mother, still a handsome blonde spirited woman, takes the part of Ruth's mother, since dead. There are continual references in the play to Hazel Dawn by name, one of which she must make herself.

A wire to Hazel Dawn from Ruth Gordon in New York, where she is presently preparing to star in the newest play of her own authorship, shows how the now celebrated author-actress feels about this sentimental show at Newport. 'If only I had known this might happen years ago!' she wired.

Ruth Gordon, who discarded her surname, Jones, (it was too plain) when she went on the stage, was 16 and a senior at Quincy High School when she first saw Hazel Dawn on the stage. That was at a matinee in the Colonial Theater, Boston, during January 1912. The show was 'The Pink Lady.'

So thrilled was the pig-tailed girl from Wollaston that she sat down afterwards and wrote a letter to Hazel Dawn expressing her admiration. The great Pink Lady herself answered the child's note. From that time on, Ruth was committed to a career on the stage, and within six months after graduation, embarked for Broadway and a career which saw her eventually become a great actress, and within the last three years a recognized dramatic author.

Ironically her basic ambition was 'to be like Hazel Dawn,' which is to say a beautiful glamorous creature, starring in musical comedies.

Though she became a star of tragedies like 'Ethan Frome' and 'A Doll's House' and comedies like 'The Country Wife,' she never got into musical shows.

Tall, blonde Hazel Dawn, a very striking woman whose vivacity is most remarkable, not only remembers that first letter from Ruth Gordon, but still has it, along with many others. In the years between the two have become and remained great friends.

Why did she answer that letter in the first place? That she did answer, while ignoring similar fan letters from some of Ruth's girl friends, was the real reason that Ruth Gordon's theatrical ambitions reached the boiling point.

'It was such a sweet letter,' Miss Dawn remembers now. 'So intense. I have always kept it. We got thousands of letters in those days, but this one was unusual.'
"The Pink Lady" was Broadway's sensation of the 1912 season. ... "We never got less than eight or nine encores," Miss Dawn remembers.

The same production was made into a movie, of which Louella Parsons in the New York Journal-American told of the film to be made with Kay Spreckles taking the role of Hazel.

"Director George Cukor says Kay is one of the few women beautiful enough to play Hazel Dawn, one of Broadway's most glamorous stars of years ago in 'The Pink Lady.'"

Hazel now lives in New York, as do all her sisters except Margaret who lives in California, all "well and hearty, happy with our families, and grandchildren, but getting very old."
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PART III

LEORA THATCHER
CHAPTER XXIII

MORMON HERITAGE

Leora's grandfather, Moses Thatcher, born in Nauvoo, left with his family at the age of four on a trek to the Salt Lake Valley. In the Spring of 1849, the epidemic of gold fever reached Salt Lake, and again the Thatcher family left, this time for Auburn, California, where Moses's father established an eating place for the miners. In 1857, with the encroaching threat of Johnson's army, Moses and his family recrossed the mountains and deserts to Salt Lake to assist the Saints. When the trouble was settled peacefully, the boy joined his father in a move to Cache Valley, where he organized the Cache Valley Board of Trade in 1878, becoming its first president.

In the Church he was called as superintendent of the Cache Valley Sunday Schools, continuing in this office until he became President of the Cache Stake in 1877. In 1879 he was ordained by President John Taylor to the Council of the Twelve. He spent much time working on the establishment of a mission and colonies in Mexico, making 23 visits across the border and traveling some 18,000 miles a year during that period.

He also built the Thatcher Opera House in Logan, opened November 10, 1890, where the stars from New York
traveled on stagecoach to play.

Leora's ancestry is distinguished not only in her Mormon heritage, but also in her European background. Her line has been traced back to Jonathan Farr, who married Mercy Winslow of the famous Winslow Plymouth Colony, and even further, to Charlemagne—entitling Leora to membership in the Magna Charta Dames, the Colonial Order of the Crown, Descendants of Charlemagne, the Plantegenet Society Descendants of English Kings, Daughter of the American Colonists (a descendant of Roger Conant who settled Salem, Massachusetts), The Knights of the Most Noble Order of the Carter, and the National Society of United States Daughters of 1812. (Joseph Kitchen, their ancestor served during the war). 73

73 Since all information has been taken from Miss Thatcher's own personal files and scrapbooks which offered little if any source identification, proper footnotes were impossible. All available identification of sources is included.
CHAPTER XXIV

BOUND FOR STARDOM

Leora's parents urged her to go into the theatre:
"Mother and father were stagestruck and went to every play
that ever came to Utah. They used to drive all the way to
Salt Lake from Logan to see plays at every possible chance,
and never missed a production at the Thatcher Opera House."
She later reminisced "That's all I ever wanted to do; I
used to embarrass my mother imitating her."

From her very infancy Leora was exposed to the thea-
tre; she was even named after a company that came to Logan
to perform a few weeks before she was born—the Leora Lane
Company. When she was two years old, her mother, unable
to get a sitter and determined to see the production, took
her to see Faust at the Thatcher Opera House. The manager
wouldn't admit such a young child so her mother burst into
tears, and he finally relented. They sat in the family box
right over the stage, and the star John Griffith talked to
Leora during his performance—addressing his lines to her
rapt (and noiseless) face.

That she had innate ability for the theatre was
testified by her first drama coach, Mr. W.O. Robinson of
Brigham Young College. He noted:
It's difficult to find in high school anyone who is able to play old age and create the illusion of age effectively. She had the right conception of portraying character at an early age and achieved extremely effective characterizations though very young. I noticed in her social life that she had a dramatic instinct of cutting up, of being playful and tricky, that indicated her acting ability. Leora proved to be my most outstanding pupil though she was just beginning her work when I had her.

A member of the Brigham Young College Dramatic Club, as a teenager Leora started her portrayal of older character parts for which she was later to become famous.

She then attended the Agricultural College (now Utah State University) and joined the UAC Dramatic Club, performing in Milestones, The Door, and the lead role of Eliza Doolittle in Pygmalion, working under the famed Sara Huntsman, and N.A. Pederson.

During this time she was also a volunteer nurse for the Red Cross when a terrible flu epidemic killed whole families. She noted that:

During World War I the Red Cross farmed us out to the Agricultural College where the soldiers were housed, and were dying like flies. No one else would come near to help the sick for fear of contracting the 'black flu.' Even the Elders were afraid to go to homes of the sick to administer. My parents used to cook the food to feed these people since I didn't have time to do it myself. We worked all that winter until the epidemic subsided.

In 1918 she taught sixty grade at Woodruff School in Logan, where she had attended as a child, and left to finish college at the University of Utah in 1920. Though she had completed all her general requirements at the Agri-
cultural College, Logan did not offer a degree in Speech so she transferred to Salt Lake and studied under the direction of Miss Maud May Babcock, carrying fifty-six hours of speech classes in one year. During that year she also performed in many one-act plays at Social Hall, as well as full-length productions, notably Land of the Heart's Desire by Yeats, Ibsen's The Master Builder, Githa Sowerby's Rutherford and Son, Shaw's Arms and the Man, and Hobson's Choice, which was performed at the Columbia Theatre in Provo as well as Social Hall.

Following graduation in 1921, Miss Thatcher taught speech at Logan High School for two years, directing Eliza Comes to Stay, and Happiness. While teaching high school, she was also a member of the Community Playhouse in Logan and directed the Community Players in Merely Mary Ann, and performed in The New York Idea at Nibley Hall.

She also worked with the community theatre in Ogden, directing The Youngest, and Dover Road. The Ogden Standard Examiner, October 30, 1931 indicated the polish of her direction:

There is nothing 'amateurish' about the performances, except that evident enthusiasm which prompts the amateur to strive to succeed through sheer love of what he is doing. The plays are finished productions of splendid drama excellently performed.
CHAPTER XXV

THE MORONI OLSEN COMPANY

In 1923 Leora was invited to become a permanent member of the Moroni Olsen Players of the Circuit Repertory Company which toured the entire West, and was on the road for eight years. The ensemble acted on the premise that:

"The people want the theatre. They need the theatre. They hunger for good plays; we are convinced of that. Outside of New York and Chicago and one or two other of our larger cities, the great American people are unable to satisfy that hunger. They have their picture houses, perhaps vaudeville, and an occasional road show, but it is not good enough. That is why the clamor to get copies of all the worth-while plays produced on Broadway. Since they have no opportunity to see such plays, they must satisfy themselves with reading them, with organizing amateur companies, and with making extensive studies of the drama in our universities. For various reasons in the so-called commercial theatre the high-class road shows are rapidly disappearing. There are fewer good stock companies in our western cities; in short, there is a dearth of dramatic development. Too seldom do we see things that are sincere and beautiful in our theatres. It is the realization of this need, and the sincere desire to bring to the Northwest the best in drama, that has brought about the organization of the Circuit Repertory Company of the Moroni Olsen Players.

It is not our intention to make lavish or dazzling productions. We couldn't if we wanted to, because our only financial support is the subscription of each of our circuit cities. We are a group of men and women of one mind and that is to present simply and sincerely plays which mean a great deal to us."

The Moroni Olsen Players followed closely the ideals of the Theatre Guild in New York, as indicated on one of their programs:

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We hope in some small measure to emulate them, to bring to the West what they have brought to the East. We quote from an article of 1923: It is time that the Theatre Guild found imitators in other circles; the readers of The Nation throughout the country will, we hope, direct attention in their respective communities to its success. But they must not fail to point out also that this remarkable enterprise has succeeded because of the entire subordination of the profit motive, the democratic spirit of the organization, the determination to build from below, and the devotion to art of all concerned. No more hopeful experiment has been seen in the theatrical world since the disappearance of the old stock companies.

Indeed, the company followed this philosophy in everything they did; they worked as an ensemble in the strictest sense of the word—there were no stars—rather teamwork. Consequently, most of the reviews of the company talked not of outstanding performers, but of the company as a whole. One reviewer noted:

If anybody expects us categorically to discuss the individual acting of members of the Moroni Olsen Company...he is, to say it forcibly, 'all wet.' You cannot tear apart a finished product. You cannot analyze a flower that makes you blink your eyes or a melody that brings tears. And who will get so curious as to inquire into the process which takes us to fairyland?

A Boise paper lauded the successful structure of the company:

Moroni Olsen seems to have solved the big problem of the legitimate stage. The really good actors of yesterday were developed in the stock companies; but the movies cut an end to stock success. A group of players cannot survive night after night at the same theatre in the same city, changing from play to play and setting to setting—not in competition with the movies. It is not that actors are unwilling, but the public will not go. It prefers the finished fake of
the cinema. Without the school of the stock company, the art of acting has languished and producers have had to overlay such really good players as accident or vaudeville gave them and cover up the deficiencies of others by extravagances of setting, slapstick, and sex appeal. Noroni Olsen, who is more than something of a genius as a dramatic director, has found it possible to make good actors, actors destined for big success, in circuit repertory. It is, in a way of speaking, the stock company on wheels. His players run around a circuit with one play, then run around the same circuit with another, then a third, and maybe a fourth and fifth. Good houses are thus assured. The company's welcome is never worn out. And financial success assures histrionic ability.

And the circuit system of playing served the company's purposes well. Where they played was decided by who sponsored them. The Business Professional Women at Boise, for example, sponsored them for the full eight years of their existence.

When the members were hired they never signed a contract; their word was their bond. Parts were cast according to ability; there were never any try-outs. The actors were paid by the month regardless of whether or not they worked. The players were not under Equity rules because as Leora noted, "We didn't need protection. The minute we had union help, our troubles began. The reason the company was finally disbanded was because the theatres' forced us out—not because we lacked an audience—they wanted motion pictures and not legitimate actors.

The company toured all the provinces of Eastern Canada: Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Montreal,
and much of the United States: New Jersey, Connecticut, Maine, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Washington, Idaho, Oregon, British Columbia, and San Francisco. Leora noted that "we took our company to places where the people had never seen live performers. I remember women with tears streaming down their faces because we offered the only such entertainment available. People drove miles to see us. I remember in Coaldig Idaho, the townpeople traveled 35 miles in bad weather to come and see us."

George O'Neal, the Dramatic Editor of the Oregon Journal, wrote a laudatory pamphlet concerning the company:

Over a grocery store in Ogden, Utah, there is a loft heated by two coal stoves. In this obscure retreat was developed an idea which has commanded admiration through all of the Northwest and supplied many play-hungry people with substantial dramatic fare such as the commercial theatres, for reasons of one sort or another, have not been able to furnish. This loft is the home of the Moroni Olsen Players' circuit repertory theatre, an original experiment in play production which has in its conception the elements of a sound, vital, and permanent institution.

What the Theatre Guild has done for New York this sturdy, resourceful organization is accomplishing in the Northwest, receiving in the vast and, strange as it may seem, responsive territory between the Rocky Mountains and the Coast, eager, energetic support, and achieving through clear vision, hard work, and intelligent application, most gratifying results in spite of severest handicaps. . . .

The Moroni Olsen Players, though thoroughly professional, are in no sense commercial. They appreciate the desire of the people of the Northwest for distinctive drama. With just $2,000, in capital, a wealth of intelligent enthusiasm, the loft and two coal stoves
already mentioned, a buoyant spirit of adventure, a
devotion to fundamental truth in drama and unfaltering
Courage, they have started the career of their unique
Theatre, the first circuit repertory theatre.

The plays are rehearsed in the company's home in
Oregon. Last year five plays were produced. Fifteen
towns and cities were included in the circuit. A play
was produced each month during the winter season. While
on the road with one play, the preliminary rehearsals
for the next were started.

The season was financed by contracts in each communi-
ity for a minimum guarantee, the guarantee to cover only
expenses of travel and production and additional indis-

censable overhead, which included ordinary living sal-
aries for the members of the company....

As an example of the success this company has already
enjoyed and the success it can have in other communi-
ties during the next season, the exceptional reception
in Tacoma, Washington, is cited. Here the Drama Center,
with Mrs. Carl Morrisey, President, sold 1100 $5.00
season tickets and filled the theatre for each of the five
performances.

The second most successful place from the point of
view of attendance was in Boise, Idaho, where the season
was sponsored by the Business and Professional Women's
Club, Mrs. Dockery, President. In every place the audi-
ces increased during the season. The circuit for the
next year has been extended to twenty-five towns and
cities, reaching from Salt Lake City to Vancouver, B.C.

There are eight members of the permanent company,
which is directed by Noroni Olsen. Olsen studied in one
of the leading dramatic schools of the East and spent
some years in stock and as a platform reader of plays.
He has been associated with Maurice Browne and Ellen Van
Volkenburg in 'Little Theatre' ventures in both Salt
Lake City and Seattle, and appeared first in New York
City as Jason in their production of 'Phedinides' Medea,'
at the Garrick Theatre (March 1920). He played Cassius
and Achilles in Margaret Anglin's productions of the
'Trial of Jeanne d'Arc,' Shubert Theatre, and 'Iphigenia
in Aulis,' Manhattan Opera House (Spring of 1921), and
was later seen as Satan in Arthur Davison Fiche's 'Mr.
Faust' at the Provincetown Playhouse, and as Mr. Norrell
in George Bernard Shaw's 'Candida' at the Greenwich
Village Theatre, (Spring 1922).

In addition to participating in the plays, each
member of the company has additional duties. Miss
Janet Young, the first lady of the company--(in sonio-
rity; there are no leading players)--is in charge of contracts and booking and the business details of the enterprise. Miss Young is a graduate of the University of Oregon. Her home is in the Dalles, Oregon. It was largely through her zeal and determination that the present venture was made possible. In 1923 she toured the Northwest with Byron Foulger in a group of one-act plays and while on tour investigated the field and made contracts which later resulted in the first season of the repertory company. Miss Young, too, is an actor with Broadway experience, as is Byron Foulger, who writes publicity and attends to all press notices, etc., in addition to playing.

Other members of the company are Joseph Williams, who has charge of staging and carpenter work; Frank Pas-

For other members of the company were selected by Mr. Olsen

from his dramatic associations over a period of eight years. They come from as far east as Maine and as far west as Vancouver, B.C. All are graduates of colleges or universities.

In addition to the duties enumerated, each member of the company is janitor ex officio. The first to arrive at the workshop in the loft, fires up the two coal stoves and sweeps up. This willingness to take part in any of the work is evidence of the spirit of cooperation which gives to the organization its vitality. There are no stars. As with the Moscow Art Theatre and the Theatre Guild, to whom the company gives just credit on its programs for many of its working principles, ideas and choice of plays, a democratic spirit permeates the organization, which subordinates everything to the artistic impression....

Because of limited resources the company has made use of cyclorama draperies to a large extent in its stage settings. A set of heavy monk's cloth arranged for permanent doors, windows and essential woodwork and decorations was used as the background for the first five plays, with blue curtains for outdoor scenes. Through the ingenious use of these curtains, which with the other stage fittings and essential properties can be packed in two trunks, the company succeeded in achieving always just the desired semblance of reality, concentrat-

ing on the impression and not on excess of detail.
One cannot refrain from feeling admiration for the simple, satisfactory way these players create their illusions and the integrity of their performances and convictions with which they enact each play with their meager equipment. When they can do so much with the barest suggestion of scenery and establish and sustain complete atmosphere with almost nothing, as was done so remarkably well in their hilltop scenes in 'Beyond the Horizon,' one wonders what they might be able to do with more resources.

The pioneer circuit repertory company has made no appeal for outside assistance. The first season was financed entirely with the contracts for minimum guarantees. Just as the Theatre Guild has struggled through the initial years of its famous career, this company of determined artists is laboring under great hardships. They have asked for no help, but it occurs to me what a splendid thing it would be if someone with the interest of real drama at heart should volunteer to help them. A limited endowment fund, for instance, would make it possible for the company to have a real scenic artist, someone to specialize in lighting, a trained publicity man and an advance agent.

The success of the past season seems adequate reason to suppose the company will be permanent.

The members of the company possess a most wholesome interest in criticism and have given ample proof of a disposition to be benefitted by intelligent suggestions. They are neither overwhelmed by any important mission nor merely exulted by the novelty and caprice of their original undertaking. They are devoted to good plays and wish to present them to appreciative audiences. Sincerity in acting and unity in production, simplicity and effectiveness in method are the distinguishing characteristics of their production, and the guiding principles of their work, in which respect it is safe, even with so little achievement as this one season to judge by, to compare them to the Moscow Art Theatre and the Theatre Guild.

There is no reason to suppose that conditions on the road for professional companies will improve to any great extent. The Koroni Olsen Players have taken the initiative in a distinctly new movement which has in its basic idea vast possibilities of developing great latent powers.

For if there had been no Moscow Art theatre, would there have been a Chekov, a Gorky, an Andreyev?
CHAPTER XXVI

ON TOUR WITH THE OLSEN PLAYERS

The first play presented by the Circuit Repertory Company was **Candida** by George Bernard Shaw, secondly, **Ambush**, by Arthur Richman, and in 1924, **Jane Clegg**. A Twin Falls reviewer exclaimed that it was one of the most thoroughly finished theatrical productions from an artistic standpoint ever seen in Twin Falls:

The play itself presents a cross-section of life without embellishment and with an almost studied absence of the generally accepted values of modern dramatics. In weaker hands it might have been impossible as a vehicle, yet as played by the Olsen cast it proved of sustained and absorbing interest. Too much cannot be said in praise of the quality of entertainment offered by these people. To those who enjoy the theater for its own sake the performance was almost a revelation. It was well-balanced throughout, carefully staged, and offered with a fidelity to detain which lifted the entire performance out of the common rut of the so-called straight show and placed it on a pinnacle of dramatic art which proves as refreshing as it was delightful.

Mr. Olsen, and in fact the entire cast, belong to the quieter school of acting. The intensity of the more dramatic features was heightened by a reserve strength rarely met with in the work of the average road company. Every part was in perfect character, each player was equal to his task, every last detail gave the impression of true appreciation of dramatic art and the result as a whole left little to be desired.

Each member of the cast is a clear and careful reader, and, apparently each is possessed of an unusually good voice. Every word was audible throughout the house, and yet the great bulk of the dialogue is delivered in quiet, almost conversational tones.

Another reviewer offered similar sentiments:

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Such a play, except in capable hands, would not ring true, but would prove dull and monotonous. Presented intelligently and artistically, as it was by the Moroni Olsen Players at the Salt Lake Theatre, it grips an audience as no commonplace or melodramatic play could do....A special word of commendation must be spoken for the very excellent work of Miss Leora Thatcher as the aged mother of Clegg. Miss Thatcher's portrayal was exceptionally fine.

The Salt Lake Telegram, March 1, 1924 noted that:

Probably one of the most difficult characters in the play to portray is that of Mrs. Clegg, taken by Leora Thatcher. As the mother of Henry Clegg, around whose perfidy the story revolves, is typical of the mother devoted to her son; but aged as she is, she has developed that craftiness which sometimes comes of age, and under all circumstances never loses faith in her son and is determined that he shall not be the butt of criticism, which she never realizes as just, clinging to him as the perfect son, even to the end.

The Portland Telegram also commented on the mastery of her characterization: "Clegg's mother, acted by Leora Thatcher drew applause on many occasions, also a laugh when a tear might have been appropriate." Yet another review stated that "it is a real compliment to the actors to say that an unpleasant time was had by all."

Mr. Olsen played Henry Clegg, the rotter who confessed himself driven by his wife's very superiority away from her. He painted an admirable portrait of such a man, and was good enough an actor to paint a displeasing one. ...Leora Thatcher was Clegg's mother, who sniveled through the play, whining 'You didn't ought to spilt no milk,' or something of the kind.

A Salt Lake critic offered a clearer picture of Leora's presentation: "Miss Leora Thatcher as Clegg's mother, queurulous, 'finicky,' gossipy, bent with age, but determined to see that
her son was not abused, was superb in her concept and
delineation." A Pocatello paper similarly noted that:

since Pocatello theatre-goers are never profuse in their
ovations, the fact that the Olsen players were accorded
a real ovation and several curtain calls at the end of
the play, offered no doubt as to its success as far as
Pocatello is concerned....Leora Thatcher as the queuru-
loous mother played a difficult role. Her part was the
crux of the play and she handled it in a manner which
is deserving of the highest praise.

Following Jane Clegg the company presented Beyond
the Horizon by Eugene O'Neill. J. Gipson Stalker of Tacoma
noted that "Beyond the Horizon is the most striking drama
the company has brought to Tacoma in the 1923 season." A
Boise paper was even more lavish in its praise, stating that
"Mr. Olsen's Circuit Repertory Players touched the zenith
of their season's artistry in producing the play: Boise does
not often see more sympathetic interpretations of difficult
roles or finer characterizations." The paper noted that
though "a lot of people present in the audience got as much
joy out of it as they would have got out of a first-rate
hanging done super-artistically," nevertheless, because of
the excellent acting of the players, "there will be gladness
over Mr. Olsen's announcement that the company is coming
back next season--to produce three plays--and not a morbid
sex play in the lot."

A Logan paper noted that "Two New Yorkers in the
audience last week who saw the work of Leora Thatcher said
it was far superior to that of the Theatre Guild actress
who created the part in New York City:

The Moroni Olsen players left Logan today trailing
clouds of glory for their intelligent performance of
'Beyond the Horizon' at the Capitol last night. The
occasion was one of the unusual moments in Logan dramatic
history for it was the first time that a play by Eugene
O'Neill was given in the city. Mr. O'Neill is a young
playwright who has been making a name for himself in the
past ten years in New York and London and is probably
the most worthwhile playwright of today in America.
Amusing he certainly is not; and those who went last
night for anything more than pleasure of the mind were
sadly disappointed. They saw the tense drama of a soul
that looks beyond the horizon and has not strength of
character enough to keep his eyes aloft. He marries the
wrong woman, follows an occupation for which he is unfit
by nature, and the play is the story of the dissolution
of his soul; a grim commonplace tragedy that Mr. O'Neill
shows all the...tragic awfulness of a life mistake.

The play was well cast as the Moroni Olsen parts are
assigned according to fitness rather than according to
stellar value, and thus an evenly balanced cast is secured.

The next production of the company was Kempy. The
Tacoma News Tribune observed that:

One of the biggest houses of the year greeted the Moroni
Olsen Company at the Tacoma Theatre in its opening there,
and the company more than fulfilled its advance notices,
with the audience alternating from quiet chuckles to
rares of laughter all evening.

Another reviewer cited further proof of its success:

Members of the Moroni Olsen's company proved that acting
in America is not a lost art; lovers of the 'legitimate'
having but to shut their eyes for the moment at the Amer-
ican Theatre last Thursday night to imagine they were
back in the good old days prior to 1912, when companies
of the same high worth as Mr. Olsen's would make cities
the size of Caldwell two or three times weekly during
the winter season.

Following Kempy the company presented another hit,
You and I, considered by many reviewers as their best presentation to date. One reviewer noted that it offered more than its professed appeal to comedy:

'You and I,' the vehicle with which the Moroni Olsen players set a new record of achievement for themselves Monday night is rated a comedy. But there is precious little comedy in it for the people of the play; they run the scale of pathos. It is only fate that laughs.

Della Pringle acclaimed:

With a less talented company than the Moroni Olsen players, I would have been bored to the point of leaving--but I stayed--to see if something really would happen so I could get just one hearty laugh. But I didn't so I came home wondering how they ever had the nerve to call 'You and I' a clever comedy....Leora Thatcher has a good voice and I heard every word she said. She gave me the only laugh I had...

Another reviewer commented:

To Miss Leora Thatcher should be given credit for a quality of work of the highest order. In the hands of one less capable the part of Etta might have been burlesqued. Yet every comic situation was saved from the ridiculous by a degree of ability and technique which must be seen to be appreciated.

Taming of the Shrew followed in 1925. During the summer she performed in Oedipus Rex at the Utah Agricultural College, taking a title role as Jocasta, wife and mother of Oedipus. The production drew over three thousand people, a sizable crowd for the little valley, drawing an audience not only from Logan and Cache County, but from every county in Utah, and a score of other states, "holding the vast throng silent, and awed throughout the entire two hours of
continuous action." A local paper noted that "the outdoor theatre under a sky overcast with heavy storm clouds through which flashes of lightning played intermittently like a visible evidence of the anger of the Greek Gods so frequently importuned in the play provided an admirable setting for the tragedy." Leora reminisced that she had only three days to learn the part, as the woman originally cast became desperately ill and was unable to perform.

The next offering of the company was The Ship, called by the Butte Miner a masterpiece:

A crowd which filled the Broadway Theater laughed and cried last night with Moroni Olsen, Janet Young, and the other artists who make up the Moroni Olsen players during their masterful production of St. John Irvine's powerful emotional drama 'The Ship.'

The Oregon Daily Journal eulogized the production even further:

If any person in the city of Portland attempts to pull that old wail about the decline and fall of the spoken drama and cannot hold up his right hand and swear he attended at least one performance of 'The Ship,' in which the Moroni Olsen players opened Thursday night at the Studio Theatre, let him beware. He's in for some pointed language.

A Santa Barbara review by Paul Whitney was no less enthusiastic about the production, revived during their farewell tour:

It looks as if those who miss seeing the Moroni Olsen Players in 'The Ship' tonight at Lobero, will have thrown away their last opportunity of witnessing in Santa Barbara perfect ensemble work on the stage. After eight years of acting together, this splendid group of players is disbanding. The dissolution of the Moroni Olsen Players is the theatrical tragedy of the
Pacific coast. On this far frontier of the drama, where acting companies are organized hurriedly, rehearsed hec-tically and then given six to eight weeks of playing time in San Francisco and Los Angeles, we must be content with the coarse, rough, loosely woven fabric of performance which results from such a condition.

The Moroni Olsen players have been eight years in the weaving of last night's magnificent performance. They think, react and respond in the same beautiful pitch. They are like a glorious constellation combining their light in one brilliant radiance. They have been called the Theatre Guild of the West. Certainly they have brought to the hinterland of the broad western states plays of unquestionable worth and beauty. In communities where dramatic appetites have been satiated with movies, they have developed a taste for something better. Certainly the Moroni Olsen Players have made a wonderful contribution toward the cultural advancement of many small cities...which have spoken drama only through having been subjected to it in high school auditoriums...

'The Ship' is a studied drama of an idea. Its characters are symbols but the Moroni Olsen Players bring to each of them the blood of life. Under the sensitive and understanding hands of Mr. Olsen, who directed the play, 'The Ship' develops into a vital, forceful, living thing. I would not want to see it done by another company which had not been tuned to the ensemble playing of this group.

Acting seems all so simple as one watches the Moroni Olsen Players. There is no bag of tricks which, as the play draws to a close, becomes deflated. Technique has been developed to such a fine point that it can be forgotten and the whole thought of the players can be given to the character. When things reach such a state of affairs in the theatre it is time that somebody came forward with a subsidy which would permit this work to be carried on. Artistry such as that possessed by the Moroni Olsen group is too rare and too precious to let slip out of the theater and be lost in the frantic swirl of uninspired commercial theatrics.

...those who miss this opportunity to see the Moroni Olsen Players will have something to regret from this night on.

Another reviewer commend their moving performance:

Throughout the presentation muffled sobs could be heard
as the players moved the audience to tears, each succeeding scene of the three acts bringing a touch of that sentiment buried more or less in the breast of every individual. The chord of sympathy was struck time and time again between the artists and audience.

A Seattle reviewer, having witnessed Leora's work in many productions, commented on her ability to characterize:

Leora Thatcher...has endeared herself to the followers of this play group chiefly in her character roles, for Miss Thatcher is a character woman of unusual ability and versatility. Miss Thatcher has been sketching characters all her life, she says, and observing people and life about her, and is adding continually to her material. The philosophical old harridan in the first act of Anna Christie, she caught from observation on the Seattle waterfront. The Irish woman in 'Autumn Fire' is a composite of human observations and so real that those who saw that performance a few seasons ago remember her as a reality and have difficulty thinking of her as a mere creation, back of which moved Miss Thatcher's merry eyes and clever, humorous brain.

_Friend Hannah_, in which Leora played the devout Quaker mother of Hannah was the company's next production.

Audrey Bunch of Salem, Oregon wrote of Leora's work in this production:

Leora Thatcher, last night taking the quiet, sustaining part of the Quaker mother is an unfailing satisfaction: she knows so well what to do, and she knows so well how to do it. As Margaret Lightfoot she was Margaret Lightfoot so excellently that nothing more can be said.

Another commented that:

It is a pity the Lincoln High School auditorium would not hold ten times as many people so ten times as many could have seen the Moroni Olsen players last night in as pretty a play as has been here this season....To the title role Miss Leora Thatcher brought a spontaneity, a sincerity and a natural sense of right acting found seldom enough in the work of much more widely heralded
...There is not room to tell adequately of the excellence of the performance. It seemed flawless, and I repeat, as pretty a play as has been here this season.

In December of 1926, the players took Dear Brutus by Sir James Barrie on tour. The Oregon Daily Journal noted that:

Moroni Olsen's company of discerning actors entered into a new phase of play production, so far as Portland is concerned, Saturday night when Sir James Barrie's 'Dear Brutus' was presented at the Heilig Theatre. Supporters of these pioneers who have watched them grow year by year in dramatic strength and understanding, felt and made no effort to restrain a reasonable pride in the manner in which the company justified the most enthusiastic predictions. The production was vastly entertaining, in itself because it approached theatrical perfection, and also because it proves the power of sincerity and purpose.

When the Moroni Olsen players first came to Portland to give a performance in the Women's Club building, they were mistaken for amateurs, but with each successive performance, the number increased. The question 'who are they?' became familiar. The demand for a better place for their performances became more insistent. And after four years, Saturday night the Moroni Olsen players gave their first performance at the Heilig before a cosmopolitan audience that placed the final stamp of approval of the quality of their work. They are excellent actors and one may be assured always that any play they present will be well worth seeing. No road show in Portland for a long time was offered with the finish and subtlety of 'Dear Brutus.'

In February 1927 they presented Outward Bound in which Leora gave "one of her finest portrayals as the cold, overbearing and sneering woman, Mrs. Clivedon Banks." Dean Collins of The Portland Telegram wrote:

Curious isn't it that Portland must depend upon the High School of Commerce to bring to the city some
of the most sincerely artistic dramatic performances that the theatergoers will be permitted to see—probably until the Moroni Olsen players return in another play later in the season?

One would think that it should at least be the Portland Art Association, or a federation of all the groups in the city that are interested in drama, or maybe Reed College, or the extension division of the U. of O., or some other accredited and mature shepherd of public taste in things artistic.

But it isn't any of these that sponsored the Moroni Olsen players. It was the High School of Commerce, where pupils are supposed to be learning all about comptometers and double entries and typewriting and office system and to have no concern with the finer arts, and least of all the drama.

...It must have been four years ago that the present reviewer first saw the Moroni Olsen players at the Women's Club. At that time they were putting on a type of performance so much superior in every respect to the average road company that was coming to Portland that the reviewer spared time for a sigh because they would not have a larger theater and a larger following.

**Lilies of the Field** which followed in 1927 received such extravagant reviews that the company was placed almost on the level of perfection:

Denver has to thank the Little Theater for an evening of such pure charm as rarely comes in a season of play-going. Had the community, every portion of it, sensed the quality of the Moroni Olsen players, the Broadway Theater would have been inadequate for the crowds that would have thronged to their production of 'Lilies of the Field' last night. The Moroni Olsen players, individually and as an organization, are far superior to the average company. Their choice of vehicle is equally so and the direction priceless. This visit, while brief, should certainly be a guarantee for another.

A San Francisco review offered no less praise:

*Lilies of the Field*, the wholly delightful comedy of flirtatious youth, remains a second week at the Columbia Theater. It seemed essential from the very first performance to lengthen the scheduled one week of John
Hastings Turner's play. Moroni Olsen and his skilled ensemble players already have won a secure place in the affections of San Francisco playgoers. The wonder is that they never visited this town before in the course of five years' traveling repertory, such a ready welcome awaited them. Here is ensemble work of masterly smoothness and considerable zest, the easy teamwork of actors schooled to one another's mannerisms.

Expressing Willie followed in 1928. The Seattle Daily Times noted that "Expressing Willie," a highly diverting comedy by Rachel Crothers has to do with a young man who has amassed a great fortune from the manufacture of toothpaste and to the distress of his practical, old-fashioned mother, [of course played by Leora] feels the urge of self expression."

Anna Christie was also performed in 1928. The Spokesman Review, Spokane Washington noted that:

The Moroni Olsen Players delighted a crowd that was close to capacity at the American Theater last night in Eugene O'Neill's realistic drama 'Anna Christie.' This play was enthusiastically received and the leading players were called back repeatedly after each act....

Leora Thatcher scored a comedy hit in the first act as the slatternly old companion of the skipper.

The Morning Star of Vancouver, British Columbia, March 21, 1928, commented that:

Few theatrical companies that have played Vancouver in recent years have possessed the versatility so forcibly demonstrated by the Moroni Olsen players, who ended a series of three productions at the Vancouver Theatre, Tuesday night with 'Anna Christie.'

Few dramas could be more widely different than 'Candida' and 'Anna Christie,' a transposition of Minnesota skid-road to the atmosphere of an Atlantic coastal barge. In both vehicles, the Olsen Players
exhibited a degree of skill far in excess of the appreciation accorded them in Vancouver box office returns.

In 1929, *What Every Woman Knows*, by James Barrie was taken on tour, in which Leora played the French Comtesse de la Briere, and later reminisced that she was "scared to death" because she had to speak with a French accent, and she knew no French. However, her performance was so believable that several people commented that they thought she was French. One reviewer noted:

In this play Leora Thatcher has a delightful role of the Comtesse de la Briere, a woman 'old in iniquity' as she terms it, with her quick perception and sense of humor thrown in direct antithesis of the hard, humorless Scotch. She received many generous outbursts of applause.

In the next production, *The Detour*, while Leora had little to do as a visiting artist's wife, the production gave excellent background for later success in *Tobacco Road*:

Owen Davis, author of 250 plays, seems to have reserved everything drab, somber, monotonous, and depressing for 'The Detour.' He goes in for unadulterated suffering.... According to his thesis, drudging farmers' wives bring drudging daughters into the world, and he brings down the curtain on the prediction of nothing more hopeful than a granddaughter to come into still more drudgery in the future.

One reviewer commented on the effect of the production:

No more difficult play has ever been attempted and put across by the Horoni Olsen players than 'The Detour,' the medium through which they gave us their best last evening at the Marlow. The house as usual was nearly capacity and the appreciation full-hearted....Playgoers
who missed the performance last evening failed to see the treat of the season...It's a long wait until April, the next appearance of this company--what an anticipation it will be.

Mr. Pim Passes By, the third production of the Moroni Olsen Company, was revived in 1929. The Morning Oregonian indicated the success of his passing:

A realistic interpretation of such a play would be a hopeless task for an American repertory company if that company were not composed of fine actors and actresses, with a deep love of the theater and an instinctive feeling for the atmosphere and dialogue. Just such a company was the Moroni Olsen group last night.

They took a conversational play devoid of startling action and made it a piece of life by splendid acting. They depended on such things as clear diction and enunciation and intelligent acting for their effects. They had no recourse to 'hokum.' There was no heroine lashed to the railroad tracks, no whack as the comedian leaned against the backdrop, no last minute rescue by the cavalry or even the marines, no shots, screams off-stage, or sex appeal in bathing suits.

Also in 1929 they produced Autumn Fire, T.C. Murray's play of Irish folk life, and were the first company to produce it on the Pacific coast, where as the Oregon Daily Journal noted, "they entrenched themselves fully into the hearts of their hearers as worthy exponents of the more tragic side of life." Leora again played the role of the mother. The San Francisco Chronicle June 18, 1929 commented that:

Leora Thatcher who was seen during the preceding seven days as a giddy French countess, is credible at present as an old Irish woman, Mrs. Desmond, sipping her saucer of tea, and promising 'for old times' sake,' to be present at the harvest,' and again stamped her work as one of the bright, if light, spots in the play.
In 1930 they offered *The Makropoulous Secret* to the public. In this play, Leora again played a character role, which while not major, was nevertheless memorable: "Miss Thatcher came into her own in the second act, when as a wardrobe mistress she had the crowd in an uproar with her antics. She furnished good relief from an otherwise somber play." Indeed, Leora's career has been marked by her ability to take a part whether small or large and make it memorable. Mr. Lon Fulton, a Hollywood director of a radio show in which she appeared commented on this ability in a letter to her, noting that "Two line show stoppers are hard to find."

The final production of the Moroni Olsen players Philip Barry's *White Wings*, which provided a memorable finale for this prolific and talented company. One reviewer wrote of their final performance:

We went to the Pinney Friday night with an extra handkerchief, prepared to weep at the farewell performance of the Moroni Olsen players, who are coming no more to Boise after seven seasons of repertory. But never in years has a play struck us so excruciatingly funny. *'White Wings,'* by Philip Barry, is the story of a girl who loved a street cleaner. He loved her too, but he also loved horses. Between them was a triple barrier....

Review it? Might just as well explain and diagram the jokes in a masterly paged cartoon. That's what this whole play was. Not the ordinary, cheap, Katzer-whizzer type, but one with a deep stream of lovely satire back of the drawings and the slang.

True, it was somewhat Newyorkese for us. It is shocking to hear cuss words on our Pinney stage. And when, after two acts, the audience began to realize the full significance of the White Wings' symphony, it was decidedly uneasy. Half the fun was to watch the audi-
ence, desperately striving to sympathize genuinely with the young lovers, the gallant old die-hard White wing family, refusing to read the cartoon....

No doubt the Olsens chose this play for the fun of it, to insure that their farewell tour would not be overly sad. But we can't help thinking, also, knowing as we do that their audiences have often rebelled, in spite of their admiration for the company, at its choice of vehicles--we can't help wondering if the Olsens are not having a heap of fun over the failure of their audience to enter into the cartoon spirit of "White Wings."

The Logan paper similarly paid tribute to the company's final production:

The well-filled house at the Capitol last evening,... was a distinct tribute to the Moroni Olsen players. The audience was happy once more to welcome Logan's own Leora Thatcher, who in the role of Mrs. Fanny Inch, haughty and proud of her White Wing family, carried herself with credit and ease through a somewhat exacting character role.

When asked about the demanding pace of touring, Leora commented: "Touring was marvelous. Our schedule was indeed rigorous; we rehearsed from twelve to eighteen hours a day, and Moroni Olsen was a stern, demanding, yet marvelous person to work with. While it was impossible to date while on tour, the company was entertained a great deal with receptions and beautiful parties. It was my life."
CHAPTER XXVII

FROM TOURING TO RADIO

In 1932, Leora commenced another phase of her career, that of radio performing, starting at KSL with the "KSL Players," working between eight and ten hours a day for $3.00 (later raised to $4.00) a show.

During this same period she taught at the McCuen School of Music in Salt Lake and directed children's theatre productions, notably The Gnome's Workshop, As You Like It, and various poetry recitals. And in addition to working on the radio and teaching, she still found time to perform on the stage. In 1934, a letter from Gail Plummer, the manager of Kingsbury Hall of the University of Utah, indicated the success of one performance:

Dear Leora: Everybody has been raving about what a fine piece of work you did in ANOTHER LANGUAGE so I am going to just rave to you about it a little bit. I feel the same way as the others and your work was astounding. Without a strong player in that role the play would have been impossible. Your splendid interpretation of lines; the atmosphere; your makeup and all the rest of it. I wish to thank you in behalf of the audience and the Fraternity for your cooperation and talent.

In the '30s, Leora's fame on the radio extended past KSL to national recognition, and she appeared on all the daytime "soaps" in New York: Widow Brown, Our Gal Sunday, Night Must Fall, Mr. Bill, Amanda of Funny Moon Hill, and in
California in *Ruggles of Redgap*, Rudy Vallee's Variety Hour, The Lux Radio Theatre, *Seein' Stars*, *Reunion of the States*, *Mr. King*, and *Tracer of Lost Persons*. Dinty Doyle in his column "Dialing with Doyle" devoted several paragraphs to Leora's radio work:

Much has been written here about the competency of the ladies and gentlemen who perform so well and so often in the air dramas and who seldom receive even a mention at the conclusion of the play. It is therefore time to point out that last week at Rockwood Hall Theatre on the estate of the late John D. Rockefeller at North Tarrytown, one of the better radio actresses, Leora Thatcher stepped out in full stage stardom.

She was the 'Mrs. Bramson' of 'Night Must Fall,' and gave a magnificent performance which dominated the play you recall and made a great movie. Her artistry was so obvious that it attracted the attention of Charles Coburn, who heads the company at Union College, Schenectady, where his famous Straw Hat Theatre attracts patrons for miles.

Coburn promptly signed Miss Thatcher for two plays for his Mohawk Drama Festival, and that means she will be missing from the cast of the Dr. Susan serials while she is delighting audiences up-State.

In 'Night Must Fall' Miss Thatcher was most expert in an exacting part, carried the rest of the company because of her well-defined tempi and artistry which can be gained only through experience.

She also performed with the Cragmoor Playhouse in *Years Ago* by Ruth Gordon. A reviewer noted that:

Leora Thatcher, who plays the author's mother, comes to Cragmoor after many years of successful radio work. She is heard regularly from coast to coast as Mrs. Davis in 'Pepper Young's Family,' and Yetta in 'Light of the World.' While in Hollywood, she was guest star on 'Lux Radio Theatre,' 'Screen Guild of the Air,' and 'Dr. Christian.'

Leora also "starred" in many radio commercials, no-
tably, Spry Shortening, Coca Cola, Conoco Gas, Gold Medal Flour, Hellman's Mayonnaise, and Nestle's.
CHAPTER XXVIII

CALIFORNIA

From 1935 to 1937, Leora added the Pasadena Playhouse to her list of accomplishments, where she was invited by Maurice Brown, and performed both at the Pasadena Playhouse, and at Brown's theatre The Playbox, where she appeared in the world premier of *Twilight of the Theatre*.

The *Los Angeles Times*, June 30, 1936, told of her work with the Pasadena Playhouse in *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, which also received its American premier in Pasadena, and in *Laburnum Grove*.

The movies next enticed Leora, and she appeared in the *Andy Clyde* Comedy Shorts, *Theodora Goes Wild*, with Irene Dunn (directed by Richard Boleslavski), and *Counsel for Crime*. 
CHAPTER XXIX

TOBACCO ROAD

In 1938, Carlton Miles, a publicity agent, gave Leora an option to play in Tobacco Road in San Francisco, where she performed for six months with such success that she was invited to perform in the New York production of the same show, and for which she gained perhaps her most thunderous acclaim. The Salt Lake Tribune, December 4, 1940 noted on page twelve that:

Wednesday night 'Tobacco Road' begins its eighth year on Broadway, and Utah's Leora Thatcher gives her 800th performance of the role of Ada Lester. For nearly two years this Utah actress has been leading woman in this play, which has enjoyed the longest run of any in theatrical history. Although the closing notice of the play has been posted, life at 'Tobacco Road' is far from dead--it still is playing to packed houses.

It is likely that few actresses born in Utah have attained a more respected and established place in the legitimate theater and radio than Miss Thatcher. Along with her stage work, she is a supporting player in many of the daytime radio serials. With such accomplishment she is to be known as an actress always to be depended upon for an excellent rendition, no matter the demands it makes.

I have watched her portrayal of the mother of the pitiful sharecropper family, and hers is no mechanical rendition, but a moving, sincere, finely etched interpretation of the downtrodden mother. She is a simple being, in desperate pain continually, but with the courageous strength, the driving force to fight for the happiness of the one child for whom she cares.

Taxing Role Handled: It is a primitive desire, a universal desire--found in Mayfair society as well as in the depths of human deprivation of the South. To create this part, this intense feeling, night after night, week after week, month after month, would tax
the strength of any but a well-trained, well-seasoned actress. Miss Thatcher rates our orchids for doing a topnotch job. One would think the demands of eight such performances a week is all that would be physically possible. But this ambitious actress rehearses daily one or more of the popular radio serials. Anyone connected with radio realizes the difficulty of such a schedule. One 'blow-up' would blackball her. It is certainly to Miss Thatcher's credit that she has no restrictions whatever.

Mary Jane Higby's book Tune in Tomorrow related one of the difficulties Leora encountered in maintaining such a busy schedule:

A newly-hired page boy at CBS's Seventh Avenue studios sprang into action one day when the elevator door opened and a human derelict stumbled out. Disheveled gray hair fell over her dirty face and she was outfitted in what looked like gleanings from a dustbin. Staring wildly, she shot past him and down the hall. The alert young man overtook her just under a sign that marked the studio as 'ON THE AIR."

"You can't go in there," he said as he grabbed her. She put up a good fight, but he had her shoulders firmly pinned against the wall when the studio door opened and a white-faced director peeked out.

"Leora! For God's sake, you're on!"

She gulped out something about 'Taxi--traffic--had to run three blocks,' and staggered through the open door. The director threw a nasty look at the dismayed page boy.

"You damn nearly made her miss the repeat," he said. It was Leora Thatcher, dressed for her role as Ada Lester in 'Tobacco Road.' There had been no time to change after the matinee.

It seems incredible that any actor caught in the maelstrom of radio would attempt the hysteria of a Broadway opening, but others, beside Leora, did, and manage to cling to their programs as well. 74

In addition to the drain on her emotions, there were many occupational hazards that accompanied her role in *Tobacco Road*. Among them was the necessity of eating turnips during each performance. A newspaper noted that:

Leora claims to be New York's turnip eating champion. For two years while playing the role of Ada, Jeeter Loster's wife in 'Tobacco Road,' she ate two turnips during each performance, Wednesday and Saturday matinees included. This adds up to nearly a ton of turnips. And she still likes them!

A paper published by NBC offered another occupational hazard accompanying her role, with the headline "Ugliness is Skin Deep Too," and contrasting a picture of her original state "before" she made up for the part, and the haggard "after," for which she spent from one and a half to two hours every night to achieve the effect:

Girls who grumble about the high cost of cosmetics should take heart from the case of Leora Thatcher, who, for the past five years has spent $129.45 annually to 'uglify' herself for the role of Ada Lester in 'Tobacco Road.' For her role in 'Ellen Randolph,' NBC-Red Network serial, she only has to make up her voice. Miss Thatcher, young and pretty in real life, is famed for characterizations of care-worn, middle-aged women, with marvellous make-ups that have won high praise from experts in New York and Hollywood.

'The art of making up as Ada isn't so difficult,' Leora explained, 'but the overhead is terrific, to say nothing of the time consumed. Here's a list of the year's cosmetic needs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foundation cream (24 jars)</td>
<td>$24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown shadow (26 tins)</td>
<td>6.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powders (20 half-pound cans)</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyebrow pencils (4)</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albolene (26 pound tins)</td>
<td>26.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Liquid foundation (26 bottles) 15.60
Astringent (12 pint bottles) 3.00
Kleenex (75 boxes) 20.00
Energine for cleaning wig (12 quart cans) 12.00
Camel's hair brushes (6) 2.40

'But that only adds up to $124.45,' she was reminded. 'Oh I forgot,' she laughed. 'Add 52 large cakes of soap at $5.20. That's to wash the war-paint off.

Not only was her part oppressively expensive, it also taxed her "whole being," as John Miles in reviewing the play for The New York Times noted:

It's closing, by gum and by jiminy. That cussin' flea-bitten tribe of Georgia Crackers is going to move out finally. And Leora Thatcher will have time to catch a breath and add up all the ills that have befallen her since she took over the role of Ada Lester, who bore the shackful of rattlesnakes who steal turnips and hiss at one another nightly in Tobacco Road.

For that hardy perennial at the Forrest Theater which opened away back in 1933 A.D. is blooked to close on May 31. By that time the show will have played 3180 performances and have enjoyed a run of something like seven and one-half years.

Tobacco Road also enjoyed a $150,000 purchase of film rights by Hollywood, a mere 853 performances more than the record run of Abie's Irish Rose and profits from touring companies which we shall not go into for fear of confusing good fortune and the career of Leora Thatcher....

In 18 years of theater Leora Thatcher has been hit in the face with pies, had her hair almost pulled out, been beaten up and, at present, gets a mouthful of dirt each night (twice on Saturdays and Sundays) in her role of Ada Lester in Tobacco Road. All this for art, she feels, so it doesn't matter....

'I've had everything,' she said, 'dislocated hip, foot infection, face infection, broken foot, pneumonia, sciatica. You name it, I've had it.'

Teaching Smooth Sailing: Back around 1923 Miss Thatcher said, emerging from the dressing room in her apartment at 38W. 53rd St., life flowed smoothly and there never was an ache or pain in sight as she taught school in her native Logan, Utah.
'Then as soon as I start doing what I've always wanted,' she commented, 'the anatomy starts kicking up.'

The ailment hoodoo struck first shortly after she joined the Moroni Olsen Co., a traveling repertory outfit. Traveling to Montana for an engagement, Miss Thatcher had an attack of acute sciatica.

'I was carried from the train,' she recalled, 'and a doctor worked for two hours trying to fix me up so I could stumble through my role. That lasted for three weeks.'

Nothing but Trouble: The ensuing eight years with the Moroni Olsen Co. were a succession of physical mishaps. A hip was dislocated in Oklahoma City, innumerable sprains and strains of ankles occurred, an impacted tooth occasioned another visit to the hospital and finally a foot infection put her out of show business entirely.

For six months the actress rocked around on crutches. 'I didn't mind it a bit, though, after I learned that it had been a question of amputation. Whew! If that had happened!...'

The foot infection sent her back to Utah, and after two more years of teaching Miss Thatcher headed for Hollywood. From 1935 until three years later she made numerous pictures with Andy Clyde and Charles Chase, being subjected to some tremendous kickings-around because she refused to use a double.

In January, 1930, the black-haired sparkling-eyed actress was offered the role of Ada Lester in a road company of Tobacco Road playing San Francisco. She had never seen the play, but two and one-half days later stepped into the role.

Nose Dive: 'It was typical,' she lamented. 'I was learning to fall dead as Ada does after she is struck by Dude's Ford (offstage happening in the play). In Reno I landed on my nose. That caused a nose and face infection which has bothered me ever since.'

The road company disbanded in Philadelphia in May, 1938 after which Miss Thatcher came to New York, 'just to kick around a bit.' Then in September, 1939, she became the fourth Ada Lester in the Broadway production, replacing Ann Dmare.

'I get a mouthful of dirt each night,' she said. 'And if there's any complication grows out of that, you can bet your last dollar I'm going to get it somewhere in these last ten performances.

In the meantime, Miss Thatcher is keeping her fingers crossed.
Leora reminisced that regardless of her injuries, she always performed:

When I was with the Moroni Olsen company playing in 'Jane Clegg' in 1924, I went home and found my mother was desperately ill with a broken leg and lung clot. We'd played in Pocatello the night before and when I got home, everything was quiet. They wouldn't let me go in and see mother. She was irrational and didn't know me. They had to give me a sedative to knock me out I was so upset--but I went and played in the performance that night. You play regardless.

Another time I was up in Montana and I fell ill in the hall and couldn't get up. I had to be carried to the train and carried off it. For three weeks I was under a doctor's care and couldn't walk--but I still performed, though I cried from sheer pain. From then on I went to a doctor in every town we hit.

Another incident which the went on regardless occurred when we were coming out of Lewiston, Idaho. The next town was Ellensburg, Washington. We had to leave via bus at midnight and travel all night. However, after an hour, one of the wheels fell off the bus--and we could hear the coyotes howling it was so quiet in the ensuing wait. No bus came to pick us up. What had happened was that a bus had started out to come and get us, but it was held up and robbed. Since we carried with us the receipts of the evening's performance, they thought they would get a haul--but they robbed the rescue bus thinking it was us. And that accident saved us from the robbery. We finally got started, slipping around like peanuts on a glass plate over Squalomie Pass--but we still played that night, though we were two hours late--the audience stayed and waited for us to arrive.

Following the closing of Tobacco Road, the Tampa Times, May 20, 1941 noted that:

Tobacco Road addicts, you're in for a treat. The principals of this long run Broadway hit will leave their turnips behind for the next week to pay daily visits at 10:45 to Aunt Jenny's Real Life Stories series and will appear in a mountaineer dramatization for Aunt Jenny. Will Geer, who is the Jeter Lester of the Broadway hit; Leora Thatcher, who plays his long-suffering wife, and Robert Rose, are the performers who
will enact a story of life in Split Rock and the nearest big city...

Leora doubled for the role of Aunt Jenny, played by Edith Spencer, whenever Edith was sick—and imitated so convincingly that nobody knew she wasn't the real aunt. She also appeared as a guest actor whenever "Aunt Jenny was on vacation visiting relatives or the like."
CHAPTER XXX

WARTIME WORK

In the summer of 1939, The Schnectady Gazette told of her work at the Mohawk Drama Festival where she was invited to perform by Charles Coburn in a revival of George Ade's The College Widow to play "Bessie, the athletic girl who wears a fedora hat." The following month she performed in the world premier of Charlotte Corday, playing Marie-Pain, with Eugenie Lentovich as Charlotte.

When the war broke out, she was among the first to donate her time and service, working with other performers serving sandwiches and food at the Stage Door Canteen at the St. James Theatre on West 44th Street. She recalled that "All the stars were there--Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt were at the counter, and I was a bus girl." She also worked at the Merchant Seaman's Canteen. While no performances were given by the stars while working in the canteens, they gave free tickets to all the soldiers to plays in which they were performing.

Also a member of the Theatre Wing, Leora went to hospitals with the U.S. Defense service and performed at the bedsides of patients. They performed a cutting of Saturday's Children throughout the war to entertain the afflicted. She proudly claims certificates from the American
Theatre Wing War Service, and the Office of War Information for her "devoted service to the furtherance of civilian war activity and for giving inspiration to the American people through the 1942 Victory Front." The United States Treasury as well sent her special thanks "in recognition of patriotic service through personal and untiring effort," and earning "the grateful appreciation of the War Savings Staff for an effective contribution to the outstanding record of New York State." She also assisted Mrs. Eddie Rickenbacker in "Interception Command," and taught English to Jewish refugees.
CHAPTER XXXI

TELEVISION

In 1945 through 1947, Leora again resumed her full-time career, performing in The Lux Radio Show with Cecil B. DeMille, and again on tour to California, Oregon, Washington, Denver, and Chicago with Billy Burke in Accidentally Yours.

Also in 1947 she became known on television as on stage and radio, and appeared on all the live TV Playhouses: CBS Playhouse Studio One, Alcoa, Brillo Star Theatre, NBC's Matinee Theatre, Motorola Theatre, Cavalcade of America, Montgomery Presents, Hallmark, (the last production being Inherit the Wind with Melvyn Douglas and Thomas Mitchell), Kraft Theatre (performing in Feathers in the Wind, the same play as Labernum Grove as performed at the Pasadena Playhouse only renamed), and on many television programs: Janet Dean, R.N. (film), The Doctor (film), The Web, Mama, and all the television soap operas: True Story, Whispering Streets, When A Girl Marries, The Secret Storm, The Guiding Light, Love of Life, Search for Tomorrow, Concerning Miss Marlow, As the World Turns, and Young Dr. Malone (of which she appeared in both the radio and TV productions). She also starred in many commercials: Morton Frozen Products (Mrs. Morton), and General Electric Filter Washer.

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In addition, she still maintained her radio career, performing with a feature role on The Big Story on NBC.
CHAPTER XXXII

LATER ROLES

In 1950 Leora was a reader in Washington D.C. when the state of Utah presented a life-size statue of Brigham Young at the rotunda of the Capitol. In 1952 she appeared in The Male Animal on Broadway with Robert Preston, Martha Scott, and Eddie Nugent, also in One Bright Day with Howard Lindsay, The Children's Hour, with Kim Hunter, Patricia Neal, and Katharine Emmett, and in The Music Man, with Robert Preston, Burt Parks, and Eddie Albert.

In 1953 she appeared with Basil Rathbone at the Anta Theatre in J.B. That same year, she was brought to Utah State University and featured in a play called Jane, and staying for six weeks following the production to teach at the University.

In 1958 she performed at the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Miami, Florida in Simon and Laura, by Alan Melville, and during the summer, participated in summerstock theatre at Lakewood, Maine, Coney Island, and on the road with Melvyn Douglas in Season With Ginger (a reviewer noting that Leora as the maid "works a thin role into three dimension). From New York she went to Dallas, Texas and performed in the State Fair Musicals with Charles Meeker and Lehman Engels in Fanny, Oklahoma, and Gentlemen Prefer Blondes.
On July 5, 1962, she was the feature speaker for the Salt Lake Kiwanis Club, and in 1965 she was invited by the University of Utah to perform in *Music Man*—a production that broke records for attendance even though they were rained out one night.

Currently Miss Thatcher is no less busy than at the start of her career. Today she keeps her usual active pace by teaching both Speech and Theatre at Utah State University, and a proud lifetime member of the Actor's Fund, The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists, and Equity Screen Actors, having filled a rewarding and productive career in which she never missed a performance.
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PART IV

EVALUATION
CHAPTER XXXIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Art, the expression of humanity, must be evaluated with acute sensitivity and appraisal made with a sense of history; a cosmic stance is demanded of the critics of the arts, for it is through criticism that man confronts his worth, and it is the critic who protects humanity and the creative struggle of its artists from the forgetful kingdom of time. The burden of the critic must therefore be assumed by the historian, and an exposure of the veneer sensibilities of the critical sources is essential to the realignment of fact.

Conceived solely as an historical inquiry into the careers of three Mormon actresses, this thesis dilated to afford a view of the patterns of criticism from the turn of the century to post-war theatre. This was the Golden Age of Broadway, of big stars, elaborate productions, and exorbitant reviews, and theatrical criticism emerged here as a rather uncertain foothold for an accurate historical perspective.

From this study, the style of criticism in the early 1900's fluctuated from flamboyance to extravagance; a plethora of laudatory reviews followed most productions with little or no critical inspection; the thrust of the
theatrical review was more adulation than appraisal. Critics from the turn of the century typically duplicated the extravagances of the productions rather than evaluated them. The critic would disregard such subtleties as performance, and extol only the physical; eyes, hair, teeth, and even fingernails were a fetish for critics—one lengthy review talked of nothing but feet. Columns were devoted to such newsworthy information as losing one's baggage, the hazards of pre-zipper dress fastenings, how to dispose of one's fan mail, the novelty of riding in a car, whether or not one can be successful without showing one's teeth, which physical characteristic constituted the latest "vision of loveliness" or "springtime incarnate," and any toothsome morsels of indecency—particularly lingerie, pajamas, and bathrooms. The fact that Viola and Hazel were both Mormons delighted many a gossip-hungry reviewer, for such a creed afforded a wealth of possibility for exploiting its implications.

The type of theatre presented in this age seemed to consist of inane farces and glamorous musical extravaganzas a la Ziegfeld follies, with elaborate stage sets and costumes. Presentational theatre and the star system reigned supreme in this medium where the leading lady had eight or nine encores, and songs were repeated many times before the
crowd would be pleased.

Leora Thatcher, in contrast, while born only three years after Hazel, performed in a completely different atmosphere from the glamour of the superstars. The Moroni Olsen Company stood for the very antithesis of spectacle, and sought instead realistic illusion in ensemble acting, where the play, not the star was paramount, where the "fourth wall" cut off the interrupting encores and repeated re-singing of a crowd pleaser, where the playwright drew top billing.

The reviews showed a similarly sharp contrast in content as compared to those of Viola and Hazel. Missing were the allusions to ephemeral beauty, and instead, the play was critiqued, with references to the actors secondary.

However, when Leora performed on Broadway in Tobacco Road, though the medium was realism, and ability was a consideration as well as beauty, the aura of being a "star" again took precedence, with reviews again becoming gossipy, dealing with extraneous details--how many turnips Leora ate, how much she spent on make-up, what ailments she encountered in her profession, and the occupational hazards of being a star.

Nevertheless, all three actresses achieved great success, and provided an undeniable contribution to theatrical as well as Mormon history.
THREE MORMON ACTRESSES:

VIOLA GILLETTE, HAZEL DAWN, LEORA THATCHER

Mavis Gay Gashler

Department of Speech and Dramatic Arts
Master of Arts Degree, May 1970

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to recreate the theatrical lives of three Mormon actresses through an appraisal of the critical reviews of the press, the primary source of available material.

COMMITTEE APPROVAL: Charles L. Metten
(Committee Chairman)

(Committee Member)

(Department Chairman)