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THE LADIES' HOME JOURNAL

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A GIRLISH "JULIA"—"THE HUNCHBACK"

MY EARLY DAYS ON THE STAGE

By Mary Anderson de Navarro

*NUMBER II

FTER the plunge into the sea of public life, which my first appearance on the stage gave me, it was naturally heart-breaking to be thrown back again upon the dry land of study without practice—hope without realization. The interval of three months with no engagement in sight was not spent, however, in idle moping. The part of "Bianca," in Dean Milman's "Fazio," was thoroughly prepared. At the end of that time Mr. Macauley offered me a week at his theatre in Louisville, Kentucky, which was accepted with joy.

The repertory selected was as follows:

"Bianca"	. in "Fazio"	. for Monday
"Julia"	. in "The Hunchback". . .	. for Tuesday
"Evadne"	in Lawler Sheil's "Evadne"	for Wednesday
"Pauline"	in "The Lady of Lyons" .	. for Thursday
"Juliet"	. in "Romeo and Juliet" . .	. for Friday and Saturday

At the end of the engagement I was in debt to the manager for the sum of one dollar, the houses having been large enough only to cover the running expenses. All I had gained by a week of hard work was a sad heart and a very sore throat. Besides, creditors became unpleasantly importunate, for my scanty wardrobe was not yet paid for. This consisted of a white satin dress, simply made, which did service for all the parts. It sparkled in silver trimming for "Juliet"; was covered with pink roses for "Julia," became gay in green and gold for "Evadne," and cloudy with white lace for "Pauline." The unfortunate gown owed its many changes to the nimble and willing fingers of my mother, who spent much time each day in its metamorphoses. A train of velveteen, a white muslin dress, and a modern black silk gown (which, like "Mrs. Toodles," we thought "would be so useful," but which had to be discarded after its first appearance) completed my wardrobe—surely a meagre one for five plays of five acts, each requiring at least twelve gowns. We had built up financial as well as artistic hopes for that week, and were disappointed in both. But it proved more successful than was at first thought, for shortly after Ben De Bar (one of the greatest "Falstaffs" of his time) engaged me for six nights at his St. Louis theatre. At the end of that time I found myself in his debt for the sum of six hundred dollars; but the houses had steadily improved, and the press was filled with long articles, enthusiastic about the present and full of predictions for the future.

A RÔLE IN WHICH SHE WON GREAT FAVOR

After seeing "Evadne" Mr. De Bar engaged me for the last week of that historic old theatre, the St. Charles, in New Orleans, before it was converted into a music hall or variety theatre. After traveling from Saturday until Monday there was only time for one hurried rehearsal for that night's performance. The company, like the one at St. Louis, was composed of a most helpful and kindly set of men and women, who found no trouble too great to make the plays successful. But our hearts sank very low on learning that not one seat had been sold for the entire week. The outlook was hopeless, and horrible visions of failure and new debts rose up before me. I could not but be amused, however, when the Irish box-office attendant said: "Och, the houly saints bliss yer yung heart, not a sate have we sauld for the wake. Oi asked Missus Mc—— if she wud give me the plisure of sinding her a few tickets for the wake. Ye see she's the mither of a large family, and Oi thought they wud help to fill up a bit. 'Well,' sez she, condiscendin'-like, 'if it wud obloige ye, sur, I moight take a few.' 'Divil a bit,' sez I, with me temper up, 'if it's only to obloige me, not a sate do yus get with thim foine airs. Maybe before the wake's out yees'ill be beggin' thim of me.'" This, it seems, she did, and in vain, for his heart was like flint against deadheads when success smiled upon us.

Dr. Griffin, quite unknown to us, realizing the disaster of closing the theatre on a first night for lack of an audience, gave the head of one of the medical colleges, an acquaintance of his, a ticket of admission for all the students, also inviting a number of his army friends. When the curtain rose, to my surprise, the house was well filled; though I afterward learned the gross receipts for the night were but forty dollars. Two of my childhood's favorites, *General and Mrs. Tom Thumb, sat in a box clapping their tiny hands vigorously.

After the first night the houses steadily increased, and on the last nights were crowded. So successful in every way was the engagement that Mrs. Chanfrau offered me the following week at her theatre, the leading one of New Orleans, only stipulating that "Meg Merrilies" should be studied and acted on my benefit night. The opportunity of impersonating the withered gypsy was a lucky one, for many attributed my success to "youth, etc."

After bidding farewell to the St. Charles, whose stage had witnessed the triumphs of Rachel, the elder Booth, Julia Dean, Forrest and Cushman, I began my fourth week of public life before a large house at The Varieties. I remember that engagement as one of the pleasantest of my life. The manageress, Mrs. Chanfrau, the handsome wife of "Kit, the Arkansas Traveler," made it one of the freshest, cleanest, and most comfortable places imaginable. She kept it as a good housewife keeps her home—immaculate. Welcoming all pleasantly, she seemed more like a charming hostess to those who acted under her than like the usual businesslike manager. The week passed off very successfully. On Friday I donned the witch's rags, in "Meg Merrilies," for the first time. All my teeth were covered with black wax, except one, which in its natural whiteness produced a tusklike effect. The hair concealed by gray snaky locks, the complexion hidden beneath the wrinkles and brown parchment-like skin of the weather-stained gypsy, the eyebrows covered with shaggy gray hair, the figure bent nearly double, made the illusion so perfect that my mother could not recognize one feature or movement. The character had been studied at a few days' notice, and the astonishment of all, including myself, was great when it was received more warmly than anything I had attempted. After much enthusiasm from the audience that crowded the play-house, speeches and presentations were made; checks concealed in baskets of flowers were handed over the footlights, and among other gifts the greatly-prized "Washington Artillery" badge, which made me an honorary member of that battalion, was presented. Miss Mildred Lee, a daughter of General Robert E. Lee, and I were the only lady members, an honor of which we were justly proud, for the splendid bravery of that body of men during the war had won for them the title of "The Tigers."

My unexpected success in New Orleans, a success of which any veteran actor might have been proud, was almost stupefying, coming as I had so suddenly from utter obscurity into the dazzling light of public favor. Nothing was left undone to make our visit delightful in every way. The railway company's parting compliment was to place at our disposal a special car to Louisville; and all along the journey we had proofs of their constant thoughtfulness. After arriving an utter stranger it seemed remarkable to be leaving the beautiful Crescent City two weeks later loaded with so many favors and marks of its friendship. My bright dreams were first realized there, and I shall always remember New Orleans with affectionate gratitude.

Our first act on returning was to pay off all our creditors. The satisfaction of doing this with one's own earnings must be experienced to be understood. Toward the end of the summer a week's engagement at Owensboro, a small pretty town near Louisville, was offered me. The disadvantages of acting with a group of country players, we were told, would be many: the "juvenile leading man" of the company was a rather elderly woman; the scenery, to say the least, not of the best, and the discomforts and inconveniences were sure to be legion. Still, every performance was a gain in experience and

A YOUTHFUL "GALATEA"

ease, and a fever for improvement at any cost, as well as the anticipation of some primitive "barn-storming," induced me to accept the offer. I was a tall, slender "Juliet," and my "Romeo" proved to be a plump, pleasant little woman, probably the mother of several would-be "Romeos" and "Juliets." The moon she ("Romeo") swore by we found to be the headlight of a railway engine hired for the occasion. This was held by a small negro boy perched upon a ladder, who was so amused by the play that he laughed until he shook over the most tragic scenes. His mirth, as may be imagined, was not conducive to the moon's steadiness. At one time she was shining in an upper box, at another on the head of a bald musician, often blinding the unfortunates in the front stalls, here, there, everywhere save on the face of her ("Verona's lovely flower") she had been especially hired to illuminate.

The conductor of the orchestra was a carpenter by trade, and sawed away as lustily during the day at the boards he was converting into profile statues of "Evadne's" noble ancestors as he sawed upon his violin at night. These statues, I may remark, bore a striking resemblance, when finished, to the little men and women kind cooks cut out of dough, and "fry and sugar" for favored children. The week was very successful artistically, for the performances (how bad they were I am ashamed to remember) met with the approval of "the most discriminating audience in the States." This standard of critical excellence I found later to be of home manufacture, and common to every small town we appeared in. Until one learned that its meaning was not as awe-inspiring as it sounded, it hung like the sword of Damocles over the heads of all young artists like ourselves, bent on "barn-storming." Financially the visit was also successful, for the theatre was packed, gangways included, at each performance. A year later we returned to the same town with a company organized by my old friend, Mr. Thomas Hall. He had arranged for a short tour with several utility men and women, the leading juvenile comedian of the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, and a few other stray actors from the same city. These were styled on the bills "A Company of Metropolitan Artists."

We played to such full houses at Owensboro that it was decided to give a morning performance, and a "grand matinée" at two o'clock was accordingly announced. Why a matinée should be invariably called "grand" on the bills has always puzzled me. "The Lady of Lyons" was the play. When I arrived to dress for "Pauline" not

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*Mrs. de Navarro's first paper, telling of her study, rehearsal and "First Appearance on the Stage," was printed in the December JOURNAL. The third chapter of Mrs. de Navarro's memoirs will be given in the February issue. Copyright, 1895, by Mary Anderson de Navarro.

*The charming wee General afterward came to pay me a formal call. On entering the drawing-room I found him standing on a chair, so as to enable him to see out of the window.

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MEMORIES OF OUR CHILDHOOD HOMES

By Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D. D.

IT has seemed to me that there is no way in which this series of articles could be more fitly concluded than by devoting the present paper to a mention of some of the quiet effects that in our adult years remain with us from the scenes and experiences of our childhood. Hardly any more eloquent testimony could be given to the essential sincerity of human nature than that which is afforded by the restful satisfaction with which we dwell upon the simple life and the unseasoned enjoyments that marked our earlier years. However different our surroundings may be now from what they were then, and whatever increase there may have been in the matter of comforts or even of luxuries, still there was a certain naturalness and wholesomeness about those earlier experiences that impress us with more and more of effect as we move farther away from them. Perhaps we should not like to live now as we had to live then, but that does not prevent our realizing that a great deal of what we are now, and by far the better part of what we are now, we owe to the quietude and healthful simplicity that marked the duties and pleasures which made up our childhood. It took little then to make us happy and our happiness was of a very happy kind. Our enjoyments were of the most unelaborate and inexpensive sort, but all of that was more than compensated for by the fresh, hearty, tingling nerves to which our unsophisticated amusements made their appeal.

I REMEMBER a simple little woodcut that hung in my chamber. It was not much of a picture, and the frame was not any better, but it was an honest picture. "My Kitten" was the title of it; and among all the paintings that since that time it has been my pleasure to inspect in the great galleries of Europe there is none whose remembrance is so close to me or so dear to me as that. Undoubtedly the explanation of much of this is that in those first years the down is all on the peach, and our powers of appreciation are full of warm alertness, but that is just the important feature of it all, and it is that which makes those early, sweet, home days so regnant over all the years that draw on afterward: they hang the inner walls with pictures that never fade. Notwithstanding that we have so much to do with the world outside, nothing comes so close to us or stays by us so faithfully as the impressions that are put upon the sensitive-plate of our own spirits. Memory makes of each man's mind a picture gallery, and the pictures in that gallery that we never take down and never find the need of having retouched are the ones that were earliest put in place and which we never allow any later associations to overlap or obscure. There is no such enduring service we can do for one as early furnishing him interiorly with those etchings, those "pleasant pictures," upon which his eye can always rest in tranquillity and wholesome delight, and to which the years as they go will only add distinctness and impart a fuller tone. That was one of the advantages of the old-fashioned, country way of living, that our experience was so uniform and our surroundings so unaltered from day to day and from year to year that not only the house we lived in but all the thousand and one accompaniments that combined to compose our home had time ineffaceably to daguerreotype themselves in our thoughts and even in our hearts. A good many of the well-to-do children that are growing up now never live long enough in one place to give chance for a "time exposure." They stay awhile here and awhile there, and a good deal of the time are on the road. By this means the scenes through which they move are too evanescent to score a photographic record that will stay. Aside from this is the fact that in the case of city-bred children there is little of that individuality about the home that is needed in order that the mental camera may have a well-marked object for it to focus itself upon. A city home does not mean anything in particular. It may be warm and bright and cozy on the inside, with no end of jaunty furnishings and expensive bric-à-brac, but the same things are on exhibition next door and in all the houses on the block probably.

IT takes a good deal to make a home. It needs something even beside father and mother and an open fire and the cat on the hearth and the aforementioned museum. The first element in the home is the house itself which needs to be distinctly different from any other house in sight. Associations never cluster about a building that is simply one of a row of duplicates. Then there needs to be some land around a house before it can be "real homey." It is well if there is so much land around it that all you can see of your next-door neighbor's house is the smoke from his chimney as it curls up through the trees. That gives playroom for the eyes as well as for the feet. There ought also to be a generous sprinkling of big trees and somewhere about a dense forest for childish imagination to brood mysteries in. A wide range of solemn woods will do more for a child in a week than yellow bricks and dirty paving stones will do for him in a year or ever do for him. It is a great thing for a child to grow up within earshot of a babbling brook. There is a kind of musicalness of spirit that will become his in that way that he will never be able to acquire from a piano teacher or a fiddling master. This wide range of prospect will also companion him with the bright and the more earnest moods of the great mother earth on whose bosom he is being nourished. He will have opportunity to see the days brighten in the east in the morning, and his soul will unconsciously absorb some of the glory of the setting sun. Children in the city hardly ever see the sun come up or go down. It simply grows light about the time they have to get up and grows dark a dozen or so hours later. To a child in the country there is likewise opportunity for him to see it rain. There is a great difference between rain and falling water. All we see in the city is falling water. I never see it rain in New York but I wonder how much sewage it will wash off into the North and East Rivers. Rain in the city is only wetness broken loose, and is calculated only in terms of street-cleaning and aqueduct supply. A square mile of rain or a dozen square miles is a different matter and is unconsciously construed by the child as being a mood of Nature's mind rather than a hydropathic uncorking. Still more impressive upon the child's mind are the strange communications made to him by the lightning flashing above him across a hundred miles of country sky, and the weird aurora and the swift and blazing track of "falling stars," that make him feel how solemnly close to him is the great wonderful world above the woods and the clouds. In all of this I am not imagining nor extemporizing, but only translating into words the pictures painted upon my own mind by the surroundings of my boyhood. Such pictures I would not exchange for the finest and most classic touches ever put upon canvas. They are fraught with nobility and purity, and they weave themselves into the tissue of the child's being through all the loom-work of young years.

THERE are frescoes also of a yet mellower tint wrought by loved scenes which lie around the child's growing years in still closer embrace. Their hold upon us is only strengthened and deepened by the passage of time; for it seems one of the ways by which God would make apparent to us the emphasis He lays upon childhood that the farther we go on in life the more indistinct and blurred its middle period becomes, but the more defined and closely-neighbored the things we did and felt when we were boys. Life seems in that particular to be like the circumference of a circle, that the longer we travel upon it the nearer we come to the point from which we started. The more delicate and influential reminiscences of which we are just now thinking connect themselves with the home's interior and with those personal associations and ministries which go to form the substance and heart of home life. A benediction remains upon all the years of a man or woman whose heart is printed with lines of grace and sweetness caught from scenes enacted in a home dominated by motives of love, sacrifice and piety. The family circle may be broken and many of those who composed it may have passed beyond the reach of our thought and almost beyond the reach of our prayer, but the walls of the heart are still hung with the delicate delineations of it all, and in our quiet retrospective moments we yet move amid pictures that look down upon us in tender concern as with the presence of days and loved ones that are gone.

IN such seasons of reminiscence we feel in us the traces of all those years of caretaking and safeguarding through which we were led by a father's strength and a mother's ministry, and there stay by us the scenes, fresh and new to memory as the light and dew of this morning, in which father's hand strengthened us and mother's love comforted us. We remember how in our sickness we were then taken care of, and the elements of the scene group themselves so unbiddenly and easily that if only the voice that has been so long still could be heard we should certainly think we were a child again. We remember where our mother sat and how she looked as she aided us in our lessons, as she toned our inflections and corrected our gestures in preparation for "speaking our piece" at the village school, and the way she tied our tippet as we rushed out into the cold and snow. Very distinct and warm and cheery still is the picture with which we are inlaid of the long, snug, homey winter evenings, when the work had been finished for the day, the "chores" done, with nothing existing in all the world but father, mother and us children. There is nothing peculiar in all this experience.

We all of us put into these lines the like meaning gleaned by each from our own separate experience, and it is just because the experience is one in which we all share that the matter becomes so mighty and serious. We never quite get away from our first years; they not only make out a part of the men and women that we are to-day, but they are still present to our regard with the potency of an instant fact. Reminiscence is such a faculty that it rubs out the times that have intervened, and blends into a single round and transparent drop the day that is gone and the day that is here. Reminiscence makes us little even when we are old, and helps to keep us pure and fresh with the springtime that was in us a score or a generation of years ago. A boy can never become utterly bad so long as there remains with him a memory of his father and mother in the act and attitude of prayer. The time may come with the hardening and chilling process of the years when he will himself cease to pray, but from the canvas long ago painted there will never fade the figures of those, now asleep, whose heads were seen day by day bent in humble, confiding worship, and who in inspired priestliness laid the morning sacrifice upon the family altar; and the memory of father's and mother's prayer helps, at any rate, to keep alive in us our own possibilities of prayer.

THE most natural years of our lives we live while we are children, and there is always rest and purification in getting back into touch with them. When the burdens press a little heavily, and the future is thick with uncertainties, the wish will sometimes shape itself that we might be back again among our free, fresh, childish days. We do not understand it very well, but there is something gone that we would dearly love to have back. Those may seem to have been rather unproductive afternoons that we used to spend up in the garret, listening, in the pauses of our merry-making, to the rain pattering on the roof, and we so dry and sheltered underneath, but our life means more even to-day because of them and because of our memory of them. Old King David hiding from the Philistines down in the cave of Adullam, had just such plaintive reminiscences. In his rocky retreat he had time to remember his Bethlehem days, and the flocks and the folds, and his boyhood and the delicious exemptions of it, and the spring at which while a boy he quenched his eager thirst, and he cried, "Oh! that some one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem which is by the gate." We love in this way to think our way back into the past because we feel that some of the dew has evaporated from the leaves while the day has been moving toward its noon-ing. It quiets us too, for it works in us a feeling of trustful dependence as we live over the unanxious days when we were boys and girls. Children are like the birds, they expect to be taken care of. There is no sleep like the child's sleep: with him the day reaches as far as to the pillow and then the night begins. Children have their little burdens but they lay them by with their garments. They go to sleep with a smile and wake up with a laugh, for they expect to be taken care of. There are many men with hoary heads that would part with a good deal of their fortune if they could have just one more night when mother would come up as of old, and the dear hands, that have so long rested from their ministry, would tuck the clothes about them, commit the dear child to God's good care for the night and seal the prayer with her kiss.

It is one of the tender features of creative wisdom that we enter life through the little wicker-gate of childhood, and that childhood can be so fragrant as to sweeten with its perfume all the years into which it ripens and mellows.

C. H. Parkhurst.

EDITOR'S NOTE—Dr. Parkhurst's series of articles addressed to women began in February, 1895, and were continued regularly throughout the year. A similar series addressed to young men will begin in the next (the February) issue, and will appear continuously and exclusively in the JOURNAL for 1896.

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