

CHILD ACTORS OF ENGLAND

YOUNGSTERS WHO HAVE BOY FAME IN THE PROFESSION.

Question of Licensing Still in the Hands of the Local Magistrates Olive Walter, the Best of Them All, a "Holy Terror" to Her Fellow Performers.

LONDON, Aug. 30. The licensing of child performers in England is a matter which never reaches settlement and which is always under discussion, particularly this month, when engagements for the autumn season are being made.

It was at one time thought that the joint committee appointed to examine the working of the censorship of plays in England would recommend the creation of a special Government department to deal with various other matters appertaining to the theatre, in which case this licensing of child performers, now vested in the local

magistrates, would surely have been under the jurisdiction of that department. Unfortunately, however, the committee members found themselves in quite enough hot water over the handling of plays without venturing to undertake further responsibilities, so local Magistrates still have jurisdiction in this matter of child performers.

The inconvenience of the present arrangement can easily be seen when it is realized that a child actor or actress on the road must get a license to appear in every place, and that their being allowed to take part in the performance depends entirely upon the humor of the Magistrate in authority. Should he disapprove of stage children he can refuse the license, subject to certain conditions as to time of leaving the theatres, hours of work, &c. In London all this is in the hands of the County Council, who have women inspectors who visit the playhouses unexpectedly to see if the children are really starting home at the time their licenses demand and whether the dressing rooms are properly arranged for their health and well being.

Even the bitterest opponents to the employment of children on the stage are obliged to admit that at the present time every possible care is taken of the little ones and that in many cases they benefit by their life in the theatres as far as physical welfare goes, even though it may not be best for them in other ways.

These licenses are granted, of course, even though all the necessary restrictions are complied with, in which case the entire company may be thrown out of work while they are in that place.

Until very recently the youngsters were obliged to make an appearance in the police court of each little town, along with petty criminals and drunkards, so that the Magistrates could decide after seeing them whether or not he would license them. This was an evil the entire theatrical profession, related against for years but without avail. Now, however, through the passing of the children's act, the children need not appear in open court but can apply for their licenses privately.

Previous to 1901 no child under 7 could appear professionally on the English stage, but in that year the minimum age was raised to 10, so that as it stands now the law is "No child under 10 years of age can appear at all."

No child under 14 may appear without a license.

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PHYLLIS BEDELLS, PRINCIPAL DANCER AT THE EMPIRE MUSIC HALL.

For instance Sir Herbert Tree and Arthur Bourchier in producing their Christmas plays have several matrons to look after the small actors at rehearsals, as well as performances, and any signs of fatigue or weakness are noted and attended to. Lessons also are not neglected. Either rehearsals are arranged so that children may attend school as usual or a certain number of hours in the theatre are given up to studies. Mr. Bourchier managed the last winter. He kept his child artists all day, but part of the time they had regular lessons. The rest of the day they rehearsed "Where Children Rule."

Whether the employment of children on the stage is a good thing for them or not, the fact remains that in no country in the world are there so many child performers who love their work as in England. In the Christmas pantomimes hundreds of youngsters sing and dance with the skill and ease of their elders and the joyous abandon of extreme youth. "Cinderella" was performed last winter entirely by children, forty-seven of them, all under 14. "Where Children Rule" had a cast of forty youngsters and four adults, and in all the other Christmas pieces the same thing occurred.

Of course the little performers are drawn from several classes, first the children of respected and clever theatrical parents. These come to their work equipped with an inherent love of the stage and a knowledge of its technicalities. They are likely to continue in the profession the rest of their lives. Ellen Terry, Mrs. Kendal, Lady Bancroft, Marie Lohr, Phyllis and Zena Dore, Elaine Terriss, Gabrielle Ray and hosts of other well-known actresses and actors had this experience.

Then there are the youngsters exploited by lazy and incapable parents, who support an entire family sometimes on their weekly wage. They are very clever, but unhappy homes and hard work are very often too much for their nervous systems. There is still a third class drawn from the very poor. These children are used chiefly for spectacular purposes. They need not have any real ability, as

youngsters find they have grown too tall for their work and they are cast adrift, having had just enough of stage life to unfit them for any other and not enough real talent to warrant their return to the theatre when they are a little older. Many of these become callboys and they serve as one of the tests against the demoralization of stage life for juveniles.

Just now the English theatre has so many clever young recruits that it is difficult to select the most talented. Perhaps the most remarkably gifted child is Olive Walter, who played "Tilly" in "The Blue Bird" till a month or so ago, when the play was withdrawn. She is 12 years of age, very pretty and graceful and a perfect little actress. "Tilly" as a part is said to be as long as Hamlet, but on the first night of "The Blue Bird" Olive not only never missed a line of her own part, but she even prompted weaker members of the company, adult and infantile, who had lapses of memory.

If she were only as good a child as she is a marvelous actress she would be a joy to any manager, but alas she is always known in the company as a "holy terror," and can cause more trouble to stage managers and dressers than any other small girl alive.

She plays every prank that can be devised and even tries this sort of game on the stage, to the great annoyance of fellow thespians. It is all due to pure animal spirits, but the members of the "Blue Bird" company did not feel kindly about it and Mr. Trench had so many complaints from the cast that he finally banished Olive from the theatre for two weeks, to her great grief, and gave her part to a boy understudy, Stephen Thomas, who played it very well. When Olive returned she behaved in most exemplary fashion for almost a month.

Flora Crayon, who is 12 years of age, is a wonderful dancer as well as a charming little actress. She made her first appearance a year ago at His Majesty's Theatre in "Pinky and the Fairies," and was so finished and delightful in her work that the house literally rose and shouted its enthusiasm, and the tiny eleven-year-old fairy queen, with her long yellow curls

and miniature tartan skirts, came forward quite at ease to take her curtain calls all alone. Later she "accepted" an engagement at the Coliseum, where she received \$500 a week, a record salary for a child in England.

Flora Crayon's successor in the part of the fairy queen is Florence Lewis, 10 years of age. She is quite a marvelous little dancer, but a distinctly cockney accent somewhat mars her rendering of the fairy queen's lines. On the stage she seems not larger than a child of 5, but personated like a premiere danseuse, and loves her work as most girls love dolls or games.

Iris Hawkins still ranks as a child act-

ress, though she is now 16 years old. She is not taller than a child of 10, and plays small boys and small girls with equal facility. She was the little boy in "His House in Order" and also in the "Secret of Polheim," and she created "Pinky" in "Pinky and the Fairies," doing quite a remarkable dance in this play with thirteen-year-old Philip Tonge, who played Tommy, her brother.

Philip Tonge is a protégé of Mr. and Mrs. Seymour Hicks and is a clever youngster who always brings a sort of wholesome outdoor atmosphere into the theatre with him, and though he sings and dances like an artist, yearns to talk of cricket and hockey. He was the original "Michael" in "Peter Pan" but grew too big for the part a few years ago.

Bobbie Andrews is the boy actor most in demand. He is very handsome and most artistic in his work, studying each of his parts carefully and more like a

leading man than a small boy of 12. He is never out of an engagement. As soon as the Christmas plays end he is engaged for legitimate drama.

Phyllis Bedells at 15 is premier danseuse at the Empire Music Hall. She has been on the stage since she was 10 and now has devoted all her attention to dancing. She is a simple, unaffected girl who is interested in her art and is carefully looked after by a devoted mother, who in years gone by was a dancer also. Phyllis is of course the youngest premiere danseuse in London.

Edna Langford, the child in "A White Man" as 11 years old, Bella Terry, who came out last winter in "Where Children



FLORENCE LEWIS



PAULINE GILMER AND OLIVE WALTER AS MYTYL AND TYTYL, IN MAETERLINCK'S "BLUE BIRD."

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EXCITEMENT FOR A STRANGER.

The Visitor to Brownsville Finds Poker and Violence Ready for Him.

Nothing whatever had happened in Brownsville for a long time. Long Mike, whose name to be considered the leading citizen of the town had never been questioned and had not committed a breach of the peace since the day when he drove his prisoner, Gallagher, into the river with a magnificent amount and with an excess of zeal had followed him into the water despite the fact that Gallagher was the better swimmer.

The one man who had forsaken Brownsville, finding it wholly inadequate as a field for his particular talents, and had been heard of at irregular intervals as a tournamentable gambler, was the Mississippi River steamboat.

Stumpy had apparently become reconciled to the probability of existence in the little river town, and though he frequently complained to Sam, the landowner of the fact that he was getting "stumped" for a stumpy, he had taken no active steps toward originating it.

As Brownsville depended entirely on those few individuals for excitement nothing whatever had happened in the town, which brings us back to where we started.

The advent of a stranger was therefore a matter of some interest. Other strangers had come to Brownsville before this, but as soon as they had reached the town they had departed again. This stranger, however, remained, and the interest aroused by the mere fact of his having come depended day by day when it was observed that he had not gone away.

"What the devil do ye reckon that ornadoun do be doing here, I dunno," said Stumpy to Sam as they stood at the barroom door.

"Nathin, I reckon," said Sam briefly. "Folks in 'eck come to a good place this," said Stumpy, but "I do think 'tain't that them that already 'round here is mostly gettin' ready to raise the devil some way. Does he play cards now?"

"I told him there was a game on some times."

"There'll be wan the night," said Stumpy with an air of conviction. "Thim crossroads picks bite off more'n 'n they ch' chance times. Belokin' th'it'll be wan 'n thim times."

"Without wastin' more words he went off up the street in search of Long Mike. Having conferred with him at some length he sought out Gallagher and Hennessy and talked with them mysteriously. Thereafter until sunset he was not observed otherwise than as a red-headed Irishman much given to apparently causeless laughter.

Shortly after nightfall these four citizens might have been seen entering Sam's barroom singly and encountering one another with every appearance of surprise. The stranger was there already, there could be no other place where a stranger could go after nightfall.

Long Mike, who was the last of the group to appear, suggested the propriety of indulging in some of Sam's best, which was also his worst, and somewhat tactlessly insisted that everybody present should join in the libation.

This they all did without visible reluctance and a general conversation followed in which the stranger joined affably. "Then without haste and quite as if it were an impromptu suggestion Stumpy said:

"Sure we haven't had a game of cards for a divil of a while."

"There for ye," said Long Mike, "an' it's a fact, for a game of poker or an' Will ye all set in?"

and he showed down four sevens as the stranger's hand was four sixes he thought and called for another stack.

"A pretty hot for a start," he observed, though he had a strategy in mind. He was considerably surprised when Stumpy considered with an appearance of scorn, "Sure 'tis nothin' unusual. There do be them who can't quit a strategy for a divil of a look directly at Long Mike when he spoke."

"That gentleman answered angrily. "Sure ye can't quit a strategy for a divil of a look directly at Long Mike when he spoke. 'an' it's not the looks of ye 'll tell me when to quit a strategy for a divil of a look directly at Long Mike when he spoke."

"Shut up thim!" exclaimed Long Mike with a roar, but Stumpy laughed at him sneeringly, and he growled like a bear. Then the stranger looked on with amusement.

He said nothing, however, and talking the deck began the deal. When it was concluded Stumpy came in on Hennessy's side, and Long Mike, who was raised first, then Gallagher and the other trailed, and Hennessy made it a dollar more to play.

Stumpy expressed his opinion of the game and all those engaged in it with much vigor as he threw down his cards, but Long Mike observed Gallagher, saying this, emptied his pocket, and then clubbing his weapon through himself upon the stranger and raised his arm as if to brain him.

As for Long Mike, no man's eye was quick enough to follow his movements, but so far as could be seen he appeared to be anxious to shed Stumpy's blood. Bearing out a torrent of the most violent obprobrium he seemed to be all over the room at once, but Stumpy was even more nimble than he.

Tipping Long Mike, he threw that champion to the floor. Then bounding over Hennessy's outstretched form he joined Gallagher in what appeared to be a ferocious onslaught on the stranger. Such was his violence, however, that he succeeded only in interfering with the blow that Gallagher was delivering, and for a instant the stranger stood free.

It was enough for his purpose, however, and turning with a wild yell he fled from the room. Sam, who had stood looking on with no apparent interest, reported him as he ran across the levee and reported afterward that he had rushed on board the Ross Lee, which was tied up at the landing, and had disappeared.

"An' now," said Stumpy calmly, "we'll aish us our cash in the tin dollars we sharted wid, an' Sam'll set up \$20 worth of booze for the town of Brownsville. It'll be a grate night, an' thim thim horn'll shay away for a while."

From the Mexican Herald. All articles owned in the National Monte de Piedad and branches in the month of February of this year for amounts from 25 to 75 cents will be returned to their owners in September. This will be the contribution of the national pawnshop to Mexico's poor as a part of the centennial celebration.

The articles, which are principally jewelry and clothing, will be returned to the ticket holders, who will not be required to pay either the principal or interest on the loan. It is evident that only the very poor people have asked for amounts less than \$1 and it is these people that it is desired to help.

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BILLIOPS, OPTIMIST.

The World Looks Brighter Still to Him After Reading a Certain Letter.

"I have just received from Mrs. Billiops," said Mr. Billiops, "a letter in which she characterizes me as a dear contented optimist, and truly that pleases me greatly."

"I am an optimist sure enough, and surely I am contented; but what pleases me most is her calling me a dear contented optimist, dear."

"Do you notice that she doesn't say, as she might have said, 'Oh, she doesn't call me a dear contented old optimist? No, no, no, I'm just a dear contented optimist, and truly that pleases me greatly.'"

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GAS STOVE BRINKLES.

The New Way to Bake Apples and Potatoes Trouble Savers.

"The visit I had the other day from the gas stove demonstrator from all my respectable ideas about cooking."

"Baking apples in the oven, I suppose?"

"Then she began to tell me how much gas I'd have saved and how much better looking the apples would have been."

"Next she told me that when I was roasting a small piece of meat in the lower oven, or what I always called the broiler, I might just as well save gas by cooking something in the oven right above, which was heated by the same row of gas burners."

"I thought she meant a pudding or a pie, or even a small cake, but she said she could use a small toaster with a little baking pan underneath to catch the drippings. The little toaster rests right on the baking pan."

"Her toasty turkey style of doing things is quicker and easier than my old way, and now that I've tried the different things she told me, and found each of them worked well, I'm hoping she'll come again."

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