

Susan Glaspell, Author, Playwright by Chance

Interesting Career of Greenwich Village Writer Who Helps the Provincetown Players—She Tells of the Joys of Her Work and Its Aims

By CHLOE ARNOLD.

SUSAN GLASPELL became an author on account of politics and a playwright purely by accident. I say this for the reason that it would be difficult to enumerate any preliminary events before introducing Miss Glaspell. But for all her literary endowments you will do well to keep in your thoughts a woman so sincere and simple as to be like one of Barrie's finest characters.

Now about the writing. Miss Glaspell's girlhood was spent in Des Moines, Iowa (not I-o-w-a, as some say), and as soon as she had attained any age worth considering she got a job reporting on a paper. Des Moines is the capital of the State, in consequence an admirable place for a potential writer, or so Miss Glaspell says. It soon became her business to regale the readers with all the news from the State House. She wrote about the sessions of the Legislature and interviews with important politicians.

"Almost everything," she said, "in politics is a story. As soon as I discovered that I commenced to write. Yes, of course I had, thought I might be a writer."

And these are the circumstances under which she became a playwright: For some years now a group of friends, who in winter dwell in the neighborhood of Washington Square, have gone to Provincetown, on Cape Cod in Massachusetts, for the summer. Among these were Miss Glaspell, her husband, George Cram Cook, and many artists and writers.

Neill Boyce had written a great unacted one act play. And the colony decided to produce it. A sea veranda was used as a stage. And the audience sat back in "Charm" magic caissons, opening on the foam. Several warships lay at anchor, and two light-houses in the blue distance finished a beautiful setting in which the play was given with tremendous effect.

Under that inspiration Susan Glaspell went home and wrote her miniature masterpiece, the one act play "Trifles." Until that moment she did not know she could write plays; but is now constantly delighted with this new means of expression.

Miss Glaspell's Cape Cod Play. On Friday, December 28, the Provincetown Players gave their third bill of one act plays in their little theatre on Macdougall street, just off Washington Square. Miss Glaspell has a new play which was acted at this time with "The Airshaft" by Irwin Granich and "The Angel Intruders" by Floyd Bell.

Miss Glaspell's play is about Provincetown, and its name is "The Outsider." It tells of the struggle between the sea and the forest, and the scene is laid at a lighthouse on the sand dunes which protect, as best they may, that part of the Cape against the ravages of the ocean. A United States life saving station used to be there, but had to be abandoned. But now Adolph Lewisohn of New York city has bought the place and goes there summers.

The setting of this new play brings us to one of the difficulties of the Provincetown Players—making the sets. For none of these is a professional stage director, and even Mr. Belasco might have some difficulty in confining his idea of a correct scene to a stage about 4x9, with two or three feet in which to shift scenes. But as some of the Players are architects and some artists, the achievement is usually good.

But perhaps making the scenery for the plays compares in no particular with the spirited contest for and against a new play about which there is any doubt in the minds of the eighteen or twenty persons of the governing board. Only two persons draw any salaries at all, and they only small ones, so this work of love is pursued with a vigor not commonly associated with things of the sort.

"Two years ago in Provincetown,"

Miss Glaspell said, "we started the Players in a spirit of fun, and we have had much joy out of the venture. Nothing is ever so good that one goes at seriously."

"Plays in manuscript are rarely bought. So that by producing them in our little theatre we sometimes give the writers a chance to sell their work. For a manager rarely buys plays in manuscript unless he knows the author's work. And that system, as you can see, would give the new author—our playwrights are almost all new to that particular thing—no chance at all."

The first new venture in longer plays is to be tried out by the Provincetown Players by the Neighborhood Players very soon. It is a play of Fericels, by George Cram Cook.

Where the Players Meet. One of the substantial joys of the Provincetown Players is the excellent fare from the hands of Christine, who used to preside over the culinary mysteries of the Greenwich Village Inn before it got to be a sort of five act restaurant. For this year they have not only the theatre below stairs in the old mansion but the floor above it. In front they have established the office, and in the rear dining room, where the twenty-five or thirty persons associated get a fine dinner for 30 cents each.

Eugene O'Neill is usually to be found here. He would not be known as the son of "the celebrated James O'Neill who created the 'Count of Monte Cristo' and now plays in 'The Wanderer,'" but as an independent playwright who has to his credit "Bound East for Cardiff," "The Habit Hole" and "The Long Voyage Home."

Mary Heaton Vorse, like other plain clothes citizens of Greenwich Village, is almost always there. A most of the Players work of days the rehearsals are given at night, and from five nights, the former number of performances for one bill, they have raised it to seven. Though, as Miss Glaspell said, they just make enough money to cover their expenses.

Miss Glaspell and her husband are among those persons who have moved from the heart of Greenwich Village down to Charlton street. One goes by way of Macdougall street and discover Chariton, next to Spring, a broad street with many fine old houses. But street conversation there is done in Italian, and those who have gone down there feel as if they were going through the high adventures of pioneers when they undertake to create a home in the midst of an alien civilization.

It was twilight and a wood fire burned brightly on the hearth, lighting up the large drawing room of a stately mansion, now colonized by the more serious people from Greenwich Village. Miss Glaspell prepared the tea. She is small, with wistful brown eyes and light hair parted in the middle, and she was wearing a white colored dress, the sleeves and collar of which were edged with mole fur.

In remembering the high lights of the conversation by the fireside one recalls that she said a necessity to any art is leisure.

"Not leisure to spend doing nothing, but time to think while at a given task," she said. "I usually wrote of mornings, and I do not like to think that in two hours I must stop and see some one or go some place; but that I can work away uninterrupted until I have done all I can."

"Everybody has his place in the world. That's why there are so many arts and occupations. Some go to war; others write or engage in commerce. But the person who thinks he can do everything generally ends by doing nothing."

The Joy of Writing. "The war must necessarily affect us all. But I find I cannot do war work. I am entirely unfitted to public service of any kind. If I am out the night before at a meeting I find that I cannot work as well the next day."

"Stories, if one has real, true ideas, develop as you go along. There is not the struggle of creating that one would

suppose. Everything proceeds naturally, and all a writer has to do, if, as I say, he has a true situation is to set the story down. But if I try to do anything else I invariably discover that I have lost interest in the story; it becomes trivial and unreal."

"The great joy in writing is to get into a novel. There is a steady going to it, and you are interested to see what will happen next, and you don't know yourself until you get to the event. Short stories are more difficult and they require a deft quickness of touch not necessary at all in the leisurely delight of novel writing."

"I know how to write a certain sort of thing which I know will sell; but that is not the kind of work I like to do. But the times when I have been poorest were when I was doing what I wanted to do. I am not sensible to think that an author would follow this method to the point of starvation, though suppressing one's individuality in mode of thought and expression has been the cause of more literary deaths than actual starvation. There is no development in following the crowd."

"I think every one should do as near as he can what he wants to do. Then if he does not produce anything worth while, he knows that he can't. You always know anyway that you will get along somehow."

Greenwich Village Poetries. In a back parlor is where Miss Glaspell does her work, and it was littered with all sorts of literary debris, manuscripts, papers, and book reviews. And besides a few pieces of fine old mahogany. Like most other women of mark in the world Miss Glaspell retains the name under which she became known for work of high excellence in novels and short stories. She does not feel kindly toward the public part of Greenwich Village.

"Serious persons, artists, writers and musicians," she said, "have neither time nor inclination to be fashionable. But the extravagance in clothes, observable in some persons who are mistaken for the people of Greenwich Village, is one almost want to keep up with the mode."

Then one fares back to Macdougall street, which is of foreign flavor at this time of evening. The elders converse in Italian, and dark eyed children talk in the latest American slang. Old oil casks are being stored in cellars. It is a street that Holman Smith must have loved. The Woolworth Building is to the south, a bright sword in a gray, December twilight, while to the north the Metropolitan tower blazes a red beacon.

At the Provincetown Players one sees the large mail box and an impatient bundle of plays. And the noise of a rehearsal in full progress mingling with the noise of the traffic in the street.

THE KNITTERS.

MEN in the street cars are so polite these days, particularly to women who are doing their bit by knitting, that it is embarrassing," said a stenographer. "I am studying French and in my bag I naturally carry my French books. I prefer to open my half hour in the subway studying my French lessons rather than in any other way. But when a man gives me a seat I feel in duty bound to knit, and as a result I am losing my best half hour for study, for if there is one place you can concentrate your mind on study it is the subway during the rush hours."

WOMEN EASY PREY FOR MODERN BUNCO MEN

By JEANNE JUDSON.

SOME ONE was asking the other day where to look for the countryman who used to buy the Singer Building and the trick of pure gold plated brass from the mine in the Far West; who used to go to Chicago and pay \$100 to see the Masonic Temple turn round, and who was the hero of dozens of other pleasing stories of like nature.

The person who asked was merely trying to satisfy his curiosity. But there are other persons whose curiosity about this genial old gentleman is not so idle. These persons know that the old gentleman still lives, only he has been reincarnated as a woman, and she is not always old.

Along with new independence, political and financial, woman has also assumed the high privilege of being a desirable victim for the bunco man. In years gone by an occasional friendless widow was persuaded to give up her insurance money for some gilded mining stock, but for the most part women were not a productive field.

With a new generation we have developed an entirely new system of obtaining money under false pretences. Only one thing remains the same: Fakery still works twice as hard making one's dishonest penny as it used to make an honest one.

Fortunes used to be made in pretended mines; now they're made in motion pictures, and the motion picture gold brick is one of the most lucrative—to the salesman—on the market. It takes various forms and is usually sold to a woman—a woman who is sure she is just as cute as Mary Pickford, and that when it comes to vamping she can make Theda Bara look like a country cousin.

She reads an advertisement for actresses (experience not necessary) and she looks at her cover with undisciplined admiration, but says that before he gives her a tryout she must get some good stiffs. Of course that will cost money. Not much, for as yet she does not know how much money she has, and he never wants more than 100 per cent. of her total assets.

After she has paid for the photographs they decide to give her a tryout before the camera. Of course that costs money too. Every test brings renewed praise from the producer. He is enthusiastic about the talents and possibilities of the applicant. When she cannot be persuaded to spend any more money her name and address are taken and she goes home to wait in vain for a call to rehearse in the big production that has been promised.

Then there are thousands of people all over the country who have paid to be taught to write scenarios. The sad part about this is that there are actually a few legitimate schools of scenario writing. There is a certain mechanical technique to writing scenarios which can be taught, provided in addition to this the student has some imagination and natural ability. For in spite of the things one sometimes sees on the screen writing scenarios does require brains.

As in the good old days all forms of gold brick selling hinge on the desire of people to win a large fortune from a small investment. There are still men who regret the passing of the mysterious stranger who came with a soiled letter from a relative, a political prisoner in Spain, telling of the gold mine in Mexico, which the prisoner, who is about to die, cannot use himself, but would like to give to his relative who is free to go to Mexico and lay claim to it. There was always some philanthropist who was willing to pay the expenses of the trip for a half interest in the mine.

It is true that this man has not been seen around New York for twenty-five years, but his spirit still moves. He came last in the form of a man who had a large Government order from the secret agent of some European country. Of course the strictest secrecy must be maintained, but here was the order all properly sealed and delivered for so many thousand guns, and the man knew a factory that would make them and a ship that would deliver them, but he needed a few thousand dollars to swing the deal.

Would the victim advance the necessary funds to swing it for a modest half of the profits? He usually would, especially if he was first invited to a very private dinner party with the Countess who was the foreign agent on this side. Two years ago New York was full of men with mysterious Government contracts of this sort.

But new grafts for old is the constant and unceasing cry of the American public. They are fickle, and while a few old standard makes of gold bricks are always to be found on the market, there is a steady demand for novelties which must be satisfied.

It has been said with deplorable truth in some cases that the war charity gold brick is one of the most successful of the 1917 models. There are so many funds asking contributions that there is a steady demand for novelties which must be satisfied.

The spurious nobleman who used to live in the best clubs and dine at ex-

clusive tables has been replaced by the interesting foreign "officer," whose uniform, secured heaven knows where, provides him with an open sesame. That some one of these men is exposed every few weeks does not seem to interfere with the operations of others.

Has the lightning rod salesman passed utterly into oblivion? No, indeed. His ghost passed through the streets only a short time ago. He was not selling lightning rods. He was merely stopping at every house to inform the residents that the United States Government had passed a law compelling every one to have a mail box out in front. The postman must not have to waste time ringing bells. Every box must be in place before the first of the following month, then only a few days off.

Of course the lady of the house wanted to know where the mail box could be purchased. The man told her she could doubtless get a very satisfactory box at any department or hardware store. Of course the Government was issuing an official box. In fact, a man with a wagon would follow him that very afternoon selling the boxes for \$2 each, but he would only stop by request, as he was a Government employee and had no time to waste.

If the lady cared to pay \$1 as a deposit and guarantee of good faith he would ask the man to stop. The lady, who had visions of long searching through stores for the mail box and of finally being arrested for not having the box in place at the time set, immediately paid the dollar and the salesman went on to the next house. Of course the man with the wagon never came.

While women are the most active gold brick buyers to-day, they are also active as sellers. There is the female financial genius who will invest your money so cleverly that after the first month you draw \$5 per cent. on it. By paying your interest with the money she collects from other people she is able to continue operations for several months before she leaves for the great unknown or before the authorities catch her.

Perhaps the greatest difference between ancient and modern methods lies in the fact that few of the modern gold brick salesmen lay themselves open to legal prosecution. In the good old days before the lid had been invented and Rome was an open town there were any number of bewhiskered philosophers from the East who were willing to sell a love philtre, the elixir of life or a sure fire beauty tonic for a price. They hung around in the

market place or outside the Coliseum and never even paid for police protection.

Their trade has never fallen off from that time to the present, and while modern beauty doctors employ a heavy camouflage of "fresh air, exercise and proper diet" there are still thousands of people who prefer to pay a big price for some mysterious, swift route back to youth and beauty.

Stories of these seekers usually confuse themselves to women, but it must be remembered that Ponce de Leon was a man, and a woman who answers beauty questions for a living says that at least one out of every six letters she receives is from a man. Most of these men write to find out how they can restore either lost hair or a lost waist line, and they will do anything except work for the desired result.

Fortune tellers are as thriving to-day as they were 2,000 years ago, though over half the people who go to consult them do not have any real faith in their prophecies. They go because for from twenty to sixty minutes some one talks to them about themselves.

It is this same variety that makes people pay the palmist or phrenologist for telling them all about their character. There are so few places where one can be the sole topic of conversation. These people are not to be pitied. They get what they pay for. It is somewhat different with the people who answer the advertisements for song writers and scenario writers. These people send in their limping lyrics and impossible scenarios and receive back letters saying that for a certain sum their work will be criticized and improved. In the case of the song writer a request sometimes comes for a few hundred dollars to pay cost of publication.

The advertiser is sure the song will make a hit if published and then the big royalties will more than pay back the small investment. The song actually is published—about one hundred copies, but it is never put on the market. Sometimes the scenario is really sent around to the producers, but they accept a fee for revising it, and they are fully within the law because they do actually make an effort to sell it.

So long as greed and vanity are common human attributes the gold brick salesman will not suffer want. He is a psychologist whom the efficiency engineers have neglected. Properly utilized his talents might be used to end the war or promote the brotherhood of man or complete the subway.

From Patrick F. Madigan's collection of autograph manuscripts.

Byron: Midnight Hour.
Midnight hour! how sweet the calm
My solemn sadness impart;
That voice, as if healing balm,
Cometh with thee into this heart!
Yet bring me not thy grace, alone—
Let others share the dear delight—
Oh, let thy soothing monotone
Be heard of all this holy night!
Thou shalt angels walk the sky,
The stars cry out in rapturous glee,
And radiant splendore glorify
The waking earth and wondering sea;
Jehovah's reassuring word
Shall be proclaimed abroad again,
And tidings everywhere be heard
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men!
This is the glory of the storm,
The sacrifice that makes man free,
And of the Babe in Bethlehem born
That midnight's voices speak to me.
Speak on, O voice, sweet and low—
Soothing our griefs and doubts away—
That all mankind may hear and know
That rapture cometh with the Day!
— Eugene Field.

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ONE OF FIELD'S FAMOUS POEMS

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Hospitable Woman Has Wild Holiday

Rescinded Invitations to Soldiers for Christmas Dinner Accepted Unexpectedly and Liven the Day Madly

NO, not all the effective war service is being performed by the boys at the front, nor yet by patriots of a single sex. There is Mrs. Blank, for instance, who lives far up on Washington Heights. Blank isn't her real name, but with that exception this is an entirely true recital of how she did her bit on Christmas Day.

Mrs. Blank had decided to entertain two soldiers at a Yuletide dinner on a notifiable evening. She invited the committee which assigned men from the various camps near New York. She was disappointed, of course, when her husband found that his business would call him out of the city on the day of the big spread, but proceeded with her plans nevertheless. She altered her arrangements only to the extent of instructing the maid to prepare dinner for three, instead of four.

"What, I get dinner on Christmas Day?" exclaimed the kitchen monarch. "It can't be done, mame. I have an engagement to dine with some of my friends."

So, because there is a little Blank in the family who demands much of her attention, Mrs. Blank reluctantly concluded it would be impossible for her to prepare such a dinner as two hungry soldiers deserved and telephoned the committee to that effect.

"We can't alter arrangements over the wire," came the answer. "Please write a letter, sending it by special delivery."

Mrs. Blank did so, enclosing a check to cover the cost of two man sized dinners at any downtown restaurant. So far so good. But at 1 o'clock on the great day of days there was a ring of the front door bell of the Blank apartment and Mrs. Blank was confronted by a stalwart young man in khaki.

"It's very good of you to invite me to a real Christmas dinner," the visitor exclaimed beamingly. "But—but—didn't they tell you?" Mrs. Blank managed to stammer. No, obviously they had not, and amid much confusion she managed to explain the situation.

"I'm so very sorry," she added, now on the verge of tears. "I thought you were the soldier."

"Oh, that's all right," said the soldier. "Really, I'm not very hungry anyway."

But something in his face seemed to belie his words and a happy thought struck Mrs. Blank.

"Well, I am," she declared. "I tell you what we'll do. If you don't mind, we'll walk down the hill and have dinner in a little restaurant I know about."

Her husband, contrary to custom, had neglected to provide reserve funds when he left the city. She hastened to his clothes closet and ransacked his overalls in the hope of finding an overlooked bill, but without success. A search of the absent maid's room was equally fruitless.

Then Mrs. Blank bethought herself of a coin collection which the family had cherished for two or three generations. Mixed in with the foreign money were some silver American coins, not many, but sufficient. Relieved, she dropped these into her bag, arranged baby's cap and presented herself before her soldier.

The neighbors were mystified to see Mrs. Blank walking along chatting with a smiling soldier who trundled a perambulator. The dinner in a little restaurant in the West 150th street quarter just exhausted the supply of rare coins, but everybody was happy. The soldier finally confessed that he had stretched the truth a trifle when he protested he wasn't hungry. "Along about 3 o'clock the little procession moved up the hill again, the renewed wonderment of the neighbors. But their mystification was as nothing to the amazement of Mrs. Blank when she returned to her apartment. The party found another soldier seated on the stairs, patiently waiting.

"Oh, I am so very, very sorry—" Mrs. Blank started, repeating the formula she had used a few hours before. "You can't," responded Soldier No. 2 in delight. He was a Frenchman who had been caught unawares in a country, and his knowledge of English was almost as limited as Mrs. Blank's available fortune had been before the raid on the coin collection.

Away! Mrs. Blank invited the two uniformed men inside while she suggested to collect her thoughts and mapped out a plan of campaign. She was putting baby to bed when like a fissa came the recollection that Mrs. Dash, up on the top floor, had told her she was having her husband's relatives to dinner that day. Surely Mrs. Dash would have enough scraps left to make up a meal for at least one.

She rushed upstairs and returned beaming, for her quest was successful. But when the hostess reappeared the Frenchman was again on his feet, bowing, voicing a million apologies and declaring that he had not dinner, "be you assure, chere madame."

But Mrs. Blank was not to be deceived by any more soldiers who weren't hungry. Soldier No. 2 was ushered into the dining room, and thanks to the good Mrs. Dash a steaming meal—re-steamed—was set before him. Every few minutes Mrs. Dash found she had overlooked something and came tripping down stairs with a new course.

So there was an abundance of Christmas cheer for everybody and, leaving the floor of the apartment, the two soldiers very happy. We sent them to a restaurant in this neighborhood. Yes, the women too are doing their bit.

Family of Five Generations

Left to right (seated): Mrs. Margaret Varron, Miss Arline Alberta Pokorny, Mrs. M. Varron Fargo. Standing: Mrs. Albert Fargo Reid and Mrs. Madeline Reid Pokorny.

THREE generations in a family, are not unusual. Four generations are rare, but to the Bronx goes the distinction of having a family with five generations represented, all well and happy. This remarkable household is ensconced at 506 Union avenue and the five links in the noteworthy human chain are all represented by the gentler but apparently longer surviving sex.

It was in 1825 that a baby girl was born in New York and she grew firmly attached to the fifth floor of the town. Eventually she was married to an engineer officer in the navy, becoming Mrs. Margaret Varron. It is Mrs. Varron who is the first branch in the family tree in the Bronx that distinguishes that borough. Two sons and two daughters were born to Mrs. Varron and one of these daughters is Mrs. M. Fargo, the second branch of our tree.

Mrs. Fargo had eight children—four sons and four daughters—and though she is now 65 years old she is as active as any woman far younger. She, too, remains in the Union avenue household attentive to her mother as she has



been for years. Though her descendants make many demands on her time, the Battalion Chief Albert Reid of the Fire Department married one of the four Fargo girls, Alberta, and the third branch of the tree had nine children, seven of whom still live. The chief, his wife and youngsters still live in Union avenue.

One of the Reid girls, Madeline, married William Pokorny, a public accountant, and to maintain the family tie, the new household also took an apartment in the Union avenue house. Thus the fourth branch was firmly attached to the fifth floor.

Soon came the fifth branch or should one call it a twig? when a baby girl came to bless the Pokorny's union and the remarkable tree was complete. Little Miss Pokorny is considered by the neighbors to be the firmest attached to the fifth floor. Her mother is too busy to comfort her childish sorrows, her grandmother to act. Or if grandmother be engaged elsewhere great-grandma stands by. And of course if a poor little girl can't be cuddled and comforted by one of these distant relatives, she remains great-great-grandmother on the court of last resort.



Susan Glaspell.