

## CONFESSIONS OF A WIFE

### HATE IS AS THRILLING AS LOVE

"On my entrance in the big scene, Margie," said Paula, "Earnest Lawton is supposed to be looking at my picture and bemoaning the fact that while he is in love with me he is in honor bound to another.

"His speech was: 'Elga, Elga! Little girl, you will never know how much I love you! I will not cloud your young life with the avowals of a man who has no right to say he loves you and will love you until eternal sleep shuts out all consciousness.'

"Then I had to say with a little intake of breath (for I had been standing behind him on the stage): 'Oh, I'm so glad, so happy!'

"Well, Margie, whenever I had said those words before I had said them from my heart, for it had always given me wondrous thrill to hear Earnest Lawton say he would love me forever, even on the stage.

"That day, as he said them, the words left me cold, but I pulled myself together, and as the words, 'I'm so glad, so happy,' came from my lips, I knew I had never given that speech with such semblance of feeling, such apparent truth. I remember thinking to myself I was a real actress after all.

"Earnest's Lawton's surprised start as he heard my words was more than acting. He had not expected me to 'speed up' as he called it. I think for a moment his pride was hurt—that I could still act a part I had been living.

"When my big speech came how I blessed the fates that had made me a woman, for under the same circumstances I do not think a man could have put himself out of it as a woman could.

"Do you remember, Margie, that beautiful story, 'Life on An African Farm'? I think it is the best story Olive Schreiner ever wrote. If you have read it you will certainly recall

the place where she says women must be actresses from the cradle to the grave. I do not recall the exact words, but somewhere in the book one of the characters remarks: 'All society says to a boy, be; to a girl, act.' A girl must suppress all feelings and act as convention has prescribed for her, while a man's greatest glory is that he can be himself always.

"Women are all actresses by inheritance as well as by the curriculum that a man-made world has laid down for their education. That night for the first and last time I blessed my class traditions.

"Margie, in all my acting I never said that big speech of love and loyalty to Earnest Lawton with such fervor as I did that night, and for the first time I did not believe a word of it.

"Earnest could not make himself believe I was acting and when I was through and he had me in his arms he whispered: 'So you do love me after all, baby child?'

"Even that triumphant aside did not deter me from finishing with a great burst of tears, which were real. The audience thought I was weeping for joy at my renunciation of my wonderful lover, but I was weeping over the loss of one more fair illusion.

"As he held me in his arms while the curtain was going down, Earnest whispered to me: 'You are not going to be cruel to me any more, are you, Paula?'

"I slowly broke away from him and said in a very low tone so that the other actors might not hear if they were listening in the wings: 'I do not know what you mean by being cruel to you, but I do know I shall never speak to you again off the stage if I can help it. You made me think you were free to love me.'

"And so I am," he interrupted,