

III

stormed the Great White Way, bombarded managers and besieged every vaudeville agent on Broadway.

My room and board cost me \$5 a week and I had to buy a new dress suit so as to be equipped to take advantage of the first engagement that might turn None turned up! Soon all my money was gone and I was in debt to my landlady. But she was the kindest and most human one in all New York. I shall always remember the twinkle in her eyes and her rich, contagious laugh. All that summer, she never asked me for the money she knew I didn't have. In order that I might make a good appearance on my daily quest for work, she washed my only shirt each night and scrubbed my lone straw hat frequently.

At last I was given an opportunity to show my act. I was told to go to the New York Roof where two agents would look over my turn at ten o'clock one Monday morning. I knew that my chances of impressing the agents were slight, for I depended upon a receptive audience to put over my act effectively. I did not relish the idea of appearing before a virtually empty house with two

critical agents as the only spectators.

I hit upon a plan—one that required bluff and plenty of it. I inserted the following advertisement in a Sunday paper:

WANTED: 1000 men for one hour at \$1 each. Apply ten o'clock Monday morning at the New York Roof.

When I arrived at the theater Monday morning the place was thronged. Entrance was impossible. The crowd lined the streets and jammed the elevators. I knew of a back entrance and made my way upstairs. Every seat was taken and more men were coming up. The two agents, who were seated near the stage, were dumbfounded. There was no way to quiet the mob.

I walked on the stage and called for

silence. The crowd became quiet.
"Gentlemen," I said, "there appears

account for this unusual situation, but I know that everything will soon be set right. Probably the man in charge has not yet arrived; I suppose he will be here soon. In the meantime it would be best for all of you to remain here quietly while I entertain you with some card

My suggestion was greeted with a roar of approval. The crowd settled back in their seats and filled the aisles. Then I began my act. The agents were impressed. When I presented the Rising Card Trick I was rewarded with an outburst of applause. When I finished with the Duck Trick, pulling a large duck from the back of a man's coat, the crowd broke out in a riot of laughter.

A Chance with Tony Pastor

I took my cards, left the stage, and ran down the back steps of the theater.

There were several other acts scheduled to appear, so the agents had no suspicion that I was the instigator of the mob scene. They looked on me as the savior of the situation. My game of bluff had won, and when I called at the agents' offices, they told me that they had several engagements for me.

But my success was dimmed by the news that the first opening would not come for three weeks. I had reached the limit of my resources, and decided to

try the game of bluff on someone else.

Among the theatrical agents was a man named Billy Plimmer, who had put off every effort I made to impress him with my act. I decided that this time I would make him listen to me. I went to his office, walked by his secretary, entered Plimmer's office and turned the key in the lock.

Plimmer half rose from his chair and looked at me in amazement. I looked straight into his eyes, and said:

"Mr. Plimmer, I want to show you my

He did not reply, but watched me steadily as I began my card manipulations, which consisted of original sleights that I still perform. Nothing like that I still perform.

NCE more I invaded New York, to be some misunderstanding. I cannot these manipulations had been seen before. Plimmer settled back in his chair, impressed. He had an eye for originality and said nothing about the locked When I had finished I knew that had succeeded.

He gave me a note to Tony Pastor and arranged an interview with the famous impresario of vaudeville for the following day.

I shall never forget my entrance into Tony Pastor's private office. He seemed to know instinctively that I was at the end of my resources and gave me a kindly greeting. I had fortified myself for the ordeal, but my throat was dry and I found difficulty in starting the conversation. He smiled and said:

"It's an engagement you want?"

"Yes, sir," said I. He looked me over slowly, pursing his lips and rubbing his chin reflectively. Finally he spoke: "Come to rehearsal

next Monday at eleven o'clock."

The whole thing was so sudden I could not realize I had really secured an engagement at Tony Pastor's. A pleasant voice brought me back to earth.
"How much do you want?"

Even in my confused mental state I remembered that vaudeville performers had advised me to value my services

So I answered glibly, "Eighty dollars." Tony Pastor looked at me with a quizzical smile and a twinkle in his kindly eyes. "Young man, I have offered you an engagement. I don't know what you can do, but from your looks I think you're all right. As to eighty dollars a week, I can't afford to pay that much. As you're a stranger in New York your name will not add a cent to my business. Besides I can engage all the well-known acts I want at that price. Fifty dollars is all I can pay you." Then he added with characteristic generosity. give you a contract for eighty dollars and charge you thirty dollars to put your name on the billboards. If your act's a success, the contract will help you to get a larger salary in future engagements.3

different to me. I fancied I could see my name in big black letters on the billboard in front of Tony Pastor's and underneath the magic phrase "The Man That Mystified Herrmann."

I advertised at once for an assistant. That night, after supper, a small colored boy knocked at my door. His name was George. He was nine years old. He appeared to be a bright, intelligent boy and after a few questions I engaged him at five dollars a week, and all expenses, including board and clothes. We practiced all day Sunday, and Monday morning we went to Tony Pastor's for rehearsal. I carried a small grip containing my cards and George followed lugging a duck.

The boy had never been in a theater.

I was about to warn him not to be nervous when it occurred to me that it would not be wise to put any such idea into his head.

We were third on the bill at Tony Pastor's that afternoon—the red letter Monday in the calendar of my days. I can close my eyes and recall the scene. The orchestra played the Zenda waltz, and I moved forward out of the wings like a man in a dream, conscious of nothing going on about me until a few scattered handclaps in the audience brought me to my senses.

A Trying Rehearsal

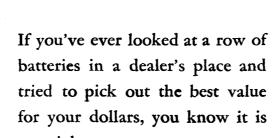
Nothing seemed to go well with the act. The day was sweltering and the inside the theater like a furnace. My hands perspired so the cards stuck to my fingers. The footlights were brighter than I had ever experienced and dazzled my eyes. The house was packed, and for the first time I knew what it was to have stage fright. But the boy George was as cool and unconcerned as if he were rehearsing in my room. His absolute lack of self-consciousness helped me. I pulled myself together, managed to get through my card manipulations in some sort of way, and finished by inveigling a man onto agements." the stage and pulling a duck from his In the street the whole world seemed coat collar. The (Continued on page 38)

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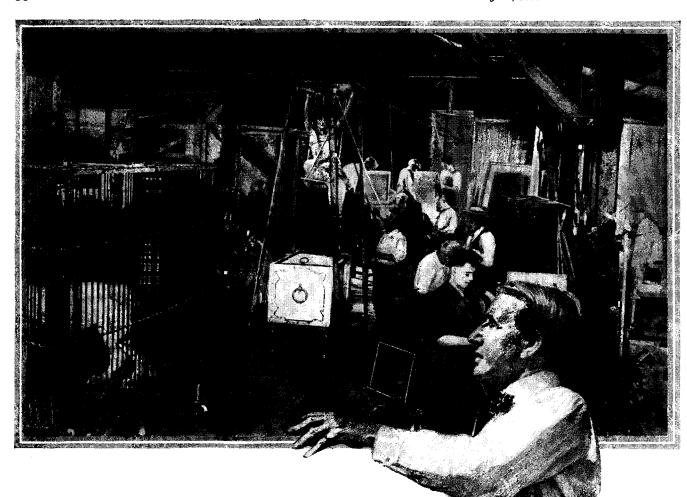
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audience laughed half-heartedly as the curtain fell and there was a scattering round of applause.

I went to the dressing-room as soon as I got my "props" together, for I had been told that Tony Pastor always stood in a secret door, behind a curtain, at the opening performance each Monday, to review the acts. I removed the make-up with trembling fingers, and with George at my heels went out of the stage door, expecting every second to hear a voice behind me canceling my engagement.

Success Appears at Last

But I was not nervous at the evening performance. The impulse to try again steadied me. Then, too, George's ease had a tonic effect on me. The act was a success from the very start. The card manipulations went with a vim that aroused the most blasé variety audience in New York to a high pitch of enthusiasm. My fingers worked with the precision of pistons, doing their appointed work without slip or hindrance. The comedy finish with the duck went over big, and the curtain fell amid a veritable storm of applause. Again and again, the curtain was raised and each time I walked forward to the footlights to make my bow. As I came off the last time, the thunder of applause still rolling through the house, Tony Pastor, his shrewd eyes beaming, put his hands on my shoulder. "Well done, my boy. Fine!"

Before the week was over at Tony Pastor's the market value of my services had jumped from fifty to a hundred dollars a week, and it was not long be-fore I was getting double that sum every time the ghost walked!

William Morris, the leading agent at the time, booked me solid in the vaudeville theaters of the United States from coast to coast.

Three times after success was attained I appeared at Tony Pastor's theater, and each time I stipulated that my salary should be the old one of fifty dollars. The last time I played at Tony Pastor's he had become old and feeble and seldom came to the theater. But I waited for him all morning, for it was matter of sentiment with me that my old friend himself should write out the

contract. When it came to the salary he looked up with his old smile, although his hand was shaking with the palsy of age

"How much now, Howard?" Tears were close to my lids as I answered, "Always the same, Mr. Pastor-fifty dollars.

I never saw him after that week. My debt to him is still unpaid.

Following my success at

Tony Pastor's, I toured the country and was starred in the leading vaudeville houses. Then I left for England, and arrived there in the fall of 1900. I was booked for four weeks at the Palace Theater in London. The Palace was considered the finest vaudeville theater in the world. I was doubtful of success for so long an engagement, and advised the manager, Mr. Charles Morton, to abridge the contract to two weeks. He agreed, but my success on the opening night in London was greater even than my first night at Tony Pastor's. My nerves were taut as I walked out of the wings, but the audience applauded each of my tricks heartily.

Up to this time, I had always finished my act with the duck trick. This comedy feature followed the throwing of cards into the audience. I had never

considered this particular feat as ex-traordinary; but at the Palace that night, as I tossed cards over the audience and to the back of the theater, the applause was interspersed with "bravos," many in the

front seats standing to see the cards striking against the back wall.

There are two tiers of boxes in the Palace, and as I threw cards into each box of the first tier, the applause greatly increased. When I had finished with the second tier, it seemed that everyone

was applauding, and amid the roar of "bravos," I sent a stream of cards to the gallery and against the dome of the theater.

I was stunned by the acclamation of the great audience. It would have been folly to attempt the duck trick, and risk an artistic success for comedy, so I bowed, while the entire orchestra of forty men stood in the pit and applauded. That is considered the greatest tribute that an artist can receive.

The next day Mr. Morton offered me a contract at a salary much higher than any sum I had received in my own

Offers came from London managers and from theaters all over England and the Continent. I finally accepted a contract at the Empire Theater in London for three months a year for a period of three years. My outside engagements at clubs and private houses sometimes numbered four and five in one evening. dressed at home, played a club or two, drove to the theater in time for my act, jumped into a cab again and played two or three private engagements before retiring. My fees ranged from five to twenty-five pounds.

Hobnobbing with Emperors

During my London engagement the late King Edward, then Prince of Wales, witnessed my performance at the Palace Theater. The Prince was a sleight-of-hand performer himself. Curiously enough, nobody informed me of his presence in the royal box, and I was not aware of it until after the show, when Mr. Morton brought him to my dressing-room.

Prince Edward sat on a trunk, and in a few minutes I found myself teaching him how to hold a card and at the same time show his hand empty, back and front. He mastered the sleight with surprising dexterity, and as he was leaving he asked if he might return at some later date and practice it again. On four different occasions he attended the performance that winter, and each time came back to show me how he was progressing and to see if there was any thing else in magic he might learn.

The Queen's death put an end to private engagements in London, and as business would not pick up for several months I deemed it a good time to tour the Continent. In Paris I played be-fore President Loubet and the King of Siam at the same time. At Brussels I appeared before the King of the Belgians, and while in Budapest I gave a performance in the palace of the Emperor Franz Josef in honor of the birthday of one of his grandchildren. The next day the Emperor personally presented me with a large gold watch which struck the hours and minutes.

While appearing at the Winter Garden in Berlin I did my best to arrange a performance for the Emperor of Germany, but I was told bluntly that such a thing as an American vaudeville artist appearing before the Kaiser had never been heard of.

One morning, however, as I was driving in an open carriage down the famous Unter den Linden, a cordon of police forced our driver to the curb in line with hundreds of other vehicles. After the police had gone I ordered our driver to go on. He shook his head and muttered something about the Kaiser, several times. Then I noticed that the sidewalks were filling with people, lining up in serried ranks, and the meaning of the whole incident was plain.

In a few minutes the royal procession appeared. As the Emperor's carriage rolled by I had a sudden inspiration Jumping onto the seat, I took off my hat with my left hand, and raising my right hand in the air, produced a fan of cards at the finger tips. The Emperor followed every movement of my hand, and as the cards fluttered from my fingers to the ground he smiled and bowed twice.

The next instant two mounted policemen rode up and informed me in German that I was (Continued on page 50)





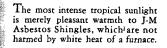
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RS-16

The Lady's Engaged

By Merle Thorpe

Editor, Nation's Business

The female of the species is more visionary, intuitive and tactful in business than the male, Mr. Thorpe finds. But she has an inferiority complex! There are 9,000,000 women employed in this country. Our national industry is undergoing an extensive interior decoration



Men in earlier days treated the woman worker like a dinner guest

OR nearly a year I have been asking executives about women in business. Are they able to com-pete with men in the higher positions? Do employers consciously or unconsciously discriminate against them in favor of men? What does the future hold for women in business?

I have discussed these questions with life insurance presidents, bank officials, manufacturers, department store owners, hotel managers, a railroad president, and perhaps twenty leaders in a dozen other fields.

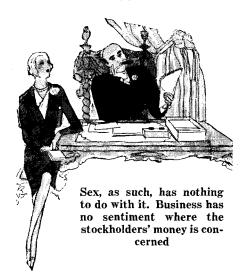
Herewith, not a detailed statistical

analysis of trends and tendencies, but an impression—for I took no notes—an impression of what American Business thinks of the woman in business.

It is noticeable, even to the casual observer, that women in great numbers have boldly entered the business arena and that the increase is by geometrical progression. The census showed 8,500,-000 women gainfully employed in 1920; unofficial government figures estimate the number today at 9,000,000. This is roughly one woman for every four men, who work for a livelihood in the United States. No figures as to women in executive positions are available, but a few straws in the wind point to fairly

safe conclusions.

First straw: One married woman in twenty-two was working for pay outside the home in 1890, says the Department of Labor, while one in eleven was similarly employed in 1920. My guess is that the census next year will show a still greater increase, and, while this pictures all women, it is fair to assume that those in the higher positions have increased accordingly.



of the University of Chicago, reports that from 1900 to 1920 the number of restaurant waiters increased about three times as fast as the number of families; restaurant owners four times as fast. Delicatessen dealers increased by forty-three per cent, or about three

times as fast as population.

Bakery production increased sixty er cent for 1914 to 1925, while population increased fifteen per cent.

Third straw: Several cities have a

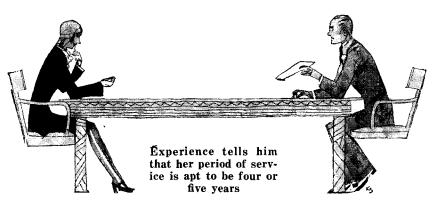
Woman's Chamber of Commerce, where a woman, to be eligible, must either own or manage a business. There is a Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, national, with chapters in forty-seven states and more than 52.000 women members. The Zonta Club, a civic organization of women executives, similar to the Rotary Club, has sixty-six clubs. The Soroptomist

Second straw: Changes in family ciently, race, religion, or previous condilife are significant. Professor Ogburn, tion of servitude have nothing to do tion of servitude have nothing to do with the case. A Steinmetz, immigrant hunch-back Pole, found his opportunity to fight to the top of a glorious career in a great American company.

The first observation can best be told

in the words of a chief executive. I had asked him, "You say you pay women less for the same quality and quantity of work than you pay a man. do you thus discriminate?"

"If two persons applying for a position of an executive nature," he answered, "one a man and one a woman, sat opposite my desk, I should consciously fix a figure for their services on this basis: I should apply an actuarial table. I should look at the man and say to myself that here is a man who shows latent ability. With proper coaching and training there is likelihood that in twenty-five years he may become a wheel-horse in the organization.



Club, a similar group, has 1,500 members.

Recently, I attended a business dinner in Petersburg, Virginia. The guests were seated at five long tables. One table was labeled: Business and Professional Women. There were about fessional Women. There were about sixty women, and I was told by the toastmaster that they were all actively engaged in business. And remember, this was Virginia!

The Impersonal Attitude

Forty, and even twenty years ago in means of livelihood had rare courage to face the ridicule and contempt of her neighbors, the objections of fathers and husbands, the slings and arrows of men competitors. Now, she arises from the breakfast table, nonchalantly announces she is going to look for a job, and by noon has been accepted in as matter-ofcourse a way as the application was

The executives I talked with were unanimous upon one thing: Sex, as such, (that is, skirts)—has nothing to do with it. They employ ability, capacity, nothing else. Business is full of sentiskirts)—has nothing to do ment, but not where stockholders' money is concerned. There it is glassy-eyed, hard. I believe the business man, offguard, has as much sentiment as a doctor, preacher, lawyer, teacher. But in the choice of assistants to do a job effi-

"For a period, any new addition to the staff is a liability. We put more in than we get back. Soon comes a turn-ing point, when the new member gives back more than he takes out. He has become an asset. When we hire anyone we take that chance. By long experience we have found that the best investment in new personnel is the one where the employee stays longest after that turning point has been reached.

"I look at the woman. My actuarial table, made up of experience and observation, shows me that instead of a probability of her staying with us for twenty-five years, the period is more apt to be four or five years. The liability is greater. The chance of the woman's staying twenty-five years and becoming indispensable to the organization is infinitely less probable.

"It becomes a matter of hard common sense. We can afford to pay the man more money than the woman, because over a period the investment will pro-

"I should like to know," I interrupted, "if you have had occasion to change your actuarial tables in the last ten

"Oh, yes, indeed," he replied, "ten years ago, I should say, I never figured on the possibility of a woman represent-ing more than temporary employment. Today, I find myself applying the test immediately and trying to satisfy my-



Social small-talk slowed down the office routine ten years ago

self on the point of how long she will be with us. I find myself cross-examining her, in an effort to bring out evidence as to her future.

"We buy the market. To the run-ofthe-mine employees we pay the market price. To those who show promise of a long-term investment, we pay more."

It must be said, however, that in a good many organizations there still prevails the feeling of twenty years ago, that all women are temporary. using the job as a stop-gap until they marry and transfer their activities to home-making. The keener executives, however, have sensed the change that has come about in twenty years, have adjusted their sights, and are attaching to their organizations women of promise, on an equal basis with men. Ideas change slowly.

Measuring Woman's Value

"What do you try to buy, in addition to hand and foot labor, when you employ a new member of your administrative staff?" has been a favorite question of mine, and, "How do you evaluate these qualities in men and women?"

The great majority placed first the

The great majority placed first the qualities of vision and imagination. Most of them do not call them by these story-book names, but, in the last analysis, that is what they mean. They were inclined to say that they looked for assistants who could think ahead, who could see the business undertaking a year from today, or even five years from today.

I know that it is an age-old theory that men use reason and women use intuition. (Continued on page 70)



A business career on an equal footing with men offers the woman an attrac-tive alternative to home-