

The Divine Spark

By George Ade

One Evening at a Converted Rink known as the Grand Opera House, a flock of intrepid Amateurs put on a War Drama.

Lila, principal Child of the Egg and Poultry King, played a Daughter of the Southland, with her Hair shaken out and Lamp Black on her Eye-Winkers, so as to look like Maxine.

All of her Relations and the other Members of the Pocahontas Bridge Whist and Pleasure Club were in Front, and they gave her a Hand every time she stepped out from behind a Tree.

She scored what is known in the Ibsen cult as a Knock-Out.

At 11 P. M., she was up on a lonesome Eminence, right between Sara Bernhardt and Julia Marlowe, waiting for a Telegram from C. F. to come on and tackle any Role that was too heavy for Maude Adams.

The proud Parents awoke next Morning to discover that Lady Macbeth was boarding with them.

When she moved from one Room to another, the Portieres had to be spread the entire length of the Pole, so as to make Room for her Head.

A local Haberdasher, who had been plotting to surround her with a new Bungalow and a lot of Mission Furniture, went to call as per Usual and found her away Up Stage, trying to look like Margaret Anglin in the Big Scene.

She was too busy to Hold Hands, for she was mapping out a Career which terminated with an Electric Sign on Broadway and the Street jammed with up-town Limousines.

So the Gents' Furnisher moved down the Street to a Brick House, the unmarried Inmates of which would begin burning Greek Fire and sending up Balloons every time a Live One slammed the Front Gate.

Lila had the Bacillus Theatricus gnawing in every part of her System.

She could see the magnificent Play House crowded from Pit to Dome, just as the Producing Manager sees it every August when the Pipe is drawing freely.

She could hear the Leading Man in the Dress Suit say, as he pointed up the Marble Stairway, "Ah, here comes the Countess Zika now." And then She would enter trippingly, wearing \$900 worth of spangled Raiment, whereupon the Vast Audience would stand up and Cheer.

Whilst enjoying this Trance she wore a Yellow Kimono and had her Meals sent to the Room.

Father saw that she was Hooked, so he loaded her into a Parlor Car and took her up to a School of Dramatic Art to have her searched for Talent.

The Head Crimp of this refined Shake-Down watched her do the Scene in which Ophelia goes Dotty and picks the imaginary Dandelions, and when it was all over and Shakespeare had been reduced to a Pulp, he slapped old Ready Money on the Back and told him his Daughter was a Phenom.

She had the Dramatic Instinct and the Fire of Genius and that indefinable Something which enables Eva Tanguay to earn more than the President of the United States.

With a couple of hundred Lessons in Correct Breathing, and the Vocal Cords loosened up with a Glove-Stretcher, and a row of Scallops put on the Technique, Mary Anderson would be right back in our midst.

So Lila got ready to fill the Vacancy caused by the Retirement of Ellen Terry, while Papa went back to the little Office in one corner of the Warehouse and began to sign Checks.

It took many an Egg to have Lila properly Conservatoried.

At last she came home with a Diploma showing that she was an Actress.

After that, she merely needed a Play and a Company and a lot of Scenery and a Manager and a Theater and the soft old Public buying of the Scalpers, in order to realize her modest Ambition to become a Real Star.

She took her Diploma and the Local Press Notices up to New York to see what she could get on them, and found 10,000 other incipient Modjedskas hitting the worn Trail that led from one Agency to another.

Artistic Temperaments were more Abundant than Lamp Posts, and getting an Audience with a Big Gun was just as easy as Opening a Time-Lock with a Hat Pin.

She had an offer at the Hippodrome to walk in front of an Elephant, waving a prop Palm, but she spurned it, because she was ready to do Desdemona at a Moment's Notice.

As for the Laudatory Article written by a would-be Willie Winter of the wild and wooly West, she couldn't find any one in the neighborhood of 42nd Street who had even heard of the Tank Town in which her Folks were so Prominent.

In order to get Experience, she signed up with a No. 4 Company, playing the Part of the deaf-and-dumb lady who crosses the Stage and removes the Tea Things early in the Second Act.

When the Troupe went on the Rocks at Mauch Chunk, Penna., the erstwhile Favorite of the Pocahontas Club found herself seated on a Trunk marked "Theater" standing off a Deputy Sheriff and waiting for an Answer to her Wire.

The First Old Woman, who remembered Edwin Booth, came and sat beside her.

"Do not be discouraged, Honey," said She. "Go right back and start all over, and possibly sometime Next Year you will again have the blessed Privilege of going up a neglected Alley twice a Day and changing your Clothes in a Barn. Any Girl with your Looks and Family Connections can curl up in a Four-Poster at night and then saunter to the Bath over a soft Rag in the Morning, but only a throbbing Genius can make these Night Jumps in a Day Coach and stop at a Hotel which is operated as an Auxiliary to a first-class Saloon. It will be Hard Sledding for the first 15 or

20 Years, but, by the time you are 45, you may reasonably count on getting 20 Weeks out of every 52, running around in front of a Kinetoscope."

Lila pulled into the Scene of her Early Triumphs with a mere suggestion of No. 2 Grease Paint still lingering behind the Ears.

As the Train rolled through the Yards, the Foreman of the Section Gang narrowly escaped being hit in the Head with a tin Make-Up Box hurled from the rear of the Observation Car.

Next day she had a strip of Red Carpet spread for the Haberdasher and was learning to Cook in Paper Bags.

Whenever she hears of a Good Show coming to Town she invites all of her Friends to come out to the Bungalow and Play Rhum on the Mission Furniture.

MORAL: The True Friend of Humanity is one who goes to the Home Talent Benefit for Something and Hisses all Evening.