

HAROLD ACTON VIVIAN

THE THEATRICAL PRIMER

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The Theatrical Primer

1

Here, children, is a Theatre. A Theatre is a big Playhouse where actors Act—sometimes. It is a pretty building, is it Not? It costs two big Dollars to get into a Theatre but People are always in a Great Hurry to get out. This is right, as it Helps the actors to act. When you go to a theatre you should always Cry as Loud and as Long as you can. It gives great Pleasure to all the People, and makes your Mother feel Good.

2

Oh, see the Press Agent! Is he not a wonderful Thing? Next to the Theatre, he is the most Important Thing in the Business. He is much Greater than the Manager, but he does not get so much Money. The Press Agent always tells the Truth, and loves to give away Free Tickets. Do not offer him a Drink or a Cigar, because he will surely refuse, and then You will feel Badly.

3

The Man looks Anxious. He is a Manager, and he thinks the Treasurer is Swiping his Money. Fie on the Treasurer! The Poor Manager has so little money that He can only take one Drink at a Time. Ask the Manager for tickets. He will pay for them out of his own Pocket. He is such a Charitable man. Try to be like the Manager, little children, and when you grow Up, you will always be without Money. Money is a great Curse.

4

This is a Chappie. No, it is not an animal; it is a human Being. Its real name is E. Z. Thing. What do you think the Chappie is Good for—Nothing? Oh, fie, it is surely good for Something. Yes; it is Good to buy suppers for Chorus Girls. Sometimes it buys Flowers Also, and has them Charged to Papa. Papa is sometimes a Chappie himself. That is right; yell "Chappie" as Loud as you can. It is not Vulgar to Yell on the Street, and the man likes to be called by such a nice name.

5

Here we see an Actor. No; do not Touch him or you will soil his Clothes. Are not his Clothes wonderful? And just Think, they are all Paid for! He wears his Hair long because the Barber shops are Closed on Sunday. He is Very busy all the week, you know. He has to walk up and down Broadway several Times every day. Actors are very Nice men. They always say good Things about other Actors, and never talk of Themselves. No; none of them wears corsets.

6

Isn't that dog Tiny? It's the Leading lady's pet Poodle. Oh, see how nicely it snaps at Everything! The Leading lady has Taught it to do that; Snaps are right in her line. Everyone loves the Little Dog. It is so Gentle and Loving. Kick the Dog in the Ribs, Johnny. It will please the lady if you do—and the Dog—and the Manager. See the Manager laugh.

7

Here we see a Lobster. The Lobster is going to Buy a Ticket from the Speculator. Will they let the Lobster into the Theatre? Oh, I guess Yes. See; the Speculator has put the Money in his Pocket. Will he give the Treasurer some of the Dough? Perhaps; if he is a very Kind Speculator. How fortunate for the Speculator that there are Lobsters.

8

Do you see the Clever Usher? He has Sold two seats in the Front Row. What will he do when the man who Bought the Seats at the box office comes in? He will say that there is a Mistake, and the Man will sit in the Sixth Row. The Man is from the Country. All ushers are clever. They need the Money to buy clean Shirts.

9

Come, children, we will Leave now. The last Act is not Over, but the Audience would sooner see your Clothes than the Play. Run out in the Aisle and make a Noise. The People will be glad; they are Tired and do not want to hear the rest of the Play. People do not go to the Theatre to Hear the Play. What a foolish idea!

10

See the Leading Lady. She is the Greatest Actress in the World. Oh, no; she does Not think so. She is Modest and Unassuming. She does not like the Star Dressing Room, but the Manager makes her take it. What a Cruel Manager! Poor Lady, she has to wear her nice stage Clothes on the Street. Do not Rubber at her. She does not Like being Rubbed at. How fond the Leading Lady is of the Leading Man! Last night she embraced him so Fervently that the Powder came off Her Arms on his Coat. He likes such Things. They are marks of Affection.

11

Here is a Programme. Is it not a Pretty Book? What lovely pictures of Corsets and False Teeth. Do not look for Cast of the Play. We will find that Next Week. The Advertisements are much More Interesting. It would be Foolish to Print the Cast in Large type, because then We could See it. How Artistic is the Cover of the Programme! Does it not remind you of the Delirium Tremens?

12

Oh, see; there is a Chorus Girl. What a beautiful Complexion she has. And what very White Shoulders. No; of course she cannot sing. But what a cunning Wink she is making at her Baldheaded Father in the Front Row. She will meet Him after the Show and take him Riding in her Automobile. Then they will have Supper in a lovely Restaurant. Father will pay for the Supper, just like he pays for the Auto. Is he not a good Father to the Poor Hard-working Chorus Girl? The Chorus Girl is a much better actress than the Leading Lady, but she is not jealous of the Leading Lady's success. Not a bit.

13

What a funny little Man that is. He is a Big part of the Syndicate. He is a very Big Bug, and so kind to Actors. He just Loves to Pay them Money. But he does Not like to make them work Hard. Oh, No; they just do what They want to. By and By they Will get too old to Work, and then he will Buy them a House to live in. All the other Managers love the Big Bug, because he does not try to Hog the Whole thing.

14

Do you see the Man with the Bald Head in the Second Row? He is a Great Critic. He gets a Million Dollars for every day that He works. He Knows all About every Show that will Ever be written. He is good to the Actors, and will tell Them how to Act Properly. The Actors and Actresses just Love to read what he Writes. When you Grow up, little Children, you should try and be Critics, and when you Die you will go to a place where there are lots of Actors, and they will Give you a Hot time.

15

Here we have the Little Comedienne. Isn't she the Real Thing? Only think, she used to be in the Chorus! But she had a very beautiful Voice, and now she owns the Whole Show. The Police will not let You walk on the same side of the Street with Her, and the Manager says no one Else in the Company must Give Pictures to the Papers. She is very Kind to the Others, and they love her. By and By she will be a Has-been, and then the other girls will send her Part of their Salary. It always pays to be Kind, little Children.

16

What do we see here? Oh, this is a Playwright. He has Written a Play. Will the Manager accept the Play? Oh, no; the Manager could not do that. It is a Good play, but the Playwright Has not Got a Reputation. If he should Kill a man he would get a Reputation and then his Play would be accepted. Perhaps he will go to England and Sell the Play. Then it will be a Great Success, and the Cruel Manager will be sorry because he has Missed a chance to Make Money.

17

This is another Playwright. He is a very successful one Because he Works very Hard. He writes a Dozen plays every year. If one is Good he Gets Paid for All the rest. Of course he has a Reputation. He made it by Knitting Socks.

18

What a Large Chest that man has. Yes; he is a Star. He is the only actor who can Play Hamlet. Did you Know that he Owns a Large part of Broadway? What is he Saying? He says that he is Not a great Actor. He thinks the Juvenile plays his Part very Well. He does not Like to be Applauded. Did he say he got a Hundred Dollars a week? That must be a Mistake. All stars get at Least Five Hundred. Modesty is a great virtue, Children. You should Try and be as Modest as the Star.

19

Here we have a Four Hundredth Performance. How young it looks. Has the Play run a Year? Oh, dear, No. But then there are Matinees, you know. And Rehearsals. The Piece has played Four Hundred Times. The Press Agent and the Manager say so. Of Course they ought to Know, and They always tell the Truth. What pretty Souvenirs! They are Real Gold and cost More than the Theatre Tickets. How Charitable of the Management to give them Away.

20

See the Fat Policeman. He walks right past the Doorkeeper. Has he got a Ticket? No, he has a shield. Why do they Let him in Free? Because he is a Policeman. Will he make the standees, settees? Of course not. He will Watch the Show, and if he Likes it He will ask for Two tickets. Will he pay for them? Don't ask foolish questions, you silly boy.

Watch the Pretty lady buy two Fifty-cent tickets. She wants to know if they are Down stairs. No, they are in the Gallery. In the front row? Yes. Has the man nothing further in Front? she asks. The Poor lady would like them in the Centre. Yes, those would do. But are they on the Aisle? No, there is no Centre Aisle. She says it is not a nice Theatre, but she Supposes she Must take the Tickets. Are they for Thursday night? Yes. Oh, that is too bad. She is going to Play cards on Thursday night, and she wants the Tickets for Friday night. Now she Will pay for them. How careful she is with her money! She has opened Her little Bag, and Taken out her Pocket book. Now she has closed the Bag. She has taken a Two-Dollar Bill out of the Pocket book and laid it down. She opens the Bag and puts the pocket book back. There; she has Closed the bag. Now she has got the Tickets. She has opened the Bag again and put the Tickets inside. The Bag is Closed again now. The man is Giving her her change. She has opened the Bag, taken out the Pocket book, closed the Bag, opened the Pocket book, put in the change, closed the Pocket book, opened the Bag, put in the Pocket book, and Closed the Bag. How quickly she does not do it. Are there other People waiting to buy seats? Oh, a few Dozen.

Here we have a Box party. Isn't it nice of Them to Come Late, that Many people can see Them? No, Johnny, they Do not come to Show off Their clothes. How happy they are. How Mirthful. You can hear them laugh right Across the Theatre. The Girl in the pink crêpe de Chine is saying that Pickles do Not Agree with her. Isn't that too bad? The man is telling her a Story. Pretty soon they Will Laugh out Loud again. See, the Lovely lady with The Charming manners is looking through her opera glasses at a Man in the Front Row. Does she Know him? Of course not, or she wouldn't look at him. When the Curtain goes down, the Men will Go out on Important Business Matters and the Women will stroll up and down so That other Women can See their Dresses. Do not try to Watch the Play, children. The Box party is much more fun.

23

What is this? A Matinée Idol. What a Meek man he is. He says he is Not handsome. That is not True. The Girls all adore him. How careless he is with his Clothes. His Pants have not been Pressed in Fifteen minutes. He is going to Have his picture taken. He had some Taken yesterday, but They did not Do him Justice. Is the Idol married? Hist! children, some things are Sacred. Whose little boy is that Following him? That is a Messenger boy; he reminds the Idol of His dates.

24

Let us steal into the dressing room. See what a cute little place It is. The leading Juvenile and the Comedian dress here. They like a small room; it is So easy to make a quick change in One. The management wanted to Make the Dressing room Larger but there was Not enough lumber. See; in his hurry, the Actor has left a pair of shoes in Front of that Chair. Put them behind the Trunk, Clara, and the Actor will thank you.

25

This is a stick of Grease paint. The Leading lady uses it to Make herself look beautiful. In this way she can make many dates. The leading lady is very fond of Dates. Her friends say she always has dates for Supper. Hold the Grease paint in the Gas flame, Johnny, and see it Fizzle. Now rub the wet paint on the Looking Glass. Put some in the Powder box. The Leading lady always uses powder after Paint; now she can Use both together. Let us hide the Grease paint in the Slipper. The leading lady will Think it a Great joke.

26

Here we have the Property man. He is making a Ship. Will the ship go? No. But it will *look* Real. What a Dusty room this is. Let's dust the Things off and arrange them. How glad the Property man will be To-night when he has to Get ready for the First act in a hurry. Oh, here is the property Man back again. Clara, help Johnny up! The Property man Wears pointed Shoes.

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