



My Memories of Vernon Castle

By
Irene Castle

THE gay figure who danced his way from obscurity into the youthful heart of America, and who commanded the enthusiasm which America has always accorded those who express its *bonhomie* and its love of life—how little we knew him, how little we cared about the real man who lived behind the dancer's mask!

To us, Vernon Castle was merely the master of our lighter hours, the pierrot of the minute, and when he unhesitatingly answered a greater call and gave his life for a deeper cause, we did not understand. Perhaps we did not try, for America forgets quickly.

Now comes this story of Vernon Castle, simply told by one who knew him best. We found in it, and we are sure every one in these times will find in it, revelation and inspiration.—THE EDITOR.

AN AIRPLANE, manned by an instructor and a cadet, was about to land safely on a Texas flying-field, when another machine piloted by a student rose just in front. The instructor, who was riding in the front seat in order to give his pupil more confidence, made what is called an Immelmann turn in order to avoid a collision. Those who saw the accident, say that possessing, as he did, so perfect an understanding of flying, the instructor must have been certain that the forty feet between him and the ground was not enough space to make the turn. It was enough, however, to avoid cleverly the

other machine. His own crashed nose down. The instructor, Vernon Castle, was killed.

Certain papers, in relating the accident, put it that Vernon Castle had "made good by his glorious self-sacrifice." Their idea seemed to be that by his death, Vernon Castle had atoned for his earlier sins, whatever they may have been. It seemed inconceivable to them that a dancer, a professional dancer and man of the stage, could be a fighter. He was not a fighter in the sense that he liked war. He was not a soldier of adventure nor any other kind. He hated discipline, and the narrowness of life in barracks. He loved above all other surface things, the theatre, restaurants,

cafés and other places of amusement. All this he gave up gladly because his country was at war, and he was too good a sport to shirk his share of the hardships and dangers that are the lot of a soldier. He thought he ought to go into it.

Speaking before a meeting of the Actors' Equity Association, Francis Wilson said that there seemed to be an impression that Vernon Castle had redeemed himself by his glorious death. The speaker declared that in his opinion, Vernon Castle's evolution of the modern dance had brought joy to so many Americans, young and old, that "he is to be credited with one of the greatest achievements of the day."

I, who knew him better than any one else, know that he would have been worth while, even if he had never flown, even if he had never gone to war. His was a rare spirit and a generous one.

There is a bugaboo in the American theatre that will not die easily, and that is that a performer is like the parts he plays. Women who play vampires on the stage or in the movies, are credited by a part of the public with knowing their business from the inside and with being personally guilty of everything except, perhaps, arson. So a man who plays a fool must be a fool.

Vernon had no intention of going on the stage. That he did go on was largely a matter of accident. Cast for eccentric parts in several of Lew Fields's productions, he played them as well as he could and with the feeling of an artist—without thought of his own future, or that he would be linked with a certain type of part. Added to this, he had the casualness and the spirit of the amateur in his work on the stage.

In one of the Fields shows, I believe it was the "Summer Widowers," there was a scene in what was at that time called a delicatessen shop. Vernon came in dressed in a ridiculous tight green suit with a silly high green hat, which accentuated his slowness, and asked for some rat poison. "Shall I wrap it up, or will you take it here?" was the line that fell to Lew Fields; and Fields could never have been so funny with that line if Vernon had not been willing to go the whole way in his clowning.

So much in an effort to destroy a popular misconception.

Vernon Blyth (the name Castle was assumed) was born at Norwich, England. He was the only boy in the family where there were four girls, all older, and all of whom adored him. His mother died when he was quite young, and neither his sisters nor his father ever spanked him in his life; and I am told that when he wouldn't eat anything or wear something they had bought for him, they had only to tell him it "came from France," to have it meet with approval in his eyes. If it was his dinner it was always "French chops" and "French peas"—the word "French" worked like magic on his tiny imagination. No one knows where this great respect for France came from, but it was strange that years later we should make our first real lasting success in Paris, and that a few years after that he should join the army to fight side by side with the French.

He seems to have had the schooling that Norwich afforded. Like many another small boy, he one day strung the house with electric bells and wires. He was immediately stamped in the family as an electrical engineer, though I never saw him show any knowledge of electricity, and he certainly never offered to wire our house with bells. Nor did he ever

have any suggestions for repairing them when they were out of order.

In London, Vernon somehow discovered St. George's Hall, where there is a bill made up of sleight-of-hand performers. Most persons find one conjuror on a vaudeville bill sufficient, and I will confess that it is too much for me, but Vernon reveled in the bill at St. George's. He hung round till he learned to do many of the simpler tricks and until he solved some that were supposed to possess a dash of the mysterious. Often, as a fancied innocent from the audience, he was able to go on the stage and confound the conjuror. Before he was twenty, he took up conjuring as a business, and appeared at clubs or private entertainments. In a scrap-book which Vernon kept in the years before I knew him—later all business details, even the trivial ones, as the keeping of scrap-books, were turned over to me—I found a letter telling him how much his entertainment had

pleased. This seems to have been his first professional engagement, and it was under the name of Blyth that he appeared. There seems to have been no reason why he should not have gone on with his work. Everybody encouraged him, but he was always eager to take up new things like a child with a new toy. The thing or the feat that he mastered yesterday had little attraction for him to-day.

In July, 1906, together with his father, his sister, Coralie Blyth (Mrs. Lawrence Grossmith) Lawrence Grossmith, James Blakely, and Jerome Kern, he came to New York. Mr. and Mrs. Grossmith had come over to play in "The Orchid." While they were rehearsing, Vernon had nothing to do except to hang around the dressing-rooms. He was not tempted to see the country, for a Sunday at Coney Island, the day after they arrived, seems to have discouraged greatly this English family, and Mr. Blyth sailed at once for England.



Harris & Ewing

Irene Castle.



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Vernon Blyth—about five.

Lawrence Grossmith, Coralie Blyth, Edna Wallace Hopper, Louise Allen Collier, Elita Proctor Otis and Louise Dresser. When the company went on the road, Vernon became his brother-in-law's understudy, and at one time played it in conjunction with his own part.

His success with Lew Fields was very great, but in the early days he was considered merely an eccentric comedian, who must have been like the parts he played—that is a burlesque Englishman, and one of the earliest importers of a wrist watch. He was in "Old Dutch," "The Girl Behind the Counter," the "Midnight Sons" and "The Summer Widowers." In one of these he had a dance with poor, charming Lotta Faust, who had previously made her great hit in "The Wizard of Oz." So far as I know, this is the first dancing that Vernon did in public.

In many ways Lew Fields's production of "The Hen-

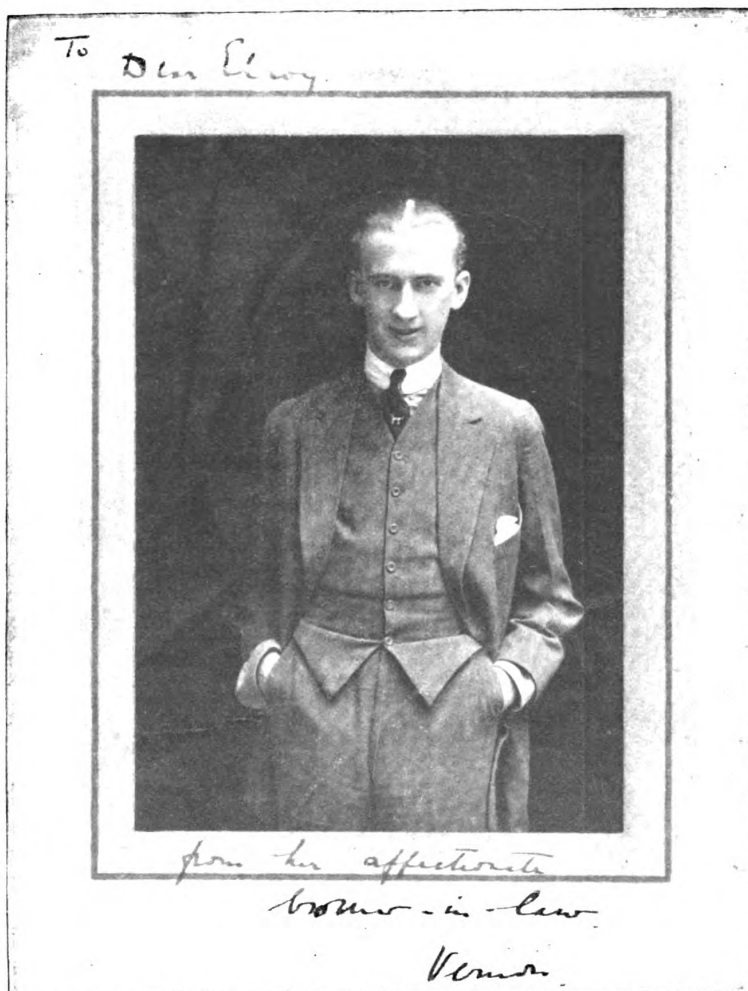


Hanna.

The English school-boy.

Vernon's idleness seems to have suggested to Lawrence Grossmith that something be found for him to do. Lew Fields, who was producing "The Orchid," consented to give Vernon a small part, and in a duel scene he appeared as one of the seconds. Much as he was interested in the theatre, he had no thought at that time, of taking it seriously. He did not wish to appear under his own name of Blyth, and then, too, his sister was well known under that name. Largely out of consideration for her, he took the name of Castle. When I first met him, I naturally thought it a perfectly genuine name, but it was Lawrence Grossmith who applied it, and Windsor Castle seems to have been the inspiration.

"The Orchid" was never done as a play, but several scenes were taken out of it and incorporated in Lew Fields's production of "About Town," which opened at the Herald Square Theatre with Lew Fields, George Beban, Harry Fisher, Joe Herbert, Jack Norworth,



Hall's Studio

A picture given to my sister during the "Hen-Pecks" run.

Pecks" was most important in his career and in mine also. Here Vernon made his first real hit, and in this part the critics grudgingly began to admit that he had a talent for the stage, and was an excellent foil for Lew Fields. His rôle was that of Zowie, the "Monarch of Mystery", and to this rôle Vernon brought all his skill as a sleight-of-hand performer. Of course the tricks he did on the stage were burlesque ones, but no one without a thorough understanding of the conjuror's work could possibly have done the part so well as he did.

It was when he was playing the rôle of Zowie that I first met him at New Rochelle. I think it was a swimming party. Like every young girl, I was tremendously interested in the theatre and every one connected with it. I had always wanted to go on the stage, and my few amateur performances confirmed me in my desire. Vernon was the first actor I had met, and I think at the time I was vastly more interested in him than he in me.

Unlike most parents, my father had no objection to my going on the stage. He thought that both my sister and I ought to learn something by which we could earn our own living. I asked Vernon to help me get on the stage. He was very nice about it, but as I remember he showed no particular enthusiasm. At that time I did not understand how much and how thoroughly the amateur can bore the professional, especially when he wants help. Always considerate, as I came to know so well later on, he promised me that he would talk to Lew Fields about me. Sometime later he told me that Lew Fields would listen to me, and I was given a trial. My agitation was, of course, very great. I had come in from New Rochelle with a pianist who feebly accompanied me in the huge, dark theatre. I danced, with castanets, a sort of tarantella. In the Fields production of "The Summer Widowers," in Brooklyn, I appeared for the first time in public under the name of Irene Foote.

In March, 1911, after Vernon had been playing *Zowie* the "Monarch of Mystery" for some time, we became engaged. My father, who had no objection to my going on the stage, liked Vernon very much, but he was not especially pleased at our engagement. He contended that actors never had any money, and he feared "international marriages" of any kind, even though an Englishman is not classed as a foreigner with us. He felt that differences of environment and upbringing tended to cause unhappiness. Finally he was won over, and in the month of May, we were married at my home in New Rochelle. When the run of "The Hen-Pecks" closed for the summer, we sailed for Europe to meet my new family. On the way to England we took part in all the deck sports and won thirteen out of fourteen events.



I imitated Lotta Faust with whom Vernon did his first stage dance.

Our team work could not be touched. In the potato race and the three-legged race we broke the ship's records. It was a happy crossing, with the most delightful lot of passengers that we ever encountered. One little boy that Vernon befriended and learned to love, told his nurse that he thought we must be a king and queen because our name was "Castle" and we always dressed in white.

It was in London on this trip that we had our first quarrel, and, as my father had predicted, it was an international one. I was intensely, patriotically American. I found everything in London inferior to things in New York. When I pointed out the small, speckled bananas in London, Vernon protested that they were not grown in England and came from the same places that supplied those I had had in New Rochelle.

I met all my new family, and there were many of them.

As "The Hen-Pecks" was to reopen in August, our trip was a short one. When the play did reopen I was given a very small part. My singing made it safer from the point of view of the manage-

ment. I was never in the chorus, an experience which might have proved valuable to me later. I had a few words to say, and for saying them, I got twenty-five dollars a week, the same salary that Vernon received when he first played with Lew Fields. Of course, at this time, he was getting one hundred dollars a week. From that day on, we pooled our interests and though we could not live very royally, Vernon somehow managed to save more money than he had ever done before, or for that matter than he ever did afterward. For my first Christmas present he bought me a diamond ring which must have cost nearly five hundred dollars. I had never had any jewelry before. There were long days of waiting for Christmas morning. I had had it slipped on my finger with my back turned and I had heard every one exclaim over it. Then after Christmas came proud days of hanging on to a subway strap gloveless, so that all might see. How different from that later Christmas when he was in France flying, and I was on the Pacific coast in the midst of a much-often-delayed movie serial. We had hoped to be together. I have his letter: "I don't know how I am going to buy you a Christmas present. One can't get anything here. I tried to fly to Versailles for one day, so that from there I could get into Paris, but I couldn't do it. It will be terrible if, when Christmas comes, you don't get anything from me."

In one of the Lew Fields productions, Vernon had danced with Lotta Faust, and he was anxious after I joined "The Hen-Pecks" to have a dance with me. As *Zowie* he had a song which was called "It's not the trick itself, but the tricky way it's done." He wanted the dance arranged for the encore. No one encouraged us overmuch, and I suppose we were not very keen about it, for all we did was to write on



My interpretation of how Bessie McCoy did the "Yama Yama Girl" song and dance.



My amateur début—as an Indian princess—in New Rochelle.

Original from

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

paper about what we thought we would do. This custom of writing our dances first was almost always adhered to in later days. The first dance we wrote, we never even rehearsed, though we might have had the stage at any time. In the days before we were married, though we went to many of the same parties, I am sure that we never danced together. Necessity made us dancers, and it was not until we got to Paris that necessity urged us.

It was while we were playing in "The Hen-Pecks" that I first knew or came to know of Vernon's boundless love for animals. He had never had a pet of any sort. The love of animals and all dumb, helpless things was there, but it was awaiting another's influence to bring it out. My home was full of pets. My father took great pride in his show dogs, and one of the first presents he gave us was an English bull that went with us on our travels, and was our greatest comfort on our first trip to Paris, which began so dismally. When Vernon was at the training-school in England and on the flying-field of France, he never in his daily letters forgot to inquire about our pets. And always he mentioned the monkeys or dogs that he had with him in France, often in spite of orders. Quite the happiest of all his letters from France, is one that tells of his joy upon landing in a field and then visiting a little farm. Here it is:

To-day I have a little something to write about. I am afraid I can't make a whole lot of it. When I went up for my flight this morning on a Bleriot monoplane, I took up a sergeant with me who wanted a ride, and when we were up about ten miles from the aerodrome an inlet valve broke—which means you have to turn off your petrol and come down at once or your machine is apt to catch fire. Well, I managed to spot a young wheat field and maneuvered to land there quite respectfully. Of course we were surrounded by the usual crowd of children and farm-hands, who in this unhappy country, see machines in the air every day, but never see them closely. Presently the owner of the field came along in a motor-bike and sidecar, and he very kindly

offered to take me to his farm where I could telephone, so I left the sergeant in charge and went off with the farmer. He was quite young and very clever. He has the cutest farm, darling, I have ever seen. Six dogs of different sizes and breeds, little ducks in ponds and ever so many cows in a dairy; little colts and everything in the world that goes with a farm. The loveliest old house. He lives there all alone and makes his living as a farmer. How I wish you could have been there with me. He must have thought I was a fool, for I was so tickled with his dogs and little ducks,

naturally to a little pond about fifty yards ahead and deposited it on the muddy bank. When he came back he explained to me that the natives always took them home and carved out their shells for parlor ornaments with no thought of even killing them first. That act was characteristic of Vernon Castle. His last pet was a large Reesus monkey that he took with him everywhere. Jeffry was his name, but Vernon always called him "my boy," because, as he explained, "he thinks he's a boy, and you mustn't hurt his feelings."

To go back again to "The Hen-Pecks." In that show there was a barber-shop scene which you have seen imitated many times, both in the movies and on the stage. It was in the beginning crude, rough fun and it has not become refined by repetition. Lew Fields was the barber and Vernon the customer. There was a very messy stage shampoo during which an egg was poured into his mouth—eight times a week, that being more times than there are breakfasts. Vernon ever after distrusted eggs. The whole act ended when the very bright red wig he wore was burned off with a bang. The act never failed to produce laughter, and it was this act which caused a Paris manager to engage us for a French Revue. It never really was done in Paris but it was that Vernon might



Vernon Castle when Broadway began to take his work as a comedian seriously.

only a day old, swimming about, not caring a darn about their chicken mother. He gave me a peach of a lunch and I returned to my plane and found that it had been fixed. I said good-by and sailed away. The field was much more difficult to get out of than in, but I managed to dodge the trees and so ended a very pleasant little diversion.

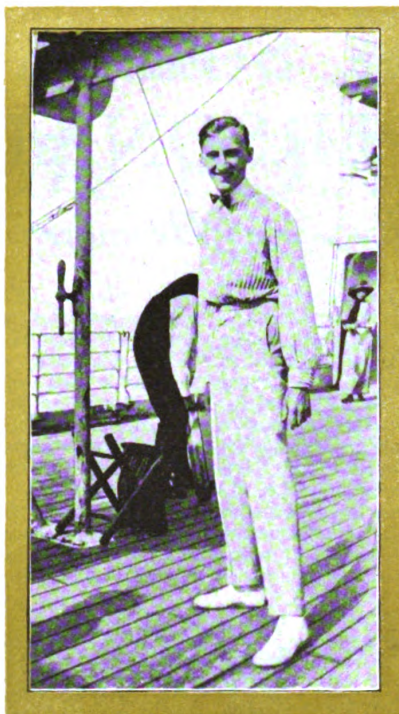
I remember one time when he was in Canada with the Royal Flying Corps and I went up there to see him. We were driving along a little dirt road from Bellville to Desoronto when suddenly the car swerved to the side of the road and he brought it to an abrupt stop. Getting out he picked up a turtle that was crossing in front of our motor. He carried it good-

act this scene that we were engaged. Before I leave "The Hen-Pecks" for good and all, I want to mention that it was here that we saw Blossom Seeley do the Texas Tommy dance after her song, "Toddlin' the Todolo." This dance and song, or what we remembered of it, came to our rescue in Paris.

As I look back, our going to Paris seems to me to have been one of the most courageous of long chances. We didn't know exactly what we were going to do nor how we would go about it. Had any one urged us not to go, in all probability, the trip would have been called off. I believe that had Lew Fields offered us a contract for five years at the combined salary of one

hundred and twenty-five dollars a week, we'd have signed. He was, however, extremely generous in that when the Paris manager stipulated that Vernon must do the barber-shop scene, he gave him all rights. So, since we had no reason to refuse, less even than we had for going, we decided to set sail.

Vernon was so like a little boy. He was interested in everything, and to go abroad on the little money we had saved, seemed quite all right. I, the more practical of the two, was caught and deceived by his enthusiasm. Then, too, he thought it would be amusing and he loved being amused, just as he loved to amuse. To the theatre he went no matter how ill he was. He never quite got over the beginner's love of the theatre's back stage. The people he met there all amused him and worshiped him, just as the people did who met him in restaurants and cafés. I have never heard of any one who disliked him, and I don't believe he really disliked any one either, but he could get most delightfully bored; things had to keep up a pretty lively tempo to hold his interest, and even those he loved bored him at times.



On his wedding trip, 1911.

never seen the flexible, modern sort of settings. She was so interested and while she was holding a broad diamond necklace under the light with her shaky hand, it sparkled and danced. Vernon said: "Granny, you ought to work in a jewelry shop, you make them sparkle so." She was never hurt, at his worst neglect. He hated writing home and never wrote her. When I first met him he had not written home in three years. He was just thoughtless, but no one was ever cross with him for long, not even process-servers.

One day when we drove into our place

For instance, I can remember going with him time and again to see his old grandmother in Norwich. She adored Vernon and for her he had a deep devotion and a great respect, but naturally her sheltered world had little in it of attraction for him, and they could find nothing to talk about; so while he would sit with legs crossed in a big chair, patiently for him, I would tell the dear old lady what I could of the things we had done, though of course all these things she would much rather have heard from him. Granny loved jewelry and Vernon once induced me to take my jewel-box to show her. She had

at Manhasset, a man jumped on the running-board of the car and served him with a summons to appear in court on a thirty thousand-dollar suit that had been brought against us. You could not load Vernon with responsibility, and he laughed cheerily. "Have you been waiting here all day for me? Why didn't you come in and ask for me? I was around somewhere." Then he asked the man in for a drink, chuckling to himself that the poor fool had stood out at the gate all day when he might just as well have come in. He was amused too that he should be sued for thirty thousand dollars, when it might just as well have been a million.

In spite of the money he made, he never had any. If he had money he spent it. To the waiter who served him, he gave an amount equal to the check, contending that it was not extravagant, since the waiter worked harder than he did. In a shop he never asked for the price of anything. If he bought a canoe he asked for the best, and accepted it as such in good faith. Even if it wasn't, it was better so than to be bothered by figures and money. You simply could not have given him money to keep for the future. I am happy now that he spent and enjoyed the money he made to the fullest degree. No one knew better how to spend than he. He bought everything he ever saw that he wanted and beat his little drums to the distraction of every one else, like a naughty boy, till the end.

But he was not selfish, with all his love of pleasure. He never failed to be considerate, and I have seen him spend a whole afternoon repairing a boy's bicycle and working on it long after the boy had ceased to be interested in whether it would ever be repaired or not.

With his love for pleasure went another love—a love of humor. He loved the comic strips and cartoons of the evening papers. He was fond of persons who had a sense of humor, and he had a very keen one himself. To the end, his letters from the aviation fields were full of quaint, unusual bits of observation and fun.

In the December number Mrs. Castle tells of their early struggles in Paris and their later success as dancers at the Café de Paris and at Deauville.



In the three-legged race we broke the ship's record.

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THE gay figure who danced his way from obscurity into the youthful heart of America, and who commanded the enthusiasm which America has always accorded those who express its bonhomie and its love of life—how little we knew him, how little we cared about the real man who lived behind the dancer's mask!

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Now comes this story of Vernon Castle, simply told by one who knew him best. We found in it, and we are sure every one in these times will find in it, revelation and inspiration. It began in the November number.—THE EDITOR.

SO WE sailed for Paris, with a great many good wishes, very little money, and accompanied by Walter and Zowie. Walter was an old negro who had been a servant in my family for a great many years. He went along as cook, valet and general utility. Zowie was an English bulldog, named after Vernon's part in "The Hen-Pecks."

The contract which had been signed with the French manager in New York did not include me, but it was thought that I might be fitted in somehow. As the manager had seen me in the small part I had in "The Hen-Pecks," it was not surprising that he should have made no effort to sign me up for his new *revue*.

We had an uneventful trip over, uneventful save for the deck sports. We traveled on the *S. S. Zealand* and arrived at Antwerp, where we were fascinated by the cathedral and narrow winding streets. I was particularly interested in the milk-carts drawn by dogs. We found them very serious-minded dogs that were trained early to attend to business alone. They passed all other dogs in the street without even turning their heads or showing the slightest interest. They did not seem to care to meet friends.

As we were not due in Paris for a few days, we decided to see Brussels, which we found a baby Paris. There were more dog-carts—some drawing hay and wood or moving families from one house to another. In the lace-shops there was so much that I wanted to buy and so little that I could afford. I did get some little Dutch bonnets that met with great suc-



I did get some little Dutch bonnets that met with great success in Paris and afterwards were widely copied here.

cess in Paris and afterwards were widely copied here. But this was not till after we had appeared in "The Sunshine Girl" and at Louis Martin's. The lines of these Dutch bonnets even went one season into bathing-caps and motor-bonnets.

In Brussels we saw two or three *revues*, of which we understood no word; dined in a few dainty little restaurants; got fleeced by the usual highwayman interpreter in the hotel and at last, with a fast-thinning "roll," we boarded the train for Paris and our uncertain future.

Darker days and a period of great uncertainty lay ahead of us. We sensed this immediately upon arriving in Paris. I had

taken over five hundred cigarets with me, not knowing that it was against the laws to take them into France. We also had some playing-cards and matches, which we learned afterward was almost as bad as to try and smuggle a bomb in now. The custom authorities seized our trunks and held them. Walter stayed at the station to watch our belongings, while we sat in our expensive hotel doing nothing. At last he came back with the bad tidings that the cigarets, matches and cards were to be confiscated and we must pay six hundred francs. Now six hundred francs was just about half of all the money we had in the world. It hurt to pay this, but it was useless to protest, as we could not speak French and did not know how to plead our case.

That same afternoon while trying to jam the cork into an *eau de Cologne* bottle by pounding it on a bedpost, the bottle broke, and all the cologne flew into poor Zowie's eyes, who was lying on the bed. It burned her awfully,

and she nearly went mad trying to rub it out of her eyes on the carpet. We rushed her out to a drug-store and there they sent us to a veterinarian's, who was afraid that she would lose the sight of one eye, anyway. This completely disheartened us, because we adored her. I felt entirely to blame for my carelessness, and was picturing myself driving her around through the parks day after day—because she loved driving—to make up for the loss of her sight. We bathed her eyes constantly and watched over her until at last her eyes became entirely well again, but they were nervous, unhappy days for us and did not tend to lighten the gloom which had settled



Walter, our only friend during our early days in Paris.

down on us since our days aboard ship.

As soon as we got in touch with the theatre for which Vernon had been engaged to do comic parts, we learned that the *revue* had been postponed and that it would be six weeks before any money could be expected from that source. The salary was less than in New York, because we had been told that it was much cheaper living in Paris than in the United States. In the making of theatrical contracts, this old gag has been worked many times. Now living may have been cheaper in Paris, but it was not so for us, as we did not know French and had no idea where to buy things cheaply. For the foreigner, Paris is probably the most expensive place in the world. We did find out, however, that the hotel was costing us more than it need have, so we moved to a small three-room apartment in the Rue St. George, half way up the hill to Montmartre. It was very small, on the top floor and the walls came in to meet you half way, as they do in those attic rooms. We had one bedroom, Walter, our servant, the other, and the third was dining-room and sitting-room all in one. There was a small kitchen in addition, where Walter cooked, when we had anything to cook, and a bath, a great luxury for a small apartment in Paris.

The management of the theatre promised me a small part and rehearsals began. Our funds were low and in order to pay our rent it was necessary to borrow two hundred francs from the theatre. The weather was frightful

and we could not often walk to rehearsals. We dared not run the risk of spoiling our clothes in the bad weather. I had one suit, a dark blue one, which I wore every day, washing the white flannel collar and cuffs every night to keep it looking fresh.

Our evenings we spent playing seven-up with Walter—a game he had taught us and at which he always won—or walking with him through Montmartre to peek in at the dance-halls and cabarets. Night after night we watched the other people. Walter learned a few words of French very quickly and did all the shopping. The shopkeepers liked him, and he often brought me an orange or an apple that he had “worked” the old man for, who kept the shop on the corner.

When we arrived in Paris, we began the custom of keeping the big copper pennies in a little silk bag hung on the door-knob. They were so big that we did not want to carry them around in our pockets. Every night each one of us put his coppers into the bag, but it was not long before we had to make our “last stand” with it. We had borrowed from the management of the theatre till we were afraid to ask for more; in fact, we were very little helped by the money that we borrowed from the theatre, for it had to be turned over immediately to our landlady. She was a large, noisy woman, who was only amiable when “paid in full.”

Every time we paid the rent, however, we had one good dinner and blowout. It was usually at some little restaurant on a boulevard. Walter always went with us, for he was the only person we knew in Paris, and we loved his company. We had champagne on these occasions and more than we wanted to eat, because there was so little left from the rent that it never seemed worth saving, and the glass of wine washed our cares away and kept our mis-



Paris, Paris.

Some of the Paris clothes I was anxious to show my home town.

fortunes from swamping us. We even used to order a whole steak for Zowie, to make it a big night for her too. I can remember Vernon buying me a petticoat and hat with one of our “rolls” of borrowed money. We had admired them both on our way to and from rehearsals, and I had looked so long and hungrily at the black-and-white-striped petticoat costing nineteen francs that, though we could ill afford it, Vernon insisted on buying it for me even before we paid the rent. By the time we had had dinner and taken a cab home, there was very little left to start the next day.

Walter received no wages, but he was quite happy, and believed that our misfortunes would soon be over. We had sailed with such high hopes and good wishes from every one that we hated to admit that we were beaten at the outset. To have sent home for money, consequently, never occurred to us. We figured that we could hold out four days more if we lived on potatoes or milk along with our fried eggs. We could not have both, but then in four days the *revue* ought to open, though rehearsals did not seem very encouraging.

Walter came to the rescue at the end of the fourth day. He rushed into the room carrying many packages. He had taught the valet in the apartment below ours to play craps. By risking nine cents he had won three and one-half francs. To offset this good luck, the *revue* was again delayed, and after carefully looking over our possessions for something to pawn, the



Paris, Paris.

Mrs. Castle and “Zowie” in Paris, 1912.

choice fell upon a gold watch which had belonged to my great-aunt. It was a very fat, ugly one that my mother had loaned me with due ceremony to impress upon me its ancestral value. I felt very proud to be trusted with it, but now I parted with it tearlessly and forgot all of my promises to guard and prize it all the days of my life. Walter went out with it and came back with fifteen francs. He had sold it outright for the gold. That night was another blowout.

We had reached that stage in the rehearsals at which it was possible to tell what the *revue* was going to be like. It was shaping up, but not to our satisfaction. Vernon hated his part. He was to play *Duncan*, a Greek poet, and the long-haired wig, short tunic and sandals made him look quite ridiculous, more so than he appeared in any of the comic costumes of the Lew Fields shows. Moreover, the scene did not seem very funny. When translated into English the lines had no point at all. We thought that they might have some meaning in French, but as the audience never laughed at them, we decided we were right in the first place. Vernon was discouraged from the opening night. He wanted to give it up, but there was no turning back. We owed the company nearly one thousand francs, and there was no way to pay except by working it out.

In this whole adventure there was but one satisfactory side and that was the opportunity to do together a very pretty little pantomime called "The Lead Soldier and the Paper Doll." This was founded upon an old fairy-tale. It all happened in front of a fireplace. A singer stood near the footlights and told the story as we went through our little dance. Our costumes were lovely. Vernon had a tin-soldier suit, made out of silver cloth with the coat tinted blue and the trousers red. He carried a wooden gun. We both made up our faces in a doll-like way—with obvious eyelashes painted round our eyes, and big red spots in the middle of our cheeks. I wore a white taffeta dress with a tight bodice and full skirt hung with garlands of pink paper roses. My hair was done in stiff little curls round my ears and slicked down flat on top. The story was the usual fairy-tale—we came to life and the tin soldier, who had long been in love with the paper doll, tried to catch her in his funny stiff arms and tell her of his love. Being the usual coquettish young lady, she would have none of his attentions and ran wildly away from one side of the stage to the other, until he, finally, brokenhearted, threw himself into the chignon flames in the fireplace. Whereupon the doll, finding life unbearable without him, followed him to his fate with a wild leap into the fireplace. I had always hoped to do this pantomime in America, and it will always be one of my greatest regrets that we were never able to show our friends here the one happy souvenir of our first appearance in France.

In the last act of the *revue* we sang "Alexander's Rag-Time Band." It created a great sensation—not our singing of it, but the song. We followed this with a sort of grizzly bear dance. It was very rough, more so than any dance we ever did in this country. In later years we tried to get away as much as possible from the acrobatic style of dancing, but at just this period, it was the most popular. I wore a little



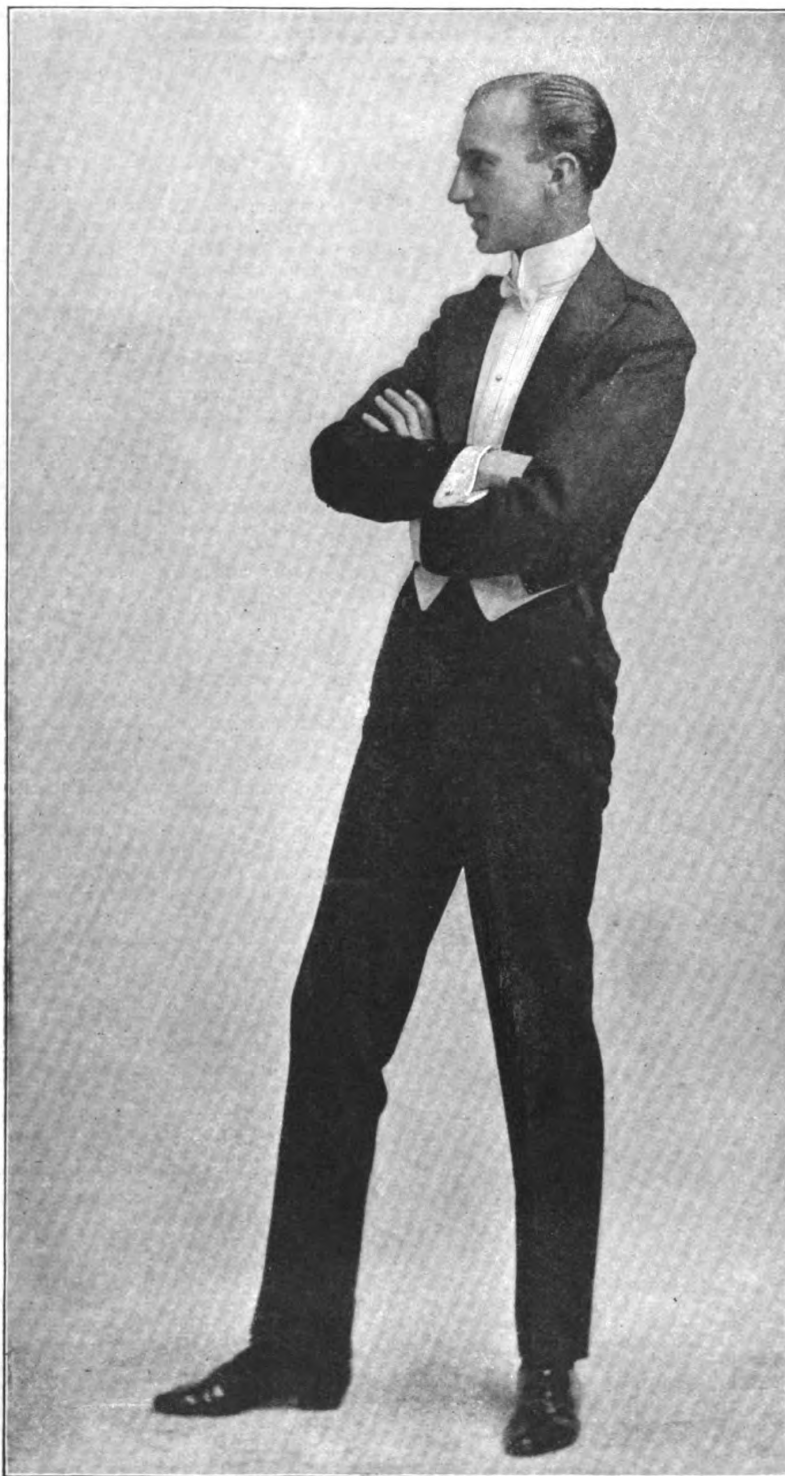
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A favorite dancing costume.

short pierrette costume and carried a big white Teddy-bear. It was a sort of Texas Tommy dance. As this was entirely from memory of what we had seen Blossom Seeley do in "The Hen-Pecks," it was quite unusual. Then, too, Blossom Seeley had danced alone, and we were trying, both of us, to imitate her Frisco style. It was liked in Paris and we were encouraged to go on.

Vernon had come to Paris, however, as a

comedian, and particularly to do the barber-shop scene. Though he was happy with the dancing, he hated the small part of *Duncan*, the Greek poet. Besides, the Olympia, where we were playing, was a dirty theatre, and unspeakably evil-smelling behind the scenes, so we decided to get out when the money we had borrowed was paid back. After deducting the money advanced, the theatre owed us about ten



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Vernon in the days of our early success.

francs. We were not disturbed, for we had become used to living on nothing and uncertainty. It seemed a rash thing to do, but we quit!

Luckily, an agent we went to see suggested that we try out one night in the Café de Paris. This looked very good to us. Much to his distress (because he feared we might not land the job), I ordered a simple little white frock made. It was

to cost sixty francs. We did some work rehearsing our grizzly bear dance, and wrote one other rough-and-tumble number to ragtime. Louis, the head waiter of the café, asked us to come the night before our try-out. We were to have supper on him and to size up the audience. I put on my wedding-dress and a little Dutch bonnet for this the most important chance of our stay in Paris. Papa Louis, as we came to

call him later, gave us a good table and the best meal we had had since we left New York. During the evening he came to us and told us that a Russian nobleman, who was one of his good patrons, had sent him over to ask us to dance. It seemed that some one had seen us at the Olympia after all! At first we refused. I had a dress on with a train, and we weren't keyed up to the work as yet. But Louis pleaded with us. The Russian was one of his very best customers, so I pinned up my train and we resolved to do our best.

Fortunately that afternoon we had been to the café to rehearse with the orchestra leader. He was all prepared, and though we were not, we sailed out on to the floor. It was a trying moment, as we had not been dancing long enough to have great confidence. But once we had started, and Vernon had given me a little reassuring squeeze, nothing mattered. Perhaps it was the informality of our first cabaret performance, perhaps it was because the audience thought that we were guests, perhaps because we were new at the game; in any event, our little dance was much applauded. While we were both quivering with nervous excitement, for it meant so much to us after the weeks of discouragement, Louis came up with three hundred francs from his Russian friend. He asked that we repeat the dance. Vernon was most embarrassed and quite proudly insisted that we could not take the money. I stepped hard on his foot and "collared" the three hundred. I did not feel that we could refuse, primarily because we needed it so much, and then I thought that we might easily offend the Russian nobleman by doing so. This seemed to me an especially bad thing to do as it had been made clear to us that he was so great a friend of Louis's. I was right; it was the custom in Paris to tip all entertainers lavishly, and we afterward made much more from tips than through our contract. We danced our encore and went home very happy for the first time since we arrived in France. With this performance behind us, our try-out scheduled for the next night had no terrors for us. When we got home, we woke up poor Walter and flashed the three hundred francs in his face. It was worth the nick in our pride to see his expression of joy.

When we went to the Café de Paris the next night, we found that Louis had kept us the same table, which was a very good one. As there are only about thirty tables in the room, it was extremely generous of him to let us have it. Before this, cabaret entertainers had not been allowed to sit at the tables as if they were guests. They were accustomed to appear from the kitchen or somewhere behind the piano. They did their specialty and then made their exit as mysteriously as they had appeared. For the six months that we stayed at the Café de Paris, we had supper each night at Louis's expense, and never once did we give up our table. All this was a great honor and I feel that in many ways it helped tremendously toward the success we afterward obtained.

We were young, clean, married and well-mannered. The respect shown us by the management was mirrored in the attitude of our audiences. My clothes were simplicity itself, and I had no jewelry, which makes me think of the saying: "Nice girl—no jewelry." The Frenchwomen were



The card used to advertise our nightly appearances at the Café de Paris.

elaborately dressed and wore many jewels.

We had not been long at the Café de Paris before Louis offered us a six months' engagement. I decided it would be best to wait a week or two to find out if our popularity continued. If so, I knew we could name our own terms. We were able to do this and we continued to dance there for nearly six months. In addition we had many private engagements every week. We danced with many famous and important people and we gave two command performances.

From the bleak, dreary place that Paris was when we first arrived, it became almost enchanted for us. We went to the races, the theatres, the other cafés and restaurants. We saw everything and met everybody. But, through it all, we continued to live in our little attic apartment because we had become so attached to it. Incidentally Walter now received a salary.

Louis spoiled us. We could dance at any hour, and at any moment we chose, and only as often as we liked. Sometimes it was only one dance. But in spite of Louis's kindness, we were becoming anxious about New York. We were impatient to return and, though Louis begged us to stay on, we

first succeeded, and France to which Vernon later went as an aviator.

We went back to the Café de Paris many times to dance and to see Louis. Once we danced a week for him for nothing. That was the summer we were to dance at Deauville. Louis wanted to engage us, but our price had gone up so much and his place was so small that he couldn't possibly pay us what we had been receiving in America, so we decided to give him a week in an effort to repay somewhat his many kindnesses to us. Poor Louis! He was so disappointed that we couldn't stay all summer, but we had agreed to dance in Deauville for the month of August, and we had literally outgrown the Café de Paris. The dancing space there was so small and our dances had expanded so much that we were hampered. But in that week that we spent with Louis, we were very happy. The café was filled with happy memories of the year before and it was so pleasant to be with Louis again. He watched us go through our different dances, night after night. If a waiter so much as rattled a plate while we were dancing, he would fly at him in rage.

At Deauville we were to be one of the attractions that were to help rival Trouville. We were to dance every night in the Casino at dinner-time. We were guests of the hotel, and everything, even our cigarets and champagne, was provided for us. In addition we had three hundred francs a day. In that happy summer it didn't seem worth while to save this money, so we gambled it all away each night at baccarat and *petits-cheveux*. We were both atrociously un-

lucky and not, like Walter, capable of teaching new games, but it was great fun. My mother was with us, and I can remember one night when Vernon had "dropped" our three hundred francs in particularly short order. He came back to mother and me to beg for more money with which he was perfectly certain of winning this time. I never fell for those stories, but mother was touched and gave him another hundred francs to run off and play with. Of course that went the way of the first three hundred. We could soon tell this by his crestfallen look when he returned to us. He was such a child about gambling as in everything else. He never won anything in his life to my knowledge, but he never lost faith in his luck.

Of our work at home—both in public and private, at Louis Martin's, where we made our first success, at our own restaurant and on tour, as performers and as teachers of dancing—I shall tell in another article. This is the account of all our days in France—France, where we

decided to try our luck in America. I had a trunkful of beautiful new clothes that I was anxious to show to people in my home town. So we sailed.

He might even have lost his life in a wager that he made in Texas shortly before his fatal accident. Some one offered to bet him that he would not stand on one of the wings of an air-plane when it was up. He agreed he would not do so, but that if some one would put up five hundred dollars, he would run his machine through a hangar, come out and go over the second, turn down quickly, go through the third and then, coming out, go over the top of the fourth hangar. This bet was not taken up.

Another summer we were at Deauville, the next one, and things were very different. We had arrived in Paris in July and there were ugly rumors of a war. No one seemed certain, but there was an undercurrent of something unusual. Louis, who knew every one, all the important people, was sure that war would somehow be averted, and so on the last day of July, 1914, we went once again to Deauville.

Our contract called for our appearance on the first of August. We had told an American friend who was spending the summer in Europe that we would be at Deauville and that it was an amusing place in which to spend August. He was sitting disconsolate in the lobby of the hotel when we arrived. There were practically no guests, and those that were there were leaving by the score. We had passed hundreds of cars streaming down the road toward Paris as we neared Deauville. We went to the Casino where we were to dance. We wanted to talk things over with the orchestra leader. The deserted place on that summer afternoon was a picture I shall not soon forget. The great room was empty save for one or two hangers-on, and the orchestra was playing the "*Marseillaise*." I have never heard anything more stirring in view of what was impending and the fact that they were playing for the last time together and all would leave to join their regiments in a few minutes. It made my heart stand still. Now we knew there was to be war. When they stopped playing, the orchestra leader spoke to us sadly, then he hastened away.

It occurred to us that we might as well try to get away, as we learned it was the last day one could sail for England without a passport—there was a refugee boatload going out that night. Our contract had been canceled by what is termed an "act of God," though I do not believe any one except the Kaiser is willing to believe that God had anything to do with this war.

The waiters were lined up in a long line that ran snakelike for many blocks, receiving their pay and starting as fast as they could for their mobilization points. All



"Tell," Vernon's police dog, whom he rescued from France in the chaos of war.

the baggage-men had gone, so piling our trunks, hat-boxes and hand packages as best we could into an old cab which supported a very ancient horse, we galloped through Deauville with flapping side curtains to get a boat from Trouville to Havre. We had arrived almost penniless from Paris and were unable to get any money in the hotel, though we pleaded for at least one day's salary to get us to England. They merely showed us empty cash drawers and shrugged their shoulders and said: "*C'est la guerre*," a phrase all of us have had to hear so often since. Finally, one of the clerks told us that he had some Belgian money and we exchanged some perfectly good American Express checks for Belgian money which was worth just about nothing then.

We managed to get on a boat for Havre. Fortunately, in purchasing our tickets, one of the Belgian notes was mistaken for a French note. We had Tell, Vernon's police-dog and one of my little Belgian griffons with us. We did not have the proper papers to take Tell out of France, nor the quarantine papers necessary to take him into England. He would not be allowed without them on the Channel boat. We dashed madly about Havre trying to find a place to leave him. At last, we found a veterinary who agreed to keep him, after having looked over two other boarding kennels which did not satisfy Vernon as a clean or safe place in which to leave Tell. After giving instructions to the man to look after Tell as though he were his only child, and promising him a fat reward if he did, Vernon told Tell to go into one of the large straw-filled cages at the end of the room. Poor Tell, though looking very disturbed, obeyed perfectly, as usual, and walked into his little prison without a murmur. Vernon was heartbroken. He hated to leave him, but it was the only way.

The Channel boat that night was hideously crowded. People stretched out on the decks with scarcely any space between them. Ordinarily the boat only carried about three hundred and twenty-five passengers—this night there were over six hundred. I slept, or tried to sleep, on the bench in the smoking-room, concealing my small Belgian griffon under my coat. We were held up four times by destroyers and coast-guard boats. Officials came on board to examine the passengers, then our course was altered because of mines, and instead of getting in at seven or eight in the morning, we did not arrive until thirty-three that afternoon.

Poor Vernon's heart was not happy, and after about three days he set out with some honored gold, which in those first days of the war would perform miracles, and a paper from the Board of Agriculture permitting Tell to be brought to England for quarantine. All the boats to Havre had been discontinued and it was necessary to go to Calais. There he learned that he would have to go to Paris first and there take a train to Havre. He also learned that he would not be permitted to go on without a passport. It was too late to have a picture taken, so he filled out the necessary papers and stuck on a picture of some one else (that he happened to have in his pocket). It got by and he caught the first



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The Castles early in their career as dancers.

train for Paris. In Paris and everywhere along the line he met Americans looking for their families and friends, and American and English people clamoring to get back to England. Paris was like a crowded theatre in which some one had shouted "Fire!" People seemed to have lost all judgment and balance.

Poor Vernon childishly forgot that he had been told not to go out on the streets at night. He tried to go to see my mother, who was stopping only a few blocks away from his hotel. A serious-minded soldier who had completely lost his sense of humor, stopped him before he had gone fifty feet. In his agitation Vernon forgot mother's address, so when asked where he was going, stammered and stuttered and could not tell. Not that I think the soldier would have understood the French he spoke, in those days, anyway. He was escorted back to his hotel.

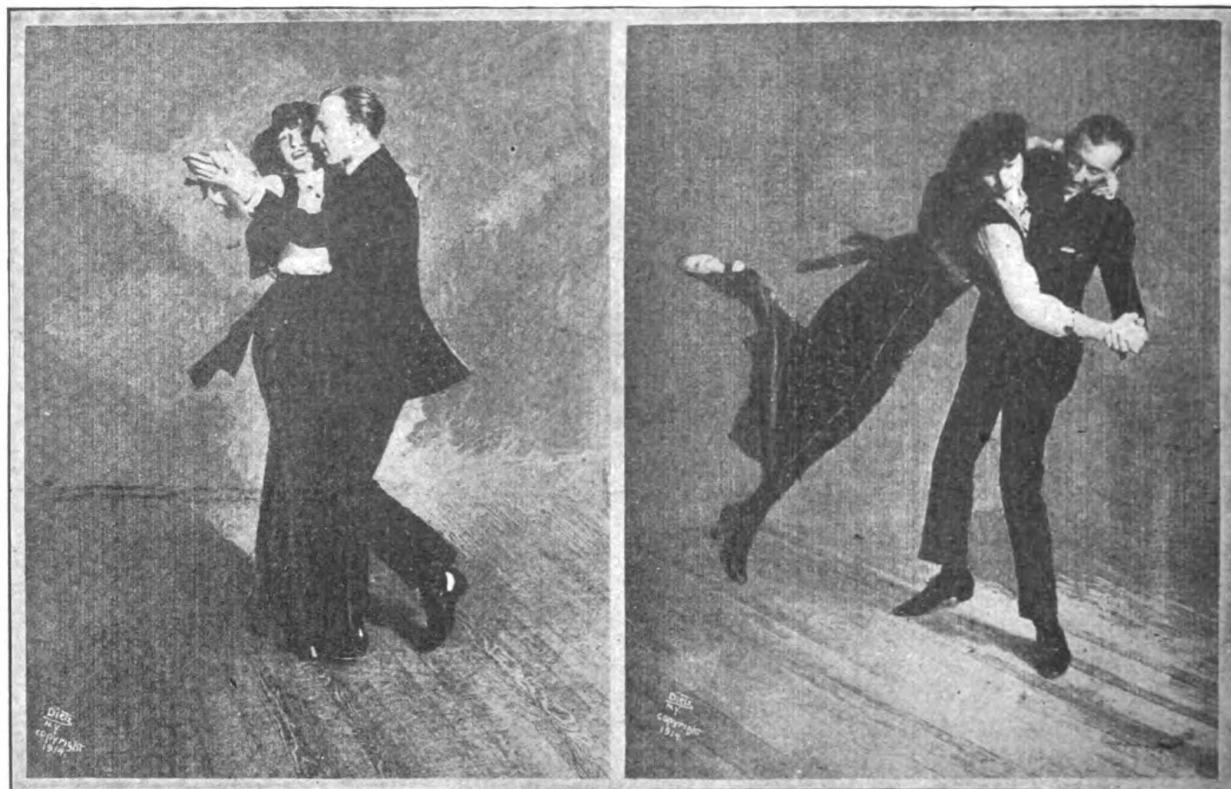
He prevailed upon some officers to let him take a hitch down to Havre on a troop-

train. With difficulty he found the place where Tell had been left on that hectic night. Somehow Vernon managed to smuggle him back to England. Tell was such a large dog that it seems impossible to have done so, but the generally upset conditions which marked the beginning of the war, and a few gold pieces, helped this project along greatly.

Vernon was very serious on his return from France. He wanted, at that time, to enlist. I fear I was responsible for his not doing so. I was sure from what I had heard, that the war would soon be over. It didn't seem possible in those days that it could last and I did not want him to go to war when it was only a matter of a few weeks and we had important contracts to fill in New York. I prevailed, but my victory in this matter was only for a short time.

He was resolved to go to war from the time he came back from France with Tell.

The January instalment of Irene Castle's story tells of the rise of the modern dancing craze, the Castles' part in it, and their great successes in this country.



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Our biggest success was made by an acrobatic style of dancing.

My Memories of Vernon Castle

By Irene Castle

IN HIS life, Vernon Castle was, to most of us, merely the master of our lighter hours. We little knew, we little cared, about the real man who lived behind the dancer's mask. And when he gave his life for a deeper cause, we did not understand.

This is the third instalment of what has been an inspiring revelation of the man, by one who knew him best, from the days of their first meeting, their early struggles in Paris, their successes in Europe and here, down to the time when the dancer answered the greater call, and left a brilliant career to enter the Royal Flying Corps.

AT THE Café de Paris we found that our biggest success was made by an acrobatic style of dancing, though we ourselves preferred the simpler dances. In returning to America, we found that the public was just becoming interested in cabarets and the modern dances, so called. In reality, at that time what was called a modern dance was apt to be an elaborated one with a good many frills and stunts. Accordingly in our first performances—at Louis Martin's—we did the dances that that particular time demanded. Others have said so and I think that I may—that in the evolution of the modern dance, Vernon played a great part, and though many of the dances that we did and originated were mere crazes and crazy things at best, they were nevertheless in response to the demand from the public and not our idea of what dancing should be. Incidentally the exceptional dance was our true and tried friend financially, because that was the dances that people paid us most to learn.

From one of these dances—the Castle Walk—we received a great deal of compensation both in reputation and in money. People wanted to learn it. The dance that thus became a furore was an accident in the beginning. One night at Louis Martin's, we had danced a good deal and were rather tired. More as a rest than anything else we fell into a reverse of the usual proceeding. In all dances the weight is thrown down on the foot. For a change we threw the weight up. It is difficult to describe but easy to do. Elsie Janis, who was sitting at our table, told us when we came back that it was one thing we couldn't get away with. It was too ridiculous to consider doing again. It wasn't very graceful, to be sure, but it did provide a variation and a great deal of amusement. In spite of Miss Janis's discouragement at the outset, we did keep up this dance, and in order that there might be something to it, we were forced to add to it a little. In our book on modern dancing, the Castle Walk is described thus:

"First of all, walk as in the one-step. Now, raise yourself up slightly on your

toes at each step, with the legs a trifle stiff and breeze along happily and easily, and you know all there is to know about the Castle Walk. To turn a corner you do not turn your partner round, but keep walking her backward in the same direction, leaning over slightly—just enough to make a graceful turn and keep the balance well—a little like a bicycle rounding a corner. If you like, instead of walking along in a straight line, after you have rounded your corner, you can continue in the same slanting position, which will naturally cause you to go round in a circle. Now continue and get your circle smaller and smaller until you are walking around almost in one spot, and then straighten up and start off down the room again. It sounds silly and is silly. That is the explanation of its popularity."

As a favor to Charles Dillingham, Vernon returned to the stage in "The Lady of the Slipper." He had a small part, for you may well imagine that when Montgomery and Stone and Elsie Janis were given sufficient opportunity to display their talents, there wasn't much for Vernon to do. He

hated the part, and dancing had discouraged him with comic rôles. In this production I did not appear.

As a return for his services, Mr. Dillingham urged the late Charles Frohman to cast Vernon for the juvenile rôle in "The Sunshine Girl." This had been played in London by George Grossmith. Frohman was not willing at first to accede, but he did so under protest. During rehearsals he and most of the other people were discouraging. I had no part in the play. I appeared solely as a dancing partner for Vernon. When the play reached production it was a success, and I am certain that Vernon's work helped greatly, not only in the dancing but in the acting of the leading rôle. Those who saw the London production as well were agreed that Vernon and Joe Cawthorne were funnier in the fireman scene than Grossmith and the comedian who played it in London.

The dancing craze was on and Castle House, the first of our adventures, was begun. This was really, and is to-day, a school of dancing, but in the early days, the teas as well as the lessons spread our fame and increased our earning capacity rapidly. There Vernon taught at least six hours a day. I, myself, never had either the knack or patience for teaching. He

woman couldn't dance at all, and that he had dragged her around.

Quite another side of his teaching is revealed in a letter from the aviation field in France:

The officers here have been making me teach them the fox-trot, etc., and now every evening they have dances and dance with one another. At any other time it would seem terrible to see two men dancing together, but when you know that every one of them is a *real man* and faces death pretty nearly every day, it doesn't seem at all out of place that they should dance, and they welcome me as a god-send.

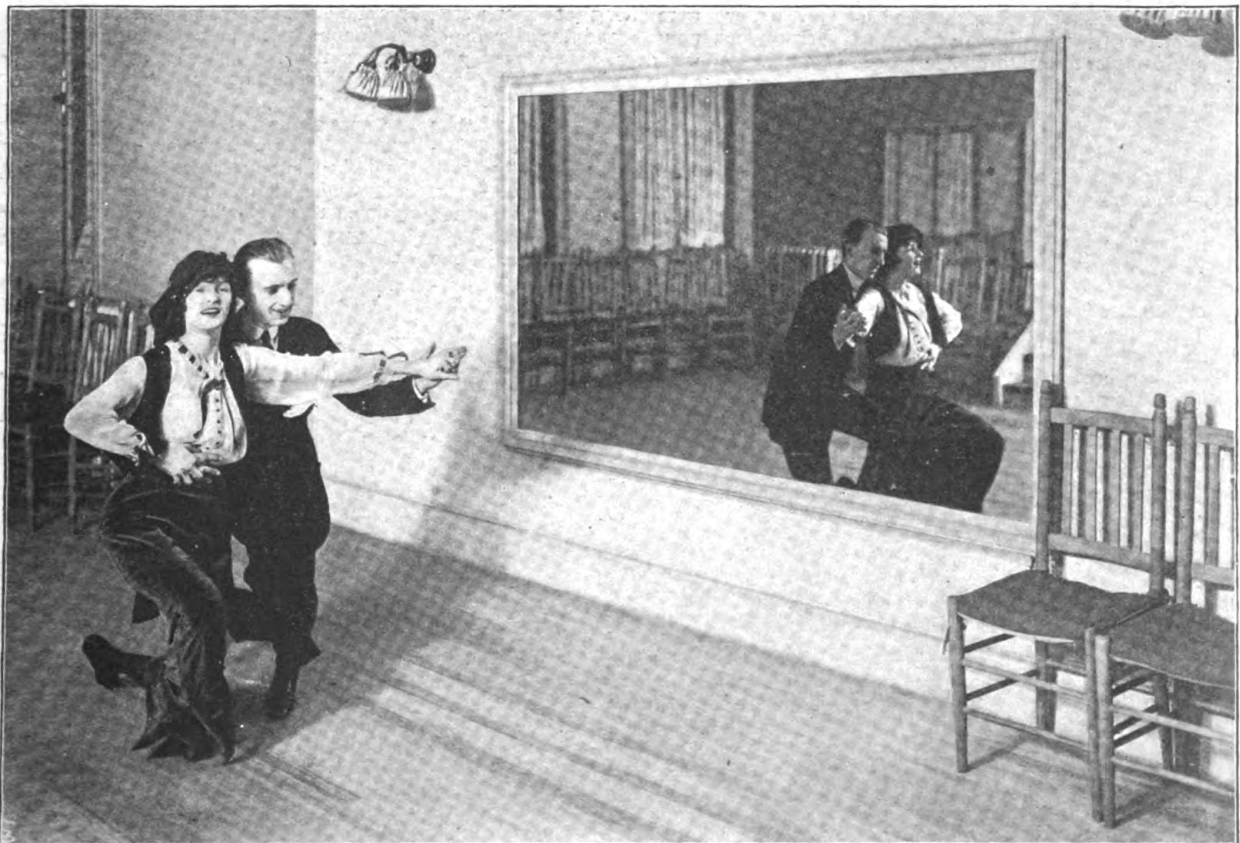
Another of our ventures, and one in which we were most interested and had hoped to repeat some day, was Sans Souci, a restaurant of our own. The head waiter at Martin's joined us in this. We had a T-shaped room down under the sidewalk, at Forty-second Street and Broadway. The opening night was quite brilliant. Persons who do not commonly go out to supper, came to Sans Souci. In Paris we had become accustomed to dancing on linoleum and we introduced that floor-covering in our restaurant here, where it had never been used before for a dancing-floor. It met with great success. "Castles in the Air" was a dancing and supper place where

Vernon, with his usual enthusiasm for the new, took up drumming. Buddie, the drummer in our orchestra, trained him so well that by the following winter his drumming was as good as that of most professionals, but with a personality and character that most of them lacked. He threw his arms round in the air and made comic faces to the delight of every one in the room. He could throw his sticks into the air and catch them in time to hit the beat. His sense of rhythm was remarkable, and he could make a drum speak. He had sets of drums and traps in England, at his camp and at home, and his greatest amusement was to start a graphophone or electric piano and beat the drum as an accompaniment, practising very hard at rolls, and inventing new stunts with the sticks.

In camp entertainments he was often called upon to drum as well as to dance. Of one of these he wrote:

The concert last night was a big success and my drum-playing seemed to be the hit of the evening. The men had never seen anything like it, and they wouldn't let me stop. I enjoyed it more than they did. I simply love to play the drum and don't get much opportunity now.

Drumming is all very well in a restaurant or on the stage or in an aviation camp,



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The dancing craze was on and Castle House, the first of our adventures, was begun.

was remarkably clever in that he could always lead even a beginner into any steps he wanted to do and show them off to great advantage. I have seen him dance with a total stranger and make her appear so graceful and easy at dancing that watchers would comment upon it, when really he often confided to me afterward that the

we appeared every evening and on matinée days at tea time. We were not directly concerned with the management. "Castles by the Sea" at Long Beach was named for us and we frequently danced there in the evening, motoring over from our country place at Manhasset.

It was while Sans Souci was running that

but in a house, beginning almost before breakfast and ending sometimes after midnight, it becomes a little trying. I can remember often imploring him to take up something quieter. But his taste for drums was something he never lost, and the night before the fatal accident, he was playing his phonograph and amusing several



He never became a remarkable polo player, but he loved the game and spent a great deal on his ponies.

of the boys at Camp Benbrook, Texas, with his drums. Theatregoers may remember his drumming in "Watch Your Step." It was a source of great interest to all of the company, who watched him intently for new tricks of the evening, or to applaud his clever recovery when he missed a stick in the air. His drums are now put away as one of my dearest souvenirs, like "the toys of the little dead child."

"The Castles Are Coming—Hooray! Hooray!" appeared on the billboards in thirty-five cities during the course of four weeks. This was the Castle Whirlwind Tour. Most of the time we played two cities a day—matinée in Rochester and an evening in Buffalo, etc. We carried our own orchestra of colored musicians. We took them to Deauville on one occasion, and had them with us in London later. Jim Europe, whose band is now in France with the Fifteenth New York Regiment, was with us on the Castle Whirlwind.

The entertainment began with some exhibition dancing. Lulu fado, forlano, pavan polka, and hesitation. Then we danced three modern dances, the tango, the maxixe, and the one-step. This was in the days before the fox-trot. During the course of the evening Vernon gave a talk on dancing, urging our constant cry, "simplification." It all ended with a contest for the Castle Cup by local dancers. The winners were always those who danced smoothly and with the least effort. Vernon always urged them to leave out all fancy steps and tricks. Often there was the keenest rivalry, and at the finish of the tour in Madison Square Garden, New York, the contest was long and almost impossible to decide. Here not only the New York dancers appeared, but the winners of the out-of-town contests. The prize was finally awarded to Mr. and Mrs. Selig Baruch (brother and sister-in-law of Bernard Baruch).

One of the things that made this circus traveling a lot more endurable was the nightly courts held in the private car in which the musicians traveled. One night we found great merriment going on in their car. We learned that one of the musicians was sentenced for wearing brown shoes with

his evening clothes in the orchestra pit.

These trials were conducted with dead seriousness and offenders were served with a summons. They were allowed to plead their own cases or to have counsel appear for them. Sometimes the court ordered the culprit to provide refreshments for the next night. As we became nightly attendants, charges were brought against us for missteps and our fines were consequently heavier. The court would order us to pay in champagne instead of beer and sandwiches.

One night our secretary, who, had a shade too many cocktails, was summoned. He pleaded his case brilliantly, but he was sentenced to say that line from "The Sunshine Girl," "She stood at the gate, welcoming him in." It reads simply, but try to say it. These courts did much to keep our spirits up on one of our most difficult theatrical trips.

When we were living at Manhasset, Vernon took up polo and the showing of German shepherd dogs. He played polo with his wonted enthusiasm and fearlessness. He liked all games except cricket of which he complains in one of his letters from the training-camp in England. Cricket he thought a trifle worse than baseball. He never became a remarkable polo player, but he love the game and spent a great deal on his ponies.

His kennels of police dogs gained some reputation, but these, with the exception of

Tell von Fluglerad, his very famous winner of all field trials, was sold when he gave up his profession to go to war. He adored Tell and thought of taking him with him, but he feared that something might happen to him and that there would be no one to care for Tell out there. It was one of his greatest joys on being sent to Canada as an instructor to the Royal Flying Corps that he could have Tell with him again.

Jeffrey, his monkey, he also had in Canada, and a little paroquet I had given him because he had taken such a fancy to him on one of his visits home. No one ever showed the patience Vernon did in traveling back and forth with his family of pets. He wasn't embarrassed to carry cages through railway stations, and spent most of his time en route in the baggage-car.

Our Manhasset home was used for the taking of many of the scenes in our movie, "The Whirl of Life." Vernon wrote the scenario for this and in the main it followed our lives, that is to say until the villains entered and kidnaped me. I believe there was another variation in that in the film we were supposed to elope.

During the taking of this movie an amusing incident occurred which caused the wastage of some film. We had been sensationally rescued from the sea and our picture audience was supposed to be waiting for our appearance. I was in my dressing-room in the hands of my maid, who was a chocolate brown. Vernon was supposed to rush in, greatly agitated by the impatience of the audience, to ask me if I was ready. The camera was grinding and in he dashed, but instead of taking up his cue and saying what he had rehearsed, he exclaimed to my maid: "Why, Mary, your make-up is too dark!" Of course the scene had to be done over.

During the days that we were living at Manhasset, it was difficult to get him home. He was always galloping around somewhere, playing polo or tennis, with never a care in the world nor a thought for the future. To me his extravagance and care-free manner were always a source of worry. But he was so charmingly irresponsible and so amusing that I easily forgot my annoyance. I can see him now crawling to the front door of the Manhasset house on his hands and knees (because the top of it was glass) to peek underneath or through the keyhole to see who had come to call before letting them know he was in.

Our best work upon the stage was done in "Watch Your Step." This was a big musical comedy of the extravaganza type with interesting music by Irving Berlin. The whole production is too recent for me to go into now. We both danced and had parts as well. From



He could make a drum speak.

Original from
PENN STATE



Ira L. Hill's Studio.

Our best work on the stage was done in "Watch Your Step."

There is a gramophone here playing all of the "Watch Your Step" music, and it makes me so homesick.

Then again:

There is an awful row going on. The continual thunder of guns outside and the more frightful singing of the officers inside. They suffer anything from "Pagliacci" to "Michigan." The favorite song seems to be "The Simple Melody" from "Watch Your Step." They didn't know how the rag part went until I showed them, and now I realize I've made one of the biggest mistakes of the war! Every

much alike. The second was given merely because all the people who wished to attend could not get into the first, and on each occasion over three hundred people were seated on the stage at the last minute. I am told that these performances established the record for attendance at the Hippodrome up to that time. Sousa's band played our music for us and we did about four dances. Our reception was enormous and so unexpected for both of us that we were truly excited. It was the largest audience that we had ever danced

drome was the scene of the second farewell—our last exhibition together in America.

There was one other time when we danced together that was in the nature of a farewell. While Vernon was still at Newport News, and before he had received his pilot's license, he came out to Indianapolis, where "Watch Your Step" was playing, to say good-by to me. On the last night of the run there, he was sitting in a box watching the show, and Frank Tinney pulled him up onto the stage. The audience was so insistent that we agreed to dance. It was hard to dance with any sort of spirit. For me there was the apprehension of the farewell a little later, and a sort of gloom had settled all over the company. They all had liked Vernon so much and his reappearance made them feel more keenly how much he was missed in this place. I had to swallow hard to keep on smiling as they played the one-step we had danced so often and so happily months and months before. Each step brought us nearer to the end, and I hated to take them. I wanted to linger on them lovingly, knowing they might not come again.

The enthusiasm of the company was as great as that of the audience and there was a hushed attention on the part of every one that had never been quite the same before. After a great deal of applause Vernon thanked everybody and said good-by. The company crowded around him and cheered as the curtain fell. He put his arm around me and stood there very embarrassed at their sincere devotion. He was always modest and shy to a tremendous degree and every outburst of admiration surprised and embarrassed him.

That was for me the blackest day I can remember, save one. I was proud, naturally, to have him go and glad that he wanted to go. I wouldn't have had him different, and I think most often of that line of Lovelace's, "I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honor more." Vernon was courageous, self-sacrificing and noble. He could not have been different when the big test came. It wasn't easy for him to change suddenly from a sensitive, tender-hearted, carefree child (as he always seemed to me) into a stern soldier. And he sometimes became bored with it all, as he showed when he wrote from France:

I want to come to you so badly. I'm tired of being a soldier. I'd rather be a postman now.

But he could not have been different, I repeat, when the test came, and so I was brave or tried to be. I smiled, because I knew he wanted me to and I had to help him to be brave. We drove to the station—it wasn't yet time for the train, so we waited in the little side street, for we did not wish people to see our parting. It was too hard and neither of us went through it as we had promised ourselves we should. He was gone, and that night in St. Louis I gave the worst performance of my life. I mention this, not because of its importance, but that I may justify myself with the persons who may have seen me that night.

Shortly thereafter Vernon sailed for England, and I, hopelessly lost and lonely, went on working. I had comfort in the tremendous pride I felt in him.



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A Castle breakfast.

night they take sides and sing on one side "Play a Simple Melody," etc., and on the other, "Oh, You Musical Demon." With the pianist playing an entirely different tune, it would all make an Indian uprising sound like real music.

We played "Watch Your Step" during most of one season, from November to June, I believe. In the autumn we went on the road with the show, playing in Chicago and in Boston, and in Chicago appearing at Rector's after the play. After mid-December Vernon left the show to study aviation at Newport News, Virginia. There he received his pilot's license. I continued a lonely participation in "Watch Your Step."

But Vernon sailed for England; and while I was still playing on the road we gave two farewell performances at the Hippodrome on two successive Sunday nights. A description of the first will suffice, for they were

before, and as most of them had come to the theatre just to see us, we were duly appreciative. At the end of our dancing we had to come back and bow our gratitude.

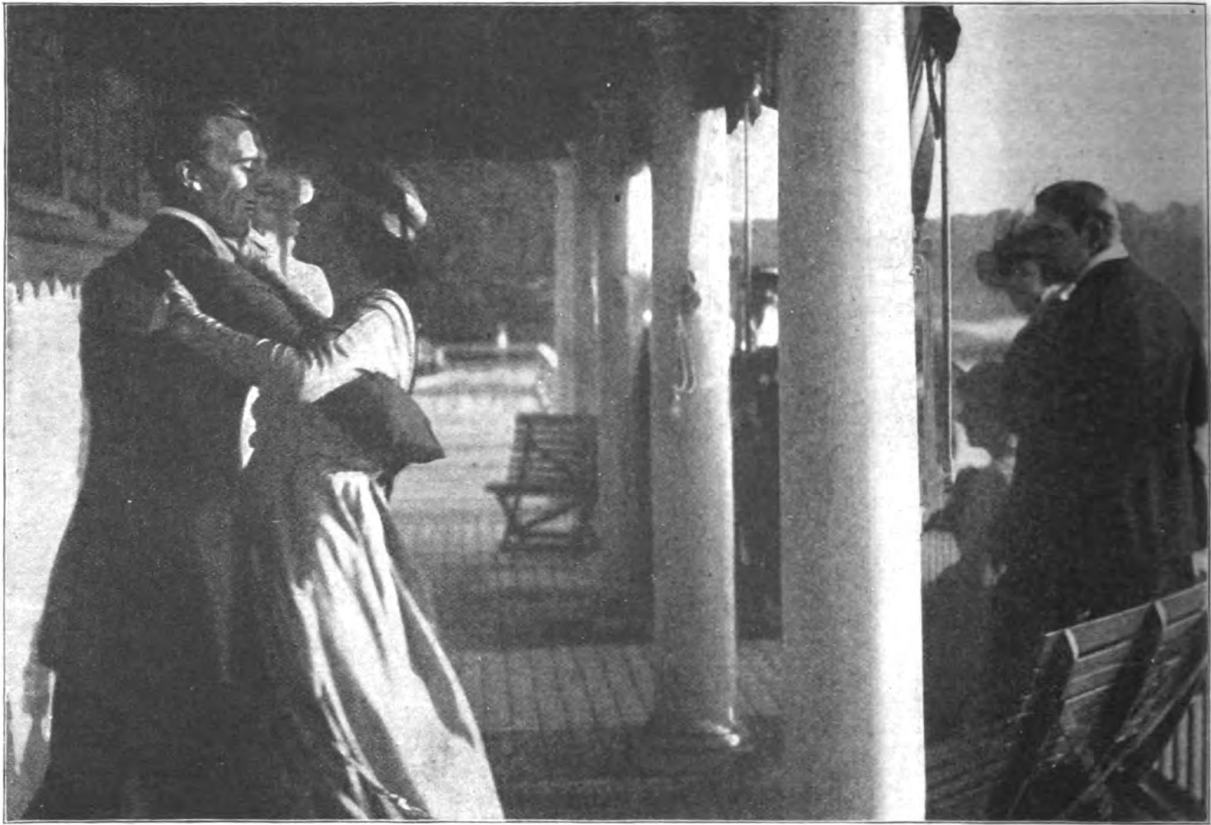
We were so happy that we nearly cried for joy and the crowd that awaited us outside the stage door was still more touching. They waved and called to us as we drove away. I shall never forget the pride we felt.

On each of these occasions I had come back on a special train from the Middle West, to dance for an hour on Sunday night and then fly back to Pittsburgh or Cincinnati for Monday night's performance of "Watch Your Step." Almost before the applause had ceased I would be on my train starting back, feeling that I had been dancing in the clouds and had just come back to earth. It always seemed like a happy dream afterward. The Hippo-

The next instalment tells of Vernon Castle's life as a British aviator.

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Original from
PENN STATE



Just for fun! The Castles in an impromptu dance on the country club veranda.

My Memories of Vernon Castle

By Irene Castle

IN HIS life, Vernon Castle was, to most of us, merely the master of our lighter hours. We little knew, we little cared, about the real man who lived behind the dancer's mask. And when he gave his life for a deeper cause, we did not understand.

This is the fourth instalment of what has been an inspiring revelation of the man, by one who knew him best, from the days of their first meeting, their early struggles in Paris, their successes in Europe and here, down to the time when the dancer answered the greater call, and left a brilliant career to enter the Royal Flying Corps and fight on the western front.

THE press-clipping you sent me was a lot of rot. I'm not attached to the French Army, and I'm no hero. I've done good work here, they say, and have made about one hundred flights over the German lines. I have led many bombing attacks, but that is no more than heaps of other pilots have done.

That is the way in which Lieut. Vernon Castle (afterwards Captain) described his experiences as an aviator. In reality, his work began at Newport News, Virginia, where he was first trained. He then went to a number of flying-schools in England and subsequently had considerable experience in France. He was sent back as an instructor to the Royal Flying Corps at Camp Mohawk, Desoronto, Canada. With the Royal Flying Corps he went to winter quarters at Camp Benbrook, Texas, where he was killed in the attempt to avoid collision with another machine which rose just in front of him. In France he was awarded the *Croix de Guerre*.

In May, 1916, as soon as I was released from my work in "Watch Your Step," I hastened to England to see Vernon before he was sent with his squadron to France. I was scheduled to be back by the end of the month to start work on a new moving picture, so I booked a round trip on the *St. Louis*, which allowed me six days in England—just six short days. We were nearing the landing and I had gone to my cabin to put on one of those last touches that I might look my best, when one of my fellow passengers tapped on my window and told me that Vernon was outside. I raced for the deck and there, below me, on a tender, he stood. It was my first glimpse of him as a soldier, and it is one which I shall always carry with me. He had received his "wings" that morning and I am sure no one could have looked smarter or prouder. We both waved frantically and conspicuously and jumped up and down with impatience. When the gang plank between the two boats was lowered he tore across it and into my arms. Those

were proud moments for me, I can tell you. He had jumped aboard the tender just as it was pulling off. As his air was very businesslike and as he wore a uniform, no one questioned him, though it was impossible to meet the liners except on official business. If any one had had a mind to question his errand after he met the *St. Louis*, I am sure that our happy meeting and the joy in our faces would have led them to condone his fault, if it was one. How lucky we were! All day long we waited just off the dock, not allowed to go ashore. The other poor passengers could only wave weakly at their friends and relatives on the pier below.

It was a very trying day for most on board. There were many Canadian women taking over sweet little children to see their daddies—perhaps for the last time. One very charming little girl had taken a great interest in my monkey Rastus. When I told her that Rastus was going over to see his daddy too, she was much impressed and demanded to know whether



"Vernon's aviation cap was rather like a monkey's cap and worn in a decided monkey fashion."

or not his daddy looked most like us or most like a monkey. I jestingly had told her that he was sort of between the two and that she would soon see for herself. When I pointed him out to her, she didn't seem disappointed, for Vernon's aviation cap was rather like a monkey's cap and worn in a decided monkey fashion.

The day after my arrival in England we danced at a benefit performance given at the Drury Lane Theatre before Queen Alexandra. Both Vernon and I were very nervous about this performance, for we had not danced together for more than six months. Fortunately, we found in London the colored orchestra that we had taken abroad with us several years before. This relieved our anxiety tremendously, for we were so accustomed to the music of negro musicians and they understood dance music thoroughly.

We never got a chance to rehearse on the stage, as it was occupied by other acts that needed rehearsal more than we did. All we had time to do was to hum over a few tunes to our colored friends of the orchestra and to instruct them to watch and follow us closely. They were accustomed to doing this, and that part of our work was easy. I wore a black chiffon dress that was in no way unusual. I did wear, however, something conspicuous—a diamond anklet. Vernon wore his dress clothes; he was not allowed to dance in uniform.

We waited back stage what seemed hours and hours until our coons struck up one of our old favorites. Hearing the music in a theatre again took us back several years, and the encouraging and admiring faces of our colored friends—they were seated on the stage—gave us an

added confidence. We forgot the crowded audience that filled the house everywhere. We forgot even the Queen Mother and danced as we had never danced before. Our nervousness disappeared completely, and as we danced the almost forgotten steps, the general rotation of our numbers came back to us as naturally as if we had never ceased continuous dancing.

It was glorious! Our hearts sang at the memory that surged up within us, and when we finished we came back to bow first to the audience and then to the Queen Mother, who was smiling sweetly and even applauding. Surely this must have been the beautiful dream or the fairy-story of two dancers come true. We didn't know whether to be happy or to cry. This was praise for work well done together. We had climbed the ladder so patiently side by side.

Then came three happy days in London,



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Ira L. Hill's Studio.

"Later all business details were turned over to me."

Original from
PENN STATE



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One of the Castles' most popular dances.

filled with theatres, dinners and parties. We danced every night till early morning to get our fill, knowing full well the months would be long and weary before we could know such happiness again. Always there hung over us the time of our parting, the time when my six days would be over. We didn't speak of it, but each knew that the other thought of it.

The day before I sailed we went to Peussy. Vernon had to report there and wait till he was sent overseas. It was the sleepiest and quaintest of little villages. We stopped at an old tavern where they lit log fires and tried in so many

ways to make us comfortable. I'd have liked to stay forever, but I had to pose and act before the camera in far-away America before the end of that month and any minute might bring Vernon his orders which would take him to France.

Our last dinner in the little town was a painful, silent affair. My tears could not be kept back and Vernon worked very hard at serving nothing. Our few attempts

tent, and as the fields and hills rolled by, hastily I wrote the following little prayer for him. It's poor I know, but I quote it because he wore it tied around his neck with a dirty little string for the next nine months. With him it went over the front again and again at Ypres.

Almighty God, if Thou art there,
Listen to my humble prayer
And keep him safe.

Keep him in your care always,
Watch o'er him through this weary day
And keep him safe.

Make him feel my love and sorrow,
Bring him back some near to-morrow
And keep him safe.

Shortly after my leaving England, Vernon was sent to the front with his squadron. He soon got into the thick of things. His interest in flying and the work he was doing was never so absorbing that he forgot to write letters home or to take an interest in our pets or the other things that had so delighted him. His love of the theatre and dancing he kept for night after night he appeared at bar-rack or other entertainments. His love of sport and games was always with him. As an entertainer he acquired added reputation and prestige in the service, and he was most popular. He thought of a thousand and one things to do for the men at the front. He sent home for many things that would make life easier or pleasanter for some one. On arriving in France he

"He dived right under the unsuspecting Hun and pointed his machine up and opened fire, something like this:—"



Something like this

to jest fell hopelessly flat. We knew then what war meant, what it was meaning to thousands of families, what suffering and sacrifice there was, wholly apart from that on the battle-field. In the gray early morning we went to the station, having promised ourselves, as we did that day in St. Louis months before, not to cry or to say good-by.

Swallowing hard, I waved feebly out of the window as the train moved away from the platform, leaving him standing at salute—every bit a soldier. Once out of sight, I sobbed to my heart's con-



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"As we danced the almost forgotten steps, our numbers came back to us as naturally as if we had never stopped."

found that there were many Americans with the Canadian aviators. He sent home to me for American magazines and papers for them, as at that time little home news that would interest them penetrated to their section.

When he was mess president (I believe that is the term that he used in his letters), he found many ways to amuse the men and to lighten the monotony of a branch of the service which may only require a few hours' work a day. I do not wish, however, to give the impression that he was entertainer at war, following his own pursuit or trade. He went about the serious business of war good-naturedly and with a big spirit. He was interested not only in what he himself did, but in what his comrades accomplished. In one of his early letters from France he wrote:

I've really had quite an exciting morning. I was flying very low, about four thousand feet, when I saw a Hun machine about ten thousand feet up, and just over our lines. I don't think he saw me, or if he did, he didn't give me a thought because I was so low. However, I thought I had better start climbing and if I could get above him, I might have a chance to bring him down. I climbed. My machine was not the fastest we have, so it was very slow work, and all the while the German was going round in big circles just over our trenches. When I was about seven thousand feet and the Hun still about ten thousand, I looked up. Another machine diving down from about seventeen thousand came into view. At that distance, I couldn't see whether it was one of ours or theirs. When it got closer, I discovered it was one of our fastest scouts, and that he was coming at a terrific

speed. He dived right under the unsuspecting Hun and pointed his machine up and opened fire, something like this. (See sketch on page 52.)

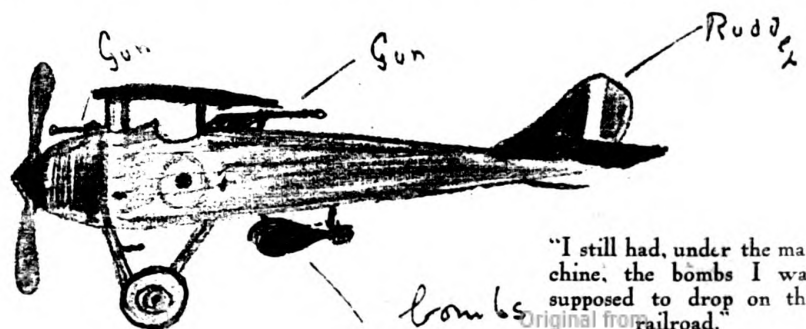
Well, the bullets must have gone into the gasoline tank, because, with a big explosion, the German machine burst into flames and went crashing to the ground. The poor pilot (I really felt sorry for him) jumped out long before the machine touched the ground, but of course there was nothing left of him when he hit.

Our pilot who did the job was so excited, and really it was a splendid piece of work.

I had promised Vernon to return on the completion of my serial picture in October, but the movie dragged on and it was not until early January, having rushed East from California, with just enough time to make the boat, that I was able to set out once more for England. The trip was stormy, cold and miserable, but as we neared Liverpool, my spirits soared and I

began eagerly searching the faces of those waiting on the pier. A dozen times I thought I saw Vernon among the British officers who were there, but each time with sinking heart I found I was mistaken. I was handed some cables and searched rapidly among them for some word of welcome, but there was none. There is nothing so lonely in all the world as watching the joyous meetings of others. Every one on the boat except me had some one to wave to or to call to them excitedly. I had the fear that something had happened to him and they had not dared to tell me. From Liverpool to London I pictured him wounded or dead, and made myself thoroughly miserable.

On arriving in London I found that his leave had been postponed, but that he would probably be over from France in a week or ten days. Finally I got a wire that he was flying across the Channel the



"I still had, under the machine, the bombs I was supposed to drop on the railroad."

Original from
PENN STATE

same day. In the late afternoon he arrived, wrapped in a leather coat and many mufflers. From the inside of his coat peeped the comic little face of a monkey which was his mascot at the front. Vernon picked him up in Paris at a Red Cross bazaar. No one else wanted to buy him, and he looked so pathetic. Vernon could never resist such an appeal. Of course they became the very best of friends and this particular monkey acquired quite a reputation as a flyer in Vernon's squadron.

On this visit Vernon told me of much concerning his work flying over the German lines. He told me of some of the experiences he had had while bombing, but one of his letters describes this better than I can do:

I had to get up at 3:30 so that I could fly and drop some bombs on a railroad before it got too light. It wasn't a very nice morning, but I went up, and then it came over very cloudy and I got lost in the clouds. I couldn't see a speck of ground, so after flying a bit I shut off the engine and dived down, but on coming out through the clouds I was immediately shelled. Having no idea where I was, except that I was not over a friendly country, I climbed back into the clouds again. I decided that I had been flying for about twenty-five minutes, so I pointed my machine due west and flew about for thirty-five minutes. When I came down again, by a great stroke of luck I was almost over our own aerodrome. I landed, but not without a great deal of fear, because I still had under the machine the bombs that I was supposed to drop on the railroad.

I enclose sketch showing you the position of the bombs, and as they are exploded by contact you will see that it was no fun landing with them. This concludes my little story.

It was on this same visit that Vernon was made very happy and proud on receiving the telegram informing him that he had been awarded the *Croix de Guerre*.

I remember with what childish enthusiasm he ran out and bought one of the medals and many bits of red-and-green-striped ribbon for me to sew on all of his uniforms. He had received it for bravery shown in many flights over the German lines and his fearlessness in attacking and bringing down enemy planes. He always delighted in talking of his first flight over the German lines.

He had been commanded to take twenty-four pictures of the enemy trenches. Now, picture-taking is the job most dreaded by the flyers, and therefore always given to men on their arrival at the front, to test their nerve and to prepare them for the worst, for the worst it is. They are bound to fly low enough to be within range of the anti-aircraft guns all the time, and the

pictures themselves would be difficult enough to get, even under the calmest and most ordinary circumstances. The flyer is given a pin-point on a little map, with the instructions that that is to be the center of the picture and bounded on all four sides by objects which are described.

All the aviator has to do is to keep his camera straight, the central object in

him in true soldier fashion and said: "Yes, sir," with great pride in his voice and expecting to have something pinned on his chest. Then to his surprise and disappointment, the commanding officer tore up the pictures and told Vernon they were hopeless, out of focus, crooked and worthless. He used rather strong language and left no doubt in Vernon's mind about the failure of his little expedition over the German lines.

Then he demanded to know why Vernon hadn't done better. By this time Vernon, thoroughly humbled, explained that they (meaning the Boche) had been firing on him pretty heavily and that he had been forced to abandon his course very often because of the bursting shells. This, it seems, was the worst thing he could have said. His squadron commander was a man of boundless courage. He knew no fear; he had attracted a great deal of attention because of his bravery in flying, and he had only contempt for those who admitted the slightest fear; all this Vernon learned afterward

from his fellow flyers.

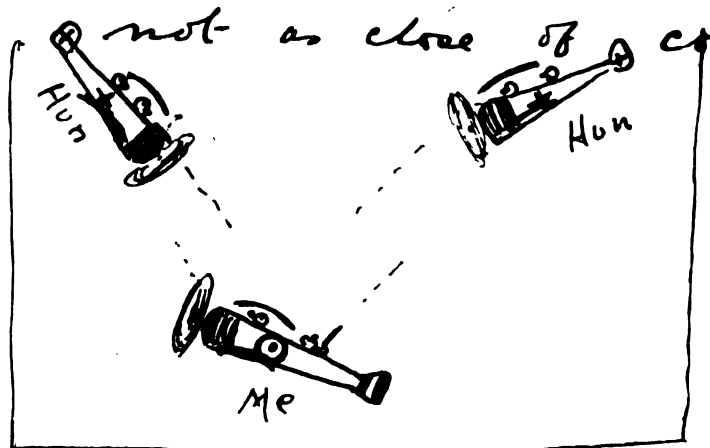
He told me that he felt much like a child who, having been severely punished, hopes to be run over in the street so that his parents may feel truly sorry for their cruel, harsh treatment. He got into his machine, very hurt and angry, but determined that he should not be sneered at a second time, and so, flying low in a

straight line over the German front and never wavering from his course (though on such missions the flyer is supposed to circle around after each picture to make it more difficult for the gunners below), he took his twenty-four pictures all over again. Flying bits of shell tore holes in the planes of his machine, one hit through the collar of his coat, and finally his rudder was so badly ripped away that he had great difficulty in landing.

I doubt if on this trip he ever heard the guns, for his mind was so determined and his heart so wounded. When he landed, his machine told the story, and the splendid pictures he turned in were proof of his courage.

After that experience there were few things the enemy could do on earth or in the air to disturb him in carrying out any mission on which he was sent.

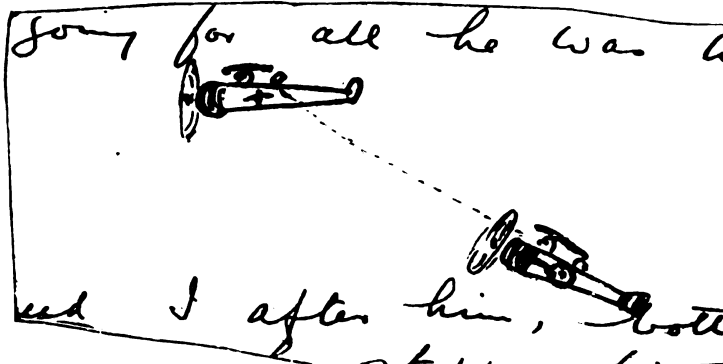
The prettiest part of this little story is that his commanding officer and he became very fast friends from that time on, and it was he who finally sent Vernon over to Canada, after he had had a bad fall in France, for fear that something else more serious might happen to him.



"They started to dive at me—not so close, of course, as in this drawing of mine."

focus, and to fly his machine under the very trying conditions which the Germans provide so well. It is not at all an easy matter, as Vernon soon learned.

He was very much concerned and distracted by the bursting shells. One would go off right in front of him and he would lose track of the pin-point that he was to photograph.



"Going for all he was worth for Hunland, and I after him—"

Another went off carelessly near the tail of his machine, and in looking around to see what harm had been done the machine would become tilted a little sideways.

In order to prevent the guns below from getting a direct range, he zigzagged and flew all around the country between each picture.

He was exceedingly shaky about it all and not a little distressed, but finally he got what he thought he had been sent out for, and flew home radiant with the satisfaction of a job that is well done.

The next morning his commanding officer sent for him and said: "Castle, did you take these pictures?" Vernon saluted

That was Vernon's first flight over the German lines. Of his first fight with a Hun he wrote:

It was a terribly cold day and I was detailed to go up on a parole. I had just got into my machine and started up the engine when I suddenly realized I hadn't my little prayer around my neck. Of course I am far too superstitious to go up without it, so I stopped my engine, got out of the machine and went to my hut, where I found it. I was too bundled up and had no time to undress, so I tied it round my wrist.

Well, I got up in the air about ten thousand feet, when I suddenly spotted four Huns. Then I was glad I had gone back for my prayer, because I thought to myself, "Here's where I get it." I beeted off after the Huns, who were well over our side of the lines and only a few miles from the aerodrome.

I gradually caught them up, and when they saw me the two behind turned on me, and as they were higher, they started to dive at me, one from the front and the other from the back like this (see sketch on page 54).

Of course not so close as in this drawing of mine. My observer opened fire at the one driving at the back and apparently frightened him away, or wounded him, because he beat it. The Hun in front of me had me cold, really, because I couldn't tilt my machine up enough to range on him, but I fired my gun anyway,



"Then came three happy days in London."

and he, like a fool, turned off, which gave me the opportunity I wanted, which was to get under his tail. Now we were like this (see sketch on page 54).

He was going for all he was worth for Hunland, I after him, both blazing away. Presently he stopped firing, and I guess either I must have hit the observer or his gun jammed. Then the Hun pilot tried to turn and shake me off his tail, but he couldn't, and every time I could get the light on him I blazed away. By this time we were across the lines on his side and the Hun Archies were firing at me, but I was so darned excited that I didn't notice anything.

Well, we kept on for some time, when suddenly his machine tipped over sideways and downward, and then started spinning like a top. I knew I had hit him. He fell right through some clouds and I lost sight of him forever.

When I came home I reported it, but of course as I didn't actually see him hit the ground, I couldn't very well claim him as a certainty; but while I was at lunch one of our pilots who was working with the artillery in that vicinity said he saw the machine come through the clouds and crash into the ground. So after it was verified I got full credit for it. It was very exciting, because all the chaps at the aerodrome could see the fight.

I don't like killing things, as you know, but I certainly saw red that time. Gee, I was excited.



My Memories of Vernon Castle

By Irene Castle

IN HIS life, Vernon Castle was, to most of us, merely the master of our lighter hours. We little knew, we little cared, about the real man who lived behind the dancer's mask. And when he gave his life for a deeper cause, we did not understand.

AFTER a bad fall in France, Vernon was sent to Camp Mohawk, Deseronto, Canada, as an instructor in the Royal Flying Corps. The fall in France was about one thousand feet, but the machine landed in some barbed-wire entanglements, which held it. He received only some slight scratches on his face.

During his instructing days in Canada he and one of his pupils who was flying the machine from the front seat, fell about five hundred feet on to the roof of a hangar where the nose of the machine jammed and stuck. They had just started up when the cadet lost control and there was not time for Vernon to right the machine before they struck the roof. While still in the air he tried to move the levers, but his pupil, probably through fright, held them rigid, and the fall could not be averted. The wings of the broken machine closed round the cadet in the front seat and Ver-



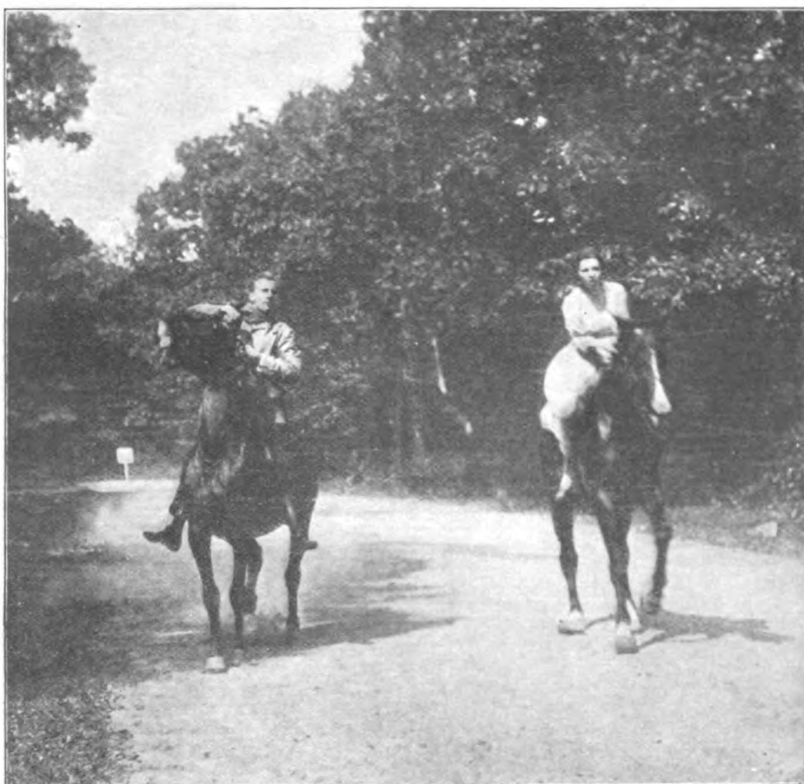
Vernon Castle was always ready to amuse.

This is the last instalment of what has been an inspiring revelation of the man, by one who knew him best, from the days of their first meeting, their early struggles in Paris, their successes in Europe and here, down to the time when the dancer answered the greater call.

non believed that he was unconscious when they struck the roof, for he could get no answer from him. Unstrapping himself, Vernon stepped out on the roof and tried to get the boy's body out, but just then the gasoline tank exploded and the entire machine fell through the roof in a mass of flames.

Some of the officers who were there at the time have told me that it was necessary to hold Vernon back as he was determined to save his student. He was so unstrung by the accident that he was sent home for a short leave. When he went back to instructing again he always sat in the front seat.

In this unsentimental business of war, the instructor, whose life is supposed for military reasons to be worth more than that of the student he is teaching, is supposed to occupy the second or safer seat. Time and again in airplane accidents, the man in front is killed, and the man in the second seat is only slightly injured,



The Castles were both lovers of horses.

often not at all. When a plane falls, the engine being the heaviest part of the machine reaches the ground first and usually burrows into it. But Vernon wished to give his pupils greater confidence and until his last flight—he was killed while riding in the front seat—he always held to the determination he formed that day at Camp Mohawk when his pupil was killed.

Vernon did not particularly enjoy the work of an instructor. It enabled him to be near home and he could have his dogs and his monkey, Jeffrey, with him, but the job really worried him and gave him more cares and responsibilities than he had had at the front. Then, too, the rush in an aviation camp is very great. Modern warfare demands so many flyers and they must be turned out quickly. When Vernon was at Camp Mohawk he was supposed to turn out forty students a month. As the personnel was, for one reason or another, changing constantly, many more than forty would come under his instruction during the course of a month.

With the 84th Royal Flying Corps Squadron, Vernon, along with Lord Wellesley, went to Benbrook Field near Fort Worth, Texas. This was to be the winter quarters of the Flying Corps. Here his work as an instructor went on. And here he gained in popularity with the men. Aviators down there have told me that he was by far the most popular of the flight commanders. He was always considerate of the men; he knew, as few others knew, that the life of an aviation cadet is a miserable one, and he was always willing to give his services as an entertainer to lighten the routine of the camp. If the wife of a student aviator was coming to Fort Worth, it was Captain Castle who met her in his car because the student could not leave.

His stunt flying was the admiration of every one at Camp Benbrook. Every evening at sunset he would fly eight thousand feet up, and his plane, silhouetted against the sky—at times barely visible, had a grace and a rhythm which few other flyers seemed to acquire. It was said that when he was in the air flying alone, none on the ground needed to ask who was up. With all the brilliancy of his own flying, he was a good instructor. He tried at the earliest moment to interest and encourage his pupil. At times he would be discouraging and tell the student that he could never fly and that he had better go into the Infantry or the Tank Service. Of course after that the boy tried his best to please his instructor. In the air he was never quick to take away the control from his student. He was there him-

self to give all and to risk all. He knew no fear and the men knew that he would not ask them to do things that he would not gladly do himself.

Among his students were men who learned to fly quickly, and men who could be trusted in the air alone after they had had a few lessons in the discouraging encouragement with which he began his instruction.

The boys who go into the aviation are so anxious to learn and so eager to be up in the air that time hangs rather heavily upon their hands. Thus it is that the life of the cadet is rather a miserable one. There are never, in these days when flyers must be turned out quickly and in great numbers, enough planes for the individual to get much time each day in the air. Hence Vernon's ability to entertain was so often requisitioned. He thought up many skits and sketches. He wrote parodies of popular songs and always his aim was to depict the plight of the cadet. Before he started he had his audience with him. In all these entertainments he elected to play the part of the cadet himself. When he appeared before the men as a performer he never wore the insignia of an officer. Often he went outside the camp to appear at charity, Red Cross or Loan Drive performances. Around Fort Worth he and his motor-cars were familiar figures.

Small wonder, then, that the day he died and the first Sunday were complete "washouts" at Camp Benbrook. In aviation parlance a "washout" is a day on which



"It had been long since we had danced our old dances together."

Original from
PENN STATE

planes are not sent up. That there were two washouts occasioned by Vernon's death was a beautiful tribute to him, for where so many flyers must be trained, a washout is a rarity.

Beside the greater chance of fatality in riding in the front seat of an airplane, there is another disadvantage in that it is more difficult to see. On that day in mid-February, Vernon and a pupil, an American student who had enlisted in the Royal Flying Corps, were just about to land. Just a few feet ahead of them another training-plane rose rapidly. Vernon undertook what is known as an Immelmann turn. It is, I believe, a combination turn and twist, named after Lieutenant Immelmann, a German aviator, who was himself brought down by an Allied aviator. Vernon's plane was only fifty feet from the ground; either it failed to respond or because of the nearness to the ground there was not room to make so difficult a maneuver. In any event, it crashed nose downward and Vernon was killed.

Those who saw this last flight of Captain Castle seem convinced that it was a beautiful attempt to do that which was almost impossible. Also they agree that so clever and experienced a flyer was conscious that he could not make the turn in safety. It showed beautiful and quick-witted management of a plane. The student was unharmed and Vernon paid unhesitatingly with his life. His death was instantaneous, and in death he was practically unmarred. His fellow officers lifted him out of the ruined plane and the camp mourned and paid tribute to one who was missed and praised and whose cleverness was so much admired.

The next day his casket, wrapped in flags and resting on a gun-carriage, was drawn to the station at Fort Worth, while with muffled drums and reversed arms, his brothers, officers and men, marched in saddened silence. As the train drew away, Victor Dodd, his devoted servant, who had joined the Royal Flying Corps to be near him, stood at attention, alone at the end of the platform until the last coach disappeared from sight. As he wrote me, "So passed for the last time one I had loved in life and love in death. I will miss him here; God grant I meet him There."

And little Jeffrey, Vernon's favorite pet, listening to each footstep, waited for him to come back to his quarters.

Hundreds of letters, telegrams and messages of sympathy reached me. The public and many prominent persons were eager to pay tribute to him.

He was a man, take him for all in all.
I shall not look upon his like again.

Few careers have from the point of view of those who have had them been so contented and happy. Vernon enjoyed life and he made others happy by his deeds of thoughtfulness. As a professional performer he was one who never lost the enthusiasm for his work. A night in the theatre was never a chore. In entertaining people he was himself entertained. He greatly influenced modern dancing; he taught many people and all the time he never lost the freshness and enthusiasm of those days when we won our first success in Paris. I'd like to quote from an editorial comment in the *Christian Science Monitor*. This appeared shortly after Vernon's death at Camp Benbrook, and though it con-



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The Castles in the early days of their career.

tains some praise for me as well as for Vernon, I think I may be pardoned for inserting it here:

The Castles showed and taught people of two continents how modern dances ought to be danced. They eliminated vulgarity and replaced it with refinement. They restored poetry to motion. Multitudes of people who had no time to waste upon ordinary dancing, as participants or spectators, took kindly, and even enthusiastically, to their dancing exhibitions and instructions. Little by little the Castles changed the atmosphere of the dance hall. Little by little, too, they made it possible for discriminating people to witness, with some degree of pleasure, stage and screen dancing. Unconsciously perhaps, because with all their popularity and success they remained as modest as they were unaffected, the two achieved a notable social reform.

Dancing was running down to the depths when they first came upon the scene, and before the war separated them, they had reversed the current. The Castles furnished an illustration of the good that may be accomplished in a calling if the effort is rightly and skilfully directed.

Vernon Castle, when his native country called, threw aside a profession that assured him a larger income than is enjoyed by the President of the United States, and took his place with the colors. His wife, without hesitation, had consented to his enlistment. He won a captaincy in the Royal Flying Corps, and her pride in him increased. The fact that he was entrusted with the task of teaching aviation, proved that he was as capable as a flyer as he had been as a dancer. His final display of heroism the other day, justified all the admiration that ever went out to him in another calling. It revealed behind the dancer and the aviator, the man.

The war changed Vernon and many of his ideas. When he first arrived in France he wrote me:

The only thing I miss is music and theatres and suppers, and well-dressed women and horses and motors and dogs, etc. We have everything here in the way of dust, guns and airplanes.

Late in his career as an aviator he wrote:

Oh, I want to get back to you so badly. I shouldn't care if we didn't have a penny. I don't want any extravagant things any more. If the war could only end this winter, but I don't see how it can, and I am here to see it through and to take my chances with the rest.

Though facing danger himself at every turn, he was most consistently and thoughtfully considerate of the work I was doing. He feared to have me go up in an airplane in motion-picture work. From France he wrote:

DARLING: Do be careful in your picture. Falling off a horse while it is running is no easy job and should be done by a double. And the man who is to take you up in a hydroplane. Who is he? And how much flying has he done? And what is the machine. For God's sake don't go up with some dub, who has only just taken out his pilot's license. Insist, please, darling, on having an experienced pilot who has done at least one hundred hours in the air. You know if anything happened to you through any one's carelessness, I'd come home to shoot him dead. I'm not thinking for a moment of your getting killed, but you might easily be hurt or maimed, by those fool picture people who are always trying to get a thrill.

I like, too, another letter that he wrote me from France; it shows thoughtfulness for me, but the greater consideration, at least so it seems to me, for the men:

I am so excited about your new clothes, sweetheart. I am so awfully, awfully proud of you. I am so glad you bought yourself some pearls. How I wish that I might have bought them for you! I shall some day, but not this Christmas. I am going to try to give the chaps here as merry a Christmas as I can. I shall get a tree and there will be lights. Will you send me one of those electric sets with colored lamps? Just a small one. A week before Christmas I shall keep back all packages which come by post so they can't open them till Christmas morning. I shall think of you a lot that day, but I sha'n't be sad.

Vernon's funeral in New York was at the Little Church Around the Corner—that little haven in Twenty-ninth Street, which has been such a solace to the theatrical profession. The streets were lined with people, the windows choked with faces and the police had to be called upon to keep the street near the church partly cleared. Inside were many of those Vernon had loved—his friends, people he had taught to dance, professionals with whom



Leo L. Hill's Studio.

Captain Castle shortly before his death.



A photograph showing the scene of Vernon Castle's crash.

he had appeared, chance acquaintances, stage-door keepers, scene-shifters and waiters in cafés and restaurants. Buddy, the drummer, who had taught Vernon to drum, and other colored musicians from our own restaurant, were there, overcome with grief.

The service was short, solemn and simple as he would have wished it. His Royal Flying Corps cap seemed so small as it rested there on his coffin which was draped in the Union Jack and the Royal Flying Corps flag. Eight men from the Corps carried his coffin from the church and behind it walked the British officers,

several dear and personal friends and his brother-in-law, Lawrence Grossmith.

And this, then, was the end of a career which went from acting and dancing to the battle-field and then cheerfully to the task of instructor in a training-camp. A teacher always, even when a fighter, and a man born to inspire others. Though at times impatient with his task of teaching, he never failed to gain his pupil's confidence and to instill in him the desire to do well the thing in hand. Vernon himself learned quickly and wholeheartedly, whether it was a game, a new step or a flying turn. His own quickness, however, never caused him to be annoyed at a beginner's stupidity. There are none of his students in aviation who are not willing to admit that he was a wonderful instructor and ready and eager to praise and to encourage where praise and encouragement were due.

His was a nature full of sunny contrasts just as his career was full of dramatic contrasts. When it was all done and the tribute of the thousands had been paid to him, he himself in his will, it so seems to me and to many others who have read it, revealed a beautiful side of his nature. His will is phrased in human tenderness, unusual I am told, in such documents. I glory in the affection that it expresses for me.

Vernon danced in Fort Worth and at the Country Club near there just before the accident on Benbrook Field. Our last dance together was while he was instructing up at Camp Mohawk, Canada. He had been given permission to come to New York especially to dance with me at a British Recruiting Benefit which was held at the New York Hippodrome. Because of the nature of the occasion he had been given permission to dance in uniform. He wore his dark-blue dress-uniform and I a little red-

braided blue jacket with a Scotch cap. It had been long since we had danced our old dances together and it had been necessary the day before to work quite hard in brushing up. I had expected that Vernon would have forgotten altogether a lot of the steps or that he would be a little stiff from lack of practise, but on the night of the benefit, he danced divinely.

At the close of the

performance many beautiful flowers were handed to us over the footlights. We bowed and bowed again our thanks. In the wings, Vernon nervously kissed my hand and there were tears in his eyes. I wonder if he guessed. We had danced our last dance, and the last ring of applause for us was still.

The world had been very good to us. We had lived well and lavishly because of that same applause. Together we tasted success, fame and money. Thank God that at no time during that night did I dream it was the end.