

SPOTLIGHT

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

—By Ahern

OUT OUR WAY

—By Williams

BEGIN HERE TODAY
SHEILA SHAYNE, dancer and discharged from a night club, meets MARION BANDOLIN, the star, is jealous of her. Sheila's career is over, and she's cured a nast in a music room show soon to go on tour.

DICK STANLEY, rich and socially prominent, asks her to give up this job and marry him, but Sheila refuses. Her idea is to go to the road company and the town far from Broadway.

Sheila's first friend is JIM BLAINE, another actor in the company from which she was discharged. When Jim offers her a place to live, Sheila accepts. Finally, she asks CRAIG ABBOTT, who is backing the show financially, to discharge Jim.

Abbott, tired of Marion and her demands, wants to get rid of her. When he secures an introduction to Sheila, a few days later Sheila refuses. Her idea is to go to the road company and the town far from Broadway.

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Tillie nodded. "That's all right. Earned money isn't everything. I think men are afraid of girls who earn good salaries. Sheila.

"Maybe they are."

That was another angle of the old argument. Home life or a profession for a girl? Sheila thought about it, but couldn't come to any decision.

She knew that for herself she wanted a home. She was making progress, however, as a dancer, gaining assurance and winning recognition. If she followed McKee's advice, returned to Broadway and landed a part there she might become a star.

What would that mean? Only that she was farther and farther away from the dream of her heart.

CHRISTMAS week brought the troupe to a large middlewestern city. The week passed almost exactly like any other with two exceptions. It meant seven days in one place instead of two or three brief engagements and it meant an extra matinee on Christmas day.

In one of the larger cities McKee, the comedian, surprised her.

"I know a lot of people here," he said. "Played here in stock years ago. There's a Mrs. Raymond—one of the social celebrities—who is in the homes of relatives and friends instead of going to the theater?"

"Why, of course. I'll be glad to," "Good. It's \$25 in your pocket," McKee explained. "Mrs. Raymond's a good sort and it's her charity—now ours."

Sheila nodded. "I can use the \$25," she said.

For two days she looked forward eagerly to the night of the charity dance. It was to be a glimpse, close at hand, of the life that to her seemed the most attractive in the world.

THE night came but it didn't, somehow, quite reach Sheila's expectations. In Mrs. Raymond's home she found herself in a different world. She was the same age as many of the girls she met there. She looked much as they did, dressed similarly.

She shared the same youthful dreams of romance, gaiety, adventure. But Sheila was an outsider in spite of all this. For some reason a barrier existed, shutting her off from these young people.

She didn't know how to get around it or climb over it. Sheila remained apart.

As she danced the "May Day" number, her feet weaving in and out in the complicated steps, she could hear whispered approval.

A polite patter of applause at the end clearly showed that the dance had been appreciated.

"Good work!" McKee whispered as Sheila took a seat again at his side. He was not performing. Sheila noticed with interest that here he was accepted as a guest.

Many people seemed to know him. He moved easy and assured, among the others. Some of them called him "Ralph," shook hands and spoke of the days years before when he had played weekly at the local theater.

"Well, how'd you like it?" McKee asked the girl as together they drove back to the hotel. "Would you like to change places with any of those girls?"

Sheila hesitated. "It's an attractive life," she said. "I don't suppose they have many responsibilities. I guess they do just about as they please every day and never have to work."

"You should see them after a hard set of tennis."

"That's not what I mean." McKee patted her arm. "I know it isn't," he said. "But you must remember there are two sides of the picture. Most of them would give their right eye to be behind the footlights. They envy you, Sheila."

The season rolled on. The play was a success and Sheila was winning recognition as a dancer. Newspaper criticisms of the play always mentioned her name.

Sometimes this praise was extravagant. It didn't make her more popular with other principals in the company, but the manager appreciated it.

McKee liked to see her receive good notices. He continued to invite her to suppers after the show, to show her little favors and give her advice from his long experience.

These attentions were always impersonal. Often he talked about his wife and family. He never tried to make love to Sheila.

PRESENTLY the Samper Sisters arrived to join the troupe. Paris had been written into the show for them. It was felt that "Ho-ho" needed some new material and the Sampers' act provided that.

The girls dressed exactly alike. They came on the stage with little shuffling steps crooning a song in close harmony that was unlike any other singing Sheila ever had heard.

The Sampers were not particularly pretty girls, but they were rated clever. They danced and sang in unison, their voices blending like notes of a violin, their agile steps matching perfectly.

They had a dressing room which they all used. They ate together after the show. On pay days one of them always was to be seen scurrying to the postoffice to send money home, holding out only what the sisters would need for living expenses.

"How's your beau?" Tillie Samper asked Sheila one evening as they

waited in the wings for the leading lady's song to come to a close.

"Which one?"

"The one you loaned me one evening. Jim something-or-other. He's rich, isn't he?" Tillie spoke wistfully. With the exception of Clara, who was married to a vaudeville headliner, the Samper girls had been beau-less.

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THE road tour of the "Ho-ho" company was proving successful. They visited small towns and larger ones. They found appreciative audiences and dull ones.

All things considered, however, the tour had been doing well. The show was making money. Few other road companies had as good a record.

Sheila's specialty dances (there were four from first curtain until closing) always won repeated encores. She was a favorite with every audience and Fletcher, the company manager, had allowed her to order new costumes for the "May Day" number and the little dance in which the spotlight that shone on her varied from red to green to blue.

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