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**MRS. C. L. CARSON**

There is no name better known or loved in the theatrical world than that of Mrs. Charles L. Carson ("Kittie" Carson), the wife of the editor of the Stage, and the founder of the Theatrical Ladies' Guild, the Guild which to-morrow celebrates its fifth anniversary with a great meeting at the Lyceum Theatre, kindly lent now, as in former years, by Sir Henry Irving.

Speaking of the origin of the Guild, Mrs. Carson tells how, five years ago, she heard a pitiful story - a story of great need on one side, of hardened narrow-mindedness on the other. A married woman, a dancer at the Alhambra, expecting her confinement, had applied to a clergyman for assistance and had been refused, "because she was a ballet-girl."

Then Mrs. Carson, who had herself but recently quitted the theatrical profession, thought out a scheme which should be the means of stretching forth a helping hand to its less fortunate members. Assisted by some seventy leading actresses, who entered with heartfelt sympathy into her plan, she founded the Theatrical Ladies' Guild, with Miss Fanny Brough as its president, and Miss Kate James as its vice-president.

The primary object of the Guild was to help the poorer members of the theatrical profession at the time of maternity. Since its foundation, however, it has received enormous additions - hospital beds for cases of severe illness, admittance to convalescent homes, help in sickness and in need, a lending library, and facilities for purchasing baby clothes at cost price; and last, but not least, second only in importance to the maternity cases, the Cast-off Clothing Society. Here the Guild has supplied a want most terribly felt by actors and actresses, "who, dependent wholly on their profession, are often prevented from obtaining engagements by the shabbiness of their outfit, or their inability to provide the clothes required by the management.

Thanks to friends, Mrs. Carson has been enabled to meet the large demand made upon her, and has so managed that no one but herself knows who has applied to her for assistance. Mrs. Carson, mentioning this part of her work, adds feelingly, "for if we are poor in this profession we are also very proud."

Every Tuesday afternoon a sewing-bee, in connection with the maternity scheme, is held at the offices of the Guild. Branch sewing-bees are also held in the provinces. Miss Lily Hanbury, who is indefatigable in her zeal for the cause, but modestly reticent concerning her own share in the good work, often presides at the London meetings. Sitting at the head of the table she presents an example of industry to the busy workers, who all come prepared to do their best.

To see Mrs. Carson on one of these occasions is to gather some idea of the magnitude of the task she has set herself to perform. Surrounded by "her girlies," as she loves to call them, she helps, advises, and directs. This week she was beset by many inquiries from ladies anxious for details as to the big meeting at the Lyceum, where Miss Ellen Terry will give to the four workers who have been most constant in their attendance at the sewing-bees a silver badge. These badges are exactly similar in pattern to the beautiful one designed by Miss Gertrude Warden, and presented, together with a diamond star and signed illuminated address, to Mrs. Carson by eighty leading actresses as a mark of their appreciation and esteem.

The Guild's energetic and cheery president, Miss Fanny Brough, will take the chair at the Lyceum meeting. Amongst the ladies who will speak are Miss Genevieve Ward, Miss Annie Hughes, Mrs. Gordon Ascher, Miss Lily Hanbury, Miss Gertrude Kingston, Mrs. Edward Sabur, Miss Kate James, Miss Vane Featherstone, Mrs. Clement Scott, Mrs. Douglas Cox, Mrs. Oscar Beringer, Mrs, Albert Barker, and Mrs. Theodore Wright, who will move the adoption of the report.

That the Guild is in a flourishing condition is evidenced not only by its comfortable balance at the bankers, but by the fact that it now numbers 2,000 members. Since 1891 nearly 500 maternity cases have been assisted, while in one form or another help has been received by about 1,200 other cases.

As Mrs. Carson simply and gratefully puts it:- "Whatever I have wanted for my work has been given to me."

She cannot speak too enthusiastically of the generous help extended to her by friends, both in and out of the profession, but there is not one of her loyal fellow-workers who does not ascribe the success of the Guild to the earnestness and devotion of Mrs. Carson. She has given up her time to the work - a work which none but a greathearted woman could have originated, which none but a woman of infinite tact, discretion, and delicacy of feeling could have carried out, and of whom it may truly be said, that to her "All worldly joys go lesse, To the one joy of doing kindnesse."

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