



Alfred Cheney Johnston

One time when Agnes Ayres was on the train James Montgomery Flagg induced her to pose for the sketch below.



## Rescued from the Bar!

The above is not the title  
of either a motion picture drama  
or of a gospel hymn.

**P**ERISH all thoughts of beautiful damsel being rescued a la Thomas Meighan from watery grave, or of father being led home from his cups by gentle Nell.

The bar mentioned is the one on which the classic beauty of Agnes Ayres would have been stranded if nature—or that which she took to be her nature when she was a Chicago schoolgirl—had been permitted to take its course.

Heaven knew what made her want to—her family didn't—but the fair Agnes got the notion along in her last year in high school that she wanted to become a lawyer.

It was an Essanay casting director who saved her for ingenue leads and O'Henry heroines. He was casting about one day from his place near the studio door—just a short while before that terrible law school that was going to turn Agnes Ayres into a stiff-collared, bespectacled modern Portia was to begin—to find a pretty blonde, also an intelligent one, to do maids and nurse girls and eventually ingenue leads. Came Agnes, who lived near by, to look over the plant. The director, after a brief inspection, mistook her for a motion picture actress out of work.

"Where have you been working?" he demanded.

"I haven't been," answered Agnes, almost adding, "and I don't want to, either," though something stopped her just in time.

"Come Monday and play an extra in a ballroom scene. I want to see how you screen," commanded the casting man.

And you know the rest. Blue eyes, fluffy hair, sweet smile photographed like a million dollars—as they still do—and that law business went to, well you know where it went to.

It wasn't long until Agnes was down in New York playing ingenue roles with Marjorie Rambeau in such pictures as "The Dazzling Miss Davison," "The Mirror," and "Mary Moreland," and with Nance O'Neil in Gertrude Atherton's "Mrs. Bal-

fame." Then she became with Edward Earle a co-star in Vitagraph's first O'Henry series—probably the most distinctive work she has done.

"I'm a 'free lance leading woman' now," said Agnes when we were comfortable, "and I like it much better than being bound to just one company. I haven't quite found my level yet. I don't know exactly what my 'style of acting' is. But I want it to develop into something distinctly mine. In going from one company to another for single pictures I acquire more versatility than I could by staying in one place. Some day when I am through with my 'apprenticeship' I hope to have a nice big fat contract—the kind that Gloria Swanson and I used to hope for, and which, I'm so glad to say, she now has, when we played tiny bits together at Essanay."

"You're not sorry you quit the law cold then?" I asked after we had discovered that we both adored O'Henry stories, and that Vitagraph had changed her name from Agnes Eyre to Agnes Ayres because they thought the last name easier to pronounce, and that she has ideals about her work, wanting to always do characters that inspire rather than debase, and that one time when she was going to Washington to appear in person with a James Montgomery Flagg picture in which she played the lead, Mr. Flagg was on the train and asked her to pose for him. (The result was the small sketch reproduced on this page.)

"Indeed I'm not," answered Mother Ayres, just as if the question had been directed at her. "I don't think the bar is any place for a daughter of mine."

Then the mother added:

"Now I'm going out to the kitchen and get you some of that home-made fruit cake of mine, and some home-made grape wine. I didn't make that myself but a friend of a lady I know did, and I know it's all right."