

# THE STAR-SPANGLED MANNER

## A Sidewalk Broadcast In Los Angeles, U.S.A.

Described by  
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I WAS swinging along Broadway, Los Angeles, not so long ago, bent on photographing the nearest thing to Solomon's temple in that locality—the wonderful green marble, gold-mounted Columbia building on the corner of Ninth Street. It lacked a few minutes of eleven a.m., and as I made a preliminary survey of my quarry from across the street I became aware of a small stir behind me, in the vestibule of the Orpheum Theatre. This part of Broadway is full of picture theatres, all, of course, running continuous performances, and already embarked upon their usual morning sessions. It was not to attend a show, then, that people were pausing in twos and threes—pausing and then stopping. A man was setting up a small platform just inside the vestibule of the theatre. He moved briskly, bringing out a microphone from the building and setting it upon the platform. The cord was plugged into a wall switch. A portable telephone was also connected up, and there followed a brief telephonic checking-up and adjustment. As the hour chimed from the huge clock on the eastern wall of the green building opposite the man stepped up to the microphone and spoke swiftly in a low voice, his eyes scanning intently, meanwhile, the interested faces of the crowd that had by now gathered about him. A sign had magically appeared: "The Man in the Street"—why, of course! I had heard him over the air—the pleasant, rapid voice murmuring "This is your reporter, Leslie Adams, speaking from the front of the Orpheum Theatre, in Broadway, near Ninth" . . . then the usual paragraph of advertising, followed by those always interesting, sometimes astonishing (as when the young lady from New Jersey calmly said in reply to the usual query as to how she liked Los Angeles, "I hate the place!") and often highly amusing interviews with passers-by in Broadway. Leslie Adams with his coaxing voice and his easy use of one's Christian name. . . .

His was obviously a worth-while photograph to secure, so I darted about on the outskirts of the crowd looking for a really good shot. A cheery, matronly woman from Idaho was smilingly replying to his queries when I secured the picture I wanted, and as I wound my film she stepped down from the platform and the Reporter, gabbling his advertising copy into the "mike," looked about him for another subject for the interview.



*No Gangster Shootings and Kidnappings in New Zealand.*

"Say, you there with the camera, what do you think you are doing?"

With a start I realised that the good-natured query was addressed to me.

"I . . . I . . . er . . ." I stammered.

"Up here, lady," he said, and I found myself being gently but firmly propelled towards the platform by a smiling crowd. And then, blushing furiously, I was facing "Your reporter" with the KFAC microphone between us.

"Now," said that gentleman, "your name. . . ?" I told him.

"Ah, Isabel . . . and you come from—no, don't tell me, I can guess! You are from England? No? Then—Australia?"

"New Zealand," I said hastily. "We don't talk a scrap like Australians, really!"

"Australians, eh? Sorry, I should have known better than that, Isabel . . . tell me, just how far away from Australia is your country?"

I told him that we were two and a-half to four days' journey from the Commonwealth according to the speed of the steamer doing the trip.

"It looks so close, on the maps," he said, "but actually it is nearly as far as we are from Honolulu. . . . Isabel, I have always been interested in New Zealand, and I believe you are trying out a new form of Government in your country. You know you are a source of great interest to the rest of the world, don't you? Tell me something about the way you do things down there."

"Things are working out pretty well, I guess. Taking things all round, I imagine we are better off than most people. Of course, there are not the enormous salaries in New Zealand that are common here. But then, we don't have the extreme poverty that is common in some parts of even America. . . ."

A legless beggar with his head only two feet from the pavement went past on a tiny platform mounted upon roller skates, propelling himself with his hands.

"You never see anything like that, for instance," I said. "The sick, the deformed, and the old and destitute are all provided for by pensions and allowances from the Government. You do not seem to have any really organised charity here, and there are

beggars in nearly every street in the city. Begging is not allowed in New Zealand, though there are a few musicians to be seen on the city streets. It's always a comfort to know that they are not in any danger of starvation, though. . . ."

"Go on. This is intensely interesting, Isabel. Doesn't the State own the railways?"

"Oh, yes, and the radio stations, and the telegraphs. We can listen-in to Parliamentary debates, you know. I imagine we are the only people in the world who can."

"And do you have gangster shootings, and kidnappings, and so on?"

"No," I said. "Nor any graft and corruption among Government and Civil officials who get into office only to line their own pockets and let the good of the people go hang!"

"S-s-s-sh!" said "Your Reporter," grinning. There was a lot of fuss at that time about the recall of Mayor Shaw of Los Angeles, whose shady practices brought down the indignation of the whole country upon his head. He was eventually "recalled," or sacked.

I was asked my impressions of Los Angeles. What had impressed me most about the city—apart from the film colony, of course!

There so many things. I named a few of them: Adult Education, for instance. There are 39 schools for adult scholars in Los Angeles and Hollywood.

"I am going to school myself," I said, "taking life art, and drama. And it costs me nothing beyond the art model's fee of 25 cents. Then there's Chinatown, and the Mexican quarter at Olvera Street. And your most wonderful Carnegie Library, and the buildings that are finished so lavishly with gold leaf, chromium, and marble. . . ."

Leslie Adams sighed.

"Isabel," he said, "I could listen to you all day . . . you have been most interesting, and I thank you very sincerely. . . ."

We shook hands, and I was presented with a sample of the particular line he was that day advertising. It was a cleanser for artificial teeth.

"I see you have your own teeth, but maybe you have a friend with a dental plate? Good-bye, and good luck. And do let me have a copy of that picture, when you have them done!"

I glanced back as I set off again along Broadway. I had been talking for twenty minutes. "The Man in the Street" was gabbling into the microphone, while his eyes searched the alert American faces grouped curiously about him.