

Job Hunting in New York at Sixteen . . . Second Instalment of *the Life Story of Norma Shearer*

(Special to the "Radio Record")

AT first I resented not having an education," Norma confessed. "Because I had had so little regular schooling, I lacked a certain mental discipline and I found life and people more interesting than books. But I was super-sensitive about my education. Until a few years ago I made a terrific effort to appear well educated, to pretend that I had spent years in school and had read everything

worth reading, but I don't do that any more. I was afraid of people then, afraid of what they might say or think about me. I'm not now. I've found that you have less to fear if you're just yourself than you have if you pretend to be something which you aren't."

The Shearers spent the next summer living economically in the country, trying to make plans for the future. When they returned to Montreal in the autumn, Norma decided to get a job. She remembered her music and the encouraging words of her teacher. But since the death of the woman, Norma had not practised very regularly. She had drifted from the skilful playing of her student days into the helter-skelter swing of rag-time, played for her own amusement and to entertain her young friends.

After an exciting and unsuccessful job-hunting period, Norma was engaged by a music store to play the piano and sell sheet music. The popular melodies at that time were "They're Wearing Them Higher in Hawaii," "On the Beach at Waikiki" and "Naughty, Naughty, Naughty." Norma played them over and over for the store's customers until she knew every note by heart. And sometimes she stopped a minute to wonder what her teacher would think and say if she could have seen her there, instead of on the concert stage where she had pictured her. At first her mother objected to Norma's working there, but the manager promised that he would give the girl time to practice her worth-while music.

"But that plan never worked out," Norma explained, "I didn't have any free time. The shop was a popular place, and all the boys and girls dropped in to visit me and to hear me play their favourite tunes; also mother's friends came in occasionally—they looked at me with surprise. I got a thrill out of it, but when mother came in on the third day I was there I could see the hurt pride in her face as she watched me pounding out one of those popular pieces. I understood how she felt. I was her baby, and it hurt her terribly to see me doing that kind of work when she thought I could do something more dignified. So, when mother asked me to leave I did, at the end of that third day."

The Shearer family was separated that year. They gave up the little house and lived in different places.

Here is the famous star in a scene from one of her most famous talkies, "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney." Critics were doubtful whether she could succeed in this famous play after the memorable stage performances in England and America, but Miss Shearer triumphantly proved their fears groundless.

