

# Do You Really Think I Look Like Shirley Temple?

*Asks*

## NOVA PILBEAM

**A**TALL, leggy girl of sixteen, with big hands and feet—"simply enormous" she calls them frankly—leant over the gate of a suburban garden. She clutched a dog in her arms to prevent his following the car. Her dress was blue, her cap was blue, her eyes were angry and blue.

"Do you really think," she asked severely "that I look like Shirley Temple?"

"Good heavens, no," I said. "Why?"

"Or Baby Leroy?"

"Hardly."

"Or Freddie Bartholomew?"

"Perish the thought."

"Then I wish," she said indignantly, "you would say so."

Nova Pilbeam, at sixteen, is going through a hard stage of her career, writes "C.A.L." in "The Observer," London. She has grown far and fast since the time, two years ago, when an unknown child sidled into the casting office at Shepherd's Bush and was tested for the part of the unhappy twelve-year-old in "Little Friend." Since then she has been kidnapped in the Hitchcock picture, "The Man Who Knew Too Much." She has followed the flying shadow of Pauline Chase, and Jean Forbes-Robertson as Peter Pan in the London theatre; she has toured the provinces as Peter and been jostled by crowds outside the stage door. Her first film with a "love interest," "Tudor Rose," is now released in London, and this month she is to go to Oxford to play Rosalind in the O.U.D.S. production of "As You Like It." Nova, if only people would believe it, has grown up.

She isn't any longer a child star. She is an actress. She has ideas about her craft; hard, sensible, experienced ideas, and can phrase them. She is beginning to get a very exact scale of values between the theatre and the cinema, to know just where the theatre is a wider training ground, just where the camera can teach precision.

### The Awkward Stage

Nova is still at that awkward stage between childhood and womanhood when motives are mixed, but instincts plain. She is looking forward passionately, for instance, to this O.U.D.S. performance of "As You Like It," because it is her first Shakespearean part, because she will stay a week in Oxford and can take her dog, because she had a good time there during the tour of "Peter Pan," because it is such an honour to be invited; and because, after playing Rosalind, there can't any longer be a doubt that she is quite grown up.

"Perhaps, after that," she says darkly, "they will begin to think of me along with the other girls of my age—people like Hazel Terry and Anne Shirley—and not as a Shirley Temple or a Baby Leroy. You wouldn't believe the letters I get, telling me what a clever little girl I am to remember my lines so nicely. And the plays they send me to read, with parts for a child of ten, little girls scrambling up trees, being patted on the head by kind old gentlemen. Of course," she added honestly, "I do get plays for married women, too."

"What do you really want, Nova?" I asked. "What sort of parts would you play if you could choose?"

"I'd like to do modern comedy," she said promptly,



As she appears in "Tudor Rose," the story of Lady Jane Grey, England's tragic nine-day queen — Nova Pilbeam, the delightful little English star.

"or a thriller. I wish I could do a thriller with Hitchcock—the sort of part he made Madeleine Carroll play in 'The 39 Steps' and 'The Secret Agent.' I'm awfully tired of being a tragic heroine. All my films have been sad, and I'm not a bit a sad person really."

She is not. In everyday life, as she was on the stage as Peter, she is a bright, impetuous, rather glowing person. The films, which make her out as dark and wistful, have under-rated her. Her hair has a tawny look to it. Her colour is eager. She would look well as Rosalind, and later prove a boon to the colour films.

### Shoes—Size 5½

The one thing I regret about Nova is that she never played the child in "National Velvet." It was planned at one time that she was to go to Hollywood to make the film for Paramount, but the deal fell through. Now she says she is too big for it.

"Look at my hands," she says, "and my feet—five and a half shoes—and see how tall I am. Fancy me a jockey! Besides, Velvet was just a child. It was a nice part, but I'm glad I didn't have to go to Hollywood."

"Don't you like America?"

"I had three weeks in New York, when 'Little Friend' was first shown there, and I was just terrified. Everyone was tremendously kind, and sent me flowers, and there were luncheons and receptions every day, but I felt such a fool, and it was all so noisy. I got lost, too, one day, talking to a cat behind a dustbin. It was a nice cat, like the one at home. But mother thought I had been kidnapped."

"So you're not going to America?"

"Oh, I hope not. I'd like to make English outdoor films though, with lots of exteriors and riding. I'd like —" she stopped.

"What?"

"Oh, it's silly, I suppose, but I'd like to make a film of 'Wuthering Heights.' I've always wanted to play Emily. And then there's 'St. Joan.' And, perhaps, Mary Rose. And 'Shirley.'"

We passed on to the chances for Norma Shearer's screen Juliet and Elisabeth Bergner's Rosalind. She wondered how Bergner, with her small, intimate voice, would compass Rosalind. We talked about "The Constant Nymph" and "Escape Me Never." "I wish I could find a part like Tessa," she said, eagerly. We talked about "These Three." She wished there could be an English version of "Mädchen in Uniform," and she could play the Hertha Thiele part.