

A HOUSEWIFE IN THE OPERA

KIRSTEN FLAGSTAD is the world's greatest living Wagnerian soprano. Since her debut at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York in 1936—which, some say, saved the Metropolitan—she has had no rival. To opera-lovers she is a Viking goddess. Her houses are all sold out. Hundreds of would-be standees are turned away. When it was announced that she would sing an additional performance of *Tristan* the house was sold out in four hours—a record. Not since the days of Caruso has anyone done so much for the box-office.

She can sing in Norwegian and Swedish thirty-eight grand opera roles. Asked to sing in German, she learned the *Brunhilde* role in *Gotterdammerung* in six days. When she finished the rehearsal the men of the orchestra laid down their instruments and cheered. She knows, in addition, fully thirty roles in operettas.

Offstage, Kirsten Flagstad's personality has a distinctly "homey" quality. She was the oldest of four children. Two brothers, Oke and Lesse, are now conductors of orchestras, and Karen Marie, her sister, is a

singer in light opera. When they were all little, Kirsten bossed the family. The parents were musicians and often they had to be away. Kirsten looked after the table manners of the younger children and saw that they took sufficient baths; washed them behind the ears; changed the baby's diapers; made them behave, and got them off to school in time.

"They minded me better than they did our father and mother," she says. "I was very proud that I was trusted to give the cook her daily instructions, and to oversee the work of the seamstress who came to make our clothes."

In 1929 she had her first offer to go to America to sing, but she did not go. For one thing she had heard there was no fresh fruit in America, and that everyone ate out of tin cans. Moreover, she had just met Henry Johansen, her present husband. Going with her brother to a party at Johansen's house, she danced all night. Before she realized it, it was broad daylight and her brother, boiling mad, was waiting in the hall to take her home. The next evening she had din-

ner with Henry. The day after that they were engaged. Mr. Johansen's chief business interest is lumber, in Norway, but he also owns a chain of hotels. Kirsten travels around the country with him, when they are at home, often spending weeks at a time in lonely lumber camps. She is an expert on skis; she has the body of an athlete, and, because of her years of vocalizing, the lungs of a deep-sea diver. Her husband explains the intricacies of his business to her, laying plans and projects before her and asking her advice. She can take a hand in any lumber deal, and has learned much about the hotel business.

Henry Johansen, like most businessmen, knew very little about music before he met Kirsten. Now he takes her to operas and concerts, and buys her new music. He is not always as interested in music, however, as Kirsten is in lumber. He has a talent for napping while she is singing in their home. Sometimes the world's most beautiful trills are accompanied by deep, masculine snores!

She is the only star of the first magnitude who does not have a maid or secretary. Some prima donnas travel with six or seven maids, chaperons, *maestros*, managers, and keepers-of-the-Pekinese. But Kirsten Flag-

stad hates to have people "fussing around her." When she is out on tour she packs her own suitcases, dresses herself, and puts on her own make-up. If she has a quick change to make, she will ask a wardrobe mistress to help her with the hooks and eyes, but otherwise she prefers to do everything by herself. Her dressing-room is as bare as a monk's cell.

After she sings she can't stop the music from going around in her head. She has to sit up, sometimes all night long, and play game after game of solitaire. Her fans have learned about this, and she is deluged with letters telling her about new kinds of solitaire games.

When she went home to Europe the first time, her children and stepchildren wouldn't believe that everyone in America was making such a fuss over her. So she brought her daughter Else Marie over with her, when she came back, and took her to a concert. Then, when the crowd was shouting and demanding encore after encore, she rushed back to Else in the wings, and cried:

"There! Now do you think Mama exaggerated?"

When an amaryllis was named for her at a flower show she attended, she sent one of the plants home across the Atlantic to prove that she wasn't mak-

ing up the story. Mama might be exaggerating again!

Besides her love of music, Kirsten Flagstad has an eminently practical reason for singing. She believes that every woman, married or single, ought to be equipped to earn her own living.

"I had to support my child for a number of years before

my second," she says. "I want her to be able to meet a similar emergency, in case it should arise. My mother was obliged to go on with her work. One of the first maxims she taught us was that everyone, man or woman, should be trained to be economically independent."—

Jack Famison, condensed from Radio Guide.



To Keep Happy, Keep Busy

I KNOW a man who married a woman with a lot of money. He doesn't have to work. He tells me that he doesn't know what to do with himself. Almost every afternoon he goes down town and attends the movies. Frequently he takes in a whole string of them in one afternoon, starting in as soon as they open up. In the winter time he drives through the South, and that, too, has got to be an old story, and simply bores him.

The man who has to work can thank his lucky stars. He has something to live for, to struggle toward. When a man arrives, when he has all the money he needs and can loaf the days away—life loses its zest. True joy comes from doing something worth while; from going out to meet the new day, with its new experiences, its new problems, its trials and battles; from the feeling that one is a part of the strenuous world of modern business.

The workers, the doers, are the healthiest and happiest folks on earth, especially when they have found the work they love.

Here's a good rule: To keep happy, keep busy.—
The Friendly Adventurer.