HETHER you see her in the flowing garb of Jessica in the moonlight scene, or in the little blue smock that she wears in the process of dressing, just before or after the play as she makes up or packs, or in the becoming school girlish clothes that she wears outside the theater, Harriet Russell, '26 arts-sc., who is playing with Fritz Leiber's company of Shakespearean actors, never loses the quiet charm that is hers. She is the youthful artisan in love with her craft. She is one of the fortunate few who has attained her life-dream while she is young enough to glory in its realization. Yet she has not drifted idly and aimlessly into her chosen profession. One gathers in rather a brief conversation with her that she has worked carefully and perhaps even arduously, though there is no appearance of harried, feverish toil, toward this remarkable beginning of a career.

"When I was a freshman," she said, "I was very definitely and intensely interested in dramatic work. I knew then that I wanted to enter the theater as a professional. But my family insisted that I get a degree before I should try anything like that."

Her first two college years Miss Russell spent at S. M. U. in Dallas. She worked hard with dramatic activities, took part in numerous plays, and became a member of Zeta Phi Eta, national honorary dramatic sorority. She was also a member of Kappa Delta, national social fraternity, and was elected president of the order at the end of her sophomore year. However, about that time she had decided to enroll at the University of Oklahoma in order to be closer home, and left the sisters in Dallas clutching the gummy. That made her a "double stray" Greek, to use her own phrasing, at Norman, and she admitted that she liked the peaceable contrast.

It was in 1926 that Hattie Mae received the B. A. degree from the Sooner university. The next fall she entered the Emerson school of Oratory at Boston, the high-brow training place for aspirants to the stage. The ordinary co-ed, a little lazy perhaps, has usually exhausted her educational zeal if she had any at the start, by the time she has acquired a B. A. But she must have worked prettily consistently at the Emerson school, for she returned the second year on a scholarship awarded to the junior student who presents the best recital of the year. At the end of her second year there she was graduated an honor student, one out of seven from a class of about one hundred students.

Although she was offered a teaching position at the high-brow school, generally ranked the country's best in the field of dramatics, she still had what the philosophers call the "driving urge" to do her Thespian bit professionally. It is still doubtful, though, whether she would have started with Fritz Leiber's company, had one of her teachers not urged her to see Mr. Leiber and read for him.

When I asked her if it was an ordeal she said, "Yes, I think it was the hardest thing I ever did—that is until I got started. When I talked to Mr. Leiber though, he was so perfectly charming that I didn't mind at all. He made me feel like Julia Marlowe or Jane Cowl."

It was in March of last year that Hattie Mae read for Mr. Leiber, her trepidations changing to gay confidence under the kind gaze of this great Shakespearean actor, who some have rated better than Mantelle and even Barrymore. At any rate he has charmed thousands with his convincing acting, apparently effortless, in the roles of Hamlet, of MacBeth, of Shylock and the other Shakespearean parts. Miss Russell, the school girl, must have pleased Leiber with her trial performance, for he gave her some substantial encouragement and in August, a job.

Hattie Mae went to New York in August, and rehearsals started in September. The company opened its season at Cleveland in October. The Leiber actors played all through the south during the winter months, appeared in Oklahoma City January 31, and February 1 and 2. From there they went to St. Joseph, Missouri, Memphis, and then back to the east.

LAVING Shakespeare in one's home town almost at the beginning of a career on the stage falls into the category of Things that are Thrilling. Hattie Mae was enjoying every minute of it apparently. She said however she was a little afraid of not being at her very best. No, she didn't think the people back home were more critical than others, particularly. "It is just that you want to give them a better show. And wanting to so very much makes it hard to do." She did please the audience though, if you can judge from scattered remarks at the theater, on the campus, and in the daily papers. An old gentleman who sat next to me at The Merchant, and seemed to know his Shakespeare, cheered heartily every time Jessica made an entrance or an exit. And he didn't happen to know her, because he would have mentioned it in his garrulity if he had. That is only a small instance of her power to please the audience.