

of His Millions?

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SCENE FROM THE GAY "MAM'ELLE 'AWKINS" COMPANY.

Mrs. Amanda Thomas was playing a chorus girl part in this show in the year 1900 when she met a young nineteen-year-old schoolboy, Herbert Thomas, and divorced her husband, Walter Yeager, and married the millionaire schoolboy.

parties of this same nature during the week which I did not join, but when the show closed its engagement in Boston Thomas told me he had spent a very large sum of money with the girls.

In the course of its travels the show went to Providence. I had business with members of the company and went to Providence. After the show the night before Washington's Birthday, I think, I was at supper with some of the members in the Narragansett Hotel, where the players were stopping. To my surprise Herbert Thomas appeared and I teased him about following the show. He confessed that he came to see the girls. Thomas asked one of the company to send upstairs for "Red Top"—Jeanne Caskie—whom he had not happened to meet in Boston. In a few moments the big red headed chorus girl appeared.

Jeanne Caskie bent over to me and said: "Put me right with the Thomas boy, won't you? He looks like a live one and I like that stickpin he is wearing."

A few moments later Miss Caskie moved to a seat closer to Thomas and the champagne was being opened and paid for very generously by Thomas.

At breakfast next morning I saw Thomas and noticed that his diamond stickpin was missing. I asked him what had become of it and he said, "I gave it to 'Red Top'—she was stuck on it."

A few weeks later I met Thomas and was surprised to find that he had practically quit his school and for about three weeks had been traveling around with the 'Awkins' show. He said he did not believe he could get back to the school because of his long absence and that anyway he did not want to leave Jeanne Caskie. He was completely infatuated with "Red Top." Soon I ran across Miss Caskie herself and she said as soon as she saw me, "Thanks for the chance at the college boy; he is going to be the real goods."

I noted that the chorus girl was extremely well dressed—much better dressed than I had seen her before. Thomas told me he had bought her a very generous supply of clothes and had spent a tremendous lot of money dressing her up. He told me, among other things, one thing which I remember quite distinctly. He said he had just paid eighteen dollars for a corset to replace a cheap and threadbare corset. At that time an eighteen-dollar corset was quite a noteworthy creation to me.

I knew Thomas very well and was quite well informed as to his travels and relations with the chorus girl, with whom he was completely fascinated. On one occasion he had given a check for \$500 in settlement of a bill at a hotel which he told me was for the chorus girl's expenses. The manager of the hotel, whom I knew very well, asked

me to endorse the check, saying that while he had no doubt the young man meant well, yet sometimes the rich fathers found out what the money was being spent for and stopped payment on checks. I endorsed the check and it was paid all right.

On another occasion the manager of a hotel, in Pittsburgh if I recall it, asked me for an endorsement of Thomas's check, which I gave him cheerfully.

Thomas was crazy about Jeanne Caskie. He followed the show about from place to place and he told me he was going to marry her, he thought, as soon as she could get a divorce. He did not know much about her husband, who, I learned later, was a clerk in a theatrical booking office in New York, but from whom she was separated.

Thomas told me that he had arranged with the Caskie girl to start a divorce action to get rid of Walter Yeager, her husband, and that Thomas was going to pay the expenses of getting the divorce so that he could marry "Red Top."

Herbert Thomas never returned to his school again. He gave up his college career and in talking with him years afterwards he said to me: "I was ruined forever the night I walked into the Narragansett Hotel at Providence and made the acquaintance of 'Red Top.' My career would have been very different if I had never met her."

It was not until March, 1901, that the divorce from Yeager was granted. Jeanne Caskie and Thomas were living in New York. Young Herbert lived at the Waldorf and Jeanne Caskie lived at the Hotel Navarre, I believe, and other expensive hotels.

Her salary was twenty dollars a week, if I recall, and I think Thomas told me that sometimes he paid as high as \$700 a week for "Red Top's" expenses.

I frequently met Herbert and the chorus girl at the Waldorf Hotel, where Herbert was spending very lavishly. I felt that the boy was headed for disaster and tried to persuade him to break away from the Caskie woman. But he shook his head and said that he intended to marry her. I cautioned him also about his lavish expenditures on the girl and mentioned the eighteen dollar corset. He laughed at this and said that was a very cheap affair and that he had paid not far from \$300 for a pair of corsets for Jeanne Caskie.

On September 19, 1901, Herbert married Jeanne Caskie in Washington. I think she was traveling with some show at the time.

From time to time I met Herbert and his wife and he told me of their trips abroad and the enormous sums of money he had spent for her clothes and expenses. In 1904, Thomas told me he regretted having married the

chorus girl. He said he guessed everything was going to turn out as I had so gloomily predicted.

In 1907 came the financial panic which wiped out the fortune of Herbert's rich banker father. Herbert Thomas himself was completely broke.

He had squandered about \$300,000, he told me, and the panic swept away the last dollar. Then Herbert and his wife separated. He had not a dollar of property, but there had piled up in the New York courts thousands of dollars' worth of judgments against him for his wife's clothes. These still hang over the young man as a memory of his married life with "Red Top."

The child, Herbert F. Thomas, Jr., was born in 1907, I believe.

It was not until April 23, 1914, that his wife started a divorce action against Herbert. On October 24, 1914, Mrs. Thomas got her decree of divorce.

The foregoing statement by one who knew young Thomas and the motley members of that old road show gives an illuminating view of the nineteen-year-old high school boy and his chorus girl sweetheart. No one would be surprised to find that a match made between such people under such circumstances would turn out the matrimonial wreck which it did result in.

It is curious to notice that Jeanne Caskie, the chorus girl, played the part of "Miss Judge"—and she claims that she has been "misjudged" in her relations with Shonts, her devoted and generous admirer.

When Mrs. Shonts's million-dollar suit is called for trial "Miss Judge" of the old road show chorus will have a chance to show just how she is "misjudged" as to what were her real relations with the old traction magnate.

Amanda admits that she became very closely associated with Shonts in 1908. And there is the record of the detectives' reports who saw Shonts morning, noon and night coming and going from Amanda's establishment on East Thirty-fifth street. And together Shonts and his Amanda went to Europe in 1913 and again in 1914. Shonts entirely abandoned his wife and daughters and made his home with Mrs. Thomas.

And all those years she was still the wife of Herbert Thomas. While she lived here and there in New York and during her trips abroad with Shonts she was the wife of another man. Through all those years until her divorce on October 24, 1914, Shonts's "friend Amanda" belonged to another.

The story of Amanda's divorce from Herbert is an interesting one. It was not until the latter part of April, 1914, that Mrs. Thomas got around to the divorce. She had gotten along for several years very nicely with Shonts without the need of getting rid of Thomas. But now it was decided that it would be convenient to get rid of her second husband as she had gotten rid of Yeager, her first husband.

When Amanda, the "chorus lady," met the schoolboy, Herbert Thomas, in 1900 she was earning \$20 a week with a road show. It was not her husband, Yeager, that year who paid her trip to Europe, filled her trunks with "dazzling gowns" and put up the money to make her one of the "best dressed women on the stage." She was a married woman—but somebody else seems to have been paying her bills.

And the same thing was repeated again when Amanda got through with Thomas. For several years Amanda and her son Herbert lived bountifully, with servants, clothes, money to travel on—but not a dollar of it came from Thomas, her husband.

In Amanda's own sworn testimony in her suit for divorce against Herbert Thomas she said:

QUESTION—When did the defendant (Herbert Thomas) last contribute to your support, as near as you can recall?

Answer—I should say in the year 1905.

Q.—Has he given you anything for the support of your child?

A.—He has given the child five dollars since he has been born.

Q.—Nothing else?

A.—Nothing else.

Q.—He never provided clothing or anything else?

A.—No, sir.

Q.—Or any present of any kind?

A.—That was a present—the five dollars was a Christmas present.

Q.—You have supported the boy since his birth?

A.—I have, yes, sir.

Amanda Thomas swore to that interesting bit of information on June 12, 1914. From "the year 1905" Herbert Thomas hadn't put up a dollar for Amanda—and it was in 1906 that she met Shonts.

From 1905 to the time of the divorce Thomas paid none of her expenses. And yet Amanda lived, and lived very well. Like the lilies in the Bible, "she toiled not, neither did she spin," so far as Mrs. Shonts knows, but she had plenty of money for herself and her boy. Mrs. Shonts asserts that Mr. Shonts put up the money to keep Amanda well dressed, well fed and well housed, including Summer tours and European trips.

But Amanda says she really didn't get on intimate terms with Shonts until late in 1908. Then who did pay her bills from "the year 1905" until Shonts took up the burden?

Is there an unknown admirer of Amanda who fills in the gap between Herbert Thomas in 1905 and the old traction magnate in 1908? It is certain that Amanda lived, and lived very nicely, during those two or three years, and she swears that her husband contributed nothing. Then who did foot the bills?

This is one of the things Mrs. Shonts's lawyers, Judge Warren Dixon and George W. Files, would be glad to find out from Amanda.

The referee asked her in her divorce suit examination:

QUESTION—You have supported the boy (young Herbert Thomas) since his birth?

ANSWER—I have, yes, sir.

And Mrs. Shonts would like to have Amanda explain HOW she supported herself and her boy. Where and how did she get all the money to support them? If it was not Shonts's money she "supported" herself and the child on—then who did furnish the money, and why?

And if it was Shonts's money that she thrived on all those years and still clings to to-day while the widow is practically penniless, then the Rev. Dr. Straton's question seems pertinent:

"If the wronged wife is finally robbed and the other woman gets this money, will not the tendency be for every weak girl in the city to ask herself the question, 'If she did these things and got away with it and now flourishes, why may not I?'"

(To be Continued Next Sunday)