

THE DIARY OF A SHOW GIRL

IN WHICH SHE MAKES A BIG HIT AND HAS HER FIRST SUPPER AT SHERRY'S

BY MRS. WALLACE IRWIN



ND there I was singing "There's many a peach on Fifth avenue, but never a lemon there." I just flew at the song. I choked it, I bamboozled it, I patted it around, I threw it at them. I knew I had to act. I acted like a peach, I acted like a lemon—and the house rose at me.

Where is Fritzi Scheff now? I just had to go on—they kept calling for me, and reporters was at the stage entrance asking what my name was. I wasn't even billed. But thank heaven for that practice night in "the Oven" in my cheese cloth wrapper. For Miss Wyncote had to have a doctor, and Grandcourt watched me sulky from the wings in her white dress that the audience hadn't seen, and I went right on with the part. Then the curtain went down, and every one crowded around me, and the owner says, "You're the hit of the piece—you've saved the show. Tomorrow your name goes on the bills." And the star says, "Bully for you, Higgins," and Mr. Smith says, "I suppose you won't speak to me now." Then a boy came with a telegram, and I tore it open right there, and it said, "Your mother is all right. Jim." Then I began to laugh and cry, too, and Molly got me away. I went in to Miss Wyncote and says, "I couldn't help it, really," and she kissed me and says, "It wasn't your fault, child." She's such a good fellow, after all.

Then two men, whom Molly knew, wanted to be introduced. They was fine looking. One of them had on the gladdest kind of an evening shell. "Where will you have supper, Miss Higgins?" says he. "Oh, Sherry's," said I, with my nose in the air, because I was kidding.

But we got into his automobile, and would any one believe it? We went to Sherry's! Honest! It seems a very quiet sort of slow place. Not much doing.

"Perhaps you think I'm used to this," says I, as the champagne was brought on. "But I've been a chorus girl ever since last February and this is the first time I've seen anything set before me that looked any little bit like lobster. I'm more used to hamburger steak. And as for those silly bubbles," says I, "cut it out for me. I'm going to have my mother here next week and I'm not used to it."

BUCKING THE LINE.

September 14—Well, here I am, living in a grand new a-partment on the west side. Gee, how many babies they is out here! I fall over their buggies in the hall every time I come home at night. Molly and Hartwell and Lovell and me has it together. There are three rooms and a bath in this a-partment, and the name of the house is "the Violet." We pay \$40 a month rent, and the gas stoves goes with the a-partment. There's a window in each of the rooms, and Hartwell sleeps on a couch in the kitchen, on the side where the dumb waiter is. Lovell wouldn't. She said she'd rather buy boards from a carpenter—he wouldn't charge much—and put them across the bathtub and sleep on that. But we wouldn't let her. She tried it one night. It seemed so unromantic to have Lovell sleeping on a bathtub, talking about "You may meet me in the conservatory, Ferdinand," in her sleep, with all her Marie Corelli books on the shelf above her head. I do like a good comfortable bed, like I've got now. It makes a girl feel real independent again. It helps her career. Of course, after my great success they raised my divvy, so now I get \$20 per. My, how I did grab those newspapers the next morning! The Sun said a few dignified joshes

and then called me "an unknown chorus girl." Gee, and that's fame! But it said it guessed the show "would draw the usual Broadway crowd." The reporter on the Telegram—Molly says I must call 'em dramatic critics—well, his name is Rosenfeldt, and he knows Miss Wyncote, and he said the piece "went as well as could be expected after her unfortunate disposition"—(it was a misprint, I guess)—"but up to that point 'The Babes in Woodland' was a crashing big success, one of the hits of the season, in which successful comedies had been more than usually successful." And then he said, "The chorus girl named Higgins certainly made good in the 'New York Peaches.'" I bought five copies of that and sent it to Paris—Ohio. But then I read another one, and bought six of it, though I was dead broke, because that critic said: "Here we have a new sensation—a chorus girl who seems to know how to act. Her voice is good as well as her dancing, and we prophesy before many years that she will be growing star size." But the rest of them just said my name was Higgins.

Every day I'm expecting a manager to seek me out to ask me will I star. Then we moved from "the Oven" to "the Violet." Hartwell said we might just as well move in a cab, as it wouldn't cost any more than an express wagon. So we got a two seated hack and carried our things downstairs. The cat was on the fire escape looking in, so we left her what she had left us of our hamburger steak. Hartwell carried the oil stove and a paper bag of potatoes and one end of her trunk and I carried the other end and my winter cloak under one arm, and a bunch of newspapers and a picture of our star he gave me with his name signed, and two bottles, and a package of jelly puddings, and a fellow put his head out of a door and called out, "Going, girls?" and Molly says, "Sorry, but we must leave you—we've got a raise."

MOVED INTO THE VIOLET

"Since you feel so bad," I sang out, over my shoulder, "you might as well pitch in and help, you'll never have another chance," and he did. So we moved that day, and here at "the Violet" it is cooler. Mamma says she'll come just as soon as she's sure we have room for her, but I told her about the bathtub, of course, just as a josh, but it scared her out. Well, the next day Miss Wyncote was all recovered, looking very pale and very dignified, and could do her part, only they kept me on to jolly up things in "The Peaches," so I act in it every night, and I'm the understudy instead of Grandcourt, and she gave up her white dress, but she comes out and dances with me in "The Pickaninnies." Gee, but I'm glad I ain't her gall. A weekly paper came out and said the show was a shine except Minnie Higgins, who acts in "The Peaches," but no one in our show mentions that ar-tickle—at all.

September 16—Mr. Barton Fordham Jones—he's the one who took me to Sherry's—says I've got real brains. I said I wish he'd pass the word along to the managers.

September 17—He laughs at everything I say.

September 18—He was in that same seat again last night.

September 19—Mr. Bowsox took me to supper last night. "Now, Mr. Bowsox," says I, "I've known you four or five months, and you're always talking about introducing me to your sisters. Trot 'em out, I says. Trot 'em out or stop the guff. I don't feel myself at all below anybody's sister," says I.

"You're not," says he, "but you're so cold, and hard, so cold," says he.

"Not at all," says I. "I never get cold until long



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about the time the first snow falls. And I like kidding and I like good things to eat, but cut out the sentiment," says I, just like that. I'm tired of Mr. Bowsox. He ain't near such a perfect gentleman as Mr. Barton-Fordham Jones, but Mr. Jones don't say a word about his sisters. They're mentioned in Vogue, sometimes twice a month.

September 20—I've got a new chiffon boa with black velvet loops in it. I wore it along the Rialto yesterday and who should meet me but the owner of the Babes—and he noticed me. Of course he never tips his hat. "Well, Min," he says, "you certainly are growing to be a good looker. Keep it up; keep it up."

"Keep what up?" says I, chewing my gum hard.

"Keep up the licks," he says. "You just dance and do your little act in as hard as you can, Minnie, and next show I get I'll give you a better part."

"How much a week?" says I, quick like that, for I guess I know my own worth, and I'm not going to be flim-flammed, but he just laughed at somebody and whistled to him, and went on.

This job is getting easy. Nothing to do but act at night and have a good time when you can raise it, and sleep late mornings and wash out things and clean them with gasolene.

September 21—Lovell is crushed on a man that she's only met once. Yesterday morning she cried two hours by our clock. "Oh, dry up," I told her. "I wouldn't be such a ninny. Why, you may never see him again at all."

"I know it," she says, and cried harder than ever. "Your face will swell up, and if he comes tonight he'll think you're a dodo bird," says Molly.

"I know it," Lovell said, and on flowed her tears till I could hear them dripping on our only rug. Our remarks didn't seem to console.

"What's the use of being a beautiful chorus girl," she said, "if no one proposes to me?"

Gee, that gave me a start. I never thought about proposals before. Perhaps we ought to get a job lot somehow and spiel about them out loud before the press agent. I don't know. The only proposal I ever got was Jim's, and that don't count, anyway, and I feel knocked silly every time I think about it. But I'd go through a good deal of proposing if it would help my career any—perhaps Mr. Bowsox would do.

September 22—When Mr. Bowsox rang me up on the 'phone yesterday afternoon—there's a telephone at "the Violet"—and asked me to go to supper with him last night, I let him take me. When we were eating our oysters and every one was looking at us—I looked better than usual—I spoke.

"Mr. Bowsox," I began, "sometimes you've called me hard and cold, sometimes without sentiment. I have been fooling you—I have a heart."

"I thought you was all rigged to run for Sweeney," he began.

"Sweeney?" says I. "His name is Jones."

"Good gracious, Minnie," he says, "Sweeney is racetrack talk for the guy the dead ones trudge for. Now you've given yourself away."

"No," I says, "whatever your thoughts, 'tis you for whom I really care."

"Thank you," says he, after a minute, "I have exactly \$2,500 a year, besides what I make off the racetrack. Last month the boy I bet on just got off and peddled matches. Do you think you could stand for it?"

"I'm not stringing you," I says. "But after all, you don't care for me." I'd learned a new trick, and I did it. It's to make your face as sad and far away as home on a wet night. I was afraid after all he was going to give it to me where Fanny wears the fichu. But not yet.

"Min," he says, "you're a scrap of a thing, about as big as a Chihuahua dog, and I can carry four members of the Fatman's club, and a bale of hay in my saddle bag, and then put down four furlongs quicker than a spotlight can reach from the gallery to the stage. All along I've had my bet down on you, and you surely can go some. You don't mean to say you're thinking of giving up the race and becoming—wife to anybody, do you?"

"Not to any one who hasn't asked me," I said. My, but it was hard work.

"I didn't know you was howling for seventeen hours of straight slumber," he began again. "I thought you were fixed to run for the end book, so far as the matrimonial handicap was concerned. Do you really want to wear my colors, my dear?"

"Yes," said I, in a hurry.

He gheeked all around the coffee and then back at me.

"This isn't no place in which to propose," said he.

September 25—Mr. Bowsox called me up again today. "Can't you propose by telephone, dear?" I asks, and then he told me to stop my kidding. I can't understand men at all. I wouldn't try to make Mr. Jones propose. I am so thankful for his friendship.

The friendship of such a man as that does a girl so much good.

September 26—They're going to have a newsboys' benefit, so they asked twenty of us and twenty from the "Purple Star" chorus and twenty from the "Girl and the Pearl" chorus to go down to Wall street in big automobiles, and sell tickets to brokers, millionaires and bears down there. I'd never had any errands down in Wall street before, though I had heard of it and knew where it was. Well, we had to get up at 8 o'clock. I was most dead because we'd been out to supper the night before with Mr. Barton Fordham Jones, and the powder on my nose would show in the daytime. But I looked lovely under a blue spotted veil—it is so hard arranging the spots so they won't get in your eyes or under your nose. Well, Willy Harris arranged us in the automobiles. We did look lovely. I never saw so much beauty together in my life before, but lots of the girls was much grander fixed up than I was. And the one on the seat next me, one of the "Purple Stars," could talk so much faster than me I just gave her a walkover. We just went spinning down Broadway, and everybody stood still to gaze at us. Some was rooted to the spot, and lots of the girls seemed to know fellows along the admiring populace, but I didn't see nobody I knew. Anyway, we had lots of jokes among ourselves. The spear carrier on the other side of me kept singing her chorus about "A potentate in him you see."

"See that old lobster there on the corner," says one of the "Purple Stars." "He hasn't a single hair on his head, and his wife won't let him wear a wig, because she's afraid it'll make him frivolous."

Then everybody talked at once. "Good for you, little chafour; take another corner like that and they'll have to identify us by—" "Ain't it cool and nice?" "At Atlantic City they—" "Stop your nose, Rosie, you're always too talky." "And when I got to Cleveland, you may strike me dead, if some one hadn't blacked my shoes for me." "Is that Maxie? Of course, it is—doesn't he look like a little handbox this morning. It isn't? Who is it then, Smarty?" "Why, that's Bat Nelson; my sister knew him before he went on the pugilistic stage." "Your hatpin is caught in my veil"—"Move over, you're a regular crowd"—"Tonight at 6 o'clock"—"If he doesn't forget"—"Look at that old jay, almost got run over; somebody at home would miss him"—"No, it goes Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la"—"She had the audacity to walk right into my flat"—"Oh, he's a mutt, and everybody knows it"—"He don't!"

"Now, girls," says Willy Harris, turning around and talking through a megaphone, "you must remember about the poor little newsboys what this benefit's given for, and you just make every man you see buy a ticket—no introductions needed."



WE WENT TO SHERRY'S

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)