

The Troubles of Two Working Girls

By Helen Van Campen
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SCENE—The telephone switchboard in the lobby of a New York hotel.
Characters—Flossie, the operator; and Evangeline, a show girl.

Time—Afternoon.

Mis' Hand's husband wants to know which is the cookin' butter.

Evangeline—Howdy, dearie, whadda you think? My chance has come at last! One the great Timmins Brothers, London managers an' producers, seen me in the scene at the Longshaw races where I'm one the Paris models, an' he called on me back stage, an' I'm to be put out in a tabloid drama of Broadway, an' he says to me, "You never would be thus obscured s'long, but your very genius was holdin' you chained, for the world ain't evolved to your level," he says, an' my own heart tells me that's true. I resigned from the east with simple dignity, an' the girls are givin' me a banquet, an' Perla Levey apologized for sayin' I had a rectangular figger, an' ast would I take her in my company, but she'd be tellin' all London how she knew me when I dressed twelve to a room—Mr. Timmins says to surround myself with a suitable support, an' forgit the expense.

Flossie—Is he a stern sort of fella, dearie?

Evangeline—Oh, no! He was kiddin' an' laughin', an' said he bet a little dickens like me'd have the Johns over there springin' themselves for pearl ropes, an' that he'd read of eyes like mine, but never expected to meet 'em. His first name's Henry, an' he ast me to call him it, cause he's lonely, an' he says to think of him as my knight. Ain't that perf'ly swell?

Flossie—Be wary, dearie, for you can't git at a man's real thoughts. My Uncle Heinie's the softest seemin' old coot alive, an' he's took three years decidin' on a wife, 'cause he makes a excuse to call on 'em early in the mornin', an' if they answer the bell in a boudoir cap, he's not saw again, as he claims that a woman who wears one'd soon be usin' his slippers an' orderin' some dark brown paint when the woodwork needed cleanin'. He—hello? Well, Guinevere, h'are you, girlie? Sure I will! Goo'bye. Ah, me—Guin was hashin' in Bennett's down in Park Row, an' a party from Curly Wolf, Idaho, blowed in, an' now they got a twelve-room apartment, an' his people adores her, an' they're so cultured they wouldn't begin a meal without slippin' a Caruso record into the machine! But a opportunity like that's rarer round this dump than a clean collar in Pittsburgh.



I'd notice some guy in a stage box

Evangeline—I've gave up my own dream of romance by sendin' the one in Portland a lettergram that I won't make the coast tour with the show, an' prob'ly it'll wreck his life, but I gotta heed art's call, an' then I wouldn't care for Oregon, anyway. It's so wet that they must move fast or the moss'll form on 'em. Yet I'm goin' to feel a lack without Lester's letters. He sells minin' machinery, but he kin suffer over a wiltin' lily.

Flossie—Hello? Yup, 9309, who you callin'? Miss Dale's gone flyin', an' won't be back 'till six. Hello? Oh, merey, maw, what's come off? Yunno she quit burlesque an' took the job of housekeeper here, dearie, an' yesterday burglars got into the boss' suite, 'cause maw left it open, while gassin' with a coupla guys who were waitin' for an elevator, about joinin' an expedition to Cocos Island to hunt buried treasure, an'—yes, maw, I hear you! Why, the idear! A' course you was right! The boss' wife is kickin' because the detective who come about

the robb'ry has been beggin' maw to go to dinner instead of gittin' evidence.

Evangeline—It's them dull, grey natured wimmen who hate all us vivacious ones.

Flossie—Hello? Hold the wire. Front! Bust into that suffrage committee room on the parlor floor, an' say Mis' Georgie Hand's husband wants to know which is the cookin' butter! Yes, dearie, I cert'ly git plenty hateful stabs around here, but like a guest from Troy says, "Blondes is too glorious to need to care what a few envious dames thinks"; an' while he never gimme no tip, still he was a discernin' fella, an'—hello? The boy's lookin' for her. Yunno I—hello? Who? Gee, this big blob on the wire's a Columbia Freshman, an' I met him while intendin' to throw myself in the Park reservoir, the day I had the argument with Abie an' he took the newsstand girl out in his ear, an' now he's tryin' to become part of my existence, which he don't realize that everybody has their moods—Abie rode by while he was persuadin' me not to jump, an' he put Agnes outa the machine, an' with a scream of horror swore whatever I said went in future, an' he drove right down an' bought that ruby ring—hello? No, I truly kinnot, Mr. Smaltz, my mother won't lemme go to dinner with no single gen'lman! Oh, no, you astin' her an' gittin' your paw to vouch for you wouldn't change her, for she's very formal. Dearie, he's been in here six times, explainin' how he's goin' to take Calculus an' trigonometry, an' wantin' me to wear his class pin!



Gassin' with a coupla guys about joinin' an expedition to Cocos Island

Evangeline—Fate belts all alike, Floss; so leave him bear his pain. Yunno I kin see myself before that London audience, compellin' their rapt attention by the way I'll shoot them lines across! Sometimes when I been standin' on the end, with only that one lipsin' line an' the posin' to do, an' I'd notice some guy in a stage box keenly observin' me, it was all I could do not to dash to the centre, an' show what true actin' was. Are you goin' to wear the new veils with pictures of landscapes in colors painted on 'em?

Flossie—No, but ain't they a boon to some, for the dear knows plenty need attention took from their dials! Yunno when Birdie Latimer got home from Parus, she had gilded eyelashes an' pink dyed ermine, an' talk about chick! They sure got it on us for effects, an'—hello? Pardon me, but you ain't rang no half hour without response! Gimme the name, an' I'll see, though I ain't goin' to be a absolute drudge to this wire, which what reward would be mine? Oh, I s'pose somewhere the arbutus is peepin' through the dead leaves, while the jeweled streams sparkles in the sun, an' nature's callin' to her votaries—hello? Kin'ly repeat it, will you? Front! D'you find Mis' George Hand? Well, tell her the party's waitin' to know about that butter! Hello—just a second.

Evangeline—Mr. Timmins said it was strange a girl of my compellin' make up was still single, an' I told him about my frightful experiences with Andy an' Mike—yunno Andy stayed in Ludlow Street jail ten months outa plain spite so he wouldn't have to come through with my alimony, an' the instant I took Mike, Andy come out an' I will admit that he give me a lovely celebration dinner. How bright the world seemed then, dearie—an' but a week passed before Mike declared maw an' Uncle Heinie hadda leave our flat or he'd leave himself—Mr. Timmins' face was a study while I was tellin' him, an' finally after a long silence he said very agitated, "Little one, many with them woes to carry would'a gave up entirely, where your valiant soul kep' you goin'?"—an' he's had his cross, too. Gee, these mousquetaire boots are terrible hard to keep up, ain't they?

Flossie—Timmins must be a real sincere fella.

Evangeline—He ast me not to go to supper with others, an' I promised.

Flossie—Mention that you're gittin' twenty or thirty 'phone calls a day, though. It'll send you in stronger with him. Hello? Hold the wire, Mista Hand, they're ballotin' up there, but why don't you broil it instead of fryin'? Grease'll just devastate your liver an' bacon. Hello? Take the toaster if you can't find the broiler, an' push it into the place under the gas oven, an' stir up a little flour gravy with the drippin's, see? Goo'bye. Hello! Sir? Line's busy, but I'll try 'em in a minute. Hello? Say, Mista Hand, keep stirrin' or it'll be lumpy! I wish you'd hear that Central hornin' in an' tellin' him gravy's too rich! What does a minx like her, with a chin like a gillette, know about—hello?

Evangeline—What's all those fellas movin' away from the desk so fast for?

Flossie—When the standees git too thick, the boss sends a deckhand around to wipe off the marble with a cloth soaked in ammonia. Say, look out an' see if that noise is Abie's car, dearie, he was comin' at five, an'—hello? Oh, say, him in the fawn suit just enterin' the cutest boy! He took me an' maw round the cabarets last night, an' he knows all the music publisher's boostin' crews by their first names, an' he's a bear on the piano, himself, an' when he ragged the Baccarole he gimme a passionate look, an' says, "Could this here hour but last forever!" A'course, I gotta be glued to duty daytimes, but with evenin's shadows, I kin give a last clank of my demeanin' chains, for—hello? Marie Dressler ain't livin' here now. Hello? I ain't in no state to be doin' this work, 'cause just as I was leavin' this mornin' I found I'd turned the oil stove in the bathroom too high, an' the whole place was full of soot, an' the agent bringin' some people who may take our lease offa our hands! Why has such dreadful happenin's gotta be?

Evangeline—Cheer up, dearie! Eva McIntosh was ridin' in an elevated train, goin' home to Harlem an' wonderin' why she was ever born, when a handsome fella reached down to tie his shoe, an' when him an' Eva both got up at 125th Street, he'd tied the lace to her shoe, an' they had to move in the lock-step 'till he fixed it! When he looked in her face she seen he was a little cross-eyed, but that ain't essential, when men git the salary he does—they went to Berlin on the honeymoon.

Flossie—But workin' here takes the pep right out of me, an' if a romance come by, I'd think it was just another taskmaster yellin' for a call.

Evangeline—Thanks be, I won't be on that old stage tonight, the victim of oppression what the veriest stranger could perceive. Every time anyone smoked a thing in our dressin' room it was put onto me, an' I ast you, dearie, kin a party give the public their best when if they s'much as bow to a frien' in a box, they git fined an' coarsely rebuked? Mr. Timmins understands what I stood, an' he says he marvels I ain't in a sanitarium.

Flossie—I—hello? It's only Abie. Yes, yes—no I never, Abie! Well, he's mistook, that's all, an' I think you—oh, if you're—
(Continued on Page 12)



The way I'll shoot them lines across!



A party from Curly Wolf, Idaho, blowed in



If they answer the bell in a boudoir cap, he's not saw again