The Real Adventure

By Henry Kitchell Webster

Copyright 1916, Bobbs-Merrill Co.

THE FIRST PERFORMANCE OF "THE GIRL UPSTAIRS" IS GIVEN WITH HUGE SUCCESS FOR ROSE — JIMMY WALLACE, DRAMATIC CRITIC, MAKES A DISCOVERY

Synopsis.—Rose Stanton, of moderate circumstances, marries wealthy Rodney Aldrich, on short acquaintance, and for more than a year lives in idleness and luxury in Chicago. The life palls on her, she longs to do something useful, but decides that motherhood will be a big enough job. She has twins, however, and they are put in the care of a professional nurse. Rose again becomes intensely dissatisfied with idleness, so over the protest of her doting husband she disappears into the business world to make good on her own initiative, gets a job in the chorus of a musical comedy in rehearsal and lives in a cheap rooming house. Her taste and intelligence soon get her a place as assistant to the producer. Her fashionable friends think she has gone to California.

CHAPTER XIX.

—13—

Success—And a Recognition.

There is a kaleidoscopic character about the events of the ten days or so preceding the opening performance of most musical comedies which would make a sober chronicle of them seem fantastically incredible. This law of nature made no exception in the case of "The Girl Up-Stairs." There were rehearsals which ran so smoothly and swiftly that they'd have done for performances; there were others so abominably bad that the bare idea of presenting the mess resulting from six weeks' toil, before the people who had paid money to see it, was a nightmare.

Of all the persons directly, or even remotely, affected by this nerve-shattering confusion, Rose was perhaps the least perturbed. The only thing that really mattered to her was the successful execution of those twelve costumes. The phantasmagoria at North End hall was a regrettable, but necessary, interruption of her more important activities.

She wakened automatically at half-past seven and was down-town by half-past eight, to do whatever shopping the work of the previous day revealed the need of.

At nine-thirty—an unheard-of hour in the theater—the watchman at the Globe let her in at the stage door, and Rose had half an hour, before the arrival of the wardrobe mistress and her assistant, for looking over the work done since she had left for rehearsal the day before.

She liked this quiet, cavernous old barn of a place down under the Globe stage; liked it when she had it to herself before the two sewing women came and later, when, with a couple of sheets spread out on the floor, she cut and basted according to her cambric patterns, keeping ahead of the flying needles of the other two. After her own little room, the mere spaciousness of it seemed almost noble.

In keeping with the good luck which had attended everything that happened in connection with this first venture of hers, she was able to tell Galbraith that both sets of costumes were finished and ready to try on on the very day he announced that the next rehearsal would be held at ten tomorrow at the Globe.

She persuaded the girls to wait until all six were dressed in the afternoon frocks and until she herself had had a chance to give each of them a final inspection and to make a few last touches and readjustments. Then they all trooped out on the stage and stood in a row, turned about, walked here and there, in obedience to Galbraith's instructions shouted from the back of the theater.

It was dark out there and disconcertingly silent. The glow of two cigars indicated the presence of Goldsmith and Block in the middle of a little knot of other spectators.

The only response Rose got—the only index to the effect her labors had produced was the tone of Galbraith's voice. "All right," he shouted. "Go and put on the others."

There was another silence after they had filed out on the stage again, clad this time in the evening gowns—a hollow, heart-constricting silence, almost literally sickening. But it lasted only a moment. Then:

"Will you come down here, Miss Dane?" called Galbraith.

There was a slight, momentary, but perfectly palpable shock accompanying these words—a shock felt by everybody within the sound of his voice. Because the director had not said, "Dane, come down here;" he had said: "Will you come down here, Miss Dane?" And the thing amounted, so rigid is the etiquette of musical comedy, to an accolade. The people on the stage and in the wings didn't know what she had done, nor in what character she was about to appear, but they did know she was, from now on, something besides a chorus girl.

Rose obediently crossed the runway and walked up the aisle to where Galbraith stood, with Goldsmith and Block, waiting for her. She was feeling a little numb and empty.

Galbraith, as she came, held out a hand to her. "I congratulate you, Miss Dane," he said. "They're admirable. With all the money in the world, I wouldn't ask for anything handsomer."

The rest of it didn't matter to Rose—the more guarded but nevertheless cordial approval of the two owners, who had yet to make sure on the figures; and the details of settlement, which left her more than a hundred dollars' profit, even after she had deducted the hundred she owed Rodney. The point—the point—settled by Galbraith's praise—was that she had succeeded.

It was, on the whole, a good bargain on both sides. But Goldsmith and Block came back next day and drove another bargain, principally to their own advantage.

"You've certainly got a good eye for costumes, Miss Dane," Goldsmith said, "and here's a proposition we'd like to make. A lot of these other things we've got for the regular chorus don't look as good as they might. You'll be able to see changes to make in them that'll improve them maybe fifty per cent. Well, you take it on, and we'll begin paying you your regular salary now; you understand, twenty-five dollars a week, beginning today."

Rose accepted the proposition with a warm flush of gratitude. But, from the moment her little salary began, she found herself retained, body and soul, exactly as Galbraith himself was. They'd bought all her ideas, all her energy, all her time, except a few scant hours for sleep and a few snatched minutes for meals.

She gave her employers, up to the time when the piece opened at the Globe, at a conservative calculation, about five times their money's worth. Even if she hadn't been in the company, she'd have found something like two days' work in every twenty-four hours, just in the wardrobe room. There wasn't a single costume outside Rose's own twelve that didn't have to be remodeled more or less.

On top of all that, the really terrible grind of rehearsals began: property rehearsals, curiously disconcerting at first; scenery rehearsals that caused the stage to seem small and cluttered up, and, last and ghastliest, a dress rehearsal, which began at seven o'clock one night and lasted till four the next morning.

If you had seen them that morning, utterly fagged out, unsustained by a single gleam of hope, you'd have said it was impossible that they should give any sort of performance that night—let alone a good one. But by eight o'clock, when the overture was called, you wouldn't have known them for the same people. There was the feeling, on the edge of this first performance, that they were now on their own.

The appearance, back on the stage, of John Galbraith in evening dress, just as the call of the first act brought them trooping from their dressing rooms, intensified this sensation. He was going to be, tonight, simply one of the audience.

Rose herself was completely dominated by the new spirit. Her nerves—slack, frayed, numb an hour ago—had sprung miraculously into tune. She not only didn't feel tired. It seemed she never could feel tired again.

It wasn't until along in the third act that the audience became, for her, anything but a colloid mass—something that you squeezed and thumped and worked as you did clay, to get it into a properly plastic condition of receptivity, so that the jokes, the songs, the dances, even the spindling little shafts of romance that you shot out into it, could be felt to dig in and take hold.

But along in the third act, as she came down to the footlights with the rest of the sextette in their "All Alone" number, one face detached itself suddenly from the pasty gray surface of those that spread over the auditorium; became human—individual—and intensely familiar; became the face, unmistakably, of Jimmy Wallace!

It is probable that of all the audience, only two men saw that anything had happened, so brief was the frozen instant while she stood transfixed. One of them was John Galbraith, in the back row, and he let his breath go out again in relief almost in the act of catching it. He guessed well enough what had happened. But it was all right. She was going on as if nothing had happened.

The other man was Jimmy Wallace himself. He released, too, a little sigh of relief when he saw her off in her stride again after that momentary falter. But he hardly looked at the stage after that; stared absently at his program instead, and presently availed himself of the dramatic critic's license and left the theater.

As for Rose herself, in her conscious thoughts she didn't recognize the hope already beating tumultuously in her veins, that he would tell Rodney—that perhaps even before she got back to her dismal little room, Rodney, pacing his, would know.

It was so irrational a hope—so unexpected and so well disguised—that she mistook it for fear. But fear never made one's heart glow like that.

That's where all her thoughts were when John Galbraith halted her on the way from the dressing room after the performance was over.

"I know you're tired," he said brusquely. "But I fancied you'd be tireder in the morning, and I have to leave for New York on the fast train. So, you see, it was now or never."

Strangely enough, that got her. She stared at him almost in consternation. "Do you mean you are going away?" she asked. "Tomorrow?"

"Of course," he said, rather sharply. "I've nothing more to stay around here for." He added, as she still seemed not to have got it through her head: "My contract with Goldsmith and Block ended tonight, with the opening performance."

"Of course," she said in deprecation of her stupidity. "And yet it's always seemed that the show was you; just something that you made go. It doesn't seem possible that it could keep on going with you not there."

The sincerity of that made it a really fine compliment—just the sort of compliment he'd appreciate. But—the old perversity again—the very freedom with which she said it spoiled it for him.

"I may be missed," he said—it was more of a growl, really—"but I sha'n't be regretted. There's always a sort of 'Hallelujah chorus' set up by the company when they realize I'm gone."

"I shall regret it very much," said Rose. The words would have set his blood on fire if she'd just faltered over them. But she didn't. She was hopelessly serene about it. "You're the person who's made the six weeks bearable, and, in a way, wonderful. I never could thank you enough for the things you've done for me, though I hope I may try to, some time."

One Face Detached Itself Suddenly.

"I don't want any thanks," he said. And this was completely true. It was something very different from gratitude that he wanted. But he realized how abominably ungracious his words sounded, and hastened to amend them. "What I mean is that you don't owe me any. You've done a lot to make this show go as well as it did, in—more ways than you know about. It wasn't for me, personally, that you did it. But all the same, I'm grateful. You'll stay with this piece, I suppose, as long as the run lasts. But in the end, what's the idea? Do you want to be an actress?"

"The notion of just going on—not changing anything or improving anything; doing the same thing over and over again for forty weeks, or even four, seems perfectly ghastly—just to keep going round and round like a horse at the end of a pole. What I'd like to do, now that this is finished, is—well, to start another."

His eyes kindled. "That's it," he said. "That's what I've felt about you all along. I suppose it's the reason I felt you never could be an actress. You see the thing the way I do—the whole fun of the game is getting the thing. Once it's got . . ." He snapped his fingers, and with an eager nod she agreed.

"Well then, look here," he said. "I've an idea that I could use you to good advantage as a sort of personal assistant. There'll be a good deal of work just of the sort you did with the sextette, teaching people to talk and move about like the sort of folk they're supposed to represent. It would be done more if we could teach chorus people to act human. Well, you can do that better than I, that's the plain truth. Under this new contract of mine that I expect to sign in a day or two, I'll simply have to have somebody. And then, of course, there's the costuming. That's a great game, and I think you've a talent for it.

"There you are! The job will be paid from the first a great deal better than what you've got here. And the costuming end of it, if you succeed, would run to real money. Well, how about it?"

"But," said Rose, a little breathlessly—"but don't I have to stay here with 'The Girl Upstairs'? I couldn't just leave, could I?"

"Oh, I sha'n't be ready for you just yet, anyway," he said. "I'll write when I am, and by that time you'll be perfectly free to give them your two weeks' notice. They'll be annoyed, of course; but, after all, you've given them more than their money's worth already. Well—will you come if I write?"

"It seems too wonderful to be true," she said. "Yes, I'll come, of course."

He gazed at her in a sort of fascination. Her eyes were starry, her lips a little parted, and she was so still she seemed not even to be breathing. But the eyes weren't looking at him. Another vision filled them. The vision—oh, he was sure of it now!—of that "only one," whoever he was, "that mattered."

"I won't keep you any longer," he said. "I'll have them get a taxi and send you home."

She said she didn't want a taxi. He didn't demur to her wish to be put on a car, and at the crossing where they waited for it after an almost silent walk, he did manage to shake hands and tell her she'd hear from him soon.

But he kicked his way to the curb after the car had carried her off, and marched to his hotel in a sort of baffled fury. He didn't know exactly just what it was he'd wanted. But he did know, with a perfectly abysmal conviction, that he was a fool!

CHAPTER XX.

Anticlimax.

It was out of the limbo of the unforeseeable that the blind instrument of Fate appeared to tell Rodney about Rose. He was a country lawyer from down-state, who had been in Chicago three or four days, spending an hour or two of every day in Rodney's office in consultation with him, and, for the rest of the time, dangling about, more or less at a loose end. A belated sense of this struck Rodney at the end of their last consultation.

"I'm sorry I haven't been able to do more," Rodney said—"do anything, really, in the way of showing you a good time. As a matter of fact, I've spent every evening this week here in the office."

"Oh, I haven't lacked for entertainment," the man said. "We hayseeds find the city a pretty lively place. I went to see a show just last night called 'The Girl Up-Stairs.' I suppose you've seen it."

"No," said Rodney, "I haven't."

"Well, it was downright funny. I haven't laughed so hard in a year. If you want a real good time, you go to see it."

The last part of this conversation took place in the outer office. Rodney saw the man off with a final handshake, closed the door after him, and strolled irresolutely back toward Miss Beach's desk.

It was true, he'd been taking it on rather recklessly during the past two months. But they'd been pretty sterile, those long, solitary evening hours. He'd worked fitfully, grinding away by brute strength for a while, and then, in a frenzy of impatience, thrusting the legal rubbish out of the way and letting the enigma of his great failure usurp his mind and his memories.

"Telephone over to the University club," he said suddenly to Miss Beach, "and see if you can get me a seat for 'The Girl Up-Stairs.'"

The office boy was out on an errand and in his absence the switchboard was in Miss Beach's care. She arose obediently and moved over to the switchboard, then began fumbling with the directory.

"Why, Miss Beach!" said Rodney. "You know the number of the University club!"

He was looking at her now with unadmitted curiosity. She was acting, for a perfectly infallible machine like Miss Beach, almost queer. Without looking around at him, she said: "Mr. Aldrich, you won't like that show. If—you go, you'll be sorry."

While he was still staring at her, young Craig came bursting blithely out of his office. "Oh, Miss Beach!" he said, and then stopped short, seeing that something had happened.

Rodney tried an experiment. "Craig," he said, "Miss Beach doesn't want me to see 'The Girl Up-Stairs.' She says I won't like it. Do you agree with her?"

A flare of red came into the boy's face, and his jaw dropped. Then, as well as he could, he pulled himself together. "Yes, sir," he said, swung around, and marched back into his own cubbyhole.

"You needn't telephone, Miss Beach," said Rodney curtly. And, without another word, he put on his hat and overcoat, walked straight over to the club and told the man at the cigar counter to get him a ticket for tonight's performance of "The Girl Up-Stairs."

It was after five, and he decided he might as well dine here. So he went up to the lounge, armed himself with an evening paper, and dropped into a big leather chair.

But all his carefully contrived environment hadn't the power, it seemed, to shift the current of his thoughts. They went on dwelling on the behavior of Miss Beach and young Craig, which really got queerer the more one thought about it. . . . He flung down his paper and went into the adjoining room. The large round table nearest the door was preempted by a group of men he knew, and he came up with the intention of dropping into the one vacant chair. But just before the first of them caught a glimpse of him his ear picked up the phrase "The Girl Upstairs." And then a lawyer in the group looked up and recognized him. "Hello, Aldrich," he said, and the flash of silence that followed had a galvanic quality. The others began urging him to sit down, but he said he was looking for somebody, and walked away down the room and out the farther door.

He knew now that he was afraid. Yet the thing he was afraid of refused to come out into the open where he could see it and know what it was. He still believed that he didn't know what it was when he walked past the framed photographs in the lobby of the theater without looking at them and stopped at the box office to exchange his seat, well down in front, for one near the back of the theater.

But when the sextette made their first entrance upon the stage, he knew that he had known for a good many hours.

He never stirred from his seat during either of the intermissions. But along in the third act he got up and went out.

The knout that flogged his soul had a score of lashes, each with the sting of its own peculiar venom. Everybody who knew him, his closer friends and his casual acquaintances as well, must have known, for weeks, of this disgrace. His friends had been sorry for him, with just a grain of contempt; his acquaintances had grinned over it with just a pleasurable salt of pity. "Do you know Aldrich? Well, his wife's in the chorus at the Globe theater. And he doesn't know it, poor devil."

The northwest wind which had been blowing icily since sundown, had increased in violence to a gale. But he strode out of the lobby and into the street unaware of it.

He found the stage door and pulled it open. An intermittent roar of handclapping, increasing and diminishing with the rapid rise and fall of the curtain, told him that the performance was just over.

A doorman stopped him and asked him what he wanted.

"I want to see Mrs. Aldrich," he said. "Mrs. Rodney Aldrich."

"No such person here," said the man, and Rodney, in his rage, simply assumed that he was lying. It didn't occur to him that Rose would have taken another name.

He stood there a moment, debating whether to attempt to force an entrance against the doorman's unmistakable intention to stop him, and decided to wait instead.

The decision wasn't due to common sense, but to a wish not to dissipate his rage on people that didn't matter. He wanted it intact for Rose.

He went back to the alley, braced himself in the angle of a brick pier, and waited. He neither stamped his feet nor flailed his arms about to drive off the cold. He just stood still with the patience of his immemorial ancestor, waiting, unconscious of the lapse of time, unconscious of the figures that presently began straggling out of the narrow door that were not she.

What do you suppose happens when Rodney meets Rose at the stage door? It is a thrilling meeting they have—and the emotional stress takes them almost to the breaking point. The next installment tells you all about what happened.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Why He Came Home.

Roscoe Boone, a Muncie electrical contractor, went home late the other afternoon to find Mrs. Boone entertaining a company of women at cards. He had forgotten about the party and besides it was the usual period of the day for him to remember about the evening meal.

"Oh, Mr. Boone," said one of the guests as he stumbled upon the room filled with women, "did you come home to supper?"

"Oh, no; not at all," he replied gallantly, even if somewhat confusedly. "I just came home to see what time it was."—Indianapolis News.

Spend More for Sweets.

American people are spending more for candy every year, according to figures compiled recently by the census bureau. They spent over $185,000,000 for factory-made sweets last year, which is an average of about $1.80 for every man, woman and child. Figures recorded 65 years ago show that the annual per capita consumption of candy was then about 13 cents.

A PHYSICAL WRECK

Laid Up In Bed, Barely Holding Onto Life. Doan's Effected Marvelous Recovery.

"Without warning I was dragged to the brink of the grave by malignant kidney trouble," says Robert Wengatz, 114 Cypress Ave., Bronx, N. Y. "My kidneys seemed to stop acting and the pains in my back were terrible. Big, bloaty puffs came under my eyes and attacks of dizziness often blinded me. My limbs swelled twice normal size and I could press big dents into the flesh.

Mr. Wengatz.

"I was confined to bed and had convulsions several times a day. Despite the best of treatment, I grew worse and was taken to the hospital. I didn't improve, however, and was brought home again, barely holding onto life.

"Toward the last of 1913, a friend persuaded me to try *Doan's Kidney Pills* and I cannot put into words what they did for me. The first box helped more than all the other medicines and treatments I had taken. I continued and from an emaciated wreck of a man I have taken on good, solid flesh until I now weigh 225 pounds and am in the best of health. *Doan's* alone deserve the credit."

Sworn to before me.
JAMES T. COUGHLIN, Com. of Deeds

Get Doan's at Any Store, 60c a Box
DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS
FOSTER-MILBURN CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.

TYPHOID is no more necessary than Smallpox. Army experience has demonstrated the almost miraculous efficacy, and harmlessness, of Antityphoid Vaccination.

Be vaccinated NOW by your physician, you and your family. It is more vital than house insurance.

Ask your physician, druggist, or send for "Have you had Typhoid?" telling of Typhoid Vaccine, results from use, and danger from Typhoid Carriers.

Producing Vaccines and Serums under U. S. License
The Cutter Laboratory, Berkeley, Cal., Chicago, Ill.

Won't You Try to Stop Needless Telephone Calls —the Lines Are Very Busy and Equipment is Scarce

The constantly increasing scarcity of men and materials is causing great difficulty in getting and installing telephone equipment for the most urgent needs.

Long distance telephone facilities are loaded to their utmost capacity, and local service in some localities is suffering on account of the conditions over which the telephone companies have no control.

As the war goes on, the government's requirements for trained telephone men and for service and equipment are increasing. The present business activity is also likely to be extended as the war continues.

You can help the telephone companies "do their bit" for the government by asking for no additional equipment unless absolutely essential to the conduct of your business and by putting every possible restraint on the unnecessary and extravagant use of the local and long distance service.

NEBRASKA TELEPHONE COMPANY — LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE — BELL SYSTEM — AMERICAN TELEPHONE & TELEGRAPH CO.

The Plain Truth.

"We are going to entertain company tonight."

"Some people you like, I presume."

"Mercy, no! We would lose our social standing if we entertained people we like."

LIFT YOUR CORNS OFF WITH FINGERS

How to loosen a tender corn or callus so it lifts out without pain.

Let folks step on your feet hereafter; wear shoes a size smaller if you like, for corns will never again send electric sparks of pain through you, according to this Cincinnati authority.

He says that a few drops of a drug called freezone, applied directly upon a tender, aching corn, instantly relieves soreness, and soon the entire corn, root and all, lifts right out.

This drug dries at once and simply shrivels up the corn or callus without even irritating the surrounding skin.

A small bottle of freezone obtained at any drug store will cost very little but will positively remove every hard or soft corn or callus from one's feet.

If your druggist hasn't stocked this new drug yet, tell him to get a small bottle of freezone for you from his wholesale drug house.—adv.

When a policeman hears a girl scream after dark he doesn't know whether she is being kissed or only assassinated.

When Your Eyes Need Care Try Murine Eye Remedy

No Smarting—Just Eye Comfort. 60 cents at Druggists or mail. Write for Free Eye Book. MURINE EYE REMEDY CO., CHICAGO