

The World Outside

(Continued From Page Three.)

By Harold MacGrath

hired. But this hick in the ambassador's suit.

"Where?"

The Shadow once more recounted the comedy. Bellman roared with laughter.

"Go ahead," said The Shadow, sarcastically, "get the ha-ha off your chest. But watch your step if he comes to interview you. He passed me in the lobby a little while before you came. He had on a dress suit and looked as if he had been born to it. Now, when I get into those glad rags, I look like a waiter or a chorusman. But what's the big game? Why the Great Adventure company?"

"Hanged if I know!" answered Bellman.

"Or care?"

At the time Bancroft entered the theater, Nancy Bowman sat in her dressing room, waiting for her call. She heard the volley of laughter in reply to some witty—or supposedly witty—lines uttered by the popular light opera comedian. Ling Foo zoled in her lap, and Nancy was absently drawing her fingers through the double ruff that reached below his shoulders.

"What's the matter with me, Ling Foo? Why should I hate it, when it means bread and butter, clothes and rent all winter? I ought to be grateful for my luck. I wonder how I do it—go out there and dance, and sing, laugh and make a fool of myself, when all the time my soul is in rebellion?"

How many times had she been tempted to snatch off the comedian's wig and hurl it into the audience! But the reaction to this thought suppressed merriment; for it was easy to create an image of the scene that would naturally follow such an act. She was in luck. The mad adventure of the preceding night had not impaired her voice in the least. But how she hated it—out there!

Ling Foo hated it, too; these wailing sounds that tortured his ears and his stuffy box he had to remain in for three hours every night. He hated leashes and loved park grass, and knew that he had too much of one and not enough of the other; and besides, he was never allowed to bark at home or romp through the halls. It was a hard world for a puppy to live in.

There came a knock on the door.

"All ready, Miss Bowman!"

She leashed the dog to the dresser, gave her hair a pat, and went forth to drudgery. The moment she was on the stage, it seemed to her that her soul returned to the dressing room and left a rollicking automaton down center. Perhaps this very lack of self-consciousness made her the success she was.

No doubt it may appear incredible that a young woman who had lifted a mediocre part into a New York triumph should not be aware of her success; but nevertheless Nancy was not aware of it in the sense she should have been. The moment she appeared there was but one notion in her head—to do the work she was paid to do, as swiftly and correctly as possible, and hurry home. Her presence was electrical, put a snap into the lines and actions—and all because she was in a hurry to be gone! It is doubtful if she comprehended the nightly ripple of applause as she made her first appearance. All her energies were riveted upon the immediate object of thought—to get through and go home.

All her real ambition was directed toward another goal, and the present, one of those inescapable make-shifts which attack all life lines. Her satisfaction began and ended with the knowledge that the manager liked her work. That she had become part of the town's talk she missed entirely. But it is true that we miss many sounds by attuning the ear to one particular sound. Another girl—with the cynical wisdom of the theater in her veins—would have seized upon this opportunity and become the rage of the town, demanded five hundred a week, maids, motors, and got them; written interviews, had a thousand photos taken, got into advertising pages of the illustrated magazine, the electric signs, and whatnots. Nancy saw only a financial bridge across the winter to spring.

In the wings stood two men, discussing her. They were in evening dress. One was elderly, with an animated Semitic cast of countenance. His companion was in the thirties, with a handsome highbred face, slightly touched with certain marks of dissipation. There was in his blue eyes an expression which, defined, might have said: I have seen everything and found nothing.

"Nineteen thousand last week. For an angel, you're going to do pretty well, Craig."

"It has given me a deal of amusement, Manny, to watch the thing grow. Oh, it's a hit; but that girl out there has turned the trick.

Didn't you notice last night that her understudy wasn't received with any particular warmth?"

"Yes. Funny, you never can tell where the lightning is going to strike. Nobody dreamed the part would stand out like this."

"Nobody but this girl would have made it stand out. How much are you giving her?"

"Seventy-five."

"That won't do. Better make it two-fifty."

"Craig, I would if I dared."

"What do you mean by that, Mannheim?"

"She wouldn't understand that it was due to merit. She'd instantly jump to the conclusion that I had ulterior designs. I've been in this business all my life, but I can't make out this one. Never any questions about how her understudy pulled through last night. Another girl would have been worried stiff. Jenny Malloy brings her to me out of nowhere; and she steps right out of the chorus—into this. Jenny says there never was any affair; so it isn't from being scooped that she is shy. No; I'm afraid to offer it. She might bolt."

Craig made an affirmative gesture. "You've hit it. She doesn't understand me, either; and if I pressed forward, like as not she'd do as you say, bolt."

"Wouldn't that jar you? She can't be made to see that she is the hit of the show. Ever hear of anything like that before in this old town? But she's a good girl, Craig," the manager added soberly.

"Don't I know it? But she no more belongs in this environment than I do. The stage isn't in her, and I always watch her with the greatest bewilderment. What I mean is, she is without ambition in this line. She sings as if she resented the music, as an educated musician would resent it. And yet, observe her! She is as joyous as a thistle-down in the wind. Better give her a hundred. Just slip it into her envelope and say nothing."

"I can do that. Has she got you, old-timer?"

"I'm a fool, I suppose; but she has. Yet I've never been able to get her out to tea or dinner or supper. She won't even take my car home, myself out of it."

"Well, it's a safe bet that she rides in nobody else's."

"I wish I knew on which side to take her."

"She may have whiffed your breath, and is afraid of you. Why don't you cut it out?"

"Why should I? It's the only amusement I have left."

"That's bunk. You with all the money in the world and name as old as the island! Maybe I can help you."

"Don't you meddle, or you'll lose her."

"How bad have you got it?"

"Bad enough to marry her after the performance—if she'd have me. But there you are! I can't tell her that without letting her get acquainted with me; and she's as far off as the Pole."

The manager whistled softly. The woman-hater, eh? Arthur Craig, who went everywhere and with everybody, and all the while just as aloof as this girl was! Funny old burg; it had written down this man as one of its wildest blades; and Craig hadn't kissed a woman since the death of his wife. Excitements; the night life, because it deadened thought; lights and music and forbidden drink because, for a few hours, these served as a barrier to introspective thought. And that girl yonder had put life into his heart again.

"Why don't you enlist Jenny? She's square and a good sport. They live in the same house, and are the best of friends."

"Jenny is on my side, but she hasn't been able to make any headway. That's the devil of it. The girl has built a Chinese wall around herself."

"Supposing I drop a hint that you're the silent partner?"

"No. She would begin to distrust you, then. Jenny's going to give a party soon, some night after the show. Coffee and lemonade; and then I'll have a chance to convince Miss Bowman that I'm not as bad as I'm painted. She won't be afraid of me in a room full. If I only knew what her ambition is, I might strike from that direction."

"While there's life there's hope. You gave her that Peke, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, she's keeping it, isn't she?"

"Yes; but I wonder why."

The orchestra crashed the opening bars of the finale; and the two men retired to the stage office.

It was 11:45 when Nancy wiped the last vestige of grease-paint from her face. An unusual number of encores had carried the operetta beyond 11 o'clock. She set the dressing table in order and hung up her motley. At least she was thankful to have this room alone to herself; and there were intervals when she could romp with

Ling Foo. As she wore the same costume throughout the performance, a maid from the chorus dressing room gave 10 minutes of her time each night during the overture; and that was all the assistance Nancy required.

The innkeeper's daughter—when all her soul cried for the blonde wig of Marguerite! Mediocre music and lyrics so filled with consonants that half the time she had to hiss! Well, it was seventy-five a week, and that meant she could continue her lessons in music and French and Italian and devote hours each day to study. And they wondered why she refused to spend half the night in smoke-laden restaurants; unearthly hours and unhealthy food! She had a goal, and nothing should stand in her way; she would have her good times when that goal was reached. She was but twenty.

As she dressed, her thoughts reverted to the happenings of yesterday. Daddy Bowman was gone; she was all alone. Already she was beginning to dread Thanksgiving and Christmas, though she would be busy enough with two performances; but in the morning and when she returned at night!

She was sorry now that she had not been a little more amiable to that kindly young countryman. No courtier out of a book could have been more courteous. Well, that was life—to come and go and forget. Within a fortnight Daddy Bowman would become a memory and the young man absolutely forgotten.

Always Daddy Bowman had plucked at one string. "Steer clear of men who touch strong drink. They are never to be trusted. Steer clear of men on general principles, but particularly those that drink. Always remember the goal you have set out to reach, and let nothing interfere." She had obeyed those instructions; but in so doing she had been mostly lonely.

"Come, Ling Foo; it's past our bedtime."

She wrapped the puppy so snugly in his little plaid blanket that only his bright eyes and yet little nose were visible, and started for the door; upon which came a knock, brisk and authoritative. Nancy recognized it, and frowned.

"Come in, Jenny," she called.

The door was flung open, and a handsome, shapely young woman in the middle twenties paused on the threshold. If an artist, in search of a model to pose as Mischief, had come upon Jenny Malloy at this moment, he would have gone no further. There was mischief in the poise of her blonde head; mischief lit her blue eyes and put a quirk to her lips; but it was the mischief of the gamine, without evil.

Jenny Malloy was a product of the great city, of the most prodigal and wasteful and careless city on earth; an overgrown child of a city morally and intellectually weak, yet wonderful to behold. In her youth Jenny's playground had been the gutters; now her playground was the night life, the endless circle of restaurants and cabarets. Nancy was of that unhappy breed who are forever questing Holy Grails, and bruising and losing themselves in metaphysical swamps. Jenny's horizon was bounded by crabmeat and lobsters.

She was shrewd, cynical, slangy and honest. She was in constant demand because she was good fun; but she was a rough fencer, if a man took up the wrong foil with her. She was as wary and as chaste as Diana, and her pathway was strewn with a certain caliber of Actaeons. She mothered the green chorus girl into self-reliance; and loved Nancy Bowman with all her heart, and understood her not at all.

"Kid, how about some grand eats?" she said. "Wild duck an' apple sauce, an' all that? Good scouts, no rah-rah boys; friends o' mine. With a little fox-trottin' on th' side. How about it?"

"I'm sorry, Jenny, but I'm in no mood for it tonight."

"That's why I ask you. You'll go home an' mope; an' it won't do you a bit o' good."

"Besides, I don't know your friends."

"For th' love o' Mikel—I know 'em, don't I? Ain't that enough? If you was a prude I wouldn't bother you; but you're reg'lar when you warm up. What you need, more'n anythin' else, is a night out. I been watchin' you. You're goin' t' mope yourself out of a fine job, believe me, Aloysius! Be alive for once! forget th' future for a couple hours. I never pick 'em dead; but I never pick 'em fresh, either. Come on. We'll take turns holdin' th' pup. Eh, Ling, old sport? An' you'll got home as dry as this Sahara dump they call New York. Come on; we're dead a long time, so they tell me."

"Please, Jenny, dear! I'd only be a kill-joy. I've a lesson, too, at 9 in the morning."

"Listen, kid, we've roosted next door t' each other for two years now. Have you ever found that I pulled anythin' that wasn't straight, or introduced you t' any one who wasn't reg'lar?"

"No, Jenny. But we've gone over this so often! It's the way I'm made. I don't enjoy these false good times, and I'm never hungry enough to accept a strange man's attentions in exchange for lobster. I can't enjoy myself with strangers."

"Gee—if that ain't the limit! How do you come t' know folks if you don't meet 'em for th' first time?" Jenny closed the door resolutely. "Nancy, I'm goin' t' slip you some-thing for your own good. You've gone big; you're on th' way t' th' lights, if on'y I can wise you up. Here I am, six years at it, an' still with th' merry villagers; an' here you are, th' hit o' th' show. You sing like a bird, an' dance like Pavlova. An' yet, th' way you're goin', Nancy George W. Bowman will never get int' th' signs. Why? Because you ain't never in anythin' you do; you're a thousand miles in th' air all th' time. You ain't in your parts. But you're so darned clever you've flummoxed every-body but me."

"Jenny!"—alarmed lest some one might overhear.

"Let me get it off my chest. You've got that floozy grand opera bug in your bonnet. Fat chance! Have you got a castiron body, a heart as tender as tripe, an' a prima-donna for a friend? You have not. You've got as much chance of singin' in th' Metropolitan as I have o' pullin' Ethel Barrymore's job away from her."

"Why, Jenny?"

"You keep still! I'm goin' through with this. You've made this show. You don't realize that here is your game. How you do it, Lord knows, with your mind elsewhere. So if you really got in you'd be haulin' down seven or eight hundred a week next season, your name on th' signs, an' all that. You don't give th' press agent a hairpin t' go by; you leave him flat. You take seventy-five, when you ought t' be pullin' down three times as much. An' tomorrow mornin' you'll be spoilin' my beauty sleep with th' jewel song from 'Faust'."

"Gee, if I could on'y wake you up t' th' fact that this is your game! An' it's apple pie for you. If you can do as you do without wantin' to, think of what you could do if you'd wake up. . . . Don't interrupt me! I'm never goin' to say anythin' again; I'm goin' t' finish th' solo now."

Nancy's expression was one of bewildered indignation.

Jenny went on. "You never go out anywhere; you never have any fun. I've asked you t' go with me 1,000 times. Work, work, work—all for somethin' you ain't sure of! I knew you'd turn me down t' night as usual; but I had t' get this off my chest. How about that pup? You keep it, but you won't pay for it. Much as th' girls like you, they're talkin' about that Peke. You ain't playin' the game, buddy. All Mr. Craig wants is th' privilege o' visitin' with you once in awhile—nothin' worse 'n tea. He wants t' be your friend. Why do you hate him?"

"I don't hate him, Jenny," said Nancy, wearily.

"Are you afraid o' him?"

"I don't know."

"Is it because he gets a mild souse once in a while? Then forget it. He's always a gentleman. He's no rounder, though those who don't know him think so. You know th' story. His wife ran away with another man, an' they was both killed that same night in an auto smash. An' now he goes around tryin' t' forget. He wants your friendship because you're different. He doesn't want my friendship; an' if he was a rounder, I'd be his style."

Nancy's arm tightened around Ling Foo. A trap; she had fallen into a trap. If she had sent back the dog the first day, she would not now be in this cul de sac. The clerness of the man, and the patience of him! He had not said a word or written. He had sent the dog to her when, by some infernal instinct, he had known that her spirit would be at its nadir. Jenny was right. She hadn't played the game. Either she must return Ling Foo or meet the man's advances half way.

"What I'm tryin' t' get int' your dome is, that you're sitin' on top o' th' world; but you've got t' dig in t' hang there. You're no fool; you can take care of yourself. You don't have t' wabble t' get your name in th' lights. Wake up out o' the grand opera trance; here's your meal ticket. Mannheim's a white man, an' he'll give you fair play."

"I'm sorry you're angry, Jenny."

"Angry? Why you poor kid! It's because I love you better than anybody in th' world; an' it busts me

all up t' see you try for what you can't get an' let slide th' thing you can! That's my grouch."

"Is Mr. Craig in your party-tonight?"

"No."

"Is he in the theater?"

"He was."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"Yes."

Nancy thrust out Ling Foo.

"You mean it?" cried the astonished Jenny.

"Yes. It will tear me all to pieces for a few days; but my friendship isn't something anybody can purchase." Nancy was white, but resolute.

"You poor kid!" Jenny caught her friend in her arms, puppy and all. "You won't have t' give him up. He stopped me t'night an' said th' pup was yours without any conditions; that if he couldn't have your friendship in th' clear, he wouldn't offer t' buy it. That's th' kind of a guy he is. He won't bother you no more."

"He hasn't bothered me, actually; only the thought of him." Nancy began to weep without sound upon the shoulder of her friend.

"Well, well; th' Lord didn't make no two of us alike, sure enough. You're a queer piece o' furniture, but I'm for you. But you're sittin' on top o' th' world, if you'll on'y get wise. Your voice is like honey, kid, but there ain't no drama in it. You're fire when you dance; but your voice never gives any one th' shivers, like it ought to, if you're goin' to warble 'Rigoletto' an' all that. That's the solemn truth, Nancy. I don't know, but that's what th' conductor says, an' he knows. I'm hurtin' you, but I got t' do it. When a tooth aches, you don't say 'Naughty, naughty!—you go an' have it out—biff!'"

"I'm a snob, too," said Nancy, finding her voice.

"Forget it. Your poor old Daddy Bowman meant well, but he put a lot o' bunk int' your head about mankind being rotten, when it ain't so worse. There's always a couple wormy chestnuts t' th' pint. Come on out int' th' world. Who knows? Y' might run int' somebody who'd be interested enough t' help you. You can't fight that kind of a game alone, like you're doin'. Get int' this game, get int' th' lights, show 'em you're alive. Next year you go t' th' Metropolitan conductor. Who are you? he says coldly. I'm Nancy Bowman, says you haughtily. An' he puts a crick in his back kowtowin'. But, oh, lady, this is th' world for you if you'll only see it. So long. See you in th' mornin'!"

(Continued Next Sunday.)

New Orleans will install the automatic phone system replacing the present manual system.

Kenmore, the home of George Washington's sister, is to be preserved as a national shrine.

The recent attempt to scale Mt. Everest, required 50 coolies and 350 yaks to carry climbing materials.

More than 17,000 school children in Harlem, a borough of New York, populated chiefly by aliens, are addicted to the use of drugs, according to police statistics.

The greatest food exhibit ever held in the west began recently at the Field museum in Chicago. Members of the vegetable kingdom present numbered more than 250,000 items.

Sea lions, marauders of salmon, are to be fought by the Canadian government. A patrol steamer left recently from Vancouver, equipped with machine guns to be used against the lions.

Radio accessory factories of Canada are running under pressure, with three shifts for each 24 hours. Conditions prevail similar to that in the days of the war when factories were on munition work.

A dance hall is being erected in Charing Cross road, London, to accommodate 1,600 dancers and 1,000 spectators. Three bands will furnish music and 80 women and 25 men will be engaged to teach dancing.

The Hudson's bay company recently declared a dividend of 45 per cent. In its 252d year the company pays dividends amounting to nearly half its capital stock. This company is one of the oldest trading corporations in the world.

Argentina beef can be placed on the American market for 12 cents a pound with a good lanker. They are killing cattle there for the sake of the hides and the best beef is selling for 7 cents a pound. Cows bring \$2 in American money and sheep sell for \$1 a head.