

By Grace Of Gladys.

By CARL WILLIAMS.

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She was the child star, the youthful prodigy of the Little Gladys Dramatic company.

As a stage attraction the child was a wonder. She could play little girls who, like all the good, die young, and she also played rough soubrette parts with a dash that made more important managers wish that there were no children's societies in the large cities to prevent her appearance in the big theaters.

Her father, Joe Glidden, had tried the cities, but after half a season he reorganized his old company and took to the small towns, where the child was a favorite and where children's societies were unknown.

There, among old friends, he felt safe once more. He swaggered about as he had done before he knew what it was to regard every stranger approaching the box office as a possible police officer in plain clothes.

Gladys, as though to make up for lost time, became more incorrigible than ever.

Versatility, her precious dramatic gift, she displayed only on the stage. The members of her father's company never were treated to any private displays of the angel children that Gladys played to perfection on the stage.

In private life the child was steadily and consistently a torment. Jack Trent and Elvia Mordant, of her patient support, were her especial victims.

Gladys' sharp eyes had discovered the birth of love even before Elvia was certain of her own feelings and announced that fact to the rest of the company at supper that evening. Her shrill, piping voice, trained to fill a theater, reached to every corner of the dining room, and the gleeful statement that "Miss Mordant is awfully gone on Jack Trent" set the room in a roar.

With flaming face Elvia sprang to her feet and rushed from the room, the laughter of the company and the other guests ringing in her ears long after she had reached her room.

Swelling tears stained her pillow, but she was at last certain that she did love Trent, and, had he only known, he had cause to be grateful to the youngster. Instead he savagely suggested to Joe Glidden that a good spanking would be the salvation of the child.

Glidden knew better than to take the advice. Once, and once only, had Gladys been spanked. It had happened on a Sunday, and business was bad all the following week, because the child played abominably in spite of all threats. Not until the promise was made that she should not be spanked any more did she appear at her best again.

Glidden only smiled indulgently at Trent's suggestion, but Gladys hated the man for it, and thereafter she selected Jack and Elvia as her special victims.

It did not matter that on the trains they sat at opposite ends of the car. Gladys would discover Trent gazing intently into space and call attention to the fact that he could not keep his eyes off Elvia.

The company laughed at her pert remarks, because they were selfishly glad that Gladys found vent for her love of mischief that did not involve themselves.

Their laughter encouraged the child to fresh endeavors, and since the two victims would not provide her with material for jokes off the stage she formed the habit of guying their performance on the stage.

Jack and Elvia were cast for lovers roles, and it was disconcerting to hear a sibilant "Ah" as their lips met in a stage caress. Only in the theater did they see each other now, so Gladys made those stage scenes moments of torture.

Not for a moment did the child relent, and her father only smiled indulgently at Trent's protests and threats to leave. Engagements were not easy to be had in the middle of the season, and Glidden knew that Trent would not take chances with a mother to support.

He had no wish to lose Trent, who was a clever man and worth double what he was getting, but there seemed small danger of his resigning, and it was not an easy matter to control Gladys.

No one read better than the child the true state of affairs, and she made the most of it. More than once Trent made up his mind to leave in the hope that Gladys might then leave Elvia in peace, but Elvia would not hear of it. By suggesting that he would leave her to bear the brunt of the child's enmity she dissuaded him from his purpose.

But the crisis was bound to come. Gladys, with a sense of false security, passed all limit. The favorite play with the public was one of her "angel" parts, and the "big scene" in the last act showed the child at her mother's knee praying that her father, who had been estranged, might return.

He is lurking behind the curtains

madly jealous and waiting to kill his wife when the child is put to bed. The naive plea wins him to a belief in his wife's innocence.

It was Saturday night, and the little theater was packed to the doors. Elvia and Jack had both been accorded tumultuous welcome, and this roused the child's professional jealousy.

She was unusually quiet when off the stage, and Trent wondered at her weakness. Just when the big scene was progressing finely and the petition from the child was being read as Gladys never read it before it happened.

In her white nightdress, with her golden curls framing her earnest baby face, she was an appealing little figure, and as she made her plea that her father might return even men in the audience furtively dried their tears.

"And bring him back and make him good to mamma and me again," pleaded the child. Trent roused himself ready for the spring that should bring him to the center of the stage, his arms round the mother and child, but her next lines were not read. Instead she said slowly and deliberately:

"And please let Mr. Trent marry Miss Mordant so they'll stop being spoony—and—and bring my papa back."

"Papa" came with a promptness that startled Gladys. Jack knew that the salvation of the scene was to get the curtain down before the audience realized the interpolation and laughed, so with an improvised line he led right into the cue which was the signal for the drop to descend.

But even as the curtain fell there rose a titter that deepened into a laugh, and through the canvas came a shout of merriment as the audience caught the point. Elvia and Jack wore so popular that the audience understood the allusion.

As the glitter of the footlights was shut out by the curtain the arm that held Gladys for the stage picture tightened, and, though she struggled to escape, Trent held her fast. A moment later he was administering a spanking that lost nothing through its long delay.

The entire company crowded on the stage and applauded him to fresh efforts, and it was several minutes before even Glidden interfered.

He soothed the child even while he thanked Jack with his eyes for doing what he dared not, and at last her mother led her off, still shrieking, to the dressing room. Glidden turned to Jack.

"I don't blame you. She deserved it," he said briefly. "All the same, I cannot keep you in the company any longer or Gladys will queer the show." "I know that," was Trent's even reply. "It was worth it, though. I suppose that I can get a chance somewhere after awhile."

Glidden caught his arm. "Don't be in such a hurry," he admonished. "I was going to suggest that you and Miss Mordant are favorites over this route. Suppose that I send you out at the head of your own show. It would be a money maker, and you can have a bit of the profits."

"I'll see Miss Mordant," promised Trent rejoicingly as he hurried toward her dressing room. He knew that she would be dressed by this time and could talk to him.

An hour later he tapped on Glidden's door at the hotel. Glidden was still up and answered in person. "It's all arranged," said Trent briefly. "I'm rather grateful to Gladys."

"I should think you would be," granted Glidden, for he could read in Trent's eyes that a double question had been asked and answered. Gladys had not prayed in vain.

"Quite so." When the late Louise Chandler Moulton was in London in the late seventies she noticed the servility, as a rule, of the shopkeepers. It is a comfort to be sure not to be bullied into buying things not really desired, but strongly recommended by the tradesmen. In her volume of "Random Rambles" she recalls an incident in which the clerk's tongue got away with him.

"Quite so!" is a favorite formula with the London shopkeeper, and this habit leads him sometimes into ridiculous blunders. For instance, I went one day into the shop of a London druggist, or chemist, as they say there. "I want a toothbrush," I said.

"Quite so, madam." "And some smelling salts—strong." "Quite so!" "Oh, and ink. Have you good black ink?" "Quite so!"

Presently my parcels were put up, and I began to count out the pay for them. My Yankee arithmetic was scarcely equal to the shillings and sixpences, not to say farthings, of this unaccustomed currency, and I said: "I am awkward with your money."

"Quite so, madam," came the shopman's reply with the accustomed sweet readiness, and it was only by the smile I could not repress that he was reminded of his unintentional discourtesy.

The Secret of Success. The motto of success was given in this tale, told at a banquet: A Swede among the miners in the west was noted for always striking pay dirt. His fellows thought that there must be some secret to the unusual success of the Swede and questioned him as to how he always succeeded in finding the spot where the gold cropped out.

"Vell, Ay don't know of Ay can tell anytang 'bout dat," answered Ole. "Ay only know dat Ay just keep on diggin'."—Milwaukee Free Press.

Even Poetry. "Why do you think, Mr. Pennington, that your new book of poems will have a large sale?"

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