

AUNT LIZZIE'S FRIEND

A Comedy in One Act

by
OLIVE McKENZIE

This play secured third place in the Play Competition held by the "Radio Record" and the "N.Z. Dairy Exporter and Farm Home Journal."

Scene: Mrs. Soaring's drawing-room, a large, dismal room, furnished garishly in red plush suite and much gold embellishment. Several photographic enlargements of heavy-featured men and women about; lace curtains, looped back with gold satin ribbons, and an aspidistra on a stand by window. A small couch on corner L., and several stiff-backed chairs. A great many ornaments everywhere.

Discovered—Martha, very untidy of hair and dress, dusting, not very energetically, and singing with great fervour.

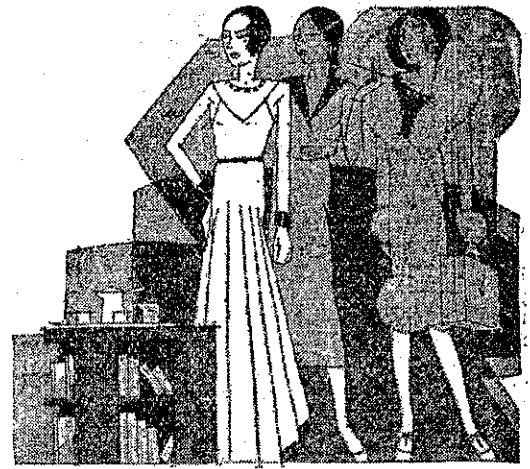
Martha (sings):

"For I'm dancing with tears in my eyes,
For the girl in my ar-r-r—ms isn't yo-
ooo—uu."

Lumme! 'Ow 'e musta loved 'er! (Stands looking soulfully at ceiling. Sighs gustily.) 'Ow fetchin' 'e musta looked! Real romantic like. (Sighs once more.) Lawks! Ain't love grand! Oh, well, I spose I must hurry—seein' as 'ow it's 'er day at 'ome, though wot on earth she wants to 'ave such h'ongoin's I can't think. At 'Ome Days—Lumme! Lot uv h'expense for nothink—that's wot it is! Anyway, who'll be here? Huh! No one but that there "Quite" woman. Says nothink but "Quite—Quite" stand-offish like, and snorts like a paper bag bursting. Huh! Missus thinks 'er real grand, but I dunno—I've never seen anyone so unpretesting. An' that Miss Wimple, the vicar's sister—Lawks! If she wouldn't give anyone the willies, with 'er red nose (indiscretion, that's wot 'er trouble is), an' that way uv lookin' at you as if she were goin' to pick threads off yer dress that I can't abide—an' eats like a horse. Huh! Lot uv h'expense, that's wot it is—expense that they can't rightly afford, either. An' who 'as to meet the tradesmen at the door an' stand their jaw—huh? Me! Lumme! It ain't arf a treat, that ain't! And yet that there Miss Stella! Lawks! (Pushes her nose up in air with one finger and walks around grandly.) If h'ever there was an h'upstart in the world it's that one. Lumme! She's the most infected person I h'ever did see! Give anyone the willies, she would! If that's wot they call bein' a lady—well—I knows a lady when I sees one. Huh! I should smile. Now, if they was all like that Aunt Lizzie who's 'ere just now. My, she's a treat! There's a lady if ever there was one! No airs—just as jolly an' friendly as can be—treats me as if I were a huming being, not a dorg. (Bell rings.) Oh, ring on, do; the missus ain't at 'ome yet.

Enter Mrs. Soaring. (Martha begins to polish table vigorously. Sings—"Dancing with tears in my eyes.")

Mrs. Soaring: Martha, do you not hear that bell? And not dressed yet. Oh, dear, dear. (Bell rings loudly.) Go and answer it, Martha, at once! It may be a caller.



Martha: Not yet, Mum. Probably the man for the instalment on the pianer.

Mrs. Soaring: Martha! (Exit Martha.) That girl is becoming impossible. Oh, dear, Oh, dear—I do hope everything goes off well. So trying about Lizzie being here this very afternoon, just when I have succeeded in getting Mrs. Snobbe-Cranston to call. Really, most trying. (Sighs.) Such a wonderful woman, Mrs. Snobbe-Cranston; knows all the "best" people—so charming. I suppose I was a little foolish to lend her that twenty pounds; it was a lot, certainly, and now I don't know how I'm going to manage. I wouldn't dare tell George—he'd be so cross (men are such queer creatures—as Mrs. Snobbe-Cranston says, they have no souls, poor things), but if I can get her to introduce me to her set, it'll be well worth it—so nice for Stella.

Re-enter Martha: Please Mum, it was the man from the Gas. He says as 'ow 'e'll cut us orf if the bill ain't paid.

Mrs. Soaring: Has he gone?

Martha: Yes, Mum. "Is yer Missus at 'ome?" 'e asks. "Not ter the likes uv you," I told 'im—

Mrs. Soaring: Very well, Martha, that will do. And just look at the dust on this table. Really Martha, you are the slowest maid I ever had. Never punctual with your work—

Martha: Indeed, Mum, an' you're wrong. It don't run in our family to keep anyone waiting. Punctual to the minute, on the tick, is our motto. My sister said "Yes" right straight off the mark when George Smith asked her to be his'n, an' my brother Joe always slept in the bakehouse for fear uv not being in time to make the morning fire, an' there was—

Mrs. Soaring: That will do, Martha. Now, go at once and get yourself tidied. You know that this is my day at home. Now, hurry along and do try to make your hair look a little more respectable.

Martha (bridling): Respectable! H'in-deed! An' do you mean ter incinerate—

Mrs. Soaring: Oh, for goodness sake, Martha, go. And do hurry. My guests will be arriving any minute. Go at once!

Exit Martha, sulkily muttering: Respectable! Respectable! H'in-deed!

Mrs. Soaring (Sits on high-backed chair, Hans face with (Continued on page 2))



Characters

MRS. SOARING—a suburban matron, who is short on cash but long on ambition, and the mother of—

STELLA SOARING—Who is very modern in everything, including manners, but fails to impress—

MARTHA, THE MAID—Who knows a lady when she sees one, as for example—

AUNT LIZZIE, from Tūree Gulch, Tussockdale, who is looked upon by her city relations as a rustic disaster, as is also—

HER FRIEND—Who was interested to meet Mrs. Soaring and her friends, including—

MISS CAROLINE WIMPLE—Who is the Vicar's sister, and looks it, and—

MRS. JEFFERSON-WHITE—Who knits, and is "quite" the lady, and—

MRS. SNOBBE-CRANSTON—Who moves in charmed circles and knows "the very best" people.