



BLANCHE DOUGLAS
Mrs. Ralph Cummings

FIRED HIS WIFE
FROM THE SHOW.

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RALPH CUMMINGS, now leading man of the Burbank Theater in this city, has drifted apart from his ain true wife in a way that no novelist ever thought of. They have been rent asunder chiefly because Oscar Wilde put two star petticoat parts in "Lady Windermere's Fan."

Mrs. Cummings is staying at the Van Nuys Broadway with a heart filled with aching woe, and Mr. Cummings is at another hotel. How different it might have been if in the play there had been only Mrs. Erlynnne and no Lady Windermere, or just Lady Windermere and no Mrs. Erlynnne!

There is also a leading lady in the case. Mrs. Cummings says that the leading lady caused her to be "fired" from her own husband's company by cruel machinations. The leading lady says various things about Mrs. Cummings.

Mrs. Cummings is an actress, a player of ingenue parts, and known to the stage as Blanche Douglass. She is a pretty, fluffy little lady, with a baby-blue dressing jacket and lacy things; also troubles.

THE YOUNG WIFE'S TALE.

"I don't know how you ever found it out," she said to a reporter, with a laugh that was fairly damp with tears.

"I suppose it amounts to my being discharged from the company; they are rehearsing without me. They haven't given me my two weeks' notice, though, and if I cared to fight it I would have the law on my side in the courts.

"I don't want to say anything that would hurt my husband's business here, but I think I have been treated most unjustly. I don't believe my husband is so much to blame as the leading lady, Laura Nelson Hall.

"I understand she has forced them to drop me from the company by threatening to quit in the middle of the season. That would leave the company without a leading lady."

And she might have been Lady Windermere for sure, so wistful was the next remark: "I guess my husband decided he would rather lose me from the company than Miss Hall."

"It began on the boat coming down from the north," said Mrs. Cummings. "What the company said does not matter, for they might have been prejudiced; but two outsiders came to me and remarked on the way Miss Hall acted toward me.

"When the company opened in this city last Sunday, it might have been expected that a play would be chosen in which the whole strength of the company would be shown. 'The Little Minister,' in which there was no ingenue part for me, was put on; there is not much of a part for anyone except Lady Babble.

"But that was all right. It is a play that is very popular just now.

"Now the company is rehearsing 'Lady Windermere's Fan,' and I am not in it. Miss Hall has taken the part of Lady Windermere which I had before Miss Hall joined us the first of this year. It is usual for the leading lady to take Mrs. Erlynne. But, of course, Miss Hall, as leading lady, had the choice of parts. When she took Lady Windermere, that let me out. I couldn't do Mrs. Erlynne. Good heavens, no! Why, she is 40 years old!"

[It will be recalled that Mrs. Erlynne is the woman with a "past," and part of the past is Lady Windermere. The latter does not know that Mrs. Erlynne is her own mother, and loathes her for a vile creature, as any good woman would. The point of the play is that Mrs. Erlynne sacrifices the fragments of her own reputation to save the daughter who never learns the truth of their relations. An ingenue might do Lady Windermere with a sufficient stretch of the imagination; one never could do Mrs. Erlynne without straining something.]

"I don't know what I am going to do about it," said Mrs. Cummings. I hope they will come to their senses. Oh, I should think Miss Hall would be satisfied with what she has done to me personally, without hurting me in my profession."

WHAT MISS HALL SAID.

Miss Hall, the leading lady, is Lady Babble on the stage and off; there is queer eerie charm of mystery about the blue-black of her eyes. Her specialty is not baby-blue dressing jackets, but rings.

"Well, where on earth did you get all that?" she asked. And then she said some more things.

"Of course, I never forced her out of the company. I have been a good friend to her. When we were in Seattle, there was a row, and I offered to leave the company and go East. I would have done it, too; but she asked me not to. Yes, and if a fuss is stirred up over this, I am going to do that now. I have a good engagement offered me in St. Paul.

"Mrs. Cummings is always stirring up a row in the company. She left in Seattle. She left without any notice and little Mrs. Hines had to "get up" in her parts with one day's notice. Mr. Cummings told her in Seattle that if she quit that way, she should never have a part in his company again. They had some trouble over a letter which he refused to let her see.

"It is not a fact that Mrs. Erlyne is always considered the start part. Julia Arthur played Lady Windermere."

HUBBY'S REMARKS.

Mr. Cummings, husband of the in-

genue with the outraged feelings, brushed the matter lightly aside. He called his wife "Miss Douglas" with much dignity, however.

"She hasn't been fired. It is all peaceful. She is just having another of her cranky spells. She has done this same thing before. When she come around, she will find her place waiting for her just as she has always done.

"Miss Douglas is a very high-strung woman; that's all. She gets on her high horse every once in a while, and you have to give her her head.

"She is a clever ingenue, and sometimes runs the leading lady pretty hard, so she was offended when I put a line of plays on, in which there were no good ingenue parts.

"I brought out a version of 'Nell Gwynne.' No ingenue part. She was sore. 'Little Minister.' No ingenue part. Sore. 'Lady Windermere's Fan.' Sore.

"Miss Hall has not the choice of



Laura
Nelson
Hall.

parts, and could not have forced Miss Douglas out of the company if she had wanted to. I employ no one for any special line of work, and allow no one to dictate to me. I am running this company myself. Mrs. Erlynne is not necessarily the star part. Julia Arthur took Mrs. Windermere, and quite an old woman did Mrs. Erlynne.

"I did not keep Miss Hall in preference to Miss Douglas. I would just as soon have one as the other. I would fire both of them in a minute."

Wherefore, it is plain to be seen that the fate of the happy home hangs on the question as to whether Mrs. Erlynne or Lady Windermere is the best part.

Should the thing ever be brought up to the divorce-court pitch (which the saints forbid) there would be the spectacle of grave and learned counsel cavorting before the judge in all his dignity, shedding tragic emotion broadcast with intent to prove and establish there are more weeps in Lady Windermere's elopement scene in the third act than in Mrs. Erlynne's farewell to her daughter with the baby's picture "business" in the final scene.

If there be those who can summon spirits from the vasty deep, for goodness sake dig up Oscar Wilde and ask him.

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