

"It's Hard to Be an Angel on Broadway"

The Very Embarrassing Tribulations of Pretty De Lyle Alda, Who Reversed Footlight Procedure by Playing "Good Angel" for a Fashionable Men's Shop



Rodolph Valentino Accepted Miss De Lyle's Suggestion and Had the Last Button Omitted from His Vest. And in This Specially Posed Photo the Famous Movie Star Registers the De Lyle "Suggestion of Nonchalance Necessary to Enhance the Charm of Perfect Grooming."

When you've got your tooties sticking through your shoes. Rent is overdue, you're singing "Bankrupt Blues." And a sentimental daddy wants to be your checkbook caddy— It is hard to get indignant and refuse. When he says he wants to star you in a play And he asks a kiss for royalty, I'll say I can see a new Rolls-Royce and I think of Peggy Joyce— Oh, it's hard to be an angel on Broadway.

ABOVE is one of the choruses of the score written for the last "Midnight Frolic" on the Ziegfeld roof of rosy memories. The star of that frolic was De Lyle Alda. She sang charmingly. There was also a chorus in which the "sentimental daddy" becomes the "angel" to the pretty girl, loses his money, then gets "the air," which ironically likewise concluded, "It's hard to be an angel on Broadway."

This sophisticated cynicism of the Rialto, however, turned around and bit pretty Miss Alda. Since times immemorial it has been the custom for business men—often men connected with the tailoring trades—to "angel" pretty girls—sometimes their wives, sometimes their sweethearts—in the "show business." But Miss Alda reversed the process. She "angeled" her tailor husband, William Sheer, in a tailoring business on Broadway. And now she is "singing 'Bankrupt Blues.'"

The notice of bankruptcy was listed officially in the following item:

Dellah Alda Sheer (De Lyle Alda), of 806 Seventh avenue; liabilities, \$17,640; assets, \$150 (voluntary petition).

Billy Sheer, ex-actor, had an eye for clothes. And De Lyle, his charming bride, said she knew she could give him some valuable pointers on how women liked men to dress. The tailoring establishment was begun on Fifth avenue a little over a year ago. But Sheer Tailors, Inc., needed lots and lots of money. There were special woollens to be purchased, special broadcloths for the new "soup and fish" coats, silk linings, fancy—oh, very fancy—buttons for walking coats. Wasn't Rodolph Valentino going to have his clothes made at Miss De Lyle's tailoring establishment? He had said he would. And for Rodolph's clothes they would need very fancy things, indeed. The business began to grow to such an extent that Sheer Tailors, Inc., moved into a new building in the heart of Broadway.



De Lyle Alda, Who Sang "It's Hard to Be an Angel."

It would be so much more convenient for the Sheels of the Rialto to hop in for any one of their very numerous fittings. So the tailor shop moved. And Miss De Lyle decided she could add much to the general sleekness of the actor men by suggesting the colors and materials best suited to their builds and complexions.

Dark clothes for Rodolph, she insisted. "Just a suggestion of nonchalance to enhance the charm of perfect grooming," was another of Miss De Lyle's suggestions to her tailor husband.

It was to the pretty little prima donna the man who knows now what the well-dressed man should wear gives credit for the latest vogue of opening the vest at the lower button. This was the hint of carelessness Miss De Lyle suggested every woman loved about a man.

"It's the mother heart in all of us," said De Lyle Alda at that time. "We women love to feel that our men are just grown-up little boys who forget to tie their ties straight and whose clothes always need buttons. It's the same charm when we are grown up. But it must be done very subtly."

In the walking coat, which is what Sheer Tailors, Inc., decided to name what was once known as a morning suit, Rodolph Valentino accepted Miss De Lyle's

idea, and had the last button omitted on his vest. It falls open slightly, suggesting a bit of carelessness in an otherwise perfect picture.

Rodey's polo clothes were made next. To have them quite perfect for his new picture it was necessary to have seventy-five fittings. First the knickers would be too bloomer like, then too narrow. The knee length was another matter of important consideration. Frantically Billy Sheer tore his hair and wired his wife. De Lyle was on the road with her act in vaudeville when she received her husband's urgent plea. She wired back her suggestions. And they seemed to suit Rodey to a T.

One actor after another came to the tailor shop when they saw how Billy Sheer had turned out Rodey of vamp fame. Owen Moore simply could not decide what color was best for him. So again Billy wired De Lyle, and she, knowing Owen when he used to be Mary Pickford's husband, wired back to suit him in gray. Owen had a lot of color and so gray he decided upon.

De Lyle knew how women liked men to look in their clothes. And with one snip of the scissors she would cut a bit off a vest pattern here, a bit from the tail of a Tuxedo there to give it a new line. Or add a bit to the length or breadth of a box coat, and, lo! all women would



BEFORE

AFTER

marvel at the "just right" appearance of the Broadway actor wearing the clothes—and nine times out of ten would give the wife credit for picking just the proper thing for her particular pride. Yet often it took more than one cutting of a garment to satisfy the actor patron. Of course, temperamental artists are permitted to change their minds often. But who will pay the cost of the cut material? Billy Sheer was asking the



William Sheer, De Lyle's ex-Actor Husband, Who Started the Men's Clothes Shop.

same question some time ago. Then De Lyle stepped forward and said she would. She signed for credit at some of the biggest wool houses in America, and Billy

again went to his task with enthusiasm. Customers could change their minds as often as they liked. On a dark day a dark suit was usually selected. And if the sun was shining when the first or second or hundredth fitting was scheduled the color would simply have to be in keeping with one's spirit. So the famed he-vamps of Broadway changed from black to gray and from gray to brown. And Billy Sheer let them change their minds as often as they liked. Always hoping for pay.

And some one forgot those pesky woollens houses. They mailed bills and more bills, and then sent wires, then representatives. Until at last they simply demanded their woollens back. But, alas! those precious fabrics were all cut up into natty clothes for actors.

With a shrug of his shoulders Billy Sheer saw the futility of pacifying both ends of his business. The woollen mills had to be paid somehow. But the actors would pay only for what they decided to take. And there was poor Billy Sheer gnashing his teeth and wondering how it would all turn out. His wife came to the rescue. Thousand after thousand, she put in all her wealth—but the shop never caught up.

"De Lyle is one woman in a hundred," Billy Sheer said the day he closed the doors of his shop in bankruptcy. "She simply went into debt knee deep trying to see me through with this venture. And I'm not forgetting that she stands alone as a wonderful little girl for all she has done. They've always said that girls in the show business were only too ready to bleed a fellow of his last nickel. That fool idea has been knocked into a cocked hat in this case."

And at the apartment hotel where De Lyle Alda and Billy Sheer have taken their sorrows, far, far above the madding chaos of Broadway temperament, her soft, soothing voice peals mellow sympathy into Billy's ear when his actress wife is on the road.

From a Chinese phonograph case of ex-

Two "Before" and "After" Photographs of De Lyle Alda. The One at Left Was Taken at the Time She Was Singing "It's Hard to Be an Angel." The Other, at Right, Was Taken Since the Bankruptcy Proceedings Began.

quisite design the voice comes forth to cheer up the forlorn tailor when everything seems dull. The record was made by his wife especially for this purpose. First there is a light little song. Then the orchestra stops for a moment and De Lyle speaks cheering words into her husband's ear.

"Never mind, dear," says the crooning voice, "we made one awful fizzle of our tailor shop, but think what a lot of fun we had."

"Fun!" cried Billy Sheer in desperation when first he heard the cheering canned words his wife had parcel-posted to him. "If that job was fun, I'll take a little misery, please."

And Billy Sheer sighs and tries to think of something else that he might do.

"I decorated this place; don't you think it's attractive?" he asks. "I selected all these colors as a background for De Lyle. They harmonize perfectly with her skin, her eyes, her hair."

Soft sea-green lamps, covered with antique silver lace, throw little shadows about the wide old-room. The carpets are dull and mellow, and the odd pieces of furniture that stand majestically about the room are in keeping with the soothing tone of De Lyle's voice as it floats from the antique cabinet.

Some one suggested that Billy Sheer had missed his vocation when he began to dress up actors. He might have made a fortune decorating pretty places for the female satellites.

"Never again!" says Broadway's angel tailor, rolling his eyes skyward. "I'm through trying to play nice old uncle to temperamentalists. Knowing their minds one moment, changing them the next, then wanting again what they selected at first was too much for me. Just \$70,000 worth too much."

And De Lyle? What does she say of the job of dressing Broadway's Sheels? She says, "Never again" too. Because De Lyle insists that what Billy says goes. So that's that!