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## MISS DUANE STEPS OUT

The Story of an Old Fashioned Girl, Who Bought  
Herself Some Glad Rags.

By ADELE HAMLIN

"Miss Hill!"  
"Well you see, Miss Duane, I—" "Double zero! Sit down, Edward Sims!"

"He was a great English writer and he—" "Sit down! You didn't study your lesson!"

"But, Miss Duane, I—" "Double zero! Sit down!" "But, Miss—" "Triple zero for trying to argue with me! Any more and you'll get ten. Sit down!"

Edward Sims sat down. He knew well that Miss Duane would not only give him ten zeros, but twenty as well. Miss Duane was in one of her darkest moods.

Miss Duane peered at the next card through her spectacles, then looked up at her class, or rather victims. Each victim shuddered because not one had studied his or her English.

There were some who grieved deeply when they received zeros. There were some not interested in anything at school. There were some who naturally expected zeros and some who did not care at all.

The day before Miss Duane had been in a wonderful mood. She had joked with her fourth hour, English six class. She had talked about her sister who had funny ways. She had discussed the picture at the theater and she had not mentioned Shakespeare. In short, Miss Duane had been a wonderful woman.

In fact, Miss Duane had been so wonderful that her students (now victims) had thought it would last until the next day, so they had not bothered their young heads about lessons. But Miss Duane's wonderful mood did not last.

There was now a silent panic in her fourth hour, English six class, because she was giving out zeros by the dozens.

The next victim received a couple of zeros, then Miss Duane decided to give the whole class ten zeros. The bell rang, saving the class from more zeros.

Miss Duane pushed her book into her desk drawer, jumped out of the chair, rushed out of the room and bumped into the new gym teacher. She was quickly caught by a pair of strong hands. Before she could adjust her spectacles, the young man was apologizing as though it had been his fault.

"I beg your pardon! I beg your pardon! It was all my—" "Well, you should! Certainly it was your fault! Are you blind?" snapped Miss Duane, all in one breath.

"I'm sorry. Did you—" "No, I did not?" Miss Duane swept past him with a gesture so haughty that it would have made Queen Elizabeth turn green with envy.

She went up to the cafeteria and bought ten cents worth of chocolate ice cream. She ate half of it, then went down to the teachers' room. Two young teachers were there discussing a very important subject—the new gym teacher.

"I think he's wonderful! His shoulders are so broad," said Miss Brown, combing her beautiful black hair.

"He isn't married, either," beamed Miss Smith as she dried her face. Miss Duane regarded them with contempt. She considered them fools, doing all of that silly talk over a man.

"I wonder how old he is?" "Oh, about twenty-nine or thirty." "What do you think?" asked Miss Brown, looking at Miss Duane.

"Nothing," replied Miss Duane. "Have you met Dick Manners, the new gym teacher, Maria?" asked Miss Smith.

"No," replied Maria. "I have not." Through narrowed eyes she saw Miss Smith and Miss Brown smile at each other. Maria didn't like that smile.

Toward the end of the lunch hour, other teachers came in. They found a lot to talk about. They would have found more, if Miss Maria Duane had not been in the room.

"And that girl is the most stubborn girl I have ever seen! She makes it her business to do what you tell her not to do and not to do what you tell her."

"Yes, Helen, I know. I know. I have had her. There should be a special school for girls like Bessie Compton. Don't you think so, Miss Duane?"

"No," said Miss Duane. "I do not." Every teacher in the room was either washing her face, powdering it, or combing her hair, except Maria Duane. She did not care at all for powdering, combing, or dressing.

Sometimes the clothes she wore to school were old-fashioned; sometimes they were almost up to date; but they never seemed to fit her right. They were always either too large, too tight, too short or too long. She wore cotton stockings whenever she wanted to and she wore shoes run down at the heel whenever she wanted to.

Miss Duane was not a bad looking woman at all. She would have been really nice looking if she had taken care of her appearance. She didn't have to wear glasses, and she had a nice form, but she never wore anything to show it.

The bell rang. Miss Duane took her purse and marched out of the room, to her section room. Everyone in her next two classes received several zeros.

When she was about to open the large door to go home, it was opened for her. When she looked up to see the face of the kind person, it was the gym teacher, or the man she had bumped into.

"I thank you," she said coldly.

"You're welcome," he said. He reached the end of the walk before she did. He saw a friend and stopped to talk.

When Miss Duane passed, she heard him ask the man: "Who is that grouchy old maid?"

To Miss Duane the words were like a blow. But she walked on. A grouchy old maid! That's what people thought about her. She didn't give a darn what people thought about her. But that man! A grouchy old maid! How did he know she wasn't married? A grouchy old maid indeed! She wasn't old. She was only twenty-six.

He didn't call Miss Brown a grouchy old maid, and she was twenty-seven! Just because Miss Brown had a pleasant disposition and pretty hair. But would he have called her that if she looked nice like Miss Brown and had a pleasant disposition?

Miss Duane stopped in the middle of the street, but she was pushed on by a crowd of home-going students.

She could act as Miss Brown did! She could dress as Miss Brown did! She would act as Miss Brown did! Just to show that old new gym teacher she didn't care a thing about him. But—still—

Monday, when Miss Maria Duane went to school, the teachers and students had to look twice before they knew her. Her hair was cut, marcelled and curled, her brows were plucked and she had just enough shadow on her eyes and rough and



She rushed out of the room and bumped into the new gym teacher.

powder on her cheeks. There was a new Miss Duane.

She had on a snug-fitting brown dress, brown net stockings, and brown suede high-heel pumps. Miss Duane was a well-dressed woman.

Mr. Richard Manners was not only moved by Maria's attire but her smile as well, when she bumped into him again.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," she said sweetly. "I'm always bumping into someone. I guess you think I'm as blind as a bat!"

"No," he murmured, gazing into her beautiful eyes, "no one would be able to think so."

"You're so kind. Well, I must hurry up to the cafeteria before it is too crowded."

"Say, I'm going your way, if you don't mind," said Mr. Manners, and he then dropped his armful of footballs.

"No, I don't mind. But what about those balls, are you going to leave them there?"

"Oh—er—the—balls—"

"Put them in the closet, I'll wait." Nothing can get crowded quicker than a cafeteria at school. It was crowded when Miss Duane walked in with Mr. Manners. She was conscious of every eye in the room on them while they were eating—that is—while she was eating, because the new gym teacher was just staring at her.

In the weeks that passed, Mr. Manners could not do a thing without Maria. He lunched her, he took her home in his car, they went to dances together, to church, to theatres, to socials and dinners.

At school Miss Duane's disposition had changed so that even her students began to like her. She stopped giving zeros and erased every zero from every card.

In the teachers' room, she powdered, combed and talked as the rest of the teachers did. She even agreed with them, although it caused her great pain to do so.

Miss Maria Duane knew that Richard Manners was rapidly falling in love with her, if he had not already fallen. Well, she wasn't falling for him. No, she wasn't! Anyone could think so, but she wasn't! Of course not!

When she got tired of him, she would tell him about the grouchy old maid and—certainly she would! She would also invite him to her home for Thanksgiving.

Maria lived with her brother and his wife.

"Maria, I believe there is some-

thing between you and Dick," laughed Vivian, her sister-in-law.

"Vivian, you shouldn't believe such things. How do I look in this new dinner gown?"

"You look gorgeous! But how long are you going to take to dress? You used to finish before Bert. Now I'm dressed before you are."

"Is that so?"

"It is. He's downstairs now because I heard Bert let him in."

"Who cares? Are you sure I look all right?"

"Of course. How do I look?" "Swell!" cried Maria, forgetting for the moment that she taught English.

"Here they come at last," they heard Bert say.

"Isn't it terrible to keep you men waiting?" gurgled Vivian.

"That's all right," murmured Richard. "Just so you don't disappoint us."

All of them laughed. After dinner Vivian suggested dancing. Bert suggested going somewhere to dance. Dick named a place and Maria said they would go as soon as she and Vivian were ready. They left half an hour later.

Maria liked to dance with Richard. She was sorry when it was over.

"We're taking Pearl home, Maria," Vivian whispered to Maria. "She's angry with her boy friend. I guess you'll get home first."

She pulled her wrap tighter about her body as she stepped out of the car. "Won't you come until Bert and Vivian come?" she asked, hoping he would say: "No."

But he said: "Yes." "We've known each other a long time," he said, after they were inside.

"Yes—three weeks." "You don't have to know persons long before you like them, Maria."

"No, you don't."

"I liked you the first day I saw you."

"Yes, you did."

"Well, didn't you like me?"

"No, I didn't!"

"Maria!"

"I'm just a grouchy old maid."

"But Maria—"

"You don't remember but I heard you call me a grouchy old maid. Well, I'm still an old maid! And I think you're a grouchy old bachelor!"

"I—" "When you saw me all dressed up, that Monday, you forgot all about my grouchiness. I just did it to make you forget it. Well, you did! But I didn't! So you'd better go on because I'm just a grouchy old maid."

"All right," said he and, walked out.

Maria was surprised. She had no idea that he would just say: "All right," and go.

"Maria! What on earth is wrong with Dick?" cried Vivian, running in.

"I don't know," said Maria, "and I don't care! I hate him!"

"You hate him?"

"Yes, I love him."

"You what?"

"I mean—I mean—you know what I mean!" And she left the room, leaving Bert and Vivian staring after her.

Miss Duane went to the movies the next day. But she left before the picture was half over, because the heroine began crying at the beginning of the picture and there didn't seem to be any chance of her stopping until the end. She went to another movie. It was a comedy that would have made the heroine of the other picture laugh.

She stayed in bed all day Saturday, correcting papers and thinking about Richard Manners. She went to church Sunday.

Miss Duane was the cause of another silent panic in her fourth hour, English six class.

"Miss Hill!"

"Miss Duane, I—" "Double zero! Sit down! Edward Sims!"

"Some of the writers in—" "Sit down! you didn't study your lessons!"

"But Miss Duane—" "Sit down! Bessie Compton!"

"I don't know!"

"Don't yell at me! Three zeros!"

"You ain't got no business giving nobody all those zeros. You—"

"Don't argue with me! Sit down!" Bessie Compton only sat down.

"You know you didn't give us no lessons. You ain't got—"

"Shut up!" cried Miss Duane. "It's none of your business if I give you fifty zeros. If I fill your card with zeros! If I make out another card and fill it with zeros! If I—" Miss Duane could not afford to cry before her class, so she pushed her book into her desk, picked up her pocketbook, rushed out of the room and bumped into the new gym teacher.

"Maria!"

"Dick!"

"Did you hurt yourself?"

"N-no. What did you start to say to me Thursday, Dick?"

"Aw, I only wanted to know whether you'd be willing to marry me," said he, as though everything in the