

APRIL, 1916: p. 143

The Girl Who Reads Tennyson Between Scenes

By ROBERTA COURTLANDT



Blanche Sweet

It all happened at the studios of the Lasky Company, just a short time ago. Since joining this company, Blanche Sweet has been unusually elusive to magazine people, for there doesn't seem to be anything she cares to say for publication, but despite this, I persisted, hoping that I might possibly persuade her to divulge some of her past life.

Mr. McGaffey, publicity director of the Lasky Company, was my guide thru the labyrinth of stages, props, directors, actors and scene-workers. We encountered Laura Hope Crews very hard at work in one set. In the next one, a scene from "The Explorer" was being rehearsed, and in the scene were Lou Tellegen, Dorothy Davenport and Tom Forman, all hard at work. And then—marvelous sight—there was Geraldine Farrar, hard at work under the direction of Cecil B. DeMille, and playing opposite her was Wallace Reid.

It was all so very, very interesting and I should have liked immensely to have stopped and looked on for awhile. But Mr. McGaffey forged straight ahead and I, perforce, followed.

Blanche Sweet

In a shady, cool corner we found the object of our search, curled up with a book, looking very cool and comfortable. Business of introductions. Business of scared interviewer asking for a "Chat." Business of Miss Sweet puckering her straight brows and looking pathetic.

"Oh, please let's dont bother about interviews. It's too hot," she pleaded. Mr. McGaffey seemed to think we might safely be left alone, so, with a serene look, he hurried back to the office, and Miss Sweet and I settled down and began getting acquainted.

"It must be a mighty interesting book to keep you reading it on a day like this," I suggested, with a meaning look towards her book.

For answer, she turned the title-page towards me, and I realized with a little surprise that it was a volume of Tennyson. Any girl who spends a warm, lazy morning reading Tennyson certainly has my sincerest respect.

"I am very fond of him," she confided, with a little, lazy smile. "I like Lord Byron, too. I adore Kipling." she added shamelessly; "and for fiction give me Phillips Oppenheim."

My respect was rising by leaps and bounds.

"Do you often spend your mornings this way?" I asked.

"Hardly," she laughed; "I seldom have a morning that I can spend this way. Today I was to have worked in 'The Secret Sin,' in which I am doing the double rôle of the twins. So I



came down to the studio all primed for work, only to find that I wouldn't be needed for an hour or so. And the hour doesn't seem to be finished yet," she answered gaily.

"What companies have you been with, save Lasky, Miss Sweet?" I ventured.

"Biograph, then Reliance (Mutual, you know), and now Lasky. I've been

Blanche Sweet

in Motion Pictures for six years," she answered, a little wearily.

"Were you on the stage before entering Motion Pictures?" I persisted.

"Yes, as première danseuse with Gertrude Hoffman. But after my first work in pictures, I didn't care for the stage any more."

"And where were you born?"

She sat up, with a little bored gesture that was rather amusing because of the twinkle in her blue eyes. She pretended to straighten the disorder of her blonde hair, then she sighed and dropped her hands in her lap.

"So it's going to be an interview, after all," she sighed, with an air of utter hopelessness. "Very well. What is to be, will be, I suppose. And who am I that I should dare to attempt to stop the tide of destiny? Where was I born? Chicago, in 1896. I suppose the date of the month doesn't matter?"

"No," I muttered, so delighted at the other information that I wouldn't be greedy and insist on more.

"Do you care for photoplays, other than your own? Seeing them, I mean?" I stammered.

"Yes, indeed. I am an inveterate photoplay fan. I think every player who has any ambition at all, any desire to get ahead in his work, should spend as much or more time seeing other people's pictures as in his own. I think that only by comparison and good hard work can we hope to succeed. And it is my highest ambition to reach the zenith of a professional career." Her voice was very sweet and earnest as she made this little preachment.

"What pictures have you most enjoyed seeing, Miss Sweet?"

"The Warrens of Virginia," she answered promptly, "and The Escape."

"And will you name some of the great photoplayers?" I persisted.

"Of course. I'll name some that I consider the greatest—Mary Fuller and Mary Pickford. I enjoy their work on the screen more than any others I have ever seen."

"I suppose you are interested in woman suffrage?" I asked.

Blanche Sweet

"Decidedly I am interested in it," she said, with a bit of a flash in her blue eyes, "but I can't say that I approve of it. Men have managed things pretty well so far—let them continue. I don't think a woman has any business in politics, except in so far as any woman can influence her husband's vote," she returned.

For the rest, before she was called to work, I managed to discover that she lives with her grandmother, since she was unfortunate enough to lose both parents when she was quite young. She is a very sane, level-headed young girl, who has her eye on a certain goal and who means to get there some day.

She designs all her own frocks and hats and often constructs them as well, when her duties at the studio will permit. She is fond of motoring, swimming, hunting and dancing—chiefly dancing, for it's her greatest pleasure—outside of the letters she receives from her admirers and friends.

She is also in favor of censorship of films, and she is single, heart-whole and fancy-free.

In appearance, Blanche Sweet is about five feet four inches in height and weighs about one hundred and thirty. Perhaps her hair has contributed more than any other physical characteristic to make her famous—it is thick, fine-spun and of a wonderful pale gold color. She hasn't a nickname, tho in her Biograph days she was known as "The Biograph Blonde."

As a parting word, see Blanche Sweet as the twins in "The Secret Sin." I am sure you'll like seeing it quite as much as I enjoyed interviewing the dainty star.

