

Vin & Kir

Secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt

Here is a delightful story regarding Mr. Roosevelt which Mrs. Roosevelt will be enjoy hearing. Read it, and pass the story along - would be good in a biographical history.

Mrs. Vincent

Thompson

Here's a formula for conquering stage fright which a sym-

thetic stranger gave to a scared high school valedictorian

The first minute

Handwritten note: *Handwritten note: Reader begins*

BY MARGARET LEE RUNBECK

WHEN I was graduating from high school, I was a very self-conscious and awkward child. For some reason—sheer brute scholarship, no doubt, and not because of any grace or popularity—I found myself on the platform during the earth-shaking commencement exercises with the valedictory speech seething around in my frightened little head.

Our class was ranged along the stage of the auditorium, and down below us in a dizzy, blurred sea of drowning faces, were our parents. Among them were mine, my mother's blessed forefinger still pricked with the thousands of tiny handstitches she had put into my graduating dress, my father spending one of his precious day's "leave" in order to witness this great event. If I disgraced them today—as I most likely should—I couldn't possibly forgive myself.

It had been arranged that the four or five of us dry-mouthed performers—the class prophet, the valedictorian, the class poet, and the grind who was to be given a scholarship at a state university—were to sit in conspicuous segregation in the center of the stage. Having to mumble a speech was horror enough, but having to sit where all could gaze upon my plumpness and the fever blister which had popped out from sheer terror, was agony unbearable.

To make the whole thing worse, next to me was an empty chair for the invited speaker who was to deliver our Commencement Address. My English teacher had said firmly that I must chat cordially with him during the few minutes before the exercises started. It would show the audience how completely at ease everyone was, she said. This, of course, was the final ordeal, for what could I possibly find to say to some strange grown-up?

When he came swinging gracefully onto the stage, while the high school orchestra was scraping through "The Blue Danube," my shy despair reached its climax. But my English teacher nodded imperatively at me, so I smiled deliriously at our speaker and tried to give a pantomime impression that all was well.

"I'm supposed to talk wittily to you," I gulped in a breathless croak, "but . . . but . . . I haven't got a thing to say . . . I'm just scared to death."

"I'm scared, too," he said. "I've got a speech written down, but I don't think it's much good, and besides—"

"But you don't have to be afraid," I exclaimed.

He looked at me carefully, not as a man looking at a child but as one human being measuring another to see where help might be given.

"Neither do you," he said. "I'll tell you a secret; then you'll never need to be scared again. Everyone on earth is shy, self-conscious and unsure of himself. Everybody's timid about meeting strangers. So if you'll just spend the first minute you're in the presence of a stranger trying to help him feel comfortable, you'll never suffer from self-consciousness again. Try it."

In his handsome face I saw a kindness that made me suddenly aware of what a fine thing a man with sympathy and insight in his soul can be.

"I will try it," I said very loudly, from the bottom of my heart.

Then suddenly, to my horror, I realized that "The Blue Danube" had come to its end, and that my voice had blazed out like a bullet in the silence. Our principal was staring at me, and all my classmates were gazing open-mouthed, and it was a moment which easily could have toppled into neighborhood disgrace.

But the man beside me laughed with assurance, and reached out and patted my shoulder in such a friendly way that everyone in the hall felt good, and pleased, and friendly. And in spite of myself, I had done exactly what my English teacher had said I must do—I had talked pleasantly with our honored guest, so that everyone would feel at ease.

I don't remember how the speeches went off, either his or mine. But I do remember how happy I was, how wonderful the whole occasion seemed. Most of all I remember the advice of the man who generously gave a frightened, unattractive child his secret for getting over discomfort by losing self in helping a stranger.

I've used his secret thousands of times; I've watched it work with all kinds of strangers; and increasingly I've been grateful to the man who gave it to me and often wished I had remembered who he was so that I could tell him of my gratitude.

Recently I had to dispose of an attic full of valueless treasures hoarded through the years. In a box with a few old letters I found the Commencement Day Program of Eastern High School, Washington, D. C. It has a blue and silver seal on the front, and a line which says: Commencement Address, by the Honorable Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

It is too late now for me to tell him of my gratitude. But I can pass along his secret to help others, as he passed it along to help me.

"Letter to the World" (below) portrays aspects of the poet, Emily Dickinson. "Salem Shore" (top right) delineates the emotions of women whose men are at sea. "Every Soul is a Circus" (bottom right) reveals the comic vagaries of which the human mind is capable

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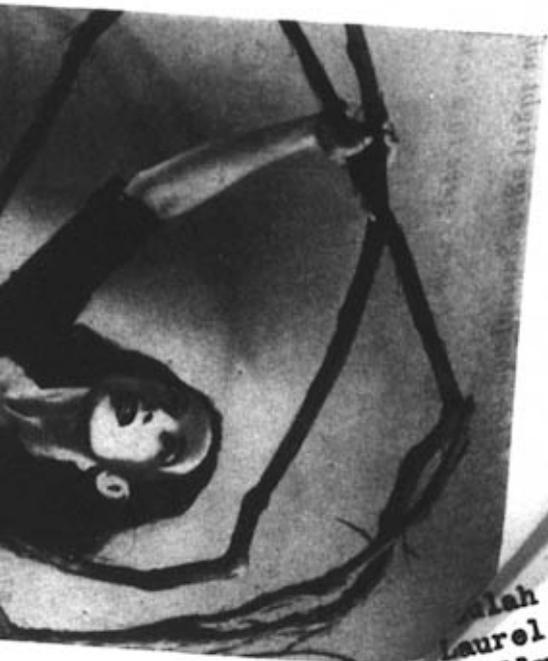
INDEPENDENT WOMAN

BY

FLORENCE VON WIEN

(bt) reveals

(top right)



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Laurel Grove Avenue
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Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
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