

It takes spunk to get ahead on the screen—and Irene Dunne, being Irish, sure succeeded

IT'S THE IRISH IN HER



In *Show Boat* you'll be seeing Irene Dunne in her most talented rôle



By Leon Surmelian

“YOU have to be a fighter to be a movie star,” Irene Dunne said with a flash of her Irish eyes. “It takes spunk to get anywhere in this business, especially when you aren’t endowed with all the gifts of the gods. Those that have reached the top aren’t ravishing beauties or geniuses. I have seen so many girls trying to enter pictures, girls who had beauty, brains, background, but got nowhere because they lacked—” and Irene Dunne indicated the region of her abdomen.

“Guts,” I blurted out.

“Don’t quote me! I didn’t say it!” she implored.

In her soft, warm, velvety voice Miss Dunne speaks a racy vernacular, but “guts” isn’t exactly the kind of word she would use. I was worried when I went to her home in Beverly Hills to interview her. I thought she might be all right for a lyric poem, but not a magazine yarn. Her grace, charm and beauty are well known. When a fan magazine writer is sent out to interview a movie star who is not a movie star in private life, he has a mighty tough assignment on his hands.

Now, an interview with Irene Dunne would be a cinch if all you have to write is what we “fan-maggers” call a straight per-

sonality story. Then you can rake up all your choice adjectives and luxuriate in such phrases as “Lovely Irene Dunne with the melodic voice carries the gracious gentility of the patrician of the old South like a halo about her pretty face,” or “This delectable Kentucky thoroughbred is tops in chawm.” But alas, I had to find a new angle on her, something other scribes have missed.

I expected to find a study in the austerities of drawing rooms, but it was an entirely different Irene Dunne that greeted me. There was, to be sure, an aroma of Park Avenue about her, but she was free and debonair, with a girlish quickness to her movements, and the twinkle in her eyes indicated that I had to deal with a funster, and not a regal, distant lady. This put me at my ease, although I still felt miserable brooding over my angle. I wasn’t sure I would get a story. I frankly told her my difficulty as I sipped my drink and munched the delicious cookies she had baked herself.

“EVERY fan magazine writer that comes to interview me wants a new angle,” she laughed. “I have no more angles. They’re all exhausted.” [Continued on page 68]

The Irish in Her

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which produced also *The Magnificent Obsession*.

She said that being a movie star makes one ruthless—ruthless not only with herself, but with others as well. Competition demands it. Those who constantly spread sunshine around get nowhere. How to economize on time and keep her health and the quality of her voice is her big problem, when there are so many things to distract her. "When I go shopping I have to glance at my watch all the time for fear of missing an appointment. I can never do anything on the spur of the moment, but have to plan everything in advance. When you are under contract to a studio, it owns you body and soul. There isn't a minute you can call your own. You accept an invitation, and then can't go. Friends feel neglected, and even accuse you of having gone high-hat. Oh, I know I have hurt even my mother many times!" And La Belle Dunne has temperament, too. But don't take her wickedness too seriously! I couldn't, and demanded positive proofs. "I hate to talk about my fights," she said. "But remember, I am half Irish!" To illustrate what she meant by being ruthless she said she stops working at 6 o'clock, promptly, and no amount of pleading on the part of director, producer, or other potentate can induce her to break this rule. Once you yield, you are lost.

As *Magnolia* in *Show Boat* she is quite unlike the perfect lady we have always known her on the screen. She plays in black face, cavorts as a harum-scarum banjo-player and gives an exhibition of tap dancing that was considered pretty hot in those days. And when she blossoms out as an enchanting blonde, she has one of those come-hither looks.

"I have sentimental reasons for liking my part in *Show Boat*," she said. "I'll never forget how thrilled I was when Ziegfeld told me I had made good in my try-out for the first road show of *Show Boat*. When later I went to Chicago, where it had such a successful run, Edna Ferber told me I was the ideal *Magnolia*. I had always wanted to do it on the screen. As a child in Louisville I grew up in an atmosphere of river boats, my father being connected with a large ship building concern."

BESIDES her vaunted Irish pugnacity, Miss Dunne has another Irish trait: an unflinching sense of humor, which I hadn't suspected in her. She is really a funster, and indulged in a few jokes at my expense. I had also told her at the beginning of the interview that I would get her O. K. on the quotes to avoid misunderstandings. An interviewee has a right to know that he has been quoted correctly. "I might have to delete your lines before the editor does," she said, in a serious tone. And as I didn't crack a smile, and on the contrary looked as if I had taken it on the chin, she burst out laughing. I felt worse than the proverbial Englishman. "I don't know where I would be if I didn't have my sense of humor!" she said. "Heaven knows you have got to have it to get along in Hollywood!" And I had to nod a miserable yes.

Among the celebrated ladies of the screen who have a Voice, Irene Dunne unquestionably is the least theatrical, the most "regular," and I am convinced, the happiest. She explained her "design for living." Having done a lot of thinking

Sorry about this page...Steve McQueen stopped by and left us this present

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PERMAPOINT

The super-indelible lipstick

CIMARRON started Irene Dunne on her screen career, and she scored one success after another. She is one singer who is also a competent and experienced actress, having been through the rigors of the stage. They give her difficult rôles, and she packs them with conviction. Remember her in *The Magnificent Obsession*, when she acted blind so naturally? That picture brought her thousands of letters from blind people, some of which she prizes highly. The tribute they paid to her acting, which they could follow through her voice, is the highest praise she could receive. Every new film increases her dramatic stature, and today, she is in greater demand than ever before. She is at the moment under contract to three studios, Paramount, Columbia and RKO, the first two calling for three pictures each. She has just finished *Show Boat* for Universal,

she has formulated a philosophy of life. "I like to do a good job on the screen and get the most out of life off screen. The important thing is to find out what makes us happy, and stick to it, no matter what others may think of it. Happiness is the one thing to strive for.

"I have three guiding principles of life. The first of these is concentration. Concentrating on my work, concentrating on the people around me, especially on those who depend on me. The second is application. Concentration without application will get you nowhere. Once you figure the whole thing out, you must apply it. This means hard work, sacrifices, and a determination to put up a fight if, and when, necessary. The third is the most important: Always be yourself. Be true to yourself, and you can't be false to any man. I think it was Shakespeare who said this. I firmly believe in it. Maybe I would have more glamour if I put on an act, but I can't. In private life, I can't be anything but myself. And because in private life I am just plain Mrs. Francis Griffin, I am poor copy for you writers. But it is far more important for me to be Mrs. Francis Griffin, than good copy."

It takes intestinal fortitude to lead a perfectly normal, sane, unspectacular life in the bizarre whirligig of this movie town, and refuse to be a movie star off screen. Irene Dunne, who has the quiet strength of the truly strong, has done this, and the Irish in her can withstand very well accusations of seclusion and antiquated primness.

Fifteen Years Ago
in MOTION PICTURE Magazine



Jackie Coogan

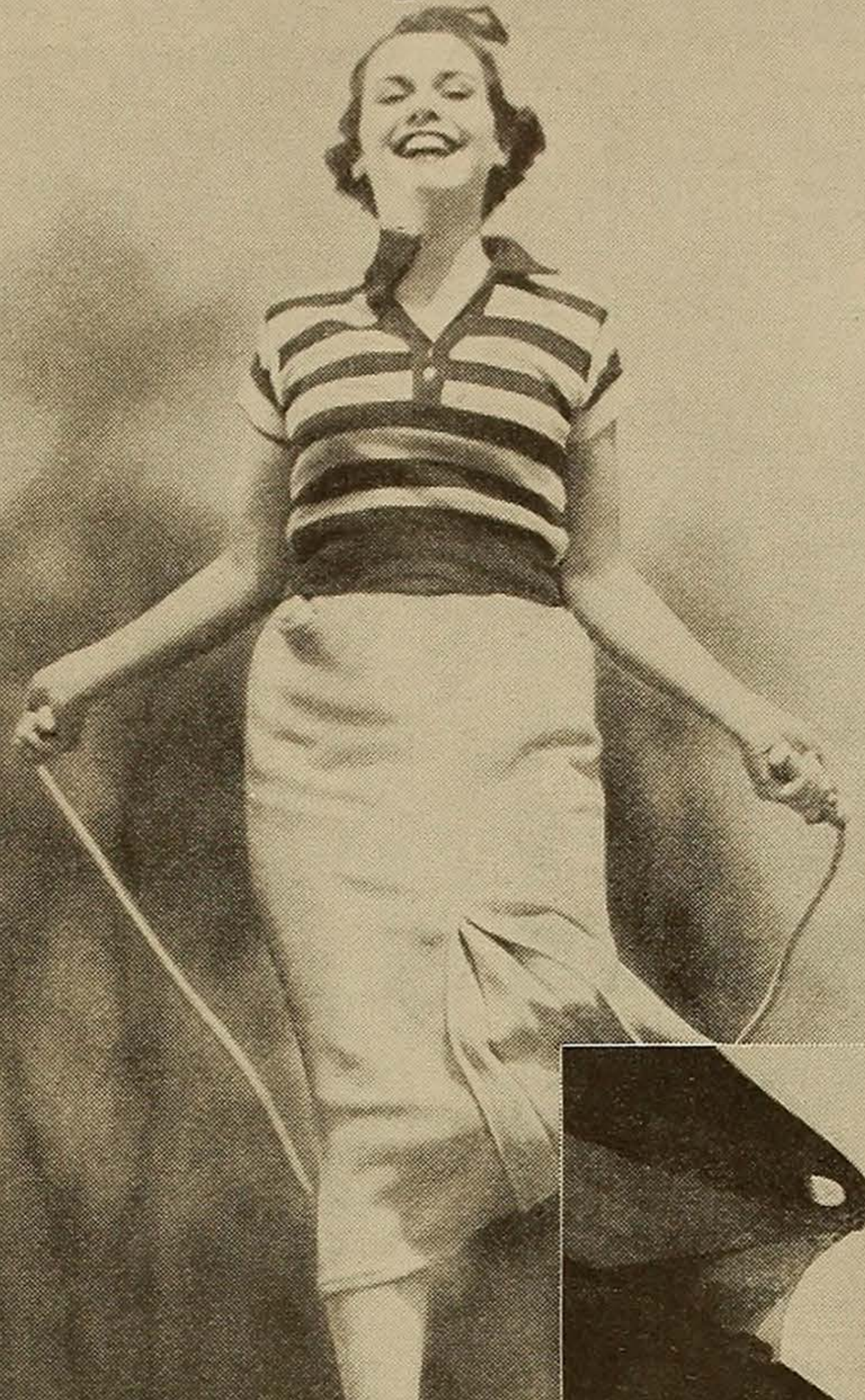
"HERBERT RAWLINS has not been shadowed on the screen frequently of late—and that will make his appearance with Ethel Clayton, in *Wealth*, doubly welcome" . . . "The screen has claimed numerous popular leading men—but none more popular than Conway Tearle" . . . "Motion Pictures, the eighth art, are not yet twenty years old, and always being sneered at because they are not on a 'higher level' . . .

Jackie Coogan, has brought to the screen, in the title rôle of *The Kid* one of the finest and most natural characterizations ever shadowed" . . . "Nazimova is playing *Camille* out at the Metro studios and Rudolph Valentino, who scored such a hit in *The Four Horsemen*, plays opposite her" . . . "Leaving the stupendous success of his stage career behind him, Richard Bennett has come to Hollywood" . . . "Bebe Daniels is not indulging in motoring these beautiful days. Judge Cox sentenced her to ten days in jail for speeding in Santa Ana County" . . . "Jack Pickford plans to return to the screen himself at the head of his own company as soon as he finishes helping Alfred Green in the direction of his sister, Mary, in *Little Lord Fauntleroy*" . . . "George Bancroft makes his screen debut in *Ave Maria*" . . . "Wallace Reid, since his triumphal tour to British Columbia, is at work on *Tall Timber*" . . . "Helene Chadwick plays the leading female rôle opposite Richard Dix in Mary Roberts Rinehart's first original scenario, *The Glorious Fool*" . . . "The screen is to be given another glimpse of Shakespeare's genius. John Stahl, who makes the Stahl Productions for Louis B. Mayer, announces that he will film a version of *King Lear*" . . . "Dick Barthelmess is 'Youth' in the film, *Experience*" . . .

DID YOU KNOW THAT Harry Carey wants his 13-year-old daughter to follow in his footsteps and that it's in his contract that she be allowed to watch him on the set as part of her training for a career?

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