

Cinderella Lives Again

Constance Binney has found luck and glamour in her brief but notable career.

By Martin Mott

WHEN, some five years ago, I attended a performance of "Good Morning, Josephine," or "Oh, My Dear," or some musicalamity of equally momentous title, I remember having remarked the beauty, the grace, and the charm of a minor participant in the festivities, she who played, humbly enough, the Maid of the House.

"A fetching lass," my companion had called her.

The program called her Constance Binney.

Say what you will, Constance has made rapid work of this climbing-the-ladder-to-fame stuff we read about. After footing it feathery for a season in "Oh, My Dear," she caught the eye of Rachel Crothers, the reformer-playwright-feminist-producer of "He and She," "39 East," and other Broadway illuminators. And Miss Crothers cast Miss Binney in "39 East." And Miss Binney did so very well in it that before she knew what had happened she was being featured.

Then the movies discovered her, the fans discovered her, and there you are. And there *she* is, Paramount star.

The first time I saw la Binney—an assumed name, by the way—she was, as I have said, elevating the fantastic toe in Philadelphia's Chestnut Street Opera House. The second time I saw her I was more fortunate; I met the young lady.

She is a demurely coquettish, mildly pepperish ingénue, with a typical ingenoodle on her shoulders.



Photo by Nickolas Muray

Not mature, this Binney girl actress impresses one with her poise and assurance.

Five years, almost to the day, later. And be it said, it is no easy thing to meet Constance. She is not upstage in the approved—and unapproved—manner; she is merely chary of her time.

"So many people want to meet me just so they'll have something to tell the old folks at home," she explained, after I had been brought through the lines with a trusted secret-service man who knew the one-two-pause-rap-thrice combination requisite to obtaining entrée to the Binney dressing room. "You are here for half a million people at once," she said. "That's different. It's the least I can do to say something for such a vast audience."

"The very least," I assured her gravely.

She is slight and pretty in a piquant way, dresses her own hair, reads A. A. Milne prodigiously, and admires Irene Bordoni, of vaudeville and musical-comedy fame, more than any one else. And she loves Faire—or Fritzi, as we inside the know know she is rightly named—her sister, and believes interviews inventions of the devil—who, I suppose

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she insinuated, always finds something for idle hands to do. Constance should be named Kiki or Marie or something less prim and staid than Constance. She is a demurely coquetish, mildly pepperish ingénue, with a typical ingenoodle on her shoulders.

I asked her how she enjoyed the heavier parts that were coming her way. She used to do frothy comedy, you know. Now she does things that have heft, punch, and that vague thing that professionals call "personality."

"Well," said Constance, "I like these parts, and I don't."

As Ring Lardner has said, there's a diplomatic answer to any question: "Yes and no." Constance had read Ring's tip, I am sure.

"I like the emotional opportunities they give me," she said, "but I prefer doing light, frolicking comedies that make the people who see them happy. I claim to be no *Pollyanna*, but I do think that pictures are made for the amusement of all—women and children—" "First?" I suggested. "And everybody," protested Constance.

"Then," I interposed, "you don't care for Theodore Dreiser or Henrik Ibsen or August Strindberg or any of the other unhappy chaps?"

"Let's not bunch them," she smiled diplomatically. "I like some of them—and some of them I can't stand. But I can choose my own course, you see. I can do light or heavy, and I much prefer the former. Although,"

she added with a touch of inconsistency, "I rather like to do big scenes like the hypnotic ones in 'Becky.'"

"Acting is a game. If you have a good part, it's as if you were winning the game; when you draw a wishy-washy rôle, you're losing. Of course, the trick is to be a good winner and a graceful loser."

Not mature, this Binney girl actress still impresses with a definite poise and assurance. She must be older than she looks, for to my untutored eye she seemed a bare seventeen. She is probably in her early twenties.

"The family was shocked," she told me, "when I went in the chorus of a Princess show. Then when I was handed a minor principal rôle—the dancing maid—they weren't quite so shocked, and when Miss Crothers gave me the lead in '39 East,' opposite Henry Hull, all opposition to a stage career vanished into thin air."

"And now," I surmised, "no one is particularly unhappy about your having achieved celluloid stardom?"

"That has been rather nice, in every way," she replied.

But, you see, her rise from a dancing girl to a twinkling star was made in the approved Cinderella or Phoenix-rising-from-the-ashes manner. It's good to find a Cinderella occasionally in these prosaic days. The Cinderella motif is by far the more ingenuous one, furnishing a much more inspiring and happy ending to just such a chronicle as this.

Emotionalized Modes

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tipped fox, and a close velvet hat trimmed with gold and red pheasants' tails.

You can follow her general idea in dressing according to moods, if you live up to the clothes which express the moods. But you must be sure that you are not a person who dresses to fit one mood and then changes the mood before it is time to change the dress. Vivacity must last if it is to inspire a bright gown.

And if you like this idea of choosing your costumes, but cannot afford to have many, let the frocks which you do purchase be rather simple, and let your accessories carry out the mood. For instance, in the last costume described, Miss Windsor could easily do this. The dark fur collar and cuffs could be detachable, and could be changed for white ones when the wearer was in a festive

mood. Much can be done by changing one's hat—as you can see by studying the different effects of the hat worn with the suit and the one worn with the crimer-trimmed coat.

One's shoes must fit the mood, also. High-heeled sandal pumps do not fit an outdoor mood—unless "outdoor" means riding in a limousine. Nor do flat-heeled street pumps and silk-and-wool stockings fit a butterfly mood.

But the girl or woman who is willing to study her own temperament, and take the trouble to see that her costumes match her various moods, will be beautifully dressed, even though her dress allowance is a very small one. And she will have the delight of knowing that, interested as other women are in her effective costuming, they won't know how she does it!