

OUR WILL: *The Life Story Of Will Rogers* By Scott Cunningham

FOURTEENTH INSTALLMENT.

In the last half of 1923 Will wrote from California: "I am away out here in the broad spaces, where an actor is no better than his double."

He starred in Pathe's "Uncensored Movies" and other two-reel comedies filmed in the Fall of that year. Hal Roach turned out some pictures with him.

But Ziegfeld wanted the cowboy for another edition of the Follies.

"No," said Will, "I'm not going back into the Follies."

Will knew Ziegfeld would raise the ante if he took this attitude, and Ziegfeld read his mind. The showman raised the ante, and finally Will consented to come.

After traveling to New York to obtain an idea of what he would have to do in the new production, Will got on a train with New York's Republican delegates and went to Cleveland, Ohio, in June, 1924, for his first national political convention.

"I don't see why the Republicans are meeting," he said. "Coolidge could have been nominated by post-card.

Will and Bryan Grow Very Chummy

"A lot of people can't understand the popularity that Mr. Coolidge is deservedly enjoying all over the country at the present time. I can tell you. It started the minute he opposed Congress and the Senate. The people said, "If he is against Congress he must be right."

William Jennings Bryan was covering the two conventions for the syndicate Will represented, and the two grew to be very chummy. They were chatting one day when Bryan remarked, "You're a humorous writer, Will, while I am serious." Rogers laughed aloud, slapped the Great Commoner on the back, and said:

"Maybe we're both mistaken." The convention proved to be a very tame affair. "There's not a band in town," Will complained. "A bell boy was pinched for paging a guest too loud."

In Atlantic City, where the new (nineteenth) Follies opened on the night of June 18, Will proved to be a big hit. The house was packed and hundreds of people were turned away.

While the show was liked in Atlantic City, it underwent a lot of change before it opened in New York the following week. "In fact," Rogers said, in comment, "Ziegfeld has achieved the record of giving a newer show in New York than he did in Atlantic City."

In addition to his monolog, Will had two scenes in the new Follies. One showed him "investigating the investigators" in a committee room of the Senate, while a hot air machine recorded the amount of gas exhaled by the members. The other scene, which he played with Brandon Tynan made up as Senator Lodge, showed two statesmen discussing topics of the day.

On the same night the Follies opened in New York's New Amsterdam Theater, the Democratic National Convention started in Madison Square Garden.

The cowboy stayed at every session of the convention as long as he could, and then returned to the theater just in time to do his act. A result was that his monolog, which he did in addition to filling the spots mentioned, comprised up-to-the-minute stuff.

Smith and McAdoo Receive Ribbings

Al Smith and William G. McAdoo, the two leading candidates, both attended the Follies, and received their ribbings from Will. Thousands of delegates flocked to hear him, too.



When Patricia Ziegfeld, then a small child, was forced to bed because of illness, Will Rogers paid \$2,000 to the Prince of Wales for a pony. Will rode the pony right into Patricia's second floor room after bargaining with the Prince on a Long Island polo field. A long friendship existed between the Ziegfeld and Rogers families. Will always referred to his Follies' boss as "Mr. Ziegfeld." This picture shows (left to right) Patricia and her mother, Billie Burke Ziegfeld, Mary Rogers, Mrs. Rogers and Jimmy Rogers upon the arrival of the Ziegfelds in California to be the guests of the Rogers family.

"My goodness," he said, "you Democrats haven't any manners. We invited you here to New York as guests; not to live with us."

When John W. Davis was nominated for President, Will sent him a wire saying: "I understand you are to be associated with one of the Bryan boys. For the Lord's sake pick the right one."

No sooner were the national conventions out of the way than America's attention was taken by the presence in this country of the Prince of Wales.

Three months before, when the Prince was being joked about falling off his horse, Will had told of some riding mishaps he himself had experienced, and pointedly inquired: "Are the Prince and I supposed to fall with the horse, or are we supposed to stay up there in the air until he gets up, and comes back under us?"

It was because of this defense of the Prince that Will one night had a call from an Englishman in uniform, an equerry to the royal heir, asking the cowboy to a dinner at the Piping Rock Country Club, on Long Island. The Prince was speaking when Will arrived, and soon finished with the request that the Oklahoma follow him.

Getting awkwardly to his feet, Rogers grinned, "Everybody asked me if I was nervous, speaking here tonight before royalty. Say, this is not my first time speaking before royalty. One time I spoke before Sir Harry Lauder.

"Well, I was all swelled up over that till I found out that a 'Sir' is about the lowest form of royalty there is. It's kind of the Ford of titles."

Prince of Wales Enjoys Will's Quips

Everybody's eyes were on the Prince to see how he would take it. He laughed heartily. Will turned to him and said, "Prince, you know we like you over here. You are the first Englishman that didn't come here to lecture.

"I can't offer you a beautiful home on Long Island like all these

other folks has done, but I can give you a cot in my dressing room at the Follies, where I am playing . . .

"I had no idea you were over here in this country at all, Prince, until I happened to see a little note about it way down among the ads this afternoon in the paper. You have made yourself mighty popular, Prince, in spite of your birth. I admire any man who can rise above his surroundings."

Not only did the heir to the English throne enjoy these quips, but when Will was about to stop, the Prince tugged at his coattails and whispered reminders of other jokes on himself that Will had been telling elsewhere.

Before the Prince hurried away at the dinner's end he exacted of Will a promise to play polo with him the next day.

When the time set for the game arrived, the Prince showed up in regulation polo dress. The game had reached the third chukker when Will appeared on the field in plain dungarees, took the place of another player, and made the royal visitor laugh till the end of the game.

Bargains With Wales for Polo Pony

The two then rode off in a car together to have lunch.

That night in the Follies Will made his report. "That Prince guy," he said, "was well-mounted. He knows good horse-flesh when he sees it, too. I was on just a couple dogs myself. One of 'em I could have got off and out-ran myself."

Will learned in another game days later that the Prince had a pony for sale. The cowboy remembered that Ziegfeld's daughter, Patricia, was ill, and offered to buy the pony.

"They stood under some trees like a couple of horse traders," recalls Fred Post, who witnessed the bargaining. Finally they made the trade, with Rogers paying a price supposed to have been \$2,000.

Asked if the pony was for himself, the cowboy exclaimed, "Lord, no! It ain't for me,

Prince. I have some alleged polo ponies of my own. In fact, I think I have the best string of 40 polo ponies in the world."

Will took the pony up to the second floor room of the house in which the bedfast Patricia Ziegfeld was staying. He gave her the pony, Fred Post recalls, and a lot of people gathered around to thank him. Will shook his head and said, "Shucks, that's nothing. When that pony's up here with you folks, he's just slumming."

(Tomorrow—"Cal and Will, those two boys.")
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MURDER IS CHARGED IN AUTOMOBILE DEATH

SAN ANTONIO, Sept. 7 (AP).—Joe Pickett, 24, was charged with murder without malice Friday night in connection with an automobile accident in which Miss Billie Summitt, 21, was injured fatally.

Miss Summitt was walking home from a neighborhood store when a car leaped the curb, struck her, drove her through an iron fence and fell six feet down an embankment on top of her. She died three hours later.

Pickett and Doris Hall, who was riding with him, were not injured.

Veteran police officers said the charge against Pickett was the first of its kind they had ever heard of in connection with an auto accident.

TRIMBLE UNDER 5-YEAR SENTENCE IN SLAYING

FREDERICKSBURG, Sept. 7 (AP). L. E. Trimble, Menard County rancher, Saturday was under a five-year penitentiary sentence for slaying W. R. Tomlinson. After a district court jury returned the verdict Friday, Trimble's attorneys indicated they would appeal the case.

Tomlinson, former Menard County Commissioner, was slain near Menard. H. B. Opp also was charged in the slaying. His case has been transferred from Menard to Burnet.