



"NELL, THE NEWSGIRL".

3 West 102<sup>d</sup> St  
N.Y.C.

"NELL, THE NEWSGIRL"

SKETCH IN TWO SCENES

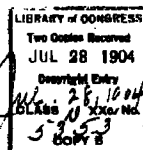
BY

HELENA FREDERICK

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CHARACTERS

NELL, a newsgirl,  
OFFICER KETCHAM, of the -- Precinct  
JIMMY, a street urchin  
DORSEY, a Butler at Ketcham's.  
STREET URCHINS.

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PLACE: New York. TIME: Present.

Scene I: Street drop in one, - at dusk. Winter.

Scene II: Four years later. Drawing room.

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At rise of curtain, urchins enter L. E.

Jimmy

Wait a minute feller, dere ain't no cops around, let's toss here.

(Flip pennies L)

(Noise off R E. Auto horn is heard and male voice shouting: "Can't you see where you're going?")

(NELL comes on R. E. picking up last muddy paper in entrance, sobs, wipes nose on torn sleeve, ruefully looking at soiled papers, and wiping mud from them)

Nell

My newsies are ruined, and I haven't a penny, and I'm so cold and hungry. I won't be able to pay for a bed at the home. That means another night in some doorway. Oh dear, I am lucky, I don't think.

(Walks over to boys, stands watching them)

Jimmy

(Looking up)

Hello, Nell, what's de row. I ain't never seen you cry before.  
 (Laughingly)  
 Say you ain't in love are you?

Nell  
 In love? Stop your kiddin. No I ain't in love. One of them  
 fly auteknewbetters nearly run over me, and I dropped my papers  
 in the mud, and I can't sell 'em. You can't read nothing now.

Jimmy  
 (Looks at papers)  
 Sure you kin, Nell. See.  
 (Reads)  
 De Japs is licking Russia - Don't cry Nell, cut out de  
 sniffles. I'll tell you what we'll do. You sing us a song  
 and de whole bunch of us will sell your poipers, hey fellers.

Others  
 You're on. Seitinly.  
 (Song by Nell)  
 (Boys sit on floor with legs crossed, listening)  
 (During last chorus, OFFICER enters R, swinging club.  
 He stands at extreme R. listening to song. At end of  
 song boys say "bully", take Nell's papers and rush off  
 L, shouting "Wuxtra! Wuxtra, all about de big War.  
 Wuxtra! War between Russia and Japan. Wuxtra." NELL  
 stands watching them off. OFFICER comes down to Nell  
 and gently strokes her head)(NELL starts)

Ketcham  
 Nell that's a mighty pretty song you was singing. I ain't  
 never heard you sing it before, where did you learn it?

Nell  
 Poor old granny taught me that before she died. That was a  
 long time ago, but why are you looking at me so hard?

Ketcham  
 You look so much like my little dead sister. She was all I  
 had in the world. All the jey went out of my life when she  
 left me, until one day I seen you. Such a little thing then,  
 all huddled up in a doorway so cold and so hungry. I was  
 goin' to tell you to move on, but these great big eyes looked  
 at me so pitiful like, and I gave you a quarter and told you  
 to go to the home and get a bed. Do you remember?  
 (NELL nods assent)

And then I heard you sing. Since that day things have all seemed to look brighter to me.

(He puts hand into pocket, pulls out big red apple, holding it towards Nell, with a sort of sob and gulp at first word)

have - an apple?

(NELL takes apple)

Nell

(To officer)

Thanks. Are you sniffing too? This must be blue Monday.

Ketcham

Yes, I do get sore at the way things are passed around in this world. Here you are a pretty little kid, got to sell papers for a livin' with a voice that would make the angels jealous, and no chance to get it tuned up, and dem rich swells on de Avenue throwing away thousands on no voice at all.

(Thrusts into pocket)

It don't seem right.

(Finds lottery ticket, shows it to Nell)

Ketcham

Who knows Nell, maybe I'll be able to do something for you someday. If this thing ever comes my way. By golly the drawings come off today. Let's see what your paper says about them.

(Looks up and down paper - suddenly with exclamation of extreme excitement)

My God! Look! Look! YOU look - what's the number?

Nell

Number 3453, why Mr. Ketcham that's the same number as your tickét.

(Both greatly excited)

Ketcham

That's right, that's right. I've won the first prize \$60,000. Say this ain't blue Monday is it Nell? Now little girl no more papers - no more sleeping in doorways - the only doorway for you is the one leadin' into the grandest singing school in Europe. And no more brass buttons for me. I'm going to invest my money in something good, and my time in educatin' myself, and Nell when you come's back a fine lady you won't look down on your old friend, will ye - ye won't forget your

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old Pal?

Nell

Do you think that of me - could I ever forget you? - you --

Ketcham

Why Nell - do you mean that you -

(Enter Boys)

Jimmy

Here ye are Sis - we done sold all your papers, and here's de rino.

Nell

I don't want it - you boys can keep it. Mr. Ketcham's just won the first prize in the lottery and I'm going to Europe.

Boys

Nully gee.

Nell

Yes, and I'm going to have a fine new dress, and a new bonnet, and a new pair of real tan shoes with stockings to match, and a beautiful pink sash. Ain't I, Mr. Ketcham?

Ketcham

Yes, kid, that's what, I'm off now to the station to hand in my resignation.

(Exit)

Jimmy

Ain't we goin' to hear you sing no more before you go away Nell?

Nell

Sure, I feel so happy, I could sing all the time. What shall it be?

Boys

"Sal, Ma kinky headed Gal".

Nell

Ain't you kids never going to get tired of dat old coon song. Well here goes.

(NELL sings "Sal")



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(NELL sings "Sal")

(Boys join in last chorus. Cakewalking around, etc. then cakewalking off. "Sal" music continues until curtain is up on next scene)

S c e n e   I I :

(Drawing room in Ketcham's home. Four years have elapsed. Ketcham in evening dress. Awaits Nell)

Ketcham

(Knocks on door L)

Hurry dear, as they say at the theatre, half hour.

Nell

Yes John.

(Off)

(Ketcham moves about stage, seats himself - monologue)  
What changes time brings - four years ago today, I put Nell and my old aunt Martha on the boat that took them to a foreign country. As the boat pulled out the future looked very dismal for me, for somehow that little girl had twined herself about my heart and her last words, I shall try very hard to make you very proud of me Mr. Ketcham, rang in my ears continually, and I made up my mind to try very hard to make her very proud of me if possible. I have been rewarded - she is now my wife. My little Nell has grown into a beautiful woman. What a lucky fellow I am to possess such a treasure.

(Jimmy's voice heard outside of door)

Jimmy

(Outside of door)

Ah what you givin' us, of course I'm coming in. Mr. Ketcham's an old friend of mine. I's been specially invited, I'm de guest of honor, see.

(Ketcham turns, goes up stage and shakes hands with Jimmy)

Ketcham

Hello Jimmy, come right in and sit down. You're always welcome in our home.

(Jimmy sits on extreme edge of chair, very stiffly, with hands tightly holding soft hat)

Jimmy

Thanks Mr. Ketcham, I can't stop but a minute. I forgot to chain me auto and somebody might swipe it. Say - is it straight that Nell - I beg your pardon sir, I means Mrs. Ketcham is goin' to sing at Mendelssohn Hall tonight.

(Ketcham laughs and slaps Jimmy on shoulder)

Ketcham

That's all right Jimmy, she will always be little Nell to her old friends. Yes she makes her debut in this country tonight.

Jimmy

Good. You can bet me and de bunch will be dere all right, and say Mr. Ketcham if we whoops her up, do you think she would sing "Sal" for us?

Ketcham

Certainly - here take this -

(Hands money)

and get good seats.

Jimmy

Holy macker - a tenner. I feel like a millionaire. well by bye, I'm off.

(Exits singing chorus of "Sal")

(Ketcham laughs - turns - sees Nell just coming in)

Ketcham

Oh here we are and looking as pretty as a peacock.

Nell

I thought I heard you speaking with someone.

Ketcham

Yes. That was Jimmy, you haven't forgotten him, have you?

Nell

Forgotten him, no indeed. Why did you not detain him. I should have liked to have seen him.

Ketcham

He was anxious to be off. That he might obtain good seats for your concert. He asked if they whooped her up for you, would you sing "Sal".

(Both laugh)

(NELL all this while has been striving to button glove)

Nell

Oh John please button my glove like a good fellow.

(While Ketcham is tugging at glove - Nell again refers to Jimmy)

Nell

Can't you find a good position for him.

Ketcham

Yes, I will give him a place in the office tomorrow.

(Ketcham has finally succeeded in fastening glove)

Ketcham

There at last.

Nell

Thank you, dear. Isn't it almost time for the carriage. I must not keep my audience waiting tonight of all nights, your little wife hopes you will be very proud of her.

Ketcham

I am already the proudest and happiest man in the world.  
(Embraces Nell, little bit of lovemaking)

Nell

Oh John you are mussing my hair. I'll look a fright.

(Nell makes wry face, John looks penitent)

Do you know dear, I'm so nervous. I do hope I will be in good voice. I wonder if I will have time to go over a song.

(Ketcham looks at watch)

Ketcham

Yes, it's only half past seven.

(Takes seat well up stage, listens quietly)

(NELL comes down C, stands erect. Bus. as if before audience, sings aria. At conclusion)

Ketcham

Beautiful - superb.

Servant

The carriage is at the door.

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(Ketcham takes up Nell's wrap, placing it about her shoulders. Takes up own high hat and coat. They go towards door arm in arm as Curtain slowly descends to music of "Sal".)

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