

“Listen, Luv!”

It was a chance remark of Gracie's that started it.

“I tell you, if I had my way . . .”

They say that what Lancashire thinks to-day, England will think to-morrow (ask any Lancastrian)—so I tackled Gracie like a flash.

The scene is in her dressing-room at Ealing Green. The meal Gracie is eating is her lunch. The fellow in the second-best chair is me. The fellow (feminine) in the best chair is Ming, Gracie's Pekingese, whose opinion of me is about 50 degrees sub-zero.

“Well go ahead, luv! What d'you want to know?”

“What you were saying . . . if you had your way. Imagine yourself Dictator of England. What would you do?”

“Listen, luv, I'd put a stop to breach-of-promise actions, for a start,” said Gracie promptly. “What good do they do? Nowt! A girl may squeeze a bit of money out of a chap, but if she's the kind that's willing to take that instead of love, she wouldn't know how to spend it.

“What harm do they do? They scare plenty of young fellows out of keeping company even; they make a girl look cheap—haggling for the price of a wedding ring; they drag up lover's tiffs into the stuffy air of a law-court, and make hatreds of them; and they give spiteful interfering relations an excuse to goad a girl into ‘asserting her rights,’ ‘getting her own back,’ ‘showing him up’ . . .

At this juncture Basil Dean, Gracie's director in *Sing as we Go*, pokes his head round the door.

“We're going to have a look at the shots we took before lunch, Gracie. Want to see them?”

Gracie leaps up, grabs the rest of her lunch, calls “Back in a jiffy,” and disappears, singing as she goes. Meanwhile, I interview Ming, but she's a poor substitute; she weeps, silently, large fat tears, if Gracie is away too long . . .

“Where were we, luv? Oh, yes I know—reforming. Well another thing I'd alter is to stop girls who don't have to earn their living, taking the jobs away from those who do. Goodness knows there's plenty standing idle.

“And I'd like to know that kiddies were being born in decent homes instead of in slums; how we ever expect them to grow up healthy . . .”

“Miss Fields, could you spare a minute for the make-up man?”

Miss Fields spares him twenty.

“Where did we get to? I'd . . .”