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years. It is said that Hearst did not know that Chandler held the mortgage and not the bank itself, but such innocence of pertinent facts would not be typical at all of Hearst. It is likely that he knew Chandler was loaning him the money, but he would rather not dwell on it.

Immediately after the Shaws' departure, Hearst and Marion threw their traditional huge party to honor his seventieth birthday. The motif was Pioneer America, and a covered wagon was among the props the guests—including Richard Berlin, Townsend and Constance (Talmadge) Netcher, Irving and Norma (Shearer) Thalberg, Anita Loos, Joe Mankiewicz and his brother Herman, Walter Wanger, Harpo Marx, and about two hundred others—found especially amusing. Marion wore a gingham dress and a sunbonnet and Hearst was decked out as a riverboat gambler with a fancy vest.

Marion had finished *Peg O' My Heart* earlier that spring and the dance orchestra played the film's theme song, *There's a Light in Your Eyes, Sweetheart Darling*, a lilting ballad in the manner of an old Irish air, often enough to send everyone to bed with a tune in their heads. The song was destined to become even more popular than the picture and soon became the number one song in the country. The wisdom of having thirty-six-year old Marion play a girl in her late teens was questionable, although she made the audience forget her years through much of it, pouring considerable Irish charm and vitality into her role. Frances Marion had attempted to bring the old J. Hartley Manners play up to date with an adulterous couple and their exposure as one of the subplots. At least a generation had passed since Loretta Taylor's memorable stage performance of her husband's hit play and Hearst may have been right in reviving it as Marion enjoyed a modest success. In the film, when Peg comes into her fortune and moves into the old family estate, she is perhaps more Marion and less Peg (Marion dancing a jig at San Simeon would be the perfect parallel in life), but the seamless sentimental comedy still worked and technically it was a great advance over her earlier talkies.

Peg O' My Heart represented Hearst's rebellion after seeing Marion play brash blondes (with gold-plated hearts) in half-a-dozen talkies including *Five and Ten*, *It's a Wise Child*, *Polly of the Circus*, and *Blondie of the Follies*. In *Peg*, she was back in the equivalent of a sunbonnet walking down a country lane or helping villagers bring in the day's catch of fish. It was his last

chance to see her perform as a young girl, and he saw that it was polished to a brightness that nearly made the film one of her best. In this musicalized adaptation, there are moments—especially when the villagers are singing *We'll Remember*—when melodically and in appearance it is remarkably like *Brigadoon*, a Broadway musical that appeared twenty years later.

Some of the party guests stayed on at San Simeon after the birthday celebration, among them Kathy Menjou, who had obtained her formal divorce decree from actor Adolphe. She was very pleased with the settlement she had received, since it included about four hundred shares of General Electric stock, which along with other "blue chip" stocks had begun a climb back upward following the crash of '29. Marion observed Kathy running into the office wing at the castle several times a day to have a look at the tickertape machine installed there, and Kathy's obsession with her stocks inspired Marion to play one of her pranks. She rigged the tickertape machine in such a way that General Electric began a dramatic slide downward almost at once, falling to a shocking 24 by the following day. When it reached 17, Kathy began shouting that she was ruined and took to her bed, where she remained, so near unconsciousness it was almost impossible to make her understand that it was all a joke. ✓

With no more than a one- or two-week interval, Marion was back at Metro playing opposite a new leading man, the crooner Bing Crosby, in Frances Marion's Hollywood satire, *Going Hollywood*. It was not as bright in its humor as *Show People* had been, and its comedy did not have that film's poignancy, but it was a smoothly tooled entertainment, Crosby's fourth feature after three successive hits (*The Big Broadcast*, *College Humor*, *Too Much Harmony*), and a Hearst movie again had supplied the nation with its number one popular song in *Temptation*. The musical score by Arthur Freed and Nacio Herb Brown was one of their finest and included other lesser hits: *We'll Make Hay While the Sun Shines*, *We'll Make Love When It Rains*, *After Sundown*, and *Our Big Love Scene*.

Marion looked better on screen in the Crosby film than she had in several years with soft makeup and a natural hair style that happened to give her more youthfulness in her role of a young woman than she had been given as a girl in *Peg*. Some of her bounce, so apparent on the screen, came from her obvious delight at playing with the leading popular singer of the day. It

was her idea that they be teamed, and it was clear from the first day of production that she and Crosby had much in common. Crosby wrote the author:

Marion Davies, as I remember her, was a very warm-hearted lady of abundant good humour, who loved functions and festive occasions more than most.

She loved festivities, and was a marvelous hostess. Always had some local jokes and pranks to play on the guests.

The experience of making a picture with her, was probably the last of the halcyon days. She always had a five or six piece orchestra on the set, to play the current hits of the day, between takes.

Sometimes the intervals between takes became quite lengthy.

Our schedule, on the picture I made with her, stretched to unbelievable lengths—but it was a real joy working with her.

She was extremely kind to members of the crew, and thoughtful, too. She always remembered birthdays and anniversaries, and was most charitable.

She was always surrounded by a coterie of old vaudeville performers and indigent actors who were fun.

All in all, an association long to be remembered.

Marion recalled the experience with as much warmth in later years and added that Crosby was "so crazy about Dixie [his wife]." It was not pure joy for Hearst, however, since Marion often would return from the studio terribly hung-over and unable to do anything beyond retiring to her rooms, where if all went well she would recover by the next morning. Although those were Crosby's heavy drinking days, it was not his fault that Marion seized upon her association with him in a movie as an excuse to celebrate nearly every day. And if Hearst was partially the source of the underlying problem that led to the marathon drinking sessions, he was helpless in finding a remedy. Fifi D'Orsay, who played the Hollywood actress in the film, recalls that they would all gather for drinks in Marion's portable dressing room on the set—Marion, Crosby, and Fifi—but when the signal came to Marion that Hearst was entering the sound stage, the signal transmitted by secretary Ella "Bill" Williams or by a member of the crew whom Marion had enlisted in this small

conspiracy, then everyone would dump the glasses, hide the whiskey, and pretend to an innocence that Hearst would gallantly accept as genuine. Whether Hearst was present or not, work was always suspended at four for a "tea break," which might last for an hour or more. There was the usual gossip about Marion's little affair with her leading man, this time blunted by the spirit or spirits prevailing on the set and by Crosby's determination to go home to Dixie, whatever the hour might be.

Going Hollywood was the Christmas week attraction at the Capitol and Loew's Metropolitan theaters in New York. It marked the feature film debut of Broadway comedienne Patsy Kelly, who was soon to win a wide movie following in a series of comedy shorts with Thelma Todd. In contrast to most movie musicals of the time, it was welcomed by audiences and critics for its modest smaller and more human scale. Fifi D'Orsay who was known as the "French bombshell," but who was born in Montreal of French-Canadian parents and who never had seen "Paree," was a protégée of Will Rogers, one of Fox's biggest stars. She had asked for her release from a lucrative Fox contract to do some personal appearances on the RKO theater circuit and at the end of the tour found herself an unemployed star. Marion had interceded in Fifi's behalf and the part of the eccentric film queen went to the American-born "Parisienne" rather than to Hearst's first choice, Lili Damita, while Crosby was cast as a famous crooner and Miss D'Orsay's boyfriend. In the movie, the two of them are on their way to Hollywood to make a picture together, when Marion, a schoolteacher and a super-fan of Bing's, spots them and follows them all the way across the country. The predictable twist in the plot has Marion achieve all of her heart's goals, taking the place of flighty Fifi D'Orsay in Bing's picture and in his affections as well.

The movie had some formidable competition the week of its release in New York. There was Eddie Cantor's *Roman Scandals*, written by no less than three of the country's finest playwrights: George S. Kaufman, Robert E. Sherwood, and George Oppenheimer. But Marion's movie proved to be more popular than the Cantor film and a star-studded production of *Alice in Wonderland*, starring Charlotte Henry as Alice. *Going Hollywood* even competed nicely with the brand-new Radio City Music Hall's Christmas show, *Flying Down to Rio*, starring Fred Astaire and two leading ladies, Ginger Rogers and Dolores Del Rio.

Joan Crawford was being given a massive build-up as a musical comedy queen at the time, and her film *Dancing Lady* had preceded Marion's into the Capitol Theatre. Perhaps overburdened by all the talent and money going into it (its songs were written by Rodgers and Hart, Jimmy McHugh and Dorothy Fields, and Burton Lane and Harold Adamson), it further escalated Miss Crawford's career and it is remembered today chiefly for one of its songs, *Everything I Have Is Yours*. Miss Crawford was not one of Marion's studio pals, although they had appeared together briefly in *The Hollywood Revue*. She was a fan of Crosby's, however, and she would rush from the set of *Dancing Lady* to sit near the camera setup on *Going Hollywood* to watch him perform. Marion said that it was nearly impossible for Crosby to do his scene with those great "owl eyes" upon him. Miss Crawford had some reservations about Marion's professionalism (although none about her philanthropies and was quick to give her full credit for those) and once, when Marion came visiting on one of her sets, she shut down production and chatted with her until Marion left twenty minutes later. She rarely visited San Simeon, although she was seen there several times with her husband Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and she shared William Haines's brotherly affections with Marion. She had her mind on her job—as a film queen—almost to the exclusion of all else, and Marion could not resist on at least one occasion doing an impression of her—in makeup—with a great slash of red lipstick and enormous eyes.

The madcap social life of Hollywood seemed a little excessive by the mid-thirties, and Hearst began to spend more and more time with Marion at Wynton, where there were no news photographers and the only pictorial record of their good times was being taken by Hearst himself and by close friends with box cameras.

The year 1934 had been one of stress for both of them. Niece Pepi was having emotional problems. She had broken with her closest friend and had fallen into a profound melancholy. Marion wanted to get her off to Europe, and she even looked forward to taking her to the Black Forest and Bad Nauheim, which she now looked upon as a cure-all. That section of Germany had the pine-scented charm of Wynton with those me-

dicinal waters that shrank down the heart and, as Marion hoped, some of the heart's problems.

But she was having trouble getting away. Her film with Gary Cooper, *Operator 13*, was running over schedule as Hearst kept tampering with it. Hearst was also nearing a showdown with Irving Thalberg over *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, the successful Broadway and London play, which he wanted for Marion and Thalberg said was purchased for his wife, Norma Shearer. Bosley Crowther writes in his biography of Louis B. Mayer: "In one crisis, however, Mayer backed up Thalberg. That was a difficult contention with Hearst as to who, Norma Shearer or Marion Davies, would be given the enviable assignment of playing the heroine in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. The popular play had been acquired for Miss Shearer. Then Hearst got the notion that it would be an appropriate vehicle for Miss Davies. *Why he or his blond protégé should have remotely assumed that she could play the delicate role of the invalid-poetess, Elizabeth Barrett, is hard to understand. . . .* [Italics mine.]" Crowther perhaps had never seen *Show People*, *The Patsy*, or either of her Sidney Franklin films prior to having written his book, but not to have properly researched Marion's acting skills seems nearly as careless as the manner in which Orson Welles later denied that the sources for *Kane* were anything but fictional—almost as though the damage which Welles knew had been done to Marion's career was a trivial matter to a genius.

As *Operator 13* reached the finishing stages, Norma Shearer and Charles Laughton were cast as daughter and father in *The Barretts* film and Hearst went into a rage, offended to the point of an open break with the studio. He had been having secret conferences with Jack Warner, and Marion's future was up in the air.

And Marion was tired. She badly needed a vacation from film-making. Finally, after several months of production (one of the longest shooting schedules of her career), *Operator 13* was finished. The result was satisfactory, but not brilliant. Despite their opposing views on horses (she still hated riding), she had got on well with Cooper. He and his wife "Rocky" had become regular guests at San Simeon. Cooper and Marion were drinking companions, but there is no evidence that their friendship ever went beyond this. He could hold his liquor better than she could (although drinking often put him to sleep), and Hearst had a special fond-