

SONGS FROM THE PASSING SHOW OF 1916

Act 1, Scene 7

“Pretty Baby” (two covers)

Music by: Tony Jackson and Egbert Van Alstyne

Words by: Gus Kahn

Date: 1916

Publisher: Jerome H. Remick & Co.

Format: Large format

Show Cover: Yes



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On May 15, 1916,... Jerome Remick wrote a telegram to [J.J.] Shubert informing him that he had a new song called “Pretty Baby”... that he was hoping to place in a show. The song had not yet been published, and Remick promised that if J.J. would find a home for it, he would “hold” the song back from being released. Thirteen days later, J.J. wrote to Fred Belcher, Remick’s New York agent, that he had discovered Melville Ellise and Irene Bordoni were singing the song in their vaudeville act at the Colonial theatre:

I had your assurance... that you would keep the number for me but it seems I cannot do anything with publishers. Their promises do not go very far. If it continues, I will take the number out of Chicago and I won’t use it in New York. I have always refrained from putting in interpolations for this very reason – that you would rather have a lot of vaudeville actors do your number than put them in a production.

Remick personally wrote J.J. and assured him that the two (former Shubert employees, no less) had been told to cease performing the song and had done so. Once the matter had been settled, Shubert ordered a twenty-eight part orchestration... [The song] was being used in both *The Passing Show of 1916* at the Winter Garden and *The Show of Wonders*, which was touring. Advertisements in *Variety* and *Billboard* proclaimed “Pretty Baby” the top Remick hit of the season... [Westover, pp. 126–127]