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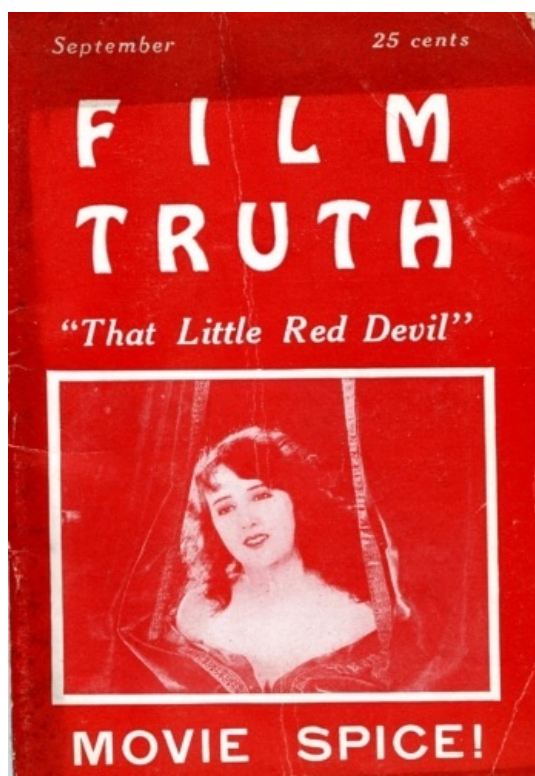
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FILM TRUTH; SEPTEMBER, 1920 ***



FILM TRUTH

Vol. 1, No. 6

September, 1920

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\$3 A YEAR

"FILM TRUTH" accepts no advertising, prints no press-agent bunk, has no boss other than its thousands of readers—and is prepared to travel willingly to the eternal bowwows the day it discovers that any other guidance is necessary.

It is the only publication for the public that comes from "within the industry," with all the real news, and the latest news.

You get concentrated, unadulterated, unalloyed "pep" when you buy "FILM TRUTH," without a wasted word or a slushy syllable.

But—to be sure of getting “FILM TRUTH” every month you must let your newsdealer know that you want it. His orders are limited and he can’t be blamed if you are disappointed when an issue sells out faster than he anticipated. Be on the safe side and have him save a copy for you every month. Tell him to-day!

Simper, Simple Sucker

DON’T cry little sucker—don’t cry! If they put Ponzi in jail the movies will get you bye and bye. You will always be taken care of—considerably more “taken” than cared for.

An easily deceived world has been led to believe that the official birth rate of the sucker clan is “one every minute”—but the man who made the calculation must have had a slow-motion watch.

We know that we are babbling words of truth. For we have before us the shining example—the word “shine” is appropriate—of a person who calls himself “Director Brennan.” Almost as long as we can remember, this self-christened “Director Brennan” has been fishing in the Shimmering Sucker Sea with the movies as his bait. And the fishing must be good, for he keeps at it, and keeps expanding.

Our first recollection of the fisherman calls to mind some very crude bait. But it worked. For a fee of several seaworthy simoleons, simpering suckers who thought they had ability that could successfully cope with a camera were permitted to see their photographic likeness in a bulletin which they were warmly assured met the eyes of all the leading producers and casting directors. The open road to a screen career was to pay for the insertion of your photograph in the bulletin—and pay again, and pay some more. Directors had to have players, and logic is logic, sooner or later some director was going to see your photo.

Only a month ago we came across one of these old bulletins in a dingy East Side printing shop. Honest, cross our heart, we are neither spoofing nor joshing—there were three hundred pound would-be ingenues and Ben Turpin doubles who aspired to play handsome heroes. Bleating boobs waited in hourly anticipation of a wire from David Griffith—“I saw your photo in Brennan’s Bulletin and must have you to play the lead in my next picture.”

In vaudeville parlance “Director Brennan” was working a “single” act then. Coming down to the Fall of 1920 we find him “doubling in brass.” If you are a silly sucker anxiously fearing that you may escape your fate we are about to show you how easy it has been made for you. Director Brennan is playing both ends against the middle—for your convenience. And—“if you don’t find what you want ask for it.”

In the New York Evening Mail we renewed our acquaintance with Director Brennan one night by reading the following ad:

GET INTO THE WONDER INDUSTRY OF THE WORLD.

The motion picture producing business. Hundreds of fortunes have been made and are being made in it. Successful motion picture playwright and director offer part ownership in a series of powerful, emotional plays for the screen, entitled “When Dreams Come True,” “Time Will Tell” and “Inspector Flynn.” I’ve got the plays, the experience, the organization and the facilities for producing up to date pictures with the real punch in them. No stock jobbing scheme. No agents. Principals only. See me personally.

Director BRENNEN, 2 West 123d st., N. Y. C.

The following morning we picked up the Illustrated News to find this burning message:

A GENUINE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE GOOD IN PICTURES.

If you have the talent to act in pictures and can qualify I will put you on the screen and register your type and personality in a series of scenes, flashes and close-ups running from 200 to 500 feet and record your screen adaptability; a wonderful chance for a few ambitious beginners of both sexes to make good in pictures. Director Brennan, New Idea Films, 2 West 123d street.

We must say that “Director Brennan” has our admiration. If “Safety First” is a nation’s motto, “Safety Always” is “Director Brennan’s” bible. His proposition is legally correct, and technically true. This may mean a lot to a sucker but it’s a ha-ha to us. Nevertheless, though Post Office Inspectors have looked him over, and our old friend Bill Hicks, the valiant crusader of the *Specialty Salesman*, has tested his spear on him, it must be stated in loud and certain terms that “Director Brennan” is “within the law.”

So line up, members of the clan. If you desire a part ownership in “When Dreams Come True”—go to it. If the dreams are slow in coming try “Time Will Tell.” After the pictures have been completed by the “successful motion picture playwright and director” and you’re wondering what the devil to do with them—ask “Inspector Flynn.” After that, get out of the line and clear the way. There was another one born the same minute that you were—and he is pleading for a “part ownership.” All we can assure you is that if “Director Brennan” offers to sell you a “part ownership” you’ll get a “part ownership.” There’s nothing wrong with that proposition.

Neither is there anything corkscrewey about the “Genuine Opportunity to Make Good in Pictures.” “If you have the talent and can qualify,” it is very simple. Of course you are not expected to be surprised when you learn that you “qualify” by having coin sufficient to pay for a test print of yourself. If the price seems pretty high for two hundred feet of film that costs about four cents a foot, be comforted by the compensating fact that despite the ad you didn’t have to show a heluva lot of “talent.”

What are you going to do with the “series of scenes, flashes and close-ups” after you get it? Search us! Perhaps it will make a dainty watch-fob. Our best society is now using a strip of moving picture film as a visiting card. There is nothing better to start a good fire on a wintry night; and we have even known of films that could be substituted for gorgonzola. Maybe yours will qualify as camembert.

At least you cannot say that "Director Brennan" did not live up to his promises and the letter of the law. He offered you a "wonderful chance to make good in pictures." You've made good. Yes, sir! Cash in advance. You've made good, suckling, don't worry.

You've been "made"—and *good*.



SUGGESTIONS FOR A FEW "SUPER SPECIALS"

These ideas, offered gratuitously, are guaranteed to work in the hands of the worst amateur and are assured smashing box-office success:

For a "Super-DeMille" special: Discard the envelope chemise, and prevail on Paris to design a postcard chemise.

For a "Super-Sennett" special: Clothe the girls in modesty.

For a "Super-Lew Cody" special: Frequent close-ups of dainty molar signatures on his broad shoulders.

This way out!

Rough-riding Mrs. Reilly

A correspondent from Los Angeles steps up to us with this dare, "Speaking of film truth, is there an editor with the moral courage to call the bluff of one Pearl Reilly, better known as Charlotte Shelby, mother of Mary Miles Minter?"

Wouldn't that peeve a pacifist moo-cow? Here we have gone serenely along thinking that, with all the crimes we might be accused of, of all the blistering names that might burn our skin, none would even hint at a lack of courage. If we need courage then T. N. T. could be improved with a dash of pepper.

Our correspondent wants to know if we care to call the bluff of Mrs. Charlotte Shelby. Frankly, we don't care particularly about the job. Mrs. Shelby means considerably less than zero in our young life; and only a minute fraction of that to most of our readers.

Aside from having been granted possession of a very talented daughter, Mrs. Shelby Reilly would be stealing time under false pretenses when occupying the thoughts of either the editor or his readers. Stage mothers are perfectly capable of taking themselves seriously and realizing their own flabbergasting importance. Thank the stars there is no need of the rest of us helping out at the job.

True it may be, as our correspondent says, that "Mrs. Reilly has ridden roughshod over everyone she meets and gets away with it. She has no regard for the dignity of any profession, insults newspaper men and writers, directors, leading men, and in fact has everything pretty much her own way."

Isn't it a sad story? Can you tell us what sort of "newspaper men" Mrs. Shelby or any one else can "insult" and get away with it? Advertising solicitors, perhaps. They are fair game for anyone in all seasons. But our own years of pencil-pushing from New Orleans to Milwaukee and New York to San Francisco have failed to record on our books any "insults" unrevenged. As a matter of fact any good newspaper man will say that an insult makes the best sort of story.

Ask the shade of old Vanderbilt what it thinks about the time that crusty individual declared, "The Public be Damned!"

Mrs. Shelby can continue riding if she cares to, dear correspondent, but she's only spoofing her own sweet self if she thinks she is going to continue to "get away with it." Some day she'll stub her toe in a poison ivy patch.

Perhaps the first scene of the final act has already been played. The Hollywood Dirty Dishers say it has. According to our correspondent the action started when Charlotte Whitney, for six years secretary to Mary Miles Minter, bobbed up out of a job. According to the letter writer, wagging tongues in Los Angeles declared that "Mrs. Reilly and Charlotte had a terrible row over Mary and that Charlotte told Mrs. R. where to head in. Rumor has linked Mary's name with that of a well known actor and Ma Reilly went wild. She had visions of the family meal ticket annexing a husband. Charlotte was supposed to keep guard over Mary at the studio while Ma Reilly endeavored to keep tabs at home.

"It seems that Charlotte, could see no harm in Mary's having a little love affair with a nice young man and didn't keep the door properly locked.

"When things got too hot at home Mary had a way of sneaking out of the unhappy mansion and going to Charlotte's house." Our correspondent then relates this *denouement*. "This had happened one night and while Charlotte and Mary were getting ready for bed Ma Reilly burst in the door and for the moment forgot her pose as the southern aristocrat. The neighbors recognized the Minter car at Charlotte's door and gathered round to hear the row and witness the fond mother, with the gentle southern manner, drag her eighteen year old daughter out by the ear.

"The next morning Mrs. Shelby ordered two well known actors on the Lasky lot to keep out of Charlotte's office, accusing them of designs on Mary and Mary's money. A well known director was also forbidden to speak to Mary. A few days after Charlotte announced that she was through as secretary."

If this be true—isn't it a rumbunctious mess? But if all such facts were roaming around awaiting placing—this lone editor's "moral courage" would not be needed to "call Mrs. Shelby's bluff." It seems to us that Charlotte is the little girl who is apt to turn that trick at any minute. Keep your eyes on Charlotte, boys and girls.



The dailies duly recorded that Gail Kane, demure and with downcast eyes, walked down the church aisle with Henry Iden Ottman, of New York, recently.

The groom is a son of the founder of a packing house bearing his name—hence should be well supplied with “skins,” wherewith to cater to the movie star’s well known expensive tastes. Which is well, oh, very well.

S’s’sh—! Some Gossip

Egotism and lack of ability usually go hand in hand. Yet, we cannot say the rule applies in Maxwell Karger’s particular case. Karger has the respect of practically all the stars on the Metro roster, and apparently has more than his share of ability. But, ye Gods, what a swelled dome! We understand there is a clause in this Director General’s contract with Metro, whereby his name must appear in every story sent out by the publicity department. We judge every copy reader in the country who gets the junk cuts the name out, just because they are sick and disgusted at even such long distance evidence of “great I amness.” Darned if we can figure ourselves, exactly why Karger thinks his name looks so pretty in type.

Oi, Oi. Vass is? That business disturber Lewis Selznick, just when he is considered down and out, gets himself new backing, and out comes an announcement that his two kids, Myron and David, who masquerade under impressive titles, and who should be back in high school, go abroad to “study the foreign situation.” That, to us, is the biggest laugh of the past month. About all the study of the foreign situation they will do will be to study the shapely legs of the midinettes who parade the Boulevard des Italiens and the Place de la Opera in Paris. Yes, indeed, Algernon, papa’s new bankroll, said to have been advanced by Stanley Mastbaum of Philadelphia, will take wings just as did all his other bankrolls under the able hands of these two, whom we have heard referred to by Harry Reichenbach, as the “biggest jokes of the business.”

A little bird whispers that Bill Russell, Fox star, is about to take the matrimonial plunge. The woman? Why, his leading lady in recent pictures, Helen Ferguson.

A picture no artist could paint was presented by Sammy Goldwyn, nee Goldfish, as he stood wreathed in smiles at the entrance to the Astor theatre, New York, waiting for congratulations after the premier showing of “Earthbound.” Someone in the Goldwyn publicity department must have tipped Sam off that he had a good picture, so, baldhead and all, there he was waiting for the critics to line up and pat him on the back. You know, all our very best film magnates are like that, shunning the limelight and detesting publicity.

In a corner of the Astor Hotel, where as many million dollar companies are started (on paper) each day, as upon the rug of the Alexandria Hotel, Los Angeles, each night, several gentlemen were discussing D. W. Griffith the other day.

One was telling a story to the effect that the Great D. W. had gotten himself unpopular in a great many circles.

Says he, “Griffith, y’know has forgotten his ‘ham fat’ days, and with his resonant voice and omnipotent air, gotten himself generally ‘in wrong,’ Well, an advertising solicitor breezed around to his offices the other day, and Grey, his man Friday, like a faithful Great Dane, blatantly berated the man for daring to insinuate Griffith should advertise. ‘Do you know you speak of the Great Griffith,’ says Grey.

Great H—, sulphurously replied the ad solicitor. ‘When he comes through with an advertising contract I’ll stand for that bull.’ ”

We doubt if there is a shrewder woman in the theatrical game than Justine Johnston, Realart’s new star. Justine, otherwise Mrs. Waenger (yep, he is with Realart, too) has our deep respect. Prior to marriage she got along very well, from Ziegfeld Follies days, through her period as hostess in Broadway “gyp” joints, down to the time she guided the destinies of “The Little Club.” Ask any New Yorker of the latter place. We thought Justine’s hand was out of the Club, then after paying two and a half dollars for a snifter of something or other, we wondered. However, that is natural. Every time we think of Justine, we somehow think of the word “expense.”

Boy, page Morris Gest!

Just before Ollie Thomas went abroad with hubby Jack Pickford, coast wanderers came back with an amusing yarn. Seems, according to the tale bearers, Ollie was partying a bit, and announced to all and sundry that Jack thought he was getting away with a lot, but in reality was not. Well, Ollie always did have good eyesight. Disclosing a little secret of our own, we have a lot of sympathy for Ollie. Because she is married to Jack? Well—maybe, we wouldn’t say. Some day, by the way, we are going to devote quite a little bit of precious space to extolling that member of the Pickford family. Always providing he doesn’t drop out of motion picture sight beforehand.

Coast gossipers are including Lillian Hall and director Emmett Flynn in their conversations these days. Seems the two have apparently been seen often together. Well, as Chaplin so aptly said, “it’s a great life in the West.” Wonder if Shirley Mason doesn’t find herself lonely without Lillian around? And what is the trouble with friend husband, which forces Lillian to depend on friends for entertainment?

A person in a position to know, has sent us another, and what is claimed a truer angle of the splitting of the Doris May-Douglas MacLean team, about which we had an article in the August issue. This party states that MacLean had such an exalted case of swelled cranium, following the success of several pictures, that he

refused to renew his contract unless he was starred alone. Tom Ince, not feeling justified in asking the delightful Miss May to support him under those conditions, had no alternative other than to sign her to a separate contract.

Perhaps we are prejudiced in favor of the feminine sex, yet, if the above is true, we earnestly look for a "flop" on the part of MacLean.

There must have been loud wails of anguish lately, if the rumor percolating from the famous Players-Lasky studios to the effect that Elliott Dexter had to stop work when a picture was but half completed, is true. Production, 'tis said, had to be retaken with another leading man. Picture row said Dexter was in a sanitarium—and was not charitable in ascribing reasons. We always found Dexter a pleasant fellow, and extend best wishes for an early recovery.

There was a warm competition between the theatrical promoters, William A. Brady and Al Woods early in August, to see who could get his play on the boards first. Both were on the same theme, and according to critics, very similar. Brady won with "Opportunity." Woods was one night late with "Crooked Gamblers." So we judge to the victor will go the spoils, and Brady will dispose of the picture rights of his play for twenty-five or fifty thousand dollars. Yep, even though it is soon carted to the storehouse.

Wow! Aren't some people hard to satisfy? Look at this here, now. Tina Mendoti, who is suing the Premier Film Corporation for \$8,000, claims she was engaged to star in a picture for \$2,000 a week, and was paid but half. Who, by the way, is Tina? And, how come she really got half of the salary in real money?

Louise Fazenda and Chester Conklin are going to shake the dust of the Sennett lot to join Special Pictures, a comparatively new corporation which will give them an opportunity to be individually starred. Tightwad Mack will have a hard time holding 'em this season.

A clash between Director Douglas Gerrard and Doraldina, the new Metro star, resulted in Joseph Engel calling off production work on "Passion Fruit." Differences of opinion arose at Santa Barbara, where the company was on location. Both star and director shot in telegrams and the company was recalled. The company it is said sides with Gerrard. Evidently trying to nip in the bud another tyrannical domineering Nazimova.

When "The Mollycoddle" was first announced as a Fairbanks production, it was naturally understood, and was so advertised, that Harold McGrath the novelist, would whip the story into screen form. And now, say the wise ones, Mr. McGrath's story should really be credited to Tom Geraghty and Doug Fairbanks himself. True, we understand the original story was McGrath's work—but the picture version, that is another thing. Anyhow one scene was McGrath's—and he drew down cigarette money amounting to \$25,000. Well, well!

Cough Up, Charlie

CHARLIE CHAPLIN is hiding in Utah because a state law makes it impossible to serve him with a restraining order preventing the sale of his latest picture. Mildred Harris is hovering around New York, because that is the spot to be if you are interested in the coin that comes from a picture sale. And her attorneys have filed suit in Los Angeles just to be safe in covering the country.

All of which is a pretty mess not calculated to do the picture industry any good. Still less is it calculated to bring credit to Charlie and Mildred. Least of all to Mildred.

For the girl who married into stardom is talking—talking too much. The interviews she gave New York's papers on the day her attorneys filed suit sounded like the rattling of a vacuum bottle. Mildred Harris in the role of an anguished wife suing for divorce on grounds of cruelty looks like Theda Bara would in a Pickford part.

Big city interviews are out of Mildred's class. She gets her "lines" balled up and hangs a "To Let" sign from the upper stories.

But Mildred has little to lose. In Lois Weber's clever hands she was an actress of promise—but no more—before she cleverly annexed stardom along with the title "Mrs. Charlie Chaplin." Slipping back will only be a balancing act for Mildred.

Charlie's case is different. Charlie is one of the half dozen figures who mean and typify the motion picture to the general public. Charlie, with all his personal faults, is so big as an artist that he can suffer; and so big a part of the motion picture, that the art can suffer.

Therefore, be it resolved and otherwise made known that we are about to take it upon ourselves to offer a little advice:

Take a tip from us, Charlie, slip her the coin. We don't know the price, but it will be cheap at any price. Settle it. Call it quits. Get back to work. There's the slim bespectacled shadow of Harold Lloyd on your path. Get busy.

You don't want to go into Court. What's the use? There are only two courses open to you. You either have to sit still and say nothing, taking your medicine like a man, playing the age-old part of giving the woman the benefit of silence, or—or—

You have to start telling things.

And that will hurt you as much as it will injure anyone else.

Silence means a costly verdict against you. Conversation will mean a costly verdict against the industry as well as all concerned—and at the hands of the great arbiter, the general public. What of it if you say you have lots to tell? Mud has an inherent habit of smirching all who touch it. Even blue mud does it.

On the other hand the payment of a juicy bunch of coin now will wrench your very soul. But after it's all over you'll find it didn't hurt half as much as you expected. It's like pulling a tooth.

Come on—try it, Charlie!

Zi-i-p—goes a nickel!



Our Stars: Eugene O'Brien

[This is the first in a series of articles which will answer for fans the eternal question, "What sort of a person really is So-and-So?" At some times we may be forced to pierce some bubbles; at others, as on occasions such as this month's subject presents—why, YOU'LL BE SURPRISED!]

EUGENE O'BRIEN was born with the advantage of a regular fellow's name, and the handicap of perfectly chiseled features. The "handicap" has served to bring him rating with the two-thousand-a-week stars in spite of the "advantage"—if you get what we mean.

O'Brien is really too "pretty." To most men he is almost—but not quite—as sickeningly sweet as Francis X. Bushman used to be. Perhaps this condition is aggravated by such titles—and such pictures—as "The Perfect Lover." Mayhap, also, it is but the innate jealousy of the male beast.

Film Truth's mail from all sections of the country is frank and outspoken—and a pretty safe index to public thought on films and film folk. Reading this barometer we find that Eugene O'Brien is regarded as not quite all "a man's man." He's "too nice," according to the most recent letter—this from an eighteen-year-old miss.

Inside the film fold and stage circles the same opinion prevails rather generally. O'Brien deserves to be kicked twice around the block and once up the alley for the "Lunnon" accent he acquired at the Lambs Club. Or, perhaps we should call it outspokenly a "Lambs Club accent." The difference may be explained by the statement that if there is any violet-tinted drawl that grates on a regular he-American's ears more than a London accent it is a Lamb's bleat.

This affectation—plus mannerisms in the same atmosphere—has been against O'Brien. We will confess that for many years we also held to the general view that Eugene was too lavender-hued for mixed company.

But later years, and closer opportunity to hold the microscope over the subject of this sketch, have brought a change of mind. We are ready to state—now that we have been asked the question, "What sort of a fellow is he really like?"—that Eugene O'Brien is a regular, honest-to-goodness human equation, and a "he" of the species.

O'Brien, to those who know him, a likeable chap, a liberal host, and a true blue pal. He has, deep down within him, a sense of personal perspective. We even believe he realizes what some others think of him, and, give him credit, a lurid, cussing contempt is his only reaction.

If only the blankety fool would exchange that blarsted thin-stringed London twinge for the healthy twang of his Denver birthplace.

The nearest we have ever known him to come to it was on a recent occasion when Selznick attempted to put into force certain petty restrictions on the use of automobiles in journeying to locations distant from the Los Angeles studio.

Harry Rapf, the studio manager, was made the mouthpiece for the ukase. It went over well enough with the rough and ready bull wielders who wield a wicked tongue—when the boss isn't around. As for O'Brien—nobody thought that "nice boy" ever raised his voice above a whisper. Rapf decided to play it safe from the first bell and he opened the attack on O'Brien in rough and ready fashion.

Then the explosion! Dynamite, T. N. T., and essence of Whiteheads! O'Brien illumined the air for miles around with a volubly expressed desire to mingle in catch-as-can combat with Rapf, a willingness to oblige with a two-fisted massage, a craving for anything short of murder and arson.

No high-and-mighty temperamental star's dignity, mind you! No sulking in the dressing room, or writing of "letters to the boss." Just man-to-man talk, rip-snorting, raz-a-matag square-shooting shouting.

Rapf crawled down from his eminence quicker than an incline railway with a busted cable. The lines traveling the hills coming down to Cincinnati or descending Mount Tamalpais couldn't make greater speed if they were hell bent for election.

And O'Brien established himself with the members of his company and the studio hash-slingers who were present that day. They swear by 'Gene, and with him.

In closing, let us remark that Eugene O'Brien is just as much a bear with the women off the screen as he is on. Gene is there as a picker—and what's more the *class* picks on him. Which tells the whole story.



The Fall Season is here—and with it the first of the year's big pictures. If you want to read about the pictures months in advance, there's one sure way,—tell your newsdealer to save FILM TRUTH for you each month.



The Best Stock Sellers

THE suns of Summer are cooling fast, and the browns of Fall are appearing. A new year is about to begin in the motion picture business. For, be it known to the lay reader, the picture year like the stage year has September for the first page of its calendar.

What better time to check up and tabulate on what has happened to the year's best stock sellers?

This sombre thought is brought to our mind by the fact that we have just met the director of "Determination," which many class as the record-breaker of the year's six best stock sellers.

"Determination," we learn, has sunk for the third time. It may come up again; it is said that they do once in a million years. But for the time, at least, "Determination" is wallowing in the mire at the bottom of the river.

"Company's disbanded. All is off," fumes the director. "And I'm going to sue for 'steen hundred thousand dollars."

"Determination," we take it on our own authority to decide, is temporarily strapped for money. It's a habit that stock-selling picture propositions have. There is no reason to believe that "Determination" is an exception to the rule.

Captain Frederick Stoll, the genial promoter of "Determination," is sure there, with the quality denoted by his picture's title, if he has no other abilities to recommend him. It must be well over a year ago that we first heard of his proposition. Then he was working Cleveland. A wealthy "queen of the manicure shops" if our memory serves us, became very much interested in the "captain's" plans to make such a super-special picture as would shame all previous efforts.

Ohio was good territory for a time, other states followed. But some six months ago the genial promoter pulled his master-stroke by moving headquarters to Washington, D. C. You see, the name of the company was U. S. Photoplay Somethin' or Other, and the combination of U. S. with a Washington, D. C., address was quite the class.

While in Washington the Captain was guilty of some very wonderful advertising. Full page advertisements in the Washington papers told the story of the Captain's life, and his reasons for believing that he had the makings of "the world's greatest picture."

From the ad we also learned that the Captain acquired his title with the 1st Illinois National Guard Regiment. A funny thing was that the ad gave over several inches of its space to tell about the history of the First Illinois, in '98 at Cuba and so on, but nowhere did we find a mention of the fact that the Captain himself was not present when its various heroic feats were accomplished.

A few months ago a company of players longer than a boarding house mailing list was announced for "Determination." Announcements flew thick and fast for a few weeks, work was started at Fort Lee—and then the shut-down.

Glory be, we've used up all the space the editor gave us and devoted it all to "Determination." We'll have to wait another month or two for a discussion of the records of "Democracy," "Crusader Films," Johnson and Hopkins, and others of the year's best stock sellers.

Meanwhile, as you read the ads and the beautiful literature, please take the tip that we have given you so often: 4% in bank is better than "ad" promises of 400%.

Five Reeling, Reels

One picture seen during the month we consider unworthy enough to be given a review outside of our regular "Boosts and Boots" department. This doubtful compliment goes to Realart's offering "A Dark Lantern" in which the ever thinning, now far from beautiful Alice Brady is starred.

When we thankfully saw the final fade-out, one expression rose to our tired mind "A heterogeneous mass of nothing." That is about all we got out of this so-called feature.

Occasionally we wonder at the almost unlimited patience possessed by a forgiving public, which will permit big manufacturing companies to foist a mass of celluloid such as this time and time again, upon them through the exhibitor.

Jumpy to a farcical point in its continuity, with a story chiefly notable by its absence, and with a star in Alice Brady, who may well be regarded as a "has-been" if this effort is the best she can offer, "A Dark Lantern" is really pitiable as a modern day picture.

Alice has apparently adopted the "grab it all for the family" policy, for friend husband James L. Crane is found in the cast. One reviewer most aptly describes his work in saying "his face reveals scant trace of emotion in any scene." Rather doll-like, as it were. And pray tell, what else could be expected of Jimsey?

Elephantitis of the bean, to put it inelegantly, is liable to result fatally for Alice, so far as her artistic career is concerned.

Home, Sweet—*Safe* Home

WHEN Gertie, the village belle, finally decides she is not appreciated at home, you can generally bet the last nickel of your last forty-cent dollar, that very shortly she will be found in the already long line of hopeful future "stars," before the door of some motion picture studio. And, just as certain as the seasons come 'round, is the fact that Gertie will never star under any lights other than the flickering gas jet beside the mirror in her hall bedroom.

It simply isn't done. In our experience, we have found that the chance of the ordinary screen struck girl of "getting into the movies" is about on a par with those of the rich man of Biblical fame entering Heaven. Yet these prodigies who triumphed in amateur theatricals at the Home Opera House, or of whom well-meaning friends spoke as "much cuter and more beautiful than Flossie Star," continue to pay the railroads a good part of their revenue.

Which may account for the startling dearth of suitable material for musical comedy choruses, and for the presence of hefty, thirty-five-year-old "girlies" in the burlesque troupes.

To go into the "hows and whys" of this would take up more space than it would be worth. And, though the difficulties of becoming even an extra in pictures have been publicized broadcast by many magazines, and even some companies, our mail continues heavy with letters from hopeful, pleading, blinded women, old and young, who seek a way to picture fame.

Casting directors, directors, company executives, have become so blasé in the face of the onrush of appealing femininity to whom home and virtue are as nothing to a career in motion pictures, that the inexperienced damsel who catches their eye to any effect is indeed a fortunate one.

True, as many readers will say, "stars" bob up over night. "Over night" is right, perhaps. Yet aren't these bubbles on the crest of the wave, these petted favorites of the moment of some one "powerful," regarded as is an old man's darling? We'll answer ourselves. THEY ARE.

Nix, girls, nix. You might be the one in a thousand who got somewhere. You MIGHT. But we would rather gamble against an electrically controlled roulette wheel than have your chance. It would be pulling an old saw to say the road was rocky, but take it from us, Aspirants to Movie Fame, unless you have absolute assurance of a position bringing in at least cakes and coffee, you will do better to stick close to home and mother.

It is a great business. But there is no quick and easy shortcut to automobiles, furs, picture in the papers and Pomeranian. Not more so than there is a shorter cut between two points than a straight line.



Boosts and Boots

"A CUMBERLAND ROMANCE" (Realmart). Padded to death. One of 'those kind of pictures' released at the fag end of the summer season. Mary Minter is as pleasing as usual, and makes most of her opportunities. See it if nothing better offers.

"WHAT'S YOUR HURRY" (Paramount-Artcraft). Another story of the 'roaring road' by a man who knows the automobile game. Well produced with Wally Reid his usually capable self. This star is well ahead of the majority of men stars, and his ability, 'regular fellow' manner, and good stories are putting him further in the lead. A picture not to be missed.

"EARTHBOUND" (Goldwyn). Fantastic in the extreme, daring in conception and execution. Will be received in almost as many different ways as it is seen by people. With a psychic theme, it makes the imagination of the spectator stretch to the utmost to encompass the thought. The thoughtful will find much to make them pause. It is our opinion the production will go over the heads of many. Also that it may not be quite the success in a financial way that is expected. But, in its way, it undoubtedly stands alone.

"WHAT WOMEN LOVE" (First National). Sol Lesser's long heralded Annette Kellerman film. Entertaining and at times thrilling. As may be expected it is built around the aquatic ability of Miss Kellerman, who is seen almost throughout in her 'one piece.' The under-sea scenes are excellent. Will please generally.

"THE JACK-KNIFE MAN" (First National). King Vidor has produced a story rich in every particular. There is humor, there is pathos, there is real acting. No 'big stars' run away with the piece. Human interest background appeals. A story of small town life that will please.

"THE CHORUS GIRL'S ROMANCE" (Metro). One of the best pictures of the year. While comedy predominates, there are moments when the spectator will be stirred out of himself. Viola Dana has done herself proud. Her cute figure lends itself well to the part she plays, the Chorus Girl. Story is well knitted, and is from the one which appeared some months ago in the Saturday Evening Post. Settings, action, photography—all are of highest standard. A picture that will appeal alike to high and low. Should not be missed.

"IF I WERE KING" (Fox). Farnum set in story of medieval days. While the public's dislike of costume plays is as strongly apparent as ever, this lavish production should be one of the few to get by from a box office standpoint. Fox certainly spent a lot of money on it, and the entertainment provided is well worth while.

"THE MAN WHO DARED" (Fox). Better than almost anything Russell has appeared in. Fox is living up to advance promises of better productions for the year. Russell good as a rough tongued, heavy fisted lumberman. Eileen Percy opposite him. Parts are overdrawn but on the whole it is a good picture.

A Confidential Chat

WHEN this little publication first made its bid for favor, the Editor had one idea paramount above all others. That was to dodge the avalanche of press agency which inundates the business, and instead to give the public entertaining and TRUE information.

That idea, while broadened, is still the main spring of FILM TRUTH.

Some editorial rats have peeked out of their habit formed cobweb and thrown a few scurrilous bouquets at us.

That is to be expected.

On the other hand, we have yet to hear from a single reader that we have offended.

From the early days of the motion picture industry, we have derived our income from it. We have breathed, eaten and slept with motion pictures before us. We wish to see the business on a continually mounting plane. And, such little as we can do to accomplish this, we are doing.

FILM TRUTH has no 'grudge fights' with player or company. Where criticism may enter one month, praise is just as liable to be the portion of the same person the next.

If we err, it is as much a regrettable occurrence to us as to the party erred against. *And our columns are open to the other side on such occasion.*

Fair play is given all. Particularly to that reading public which wishes truth, and usually gets buncombe.

Bush League Stuff

THIRTY-SIX weeks trouping in the hinterland heading the cast of a maudlin but financially successful play has revived the drooping spirits of Francis X. and Beverly Bayne Bushman. So many unpleasant, humiliating, embarrassing events have occurred in the lives of the one time film stars' lives, since their abrupt departure from public view some three years ago, that even the sublime egotism of Francis X. himself was being shaken to the very foundation. But Francis X.'s faith in himself, in his talents as an actor, in his popularity with the public, has been restored. As for Beverly she was never but a faint echo of her Adonis, second hand husband, so she too is cheered by the events of the past six months.

'Tis said that the tour of the play in which Bushman and Bayne were starred replenished the family coffers to an extent that would permit the redemption of the wonderful collection of valuable furniture which last summer graced the show windows of a Broadway second hand store and which went under the hammer to pay the alimony which Mrs. Bushman number one insists on collecting to buy shoes for herself and the five children who were the offspring of the one time film favorite's first marriage.

But it is not the somewhat delayed receipt of a little jack, that has so pleased the Bushman-Baynes and is responsible for their greatest elation. They could never regard the refusal of motion picture producers to further star them, as anything but unadulterated malice.

True there was a little talk about the Bushman divorce and the subsequent marriage of Francis X. and Beverly, but they argued that this little scandal would soon be forgotten. They acclaim now the truth of their argument.

But there are those who openly state that Francis is not able to differentiate between popularity and notoriety, and make the assertion that the appearance of Bushman and Bayne on the stage attracted a mixed crowd of the morbidly curious who wanted to see "what they looked like," the remains of a vast army of kitchen mechanics and shop girls some of them grandmothers now, who used to worship at the Bushman and Bayne shrine and a few who came to laugh at and not with the show.

A good many years ago as film history is figured, God gave Francis a lot of good looks, a dislike for manual labor and a few brains, so he decided to adopt the stage as a profession.

His histrionic ability did not set the world on fire but fate was good to him and one season found him heading the cast of a Broadway production under the title of "Going Some." The engagement was short lived not because the play was bad material since it has proven a popular dramatic stock vehicle, but because it was badly acted. Bushman was one of the worst offenders.

About this time picture producers were beginning to look about the stage for talent. Essanay engaged Bushman to play the leads in some extraordinarily good stories for the time and sent a company to Ithaca, N. Y.

The feature pictures, almost the first in the field, turned out that summer were a success not because of Bushman and Bayne but in spite of them. In fact one of the best of the several features found Francis X. cast in a minor role—wherein hangs a tale which may illustrate the true worth of this actor. When it came time to start work on "The Love Lute of Romany," Francis got his copy of the script. He read until he found a scene that demanded the hero should climb a tree overhanging a deep cliff and repose amid the branches while the villain chopped away at the trunk until the giant of the forest was about to crash into the gully below. Francis didn't read any further. He burned the soles of his shoes locating Director Wharton and began an

argument that was intended to prove that this scene was no good. However Bushman did not have the prestige with directors that he later acquired and the scene stayed in the script with the subsequent result that another actor with more nerve and less good looks played the lead in the picture.

After the Essanay engagement at Ithaca came the era of multiple reel features, with the names of the players presented on the titles, the vogue of the fan magazines in which were printed long eulogies of film players and an unprecedented interest in the photoplay.

Bushman and Bayne became famous almost overnight. For a while they shone as brilliantly as any stars of the day but soon the public began to tire of picture after picture that contained no more entertainment value than closeups of the stars and romantic poses that sickened the souls of those who hoped to find drama in the movies.

Then came the Bushman divorce. It was the last straw. The camel's back had broken. Bushman and Bayne were out in the cold, cruel world and there they have remained until the enterprising Oliver Morrosco decided that he would take a gamble with the play we have mentioned. The show went out and made money. Now comes the final sequence of our story.

Encouraged by the success of the Bushman-Bayne play, Mr. Morrosco has shipped his stars to Los Angeles and is to star them in feature pictures. He evidently has been "sold" the idea that Bushman and Bayne can "come back." Bushman and Bayne have never doubted it.

Developing Your Plot

PLOT germs have taken up quite a bit of our time in this new series of thoughts on the writing of photoplays.

And rightly so. For, unless you know where to look for plots, and how to recognize a possible plot in embryo, how are you going to construct them?

Let's proceed a step further along our path. Having discovered the *germ* of a plot, how are we going to develop it into a full grown, vigorous, structure? What is the prime necessity? What magic touch infuses life and strength into the bare idea we possess and makes of it something that will hold the interest of others, that will entertain them?

Speaking generally, and leaving to later discussion the narrower by-ways and paths of plot development, we may set down as the primary essential of a plot the basic element—*struggle*. Your plot germ, your original idea, is usually an out of the ordinary character or an incident that concerns ordinary characters in an unusual manner.

Into this source you must inject—*struggle*. Some will call it *conflict*, others will tell you that *suspense* is the necessity. But suspense is the outgrowth of struggle or conflict.

There is struggle of varying sorts. Your struggle may be that between the different characters of your story, it may be the struggle of one of your characters against conditions of life and the world, it may be the struggle of your character with his own inner self.

But it is struggle of one sort or another that makes your story. Barring the few exceptions whose existence we have noted, and which we will describe and study later, it is the tale of struggles that makes up the entertainment of the world.

The spectator who comes to see a motion picture, or the reader who picks up a book, expects to be introduced to an interesting character, one whom he will either like very much or dislike very much. After hearing your premises they expect to witness a struggle, the further progress in life of your character and necessarily the sort of progress that brings struggle. Your character may be the most interesting one in the world, but two hours talk about his unusual points will not satisfy anyone. Those two hours must concern things that are happening to your character or events that he is causing to happen—that is, the element of struggle.

You will remember that last month, in discussing the possible plots to be discovered in newspapers, we found a germ in the "Letters From Readers" column. It was an epistle signed "Lonesome," and was from a young man who wanted to know why the big city did not provide some sort of welfare club or association where a stranger could meet and become acquainted with other persons?

That word "Lonesome" aroused our curiosity. It would likewise interest an audience. Imagine Charles Ray in the character. We see him fresh from the country, in his little hall-room, life, hustle and bustle all around him. But to Charlie they mean nothing; he has none in the length and breadth of the city to call "Friend."

When you have introduced such a character you have the audience with you. But you must go further. The audience wants to see Charlie struggle against his environment, or, out of his despair they wish to see him perform some rash act that will force a struggle on him.

Comedy or drama can be developed from such a theme—by the injection of struggle. The chances are you will bring to light that most artistic and desirable of blends—comedy-drama. Suppose that our "Lonesome" youngster, suddenly grown rash, forms a decision. "I'm going to walk out that door," he says, "and speak to the first person I meet. I don't care whether it's John D. Rockefeller or a street sweeper, I'm going to tell him I'm lonesome and want someone to talk to who will speak about something beside the weather."

There's the start of your struggle. Why, it's a funny struggle alone to see Charlie walking the room, trying to screw up his determination to go through with the rashly made resolution. Finally he strides forth bravely.

Whom does he meet?

There's where your genius as a story teller comes in. What sort of a character would O. Henry have him meet? Start a Harold McGrath story off with this theme. The story will be running away with you—if your

imagination is in working order.

The simplest form of struggle is that of the eternal triangle—two men for a girl, or the conflict of two women for one man. The struggle that develops out of your “Lonesome” story may eventuate in that sort before it gets very far. But you can see that you have started on more original ground, that if you follow these paths you will not have simply an “eternal triangle” story.

That has been our reason for withholding mention of “struggle” to this point. There are those who would tell you of this basic essential before any other point had been discussed. The result is that so many amateurs set out to write stories by seeking for a struggle. They look over the list of various sorts of struggles, two men for a girl, two girls for a man, man against poverty, man against temptations, and so on. And when the alleged story is completed it is merely a framework, without life or soul. Stilted characters struggle through time-worn situations.

“Struggle” may be classified and indexed. But “plot germs” cannot; the plot germs that *you* can discover are limited only by your own experience, your own reading, your own imagination. And if you set out to write your story by searching for the *germ* that is unusual, interesting, the chances are in your favor in securing originality—something different. Because *your own life*, your own viewpoint is something different. It is yours as long as you keep it yours, it is going to become trite only when you grow lazy and follow the lines of pictures and stories you remember because that is the easy way.

Starting with a germ that is *different* the “struggle” you provide is going to be different, because it is going to be the sort of struggle that could happen only to your *different* characters.

There’s the basis of originality—your own life, your own heart, your own mind.

ABOUT THE WRITING OF PHOTOPPLAYS

No, dear reader, the article you have just read is not part of a “course in photoplay writing.” We don’t like the phrase, we don’t like anything that claims to be a course in photoplay writing.

If we were to call these articles a “course” there would be the inference that we thought any person who read them could learn how to write photoplays. And we would be taking money under false pretenses. That isn’t our business; it’s our antipathy.

No, unless you have within you the material that would make you a scenario writer eventually, whether you read this series of articles or struggled along the Rocky Road of Experience, you would never become a screen author.

A CLOSING THOUGHT

The Chicago Photoplaywright College, through its agents, requests our advertising rates.

To which we hasten to reply:

During 1920 our schedule for advertising is as follows: For schools claiming to teach photoplaywriting, \$794,687.23 per agate line; for promoters selling movie stock, \$1,545,897.13 per dot of an “i”; for the slimy beasts who take the savings of girls to make them movie stars, a page absolutely free of charge and clear of war tax, couched in our choicest adjectives, boiled in billingsgate,—all this every time we get the goods on them.

You’re welcome, Chicago Photoplaywright College! Any further information desired will be gladly furnished on request. Apply to our Service Department, with the accent on the “hiss.”

“Brilliancy”—and Stars

It happened at the luncheon table at the Astor Hotel, New York.

Trade paper critics and other film folk were gathered around the festive board, prior to viewing the latest picture with Mildred Harris Chaplin starred.

The fair Mildred naturally was present.

For a moment, strange to say, film talk had stopped, and politics and the coming Presidential election was the topic of conversation.

Said Jimmie Young urbanely and smiling addressing Mildred:

“Are you going to vote?”

*“Vote?” gushed the fair one vacantly, a tiny frown indicating deep—er—mental effort.
“Vote? What on?”*

And the orchestra softly played “Asleep in the Deep.”

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