

# Evening Ledger

PHOTOPLAY  
DANCING

AMUSEMENT SECTION

THEATRES  
and MUSIC

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## THE PLAYWRIGHT INTERVIEWS HIMSELF FOR THE PRESS AGENT

The Author of "Under Cover" Submits to an Auto-Interview, but Refuses to Discuss "The Decay of the Drama"

By ROI COOPER MEGRUE

"SAY," said the Press Agent, "The Evening Ledger wants a thousand words from you about 'Under Cover' for Sunday. Will you write something?"

"You write it," said I, the Author.

"Not on your life," replied the Press Agent. "I've had to write all the drivel so far; you've had a cinch—nothing to do but draw royalties."

"I should say so," agreed the Manager; "it's up to you to do something besides complain that we don't get you enough publicity. Playwrights make me sick, anyhow."

"What'll I write about?" asked the Author, answered meekly.

"There you go," said the Press Agent; "give a dramatist a chance to get a little advertising for himself and he dies right on your hands, but he expects the press agent to—"

"You might mention," interrupted the Manager, "how well we've handled your play, and that if it weren't for the manager no playwright could possibly make a real success."

"Even a playwright must have some regard for the truth," I said—but very gently.

"Ingratitude," murmured the Manager. "I tell you," said the Press Agent cheerfully, "dictate something about 'The Decay of the Drama,' 'Why Plays Fail,' 'Is the Drama a Factor in Modern Education?'"

"Yes," agreed the Manager, "that's good highbrow stuff."

"And it's new, too," I added casually.

"Oh, they like to read the good old bunk," said the Manager. "It always has been immense."

"I suppose it would be dangerous to try anything new?" I asked timidly.

"Sure, the public wouldn't stand for it," said the Manager.

"What new idea have YOU got?" questioned the Press Agent sourly.

"I might interview myself, mightn't I?" I asked hopefully. "You know, sort of dual personality, one the interviewer and the other the playwright. Then I needn't ask myself any embarrassing questions, and I could be quite sure my answers were not misquoted."

"Why, that IS a good idea," said the Press Agent, amazed.

"Maybe they might print it," the Manager reflected pessimistically. "Anyhow, mention my name a good deal."

"And," added the Press Agent, "write in a good, clear, legible hand on one side of the paper only."

"Well, I'll promise about the paper, anyhow," I said.

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I found Roi Cooper Megrue, the author of "Under Cover" (now playing at the Garrick Theatre, Philadelphia, matinees Wednesday and Saturday), sitting at his desk. I have found that most authors do that at one time or another. He seemed to me—a pleasant enough young man, weighing about 20 pounds more than he should.

"Yes?" I, the Author, murmured vacuously.

"I've come to interview you," I, the interviewer, answered.

"You make me feel quite self-conscious," the Author replied; "it's so difficult asking oneself questions that will not make one sound too egotistic."

"That doesn't matter," said the interviewer, "playwrights with two hits in New York must be egotistic, or every one would be disappointed at this violation of tradition."

"Quite true, and one must not fool the public."

"Ah," said the interviewer, "how comes it then that in 'Under Cover' you do fool the public by keeping concealed the identity of one of your most important characters till the very end of the play?"

"Ah," said the Author, pausing a moment to sharpen a pencil with which to continue writing this interview. "I confess I have been very much amused at the criticisms of those learned in the technique of the drama who have said that 'Under Cover' succeeded in spite of the fact that it fooled the audience and not because of it. I happen to know they're wrong, because originally, when the play was produced on tour I was

told that the twist in the last act was absolutely impossible; that it never had been done, never must be done, and that the audience must be told in the second act who 'R. J.' really is. So, one evening I told one audience, and at the end of the third act the entire lot got up in a bunch and walked out. They had no further interest in the story, for there was no suspense, no thrill, no nothing."

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## WHY I WENT INTO MOTION PICTURES TO PUT "CARMEN" ON THE SCREEN

The Noted Prima Donna Tells How She Found a Phantom Audience to Act To and How She Felt the Thrill of a New Art

By GERALDINE FARRAR

IT IS the sounding board of the piano that gives roundness and substance to the tone; it is the resistance of the carbon that gives greater brilliance to the arc, and it is the artistic sympathies of our hearers that inspire us all to redouble our efforts to interest, instruct or entertain. The orator is more eloquent in proportion to the numbers of his sympathetic hearers; the actor more brilliant as his audience sways to his art.

All this is by way of introduction to what follows. Frequently, since last spring, when I determined that the time had arrived for me to enter a new field of artistic endeavor, I have been asked the question: "Why?" My friends have said, "Already you have reached great popularity through the operatic and concert stages. Why motion pictures?" While it is true that to most of these inquiries I have answered, "Why not?" in half jest, I am glad now to tell more fully precisely the reasons WHY I declined a summer of rest and ease for a summer of mighty hard work.

For what was said in the first paragraph is quite true. The artist—the person who has dedicated himself to an artistic cause—if he be sincere in his response to the call from "within" cannot stand still. There is but one road in art and that is "straight forward." There is no detour, no turning back. And in exact proportion to the inspiration which the artist obtains from a responsive and sympathetic audience, precisely so is the effect of lassitude and wasted opportunity. Work is for workmen, as the comedian once said. And friends are for artists.

When Mr. Morris Gest first interested me in motion pictures as a field of work exceptionally suited to those gifts with which I have been endowed as an actress, I was more surprised than amused. I had been at various times to see motion picture entertainments, but usually in the theatres in Europe. It never had even occurred to me to act for the screen.

The more I thought of the suggestion the more it interested me and before long I knew—I felt, as it were—that motion pictures really offered a field in which I could not only work with great sincerity and happiness, but also through which I would be answering that inner command constantly in the artist's mind, "Broaden yourself, extend your scope, make new friends."

After attending scores of motion picture entertainments in New York and other American cities I saw and understood to what wonderful ends this great medium of dramatic expression was pointed. The Paramount theatres interested me most because of the truly high principles that seemed to prompt the producers and exhibitors.

After discussion with Samuel Goldfish, head of the Lasky Feature Play Company, I found myself within a few weeks thereafter on the way to Hollywood, Cal., where the Lasky studios are situated.

When I first sang for the talking machines I believed for a moment that I would be unable to overcome the feeling that it was a mechanical contrivance. I was not sure that the best artistic impulses would respond. My experience, however, was that once I started to sing all sense of the mechanical thing in front of me disappeared. I saw in my mind's eye a great throng of people to whom I was singing.

And that was my experience before the motion-picture camera. I lost sight of the photographer and his steady turning. I saw only a mighty gathering of men, women and children—thousands upon thousands—who were watching my every movement. It was thrilling and I knew that my sincerity was meeting with response and that my pictures would please.

Never in the world's history of amusements has there been any audience so great, so wonderful, as the motion-picture audience. Right is the medium of the photoplay, and the simple emotions of pantomime are universal to human nature the world over. The South American native, the Chinese, the most highly cultured of Europe and the Asiatic all understand the emotions of comedy, of tragedy, of happiness, joy, sorrow, jealousy and anger.

So, where thousands have seen and heard me in grand opera and concert, where hundreds of thousands have heard only my voice through the talking machine, millions now will be my audience in motion pictures. And they will see Geraldine Farrar in her happiest mood, I assure you—well, wait and see "Carmen," and tell me that you agree with me.

## GERALDINE FARRAR'S CARMEN



## Shakespeare the First Scenario Writer

By JOHN EMERSON

IF SHAKESPEARE were alive today he would be our most active scenario writer. Shakespeare in some of his plays had as many as 30 or 40 scenes. Of course, scenery was no object to him, as he merely hung out a sign which said, "This is a house," "This is a well," "This is a battlefield." He evidently believed very much in constant change of scene. Since scenery meant nothing to him he could do as he pleased. If he believed in concentrated action and using a few scenes he would have done so. So it is apparent that he believed thoroughly in the modern motion picture method.

Shakespeare had a moving-picture conception of the background for a play's action. After the setting is provided in a modern photoplay, director and actors concentrate entirely upon the action. So does the spectator in the theatre. So it was in Shakespeare's time. The audience

took the scenery for granted, even though there wasn't any there, and concentrated its attention upon the action.

In many other ways Shakespeare's plays are indeed splendid moving-picture scenarios. Very little has been done in the way of filming them, but I believe when producers turn to them they will find wonderful series of pictures, and the most striking and remarkable thing about them from this point of view is that they can be followed in regular sequence. When the average play or novel is changed into a photoplay it is necessary to amplify and build it up, but following Shakespeare's structure it will be found that his story is arranged in moving-picture sequence and fashion. I do not say that the 30 or 40 scenes which Shakespeare used would be the only ones employed in a Shakespearean photoplay, but that plenty of description will be found in the mouths of the characters for scenes.