

Evening Ledger

AMUSEMENT SECTION

Address all communications to Dramatic Editor Evening Ledger, Independence Square, Philadelphia.

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Real or Super-reel?

THERE is a good deal of guff written about the conflict of the drama and the movies. And little of it is guffier than the arguments we hear over which is the more real, the flesh and blood stage or the photoplay, with its genuine mountains. The screen drama is only an illusion, an optical illusion at that. But if we go behind the illusion of the footlights, are the words which endow the stage with its greatest distinction, half the time as real as the houses and hills conjured upon the screen?

Why Keystone Comedy Is Harmless

The productions of the week offer an interesting comparison along these lines. "A Full House" is a most enjoyable farce. There is no gainsaying its frank and honest merriment. But it is equally futile to maintain that any line of it, any character, comes within miles of reality. There are two categories in farce: One, including "Seven Keys to Baldpate," puts more or less real people through preposterous adventures; the other uses gay caricatures, such as May Vokes' servant girl in the play at the Adelphi.

Screen farce—and we may take "Fickle Fatty's Fall" at the Chestnut as an example—is just as unreal in its people, just as preposterous in its actions. Indeed, that unreality of the screen is the only thing which makes the Keystone slap stick bearable. Knock-about fun, physical abuse, is a very different thing on the stage. In only the rarest instances, when a comedian can give his personage a real and plausible character, is such fun free from a repellent quality. The blessed screen removes the physical sense. We know that most amazing things can be accomplished through the camera, which would mean bodily pain and injury on the stage. We can laugh at catastrophe because we never for a moment believe in it.

Genius Needed

The screen can be real when it wants to. Not only its great rooms and magnificent vistas, but its people and their impulses and thoughts. "The Coward" and "Matrimony" were proof enough of that.

The stage can be real only on two conditions. One, the genius of its dramatists; the other, the genius of its actors.

How High Is a Room?

One of the minor realities of the screen that we don't pay enough attention to is the height of its rooms. But, then, we never pay any attention to the preposterous, sky-vaunting ceilings of the stage. Rooms in plays are anywhere from 14 to 24 feet high. The galleries have dictated it. On the screen we see the normal thing. We have always seen it. How soon is it going to make us dissatisfied with the stage variety?

Fixing the Films

With all the physical advantages that the movies have over the drama, too many people have been taking it for granted that the technique of the screen is perfect. There is room for scores of improvements in such technical details as the "leaders" and the methods of representing "visions" and "cut-backs."

It is still possible, for instance, to see a photoplay that fails to carry its name on every "leader." The result, of course, is absolute blankness for the person who comes in after the film has started.

The length of time the leaders are shown finds complaint from two directions. As the result of breaks and patches in old films, and also of too great speed on the part of the operator, many people complain of inability to read the titles before they flash off. Far more photoplay "fans," however, are driven to mental distraction at the length that the average "leader" remains on the screen for the convenience of people who are supposed to be slow readers. Lubin got round the difficulty in the case of "The Road o' Strife" by throwing the words into a dark spot of the pictures themselves. It was an excellent experiment that should have been given a longer trial.

Wanted—Screen Conventions

Lubin is also to be credited with an interesting attempt to improve the change of scene by fading the picture black and then bringing up the light again on the new setting and new characters. In this regard there seems to be no fixed convention. Some films fade, some jump, some use the vignette opening. "The Birth of a Nation" uses all three methods in a single film. It is perfectly plain that there ought to be a specialized work for each of these methods to do. One of them certainly should be kept to indicate a "vision." Nowadays you see it indicated by any number of devices. It is to Pathe's credit that it is working out a method by which the vision may be "vignettted" over a portion of the original picture, with enough left to show the person in whose mind the vision is supposed to be arising.

When, Oh, When?

But when will the producers get rid of their absurd red fire scenes? If anyone lights so much as a match in front of the camera, they promptly stain the whole film a bright red. The sky, miles off, takes on the hue of a San Francisco fire. There are exceptions, of course. The burning of Atlanta in "The Birth of a Nation," the many fire scenes in "Cabiria" and those in "Comrade John" are excellent. But that is because the scenes were taken in such a way that the light came from the burning spot, and hence took red naturally. And why does the camera, like the soldier, "see red" when a battle starts?

Young Movie Man, Go East!

Is California to lose her movie laurels? The last month has been full of signs of an exodus of photoplay producers to the East. The Quality Pictures, which feature Francis X. Bushman, have moved their studios to the Atlantic seaboard. Other companies are establishing or enlarging Eastern branches. The Fine Arts or Griffith corner of the Triangle has two or three companies working steadily in and around New York. California's climate will never be beaten for photographic purposes—the brilliance of sun, the freedom from rain. But the life of the East, the big cities, the famous localities, the familiar trees, which are not, like Los Angeles', semi-tropical, all these are in big demand, and the only place to get them is here where they grow.

MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK



CUT-BACKS

Movie Merits

Whatever you may think of the movies, you have to lend it to them for barring:

English accents by American actors.
Taylor Holmes' stutter.
Lisping heroines.
Billie Burke chuckles.
John Drew.

And if you're blind you don't mind the two-by-four rhetoric on the "leaders."

On the Other Hand

Nobody in the legitimate says:
Do you think William Farnum is handsomer than Ernie Williams?
Ain't Mary Pickford too cute?
Anybody can see Theda Bara's French.
I just love fl-um.

Prize Press Pearl

"Mr. — and Mr. — are such enthusiastic baseball fans that they were nearly heartbroken when — the great war play at the — Theatre, New York, gave a matinee on the day of a world's series game. With the aid of the stage manager, however, the difficulty was overcome. It was arranged that in the great trench scene, the number of aerial bombs exploded should indicate the Phillies' score and the number of answering cannon shots the Red Sox's runs."

The Exchange Man's Garden of Curses

This room is so full of a number of reels That I'm sure it should all be as squinty as each.

Why Mr. Ziegfeld's Bank Account Grows

"The piece is in Mr. Sutro's happiest vein."—New York critic on "The Two Virtues."
"The piece is not in Mr. Sutro's happiest vein."—New York critic on "The Two Virtues."

What the Producers Are Doing

"The College Orphan," with Carter de Haven. George Ade please write "The Third Party" and "The Ruling Power," it is safe to say, have no connection with each other.

LETTERS

Likes the Amusement Section

To the Photoplay Editor:
The Amusement Section of the EVENING LEDGER has been such a source of pleasure to me that I cannot refrain from sending my compliments and good wishes to your editor for its success. It is so much easier to find what one wants when everything in the amusement line is confined to one section.

I find the movies very attractive, but I am waiting for the day when some inventive genius will find a way by which the pictures can be operated without the constant movement which is so hard on the eyes. I am sure I am not the only one who is prevented from going as often as might be just on this account. I notice this defect even in the high-class plays given by the Triangle Company. Is there no way by which this difficulty may be overcome? Are experiments

being made to remedy it? Why not have an article in the EVENING LEDGER some time telling what may be expected in the future in this respect.

What has become of the scheme to produce "talking" movies? Do you think it will ever be possible to have moving pictures accompanied by the natural speaking or singing voice? I imagine, though, that that is far in the future.
Philadelphia, October 29. M. G.

Full Houses

To the Photoplay Editor:
I was interested in Mr. Russell's letter last week, but it seems to me he would not have written as he did if he had tried to get into the Stanley, the Arcadia or any of the big photoplay houses last week.
Philadelphia, Oct. 27. J. E.

As to William Farnum

To the Photoplay Editor:
Sir—I think the reason most people admire the plays of William Farnum is not because of his "world-famed Farnum face," though he is sure good to look at; but on account of the absence of anything suggestive of immaturity or immorality in his plays, at least in any which the writer has seen. Is he an American—that is, was he born in America? The majority of the Fox plays are somewhat off color, to put it mildly.

Why not more such pictures as the Farnum brothers and Francis X. Bushman can give us and less of Theda Bara and her style and less of Charles Chaplin.
Philadelphia, October 29. CURIOUS.

(It seems to us that the correspondent is a little hard on Miss Bara, and fails to recognize the high dramatic and photographic qualities of the Fox films. Moreover, as the editors remarked before, Charlie Chaplin's Essanay pictures are decidedly less "vulgar" than his Keystone releases.—Editor.)

Questions and Answers

Rex.—The address of the Metro Pictures Corporation is 1465 Broadway, New York. It is safe to send Madame Petrova your manuscript care of the Metro.

Alice.—Yes, the leap to be shown in Theda Bara's "Carmen," next week and which has been largely talked of in the New York papers, was genuine. The actor broke his leg. You will find a picture of the fall in this Amusement Section.

J. E. T.—Both the Selig Company and the Centaur Corporation make wild animal features. These are not faked. The actors are in actual contact with the beasts. The EVENING LEDGER expects to print, at a later date, a description of how this work is done.

J. Monroe.—At the moment the Photoplay Editor cannot tell you who first appeared as Carmen on the screen. He hopes to have the information soon.

L. G.—It is impossible to say just what religious leader the authors of "Comrade John" had in mind, but, as the EVENING LEDGER review says, it seems to be a cross between Elbert Hubbard and Dowdy.

Harold Goodman.—Send your comedy scenarios, if one or two reels, to George Kleine, 11 East 14th street, New York city. He is after new material.