AMUSEMENT SECTION

Evening Ledger

PHILADELPHIA, SATURDAY EVENING, MAY 27, 1916.

PHOTOPLAY
THEATRES
DANCING
MUSIC

WHY THE MOVIES ARE NO LONGER MAKING PROGRESS

The Head of a Great Company Blames Stagnation on a Single Influence—the Authors

By JESSE L. LASKY

After the most rapid advance, the most marvelous progress and quick development ever achieved in a new art or a new industry, the producers of motion pictures have suddenly found themselves at a standstill. This is a truth which few will deny, and, much as I personally hate to voice it, it is a truth that must be recognized.

To disarm criticism at the very start, I will admit that this statement is general. A few individual producers are making progress. I predict that Griffith's "Mother and the Law" will surpass his "Birth of a Nation." Ince shows marked advancement in his "Civilization" over his former productions. Three months after his "Carmen," his masterpiece, was produced De Mille surpassed it with "The Cheat." A very few other producing geniuses are forging ahead. Slowly, it is true, the art is advancing.

Still, when one considers that there are approximately 25 five-reel features released in America every week, the majority of them not worthy of the name, we are forced to the conclusion that the wonderful advancement that marked the earlier development of the motion picture has slowed up to a large degree, so that I am forced to reiterate my first assertion, viz., the art of motion-picture producing is not advancing, but is almost at a standstill.

When we think of the vast possibilities of motion drama this fact is the more to be deplored. Every cause has its reason. Let us see if we can find the reason for the lack of progress in the newest art.

Our actors, including, as they do, the survivors of the old movie school and the newcomers from the legitimate stage, are the best in the world. The older school of movie artists are those who, although they lacked stage or dramatic experience, developed a technique of their own. The Gish sisters, Blanche Sweet, Mae Marsh are examples of this type. The newcomer, the legitimate actor, chosen from the very best the speaking stage afforded, such artists as Tyrone Power, Theodore Roberts, Bessie Barriscale, are now, with the other, or screen artists, the rank and file that compose the stock companies of the motion picture studios. With the best, the foremost, the greatest stars in the world devoting themselves exclusively to the screen drama, we can eliminate the actor either as a direct or indirect cause of the recent lack of progress.

Our camera men, many of them famous old still photographers, all of them veterans in the newer art—quiet, determined, thoughtful, studious, daring, always experimenting—surely no blame can be attached to them. Rather must we say, "Well done, oh! camera man. The great art owes much to you." It is a fact that in the last year motion-picture photography has advanced marvelously well. New and wonderful lighting, perfect double and triple exposure, a dozen wonderful effects, have marked the constant progress of motion picture photography. The camera man is pronounced with firm conviction "Not guilty." And the modern new laboratories have kept pace with the photographer. Clean films, fewer scratches and blemishes, splendid tinting and toning—the laboratories are space with the times.

Our scenic artists have progressed. The scenes and settings of motion pictures have been the wonder of the dramatic world. Splendid modern interiors, in perfect good taste, marvelous settings of all periods, defy the criticisms of the most critical. There can be no question on this point. The art director and scenic artist are eliminated. Also we can exonerate their brother, the property builder and the property man. Using at all times the real, the genuine, in place of the imitation, skilfully duplicating the rarest art treasures of the old world—surely he, too, deserves word of praise rather than censure.

And now, most important of all, the director. The old school men, the pioneers, experienced in picture producing from its very inception, striving, studying, inventing, progressing, they are doing their conscientious best and they are not standing still. Reinforced by the ablest men from the ranks of the dramatic or stage directors, who, bringing new ideas and tireless energy, with a world of dramatic training and experience, gave the motion drama a real push forward—surely the directors of both classes can be exonerated. I wish I had the time and space to tell of the heart-breaking toil of many of the motion-picture directors; of their 12 to 18 hours a day, of their seven days a week, of their sacrificing their social ambitions, their family ties, giving their very life, their heart's blood, to their favorite art. No, the directors are doing their full share, and at least are attempting in every way they know how to advance the moving drama. But in spite of their efforts, the camera man's efforts, the art director's, the scenic artist's, the property man's efforts, the new laboratories and the unnumbered thousands spent weekly by the too numerous producing firms, I reiterate, for the third time, the motion-picture drama is not progressing to any appreciable degree at the present moment.

Now, if all the above are doing so much,

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PEGGY HYLAND
The English film star who will be seen at the Stanley Monday in "Saints and Sinners," a Famous Players-Paramount production.

THE CAMERA MAN CATCHES A FEW GLIMPSES OF STAGE AND MOVIE STARS MAKING AMUSEMENT NEWS

THE WHY OF PHOTOGRAPHY
D. W. Griffith conferring with his cameraman, George Bitzer, over some of the artistic details of "The Mother and the Law," his new rival of "The Birth of a Nation."

AT U CITY
Tyrone Power, actor, and Tamaki Miura, Japanese opera singer, chatting while the Universal star rests between scenes.

THE ACTRESS-MANAGER ON DUTY
Grace George, who brings her repertory company to the Adelphi Monday in "The New York Idea," is here caught waiting behind a "wing" for her entrance cue.

"KEYSTONE STUFF"
Just a bit of "zoo thrill" put over by the Triangle's funmakers.

An Opera Glass for the Movies That Straightens Angles

There have been all manner of scientific improvements made upon the motion-picture process within the decade, more rapid projecting machines, gold-fibre screens and various other innovations; but the actual comfort of the theatre patron has been virtually confined to form-fitting seats, floorlights to find his way in and out, and lantern slides to bid the lady in front to remove her hat. It has remained for the Triangle Film Corporation to invent a special opera glass for use in watching the motion pictures, designed not to better the picture itself, but to correct adverse conditions under which pictures are very often exhibited.

The best pictures ever made, says Triangle, would appear disadvantageously to a spectator badly seated through no fault of the director or camera man, and any simple instrument that will rectify this point of view would be welcomed as filling a long-felt want. The salient feature of the new glass, which in appearance resembles the ordinary binocular, is that it reduces the image instead of magnifying it. It is intended primarily for those who are seated too close to the screen, throwing the image off to the proper distance and also modifying the blue and ultra-violet rays that are so harmful to the retina of the eye at short range.

A small vertical wheel between the barrels adjusts the focus in the ordinary manner; but there is another adjustment which, is peculiar to the instrument. That is a black T-shaped piece at the large end. This shifts from left to right, producing the effect of what is known in photography as the wide-angle lens. It is for convenience of those persons who are not only seated far front, but far to one side. The wide-angle arrangement corrects the viewpoint and gives the user an approximately proper range.

In the matter of perspective, there is really but one correct viewpoint for every photograph; that is the point of the camera that took it, and in the theatre the eye of the projecting machine. But as the spectator cannot sit in front of the projecting machine, he must compromise somewhat in his notions of perspective, and sit elsewhere. The Triangle binocular gives the spectator very nearly the viewpoint of the camera, although it is recommended only for those who sit too close.

The proper distance to sit from a picture was established by painters long before the cinematograph was invented. In calculating the proper distance to stand from a canvas in order to comprehend all upon it, it was agreed that the spectator should take his stand from the picture at a distance equal to a diagonal and a half, the imaginary diagonal being drawn from one upper corner of the canvas to the lower corner on the other side.

Ha! the Censor's Mind Revealed

The following story is quite fictional, with the exception of the quoted "leaders." They are genuine, save for the names:

Scene—A Motion-Picture Censor's office. The room is unadorned, unless one considers a placard: "Farce, burlesque or drama which is actuated by levity or any other serious purposes will be discouraged by the Board." The Censor's Assistants are busy snipping film at a table.

Enter James Schneider, the Censor. He speaks:

"Well, boys, any more crime today? I see the crime drawer is nearly full, so you must have been fairly well occupied. We'll have to get some new farce files, I fear. And, dearie me, the levity envelope is as full as the moon.

"What's this picture? 'Hertha's Vindictiveness.' Ha, hum. Looks bad. Too many babies in it. Let me see; if I took out the third and seventh reels, it might be fit for innocent eyes. Still, there would be far too much jocosity left for people who have reverence for the sancity of the home."

He reads on. Suddenly illuminated by A Thought he lifts his hands skyward and exclaims:

"I have it! Why go to the trouble of cutting the film when, with a new story inserted in the leaders, it could be turned into a sucking dove? I'll remove the scorpion's fangs."

Writing hastily:

"'Dowsabella goes, secretly, to meet her husband.' * * * That's proper and pretty, far more so than lover. Now let's see: the leader says she confides her love affair to her friend. I'll substitute 'I have lost my marriage certificate. I do not even recall the name of the pastor in the small village where we were married.' (They always said I had a literary bent.)

"Well, well! Dowsabella gets worser and worser. I'll just snip out all the rest of the leaders and put in my own. Here goes: 'We find Dowsabella courted by Deacon Hunt. * * * Dowsabella having married the deacon has never told him of her previous marriage or her child.'

"Now it's all ready. * * * What? You don't think the story's clear? My boy, that's because you never studied the classics. Pure English is wasted on you."

Producing Verdi's "Aida" in the Open Air at U. of P.

Only a limited number of events in the musical history of Philadelphia have aroused the interest that has been created by the coming open-air performance of "Aida" under the auspices of the University of Pennsylvania at Franklin Field Tuesday evening, June 6. It seems as if the opera will be witnessed by at least 25,000 persons. To take care of this vast audience so that all may see and hear with comfort there has been perfected an ideal arrangement of the stage with relation to the seats on Franklin Field. The stage is being built directly in the centre of the field, making the distance between it and the most distant auditor half what it was at the open-air performance at the Harvard stadium last year. This bringing the stage half way up the field will render useless all of the seats to the rear, cutting down the seating capacity one-half. The seats lost, however, will be made up by placing comfortable chairs on the playing surface of the field, making the whole like one vast auditorium seating about 25,000. The whole arrangement of stage and seats has been under the supervision of M. Bracale, who sucessfully staged the big open-air performance of "Aida" at the Egyptian pyramids a few years ago, which was witnessed by 80,000 persons.

The University of Pennsylvania performance will, it is hoped, excel the pyramid performance in every detail except the number of people accommodated. The splendid cast which has been gathered from every great opera house in the world, including the Metropolitan and Boston operas, will include Mme. Marie Rappold, who was selected to sing most of the Metropolitan Opera performances of "Aida" during the season just past; Mme. Margarete Matzenauer, the leading contralto of the Metropolitan Opera Company; Leone Zinovieff, the great Russian tenor, who sang the role of Rhadames in the pyramid production; Giuseppe Campanari, until a few years ago the leading baritone of the Metropolitan who has been induced to come out of his retirement for this one performance; Jose Mardones, leading basso of the Boston Opera Company; Leon Rothier, leading basso of the Metropolitan; Giovanni Porro, leading tenor of the Constanzi in Rome, and Juanita Prewitt, from Covent Garden, London. The great chorus of 500 will include the entire Metropolitan, Boston and Chicago Opera choruses. The big orchestra of 165 will be recruited from the same three opera companies, as well as the grand corps de ballet of 50. Giorgio Polacco, chief conductor of the Metroplitan, will conduct the performance, which will be staged by M. Bracale and M. Spalta, who staged the pyramid performance. The chorus master will be M. Setti, who is chorus master of the Metropolitan. The ballet master will be M. Albertiere, of the Metropolitan and Manhattan Opera Companies. The total cost of this one performance will be approximately $30,000, making it what is said to be the most expensive single performance of any kind this country has ever known. The enormous stage will be 200 feet wide and 120 feet deep, occupying almost as much space as an entire city block.

Letters to the Editor

To the Dramatic Editor:

Sir—In reply to F. W. Farren's letter in the EVENING LEDGER of May 13, Solomon Smith Russell appeared as Bob Acres in Sheridan's "The Rivals" at the Walnut Street Theatre in February, 1836, giving two performances of the old comedy; the rest of the engagement was devoted to "Mr. Valentine's Christmas," a one-act play, from a story by J. L. Mitchell in Life; followed by "An Everyday Man," a three-act comedy by Marguerite Merington. In Mr. Russell's company at that time were George Woodward, Mrs. Fanny Addison Pitt and Miss Bijou Fernandez.

Philadelphia, May 16 H. L. W.

To the Photoplay Editor:

Sir—There is something which has puzzled me greatly for the past few weeks and I am writing to ask your kind assistance to straighten the matter out.

Are Arthur Hoops and Eugene Ormonde the same person? I have seen Eugene Ormonde as Doctor Isaacsson in "Bella Donna" (with Pauline Frederick) and have also seen Arthur Hoops as the husband Vane with Olga Perova in "Playing with Fire." The two characters were taken by the same man, but why the different names?

J. F. K.

Philadelphia, May 25, 1916.

Eugene Ormonde and Arthur Hoops are, so far as the Photoplay Editor can determine, entirely distinct personalities.

When Carolina White Was a Curbstone Star

Not long ago, one of the high priestesses of New York's inner social circle was entertaining a party of friends at dinner. This dinner party included Miss Carolina White, former prima donna of the Chicago and Philadelphia Opera Company, who comes to B. F. Keith's Theatre next week. Naturally, music became the subject of discussion. The hostess asserted, and rightly, that the "horseshoe" made Grand Opera possible in America; or, in other words, without the patronage of the wealthy, it would be impossible for such companies to exist here. This was generaly conceded to be a fact, but Miss White maintained that, despite the patronage of society in opera, a greater appreciation of music existed in lower social circles. The discussion that followed rapidly waxed into a heated argument, and necessitated that Miss White adopt some particular way of clinching her argument. She assumed a form of a wager which was quickly accepted.

It was that Miss White was to sing in front of Sherry's, where all the "400" congregate—then to go immediately to a certain location on the East Side and repeat the operation. She claimed that her voice would attract quicker attention at the latter place than at the former.

The next day, garbed in her simplest attire, she took her station before the fashionable restaurant, and sang in her best voice the aria from "Trovatore." The few gorgeously gowned women who passed in and out of the famous hostelry hesitated, one or two complimentary remarks were passed, and several small coins were tendered the singer, but nothing more important happened.

On the East Side where the aria was repeated, the streets quickly became jammed, and throughout the song the vast audience stood as if spellbound. When Miss White's voice had finally died away, the crowd burst into enthusiastic cheers, and not only showered the singer with money, in many cases being all the money the donors possessed, but actually endeavored to raise her upon their shoulders and carry her triumphantly through the streets; and to cap the climax, a manager of a small Bowery moving picture theatre worked his way through the crowd and actually offered Miss White $50 a week if she would sing at his theatre, little dreaming that the diva in grand opera received $1000 a night.

The Screen Is the Same as the Stage

By William Gillette

It is natural for an actor to assume that playing for pictures requires that something more than stage portayals must be supplied to offset the loss of the voice. But I am convinced that this is not so, and that in acting "Sherlock Holmes" in the same manner as I would on the stage is entirely sufficient. Every act and expression is recorded so sharply in pictures that, I assume, the spectator can carry the thread of the plot without missing the slightest detail.

On the stage words forestall the chance that the audience may neglect an important point. In pictures the actor is brought closer and the minor moves and expressions, frequently unnoticed when on the stage, are fully apparent to the spectators. After familiarizing myself with picture work, I am satisfied that "Sherlock Holmes" can be exceptionally well adapted in what is commonly called the "screen."

GRACE GEORGE'S ADVENTURE AS A THEATRE MANAGER

How the Star of "The New York Idea" Founded a Repertory Theatre of Comedy in New York

Those who appreciate intelligence in the theatre have been following with keen interest Grace George's establishment of a repertory company at the Playhouse, in New York. Miss George in years past appeared generally in plays above the average, and she attracted a following of theatregoers above the average. Now she has stepped forward a long way, and she has not only taken her following with her, but won many new friends. Miss George has succeeded in a most ambitious undertaking, the formation of a notable repertory company; and she has made that organization, the Playhouse company, stand out distinctively, presenting only plays of a high standard. She provides not only decent but brilliant entertainment. And what is of most lively interest just now is that, at the end of her long New York season, she brings her Playhouse company to Philadelphia, for a special two weeks' engagement at the Adelphi, beginning Monday. Her first offering here is "The New York Idea," by Langdon Mitchell, a Philadelphian.

It was with "The New York Idea" that Miss George established her company in New York last fall. She assumed the direction of the Playhouse in September, announcing that she would give a series of plays that she thought worth while, not poetic Roman tragedies or anything of that kind, but plays that afforded real entertainment for intelligent theatregoers, who are not always considered by the regular producers. Plays of that sort were not abundant. Miss George concluded to put on "The New York Idea," which Mrs. Fiske had produced once, but which Broadway had never appreciated. Here was an opportunity to lift a good play, a brilliant play, of the kind written all too seldom, off the shelf. Miss George chose actors and actresses that she though were above the average, so as to catch the spirit of this comedy satire. She opened with "The New York Idea" in September, and instantly won success. Here was a personal triumph such as she had never won before in her various years of stardom. And her company, her whole enterprise, New York took to its heart. The occasion was notable in the history of our American theatre.

Miss George continued to present "The New York Idea" on into November, meantime rehearsing another play, and then she presented this other play, "The Liars," generally considered the best of the comedies by Henry Arthur Jones. The reception of this was also most favorable, and Miss George continued on her way, presenting both of these comedies. Meantime reports of what she was doing had traveled even into England, and Bernard Shaw, who had refused year after year to allow any American producer to put on "Major Barbara," released the rights in this country to Miss George for her to play the title role.

She produced "Major Barbara" at The Playhouse in December, and with this won the attention of a still larger public. The Shaw play, which deals with the ethics of war munition manufacture and with the Salvation Army, actually, to use a Broadway phrase, "went over." In other words, it caught the public fancy in a way to make it very profitable commercially. Success was in the air, as it is occasionally on Broadway, for some unaccountable reason. Before the curtain went up on "Major Barbara" there was an advance sale of thousands of dollars, which meant that the first night was sold out, and next morning, in the first hour after the box office opened, two thousand dollars more slid along the glass plate into the Playhouse box office. That was only the beginning. The play drew capacity audiences on through the holidays into the new year. An arrangement had been made, to protect Mr. Shaw, that "Major Barbara" should be given for fifty consecutive performances without interruption from other plays in the repertory, and Miss George gave it not only these fifty but many more.

The great danger now had become that the popular success of one play would warp her whole scheme of a series of plays. To avert this, Miss George, after trying out several more plays in rehearsal, put on "The Earth," by James Bernard Fagan. This is a drama of newspaper influence in England, and, while exceptionally well written, its appeal is limited, and by itself it never would win a hearing. As a matter of fact, it had been refused by several New York producers. But Miss George thought it worth doing, and she gave it in February.

Circumstances then demonstrated that through the months she had been building up a clientele which now came to see the new play, even though it had none of the prestige of a first American production, like that of "Major Barbara." Consequently "The Earth" got its hearing, and in general the comment was that it had been worth doing. One of the New York critics praised it as the best written play that had come out of England in recent years.

But Miss George continued on with her series, and in March she gave her next production, "Captain Brassbound's Conversion," also by Mr. Shaw. This had been presented in New York by Ellen Terry, but under unfortunate circumstances, and it ran at the Empire Theatre for only a few performances. Then Gertrude Kingston gave it one Sunday night down on Henry street, at the Neighborhood Theatre, but this served no more than the other to

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CAROLINA WHITE
The distinguished opera singer, who comes to Keith's next week.

EVENING LEDGER'S SCENARIO LESSONS AND PRIZE PHOTOPLAY SCRIPT CONTEST

THROUGH a series of lessons in scenario writing and a prize competition for a Philadelphia scenario to be produced in Philadelphia with Philadelphians in the cast, the Photoplay Department of the Evening Ledger intends to devote the summer to the development of screen talent—both literary and histrionic—among its readers.

Beginning in the next issue of the Amusement Section, Saturday, June 3, the Evening Ledger will publish daily for four weeks a series of articles on scenario-writing by the scenario editor of one of the great feature film producing companies. They will form a concrete and comprehensive course of instruction, covering every angle of the writing and marketing of a successful scenario. They will close with a reproduction of a model "script" which has been accepted and filmed.

That the readers of the Evening Ledger may test in a practical way the knowledge gained in this series of lessons, the Photoplay Department will institute in July at the end of the course a scenario competition for a "script" dealing with Philadelphia localities and people. The competition will be open to all Philadelphians and an expert and impartail board of judges will select the prize winner. In addition to a cash prize, this film will receive production under a competent director with a local cast.

Watch for further and more complete announcements, and read in next Saturday's Evening Ledger the first of the scenario lessons.