The Daily Movie Magazine

FOR THE FILM FAN'S SCRAPBOOK

VIRGINIA BROWNE FAIRE

We will be glad to publish the pictures of such screen players as are suggested by the fans

THE MOVIE FAN'S LETTERBOX

By HENRY M. NEELY

A Fan—Valentino was not a "star" in "The Sheik," but he and Agnes Ayres were featured players. He will be "starred" for the first time in "Blood and Sand." If I were to decide your bet, I'd say nobody won.

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Wanna Lou writes—"During the last week I've noticed some extra hard 'shots' against the one and only Griffith. I fail to see anything of the small-town type in his pictures. On the other hand, they impressed me as being essentially broad in vision and sensational in theme, particularly the unequaled 'Way Down East.' Griffith is the real pioneer director of pictures; even in the old Biograph days his one-reel films were noteworthy. Since no one has produced so many stars or successful super-features or started such a large number of unknown players on the star trail. Furthermore, he has an unerring sense of selection in casting characters for his plays and the intuition of a born artist staging them. Remember that brief flash of the noisy fight in 'Way Down East' and that sunset river? I'm hoping that D. W. will make many more pictures. Now, I suppose you'll be pinning me in that 'Glory-be-to-Griffith' group you write about, but, sure, I wouldn't mind, not a bit.

"I notice that Lasky is to refilm 'To Have and to Hold,' with Betty Compson and Bert Lytell. Miss Compson was a good choice, but Bert Lytell——! Perhaps they 'counted out' and he got the leading man role entirely by accident. But, then I have such pleasant memories of Mae Murray and Wallace Reid in that picture of romance and adventure and it just doesn't seem possible that any one could be as fine as they were. It was the magnetic Mae's first film and—well, I've been a Murray fan ever since.

"There's a cute little actress at Goldwyn's who is every bit as clever and capable and much prettier than the highly featured Colleen Moore, but she's never seen except in small and unimportant 'bits.' I refer to Molly Malone. It's about time she had a chance. She and the delightful Elinor Field remain unnoticed while other actresses with less than half their ability and charm attract attention. I wonder why.

"The other evening I had the unique experience of seeing a 'comedian' who was worse than Snub Pollard and Larry Semon. His name's Monty Banks and he's just plain awful. I'd much rather see Felix, the cartoon cat, or Mutt and Jeff in preference to the sad, sad comedies of the Pollard-Semon-Banks, etc., flock.

"Just a word of praise for little John Fox, who played the mischievous waif spook, 'Eli,' in 'One Glorious Day.' Wasn't he great?

"Do you know the name of the company releasing Glenn Hunter's pictures?"

(The return of Wanna Lou repays even the waving of the Griffithian colors. I don't object to awarding D. W. glory, but not all the glory there is, please, and that, after all, is what the G. B. T. G. school would desire. Save a little for somebody else, wouldn't? Sorry you don't like Lasky's choice of people for "To Have and to Hold." Personally, I think Lytell just the man, and I'm not saying that to be contrary, either. Did you ever read the Mary Johnston novel? The hero is made out to be a Virginia planter and warrior, who has fought on many battlefields in Europe and among the Indian warpaths of the New World. What ever polish he may have had, or his family may have had, has been wiped away by the hardships of that early Jamestown colony. For all I like Reid, I think Lytell a better choice, though I'll admit an older man of the Sills-Kirkwood type would have been better. I too saw the early version you mention, and I honestly thought the casting of Mae Murray as Lady Joscelyn an atrocious mistake. Not that Mae of that day had the idiosyncrasies she now shows; indeed, she was quite the opposite—the sweet, retiring, violet-in-the-dell maid, drooping coyly at the hero's glance. What changed her has always been a mystery to me. Well, as I was about to say, Mary Johnston's heroine was made to be a proud and haughty English lady and beauty, and by that the author achieved much of the effect of the book in showing the gradual unbending and lightening of her character, when love for her more or less rough Virginia husband came to her. I'm inclined to doubt Betty's success in this role, which would have been ideal for Elsie Ferguson.

The trumpet for Miss Malone and the hammer for Monty Banks and the other "comedians" are duly received and accredited. And even more do I second your praise of John Fox. The name of that Hunter company is the Film Guild.)

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Morris G. writes: "I have been an habitual, and often enthusiastic reader of your column ever since you first began to champion the cause of art and beauty in the moving pictures. Though at times the shallow, pettifogging correspondence by your manifold contributors and your own irrepressible buffoonery and humorous belittlements of yourself have seemed repulsive to me, your honest intelligent criticism has atoned for this drawback.

"I often wonder why you print letters dealing with personalities of the players and judging actresses and actors large by these absurd criterions. Acting is to be criticized only on its merits and the private life of the player is something else again. The fact that Wallace Reid is true to his wife enhances my opinion of him as a moving picture actor, not a whit, and my knowledge that Pauline Frederick has appeared in the divorce courts more than once does not detract from my estimation of that admirable actress. On the stage such standards are not considered at all, for witness the great popularity of such as the late Nat Goodwin, DeWolf Hopper and Nora Bayes. I hold no brief for Roscoe Arbuckle, but his case is little worse than many actors and actresses still playing. I never greatly cared for his pictures at any time, but I could still view his productions with no repugnance or prejudice. However, Mr. Neely, please curtail those contributions that deal with the matrimonial ventures of Mr. Valentino or anything else not concerned at all with the moving pictures."

(I didn't know I'd ever given much space to Valentino's matrimonial ventures. Certainly I didn't want to. As to your remarks on the judging of players, I say heartily, "Amen," but now are you going to convince the fans of that?)

• • •

Dumbell writes—"Just as every author that ever wrote a book or story makes a few references to his 'gentle reader,' every movie fan incorporates in his letter to you his list of favorite stars. As if you give a darn who 'Lulu, the Stenog,' likes and why! Or if you do, you always politely leave out any reference to them.

"While very few people agree on whom they like best, don't you think the average taste is toward the frivolous and entertaining rather than toward the true to life? Even though it is your business to admire the dramatic and to try to educate us up to it, do you think that you lay enough stress on the good that comedy does? After you had been hustling all day trying to please temperamental women, which would give you more relaxation, a picture of the Constance Talmadge type or Dr. Caligari's Cabinet? Did you really enjoy seeing Richard Barthelmess get half killed (apparently) by three big brutes twice his size in 'Tol'-able David'? There are enough tears in the world without reproducing them on the screen. The world wants to forget, and laughter is the best sedative.

"Let me defend myself. I don't mean that I would like to see all pictures comedies. For there are some people who have never learned the art of knowing why, when and how to laugh. What would the millions of dissatisfied housewives ever do without their daily matinee full of tears? And Lillian Gish would never see the shores of Europe again if we all turned and snickered when she just can't keep them back any longer. Tragedy has its place in the world. Every one likes to feel that he is not the only one who has had tough luck. When it turns one to self-pity it is dangerous. It is commendable when it serves as an inspiration. But it seems to me that you critics over-estimate its value. (Please don't get sore. I want to ask some questions first.)

"How do green-gray eyes photograph (not mince, and about how many years has Mary Pickford been in the movies and how on earth did you ever miss the startling resemblance between Priscilla Dean and Joseph Schl—can't go any farther and it isn't in the dictionary? They have the same high and mighty profiles, but in a full-face view I think they differ in the expression of the mouth. Miss Dean's seems to indicate a proud nature, while Joseph's has a weak and hungry look. Perhaps that was due to the picture."

(I won't "take you too seriously" if you don't want me to do so, but I certainly liked your letter. And, of course, some of the things you say cannot be denied—or—to put it more accurately—there is a lot of truth in your opinion of comedy's worth. I honestly do believe its importance is generally under-estimated, but of course—to pull an old bromide—we can't always be swinging in a hammock eating chocolates and reading Elinor Glyn. And, to pull a second bromide, if we didn't have the poignant and distressing things, Chaplin's juggling of bricks in "Pay Day," Keaton's wrecking of the automobile in "The Blacksmith" or Lloyd's tribulations with the baby carriage in "I Do," would all fall absolutely flat and would not gain a laugh. You know as well as I do how the audience laughs at the most trivial things if they follow right after a tragic or sad moment. I despise the "tear for tear's sake" school of stage and screen drama; the kind where everybody decides at about the third act or the fifth reel to "have a real good cry," but the death of "Tol'-able David's" dog appealed to me as the ultimate of pathos—to date, to my way of thinking, the screen's greatest achievement along this line.

Thanks for a lot of explaining why everybody has been asking me whether Joseph and Priscilla are related. I confess I hadn't noticed the resemblance, but I'll watch for it sharply hereafter. I'm sorry I can't fix up a lovely story about the pair having been brother and sister separated since childhood and miraculously re-united. Mary Pickford has been on the screen for more than eleven years, with a brief return to the stage for "The Good Little Devil." Green-gray eyes photograph quite light.)

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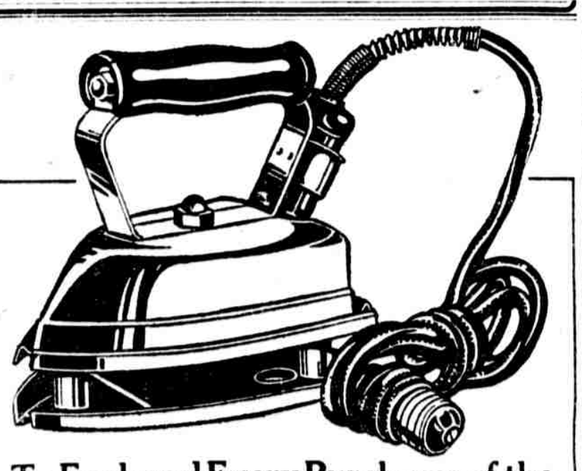

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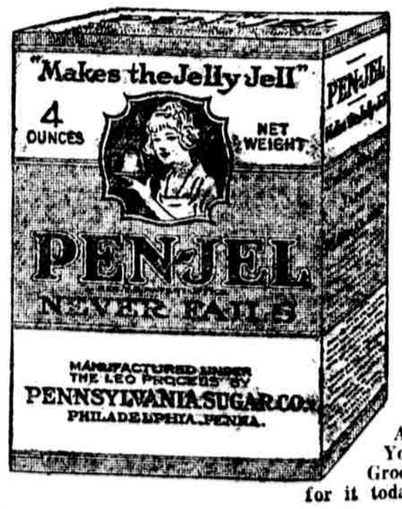

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