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The Daily Movie Magazine

THE MOVIE FAN'S LETTERBOX

By HENRY M. NEELY

Jess Smith writes: "You say you like the fans to differ, so please read our seventy-seventh letter to you, even though the other seventy-six were never mailed (but now we're mad, been saying up for a long time), so here goes, with a medal for your patience."

"Let's get it off our chest at once and say that, honestly, lately we'd like to be kind to you, give you a fishing line and let you ramble off with Mr. Reid. And we used to think you were so nice and kept you with our favorites, along with the other heroes—Mr. Meighan, Dick Barthelmess, Milton Sills, Monte Blue, James Kirkwood, etc."

"No, we aren't fickle, either, and Wallie is 'back' solid and strong with his Clarence, so much like Alfred Lunt's. Are you coming back?"

"Now, who are the 'falsely inflated stars'? And why do our readers act in all that hokum?"

"Did somebody want life as it actually is? Is 'The Loves of Pharaoh' life as we see it? 'Manslaughter' (speaking of problem pictures) and 'The Man Who Saw Tomorrow' aren't life as we see it—we who go to town each day to earn our livings in a manly or lady-like way, but we read the papers about the court scenes at murder trials, the millionaires' yachting parties, their divorce cases and scandals, etc., etc."

"Do we sit through a 'thriller' depicting the joys or sorrows of a newspaper office, a bank or a schoolroom, or the thrills of marketing and shopping, or a dinner party, a week-end visit in the bosom of our own or our friends' families, or a football game or a toothache, these are your parts?"

"No, we'd like life on a ranch, a moose hunt in Canada, or at a country club on Long Island—life as the other half lives it."

"Then, surely, we want the picture-ness of 'The Loves of Pharaoh,' 'The Prisoner of Zenda,' 'A Fool's Paradise,' 'Smilin' Through,' 'Hurricane's Gal,' 'Blood and Sand'—such stars, unquestionable in a letter with real people, though he was passable in that, which shows we are not prejudiced, but his posing and conceit are—surely, we are more vindictive than Heine and 'Manslaughter' (whose faults were more in the plot than in the interpretation, or are we wrong?)"

"Picture-ness? How 'bout the one with the top hats, the conservatories, the garden parties, the island paradise, its Viceroys, its Theodore Roberts and its Lawrence Wheat? We, too, were sorry to see Mr. Meighan in that kind of picture—the best is none too good for him."

"Is 'The Eternal Flame' life as it actually is—or was? But we go to see it because Norma's there and some one (who likes her as much as you do—suspicious) calls her a screen aristocrat, and because she and Alice Terry and Lois Wilson and Dorothy Dalton always were our pets, not alone for their beauty and talent, but for their gentility and sweet womanliness, which shine through their portrayals."

"Was that gem 'Tollable David' life as we see it? Yes, guess 'tis, as the mountaineers know it, so surely was 'Our Leading Citizen' brass tacks, and 'Hurricane's Gal' (we never saw life on the briny deep like Dorothy Phillips gave it to us, but you did, along with the other half, so we take your word). Anyway, it was great."

"Do spare us from too many matter-of-fact, dry-as-dust stories that blame old men like and give us the sweet with the bitter and don't forget 'The Miracle Man' and 'Cappy Ricks' and 'The City of Silent Men' (Always enjoy a Meighan fight)."

"Now, old friend, tell us we are forgiven and enlighten us. What shall we seek in pictures to admire and to respect?"

"Plausibility—that's the main thing. If the picture makes you really believe that life is lived by somebody as it is depicted on the screen, then it's plausible and has at least that merit. But naturally a story that is plausible to you may not be plausible to me, and vice versa. It hinges very largely on our own viewpoint and knowledge on what we've read and seen ourselves and how broadly we've lived. If a picture shows a radio operator sending out on S. O. S. with sparks flying out from his belt and from all parts of his apparatus, that may be plausible to some people who don't know anything about wireless, but it isn't plausible to me because I know that it isn't true. Therefore, to be universally plausible, a picture must be true. I'll amend that; a picture may be absolutely true, but not be plausible to people who don't know that it's true and don't know it. But that's the fault of the people and not of the picture. If you are convinced that sea life is, or has been, or might be, as shown in 'Hurricane's Gal,' then 'Hurricane's Gal' is a plausible picture to you. But, if you don't know sea life of your own knowledge, the only thing to do is to accept it as shown and believe it, unless those who really do know say that it isn't true."

"To me, 'Loves of Pharaoh' was plausible. I want to know when the old guy did his grand and lofty tumbling act off the reviewing stand, but nothing in the picture made me say definitely 'I don't believe it.' Therefore it was easy for me to put my whole subconscious self in the hands of the director and the actors and let them do as they liked with me. If they had at any time introduced something that was not plausible, they would have jarred me out of my subconscious attitude and the jar would have made me at once actively antagonistic, skeptical and suspicious of the whole performance."

"That's where Cecil De Mille almost always fails me. He gets complete control of me and then suddenly he wangles me up with his old-time, sometimes force people to do more foolish things than writing to your column. If you've started already, tear this letter up. 'This isn't what I aimed at when I mailed this letter. In today's paper there is a letter by 'Gentle Julia,' in which she says that she has yet to see a letter from a man exalting the talent of Valentino as a great lover. As I'm supposed to be a man, will tell her why. Whenever a man spends his little two bits (and, incidentally, here also) to go down to there to see if Big Guglielmi knows how to make better love than Ham Hamilton, he goes to see the person in question, display his

Bebe Daniels is blossom-

ing out. They've got her

cast now for a picturesque

part in 'The World's Ap-

plause," and here she is

shown getting rough with a

gladiator



formed one of the columnists that Mary Pickford has been in pictures for eleven years, and I wish to correct you in this little matter. Approximately sixteen years ago I saw Miss Pickford co-star with Mack Sennett in an old Biograph picture called 'Daisies Won't Tell.' Can you tell me the name of the other wom-

an in the east? At that time she was known as the woman with the pretty lips and Miss Pickford was known as the girl with beautiful eyes."

(Sixteen years ago names meant nothing in pictures. No it is almost impossible to give you such information as the name of the woman in the east with Mary Pickford in 'Daisies Won't Tell.' Some fan with a remarkable memory might be able to furnish the information, but it's too much for me. Yours truly on 'Skin Deep.' It was too much to ask of us—far too much. As to your comment on screen acting, I have long been of the opinion that a man should always kiss a woman as though it were their last kiss. You never know, you know. And, anyhow, 'last kisses' seem to be the only ones that give the girls a thrill nowadays—at least, so they tell me. Naturally, I know nothing whatever about it myself.)

J. E. P. B. writes: "I suppose you thought that H. E. F. had me completely bluffed with his reply to my question on Griffith's small-town viewpoint, but, if possible, I'll try to stage a comeback. To begin with, a statement is made that there is no connection between good and beauty. Here I, at once, disagree. Nothing that is really bad can be beautiful. It may be pleasing and appealing to the senses, but beautiful, no. I honestly believe that no matter how much lavishness or effort may be expended to conceal something that is morally bad, the result will be distasteful to those who are not dazzled by mere display. This may sound like preaching, but take your own stand."

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- ALHAMBRA 12TH AND MORRIS 2:15, 7:30 & 9 P. M. JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD'S "Man From Hell's River"
APOLLO 52D & THOMPSON STS MATINEE DAILY GRACE DARMOND in "THE SONG OF LIFE"
ARDMORE LANCASTER PIKE, PHILADELPHIA HOUSE PETERS and CLAUDE WINDSOR in "RICH MEN'S WIVES"
ASTOR EIGHTH & GINARD AVE MATINEE DAILY FIRST UPTOWN SHOWING "When the Devil Drives"
BLUEBIRD Broad & Sunquharre Continues 2:15, 7:30 & 9 P. M. DOROTHY DALTON in "THE SIREN CALL"
COLONIAL 6th & Marketwood Ave. 2:30, 7 and 9 P. M. GEORGE ARLISS in "THE MAN WHO PLAYED GOD"
FAIRMOUNT 26th and Girard Ave. 2:30, 7:30 & 9 P. M. Johnny Hines, "Sure-Fire Flint" Added—IN THE DAYS OF BUFFALO BILL; 56TH ST. THEATRE—Below Spruce RUPERT HUGHES PRODUCTION "REMEMBRANCE"
GREAT NORTHERN Broad St. at 4th RICHARD BARTHELMESS in "THE BOND BOY"
IMPERIAL 6TH & WALNUT STS MATINEE DAILY BETTY COMPTON and L. L. BROWN "TO HAVE AND TO HOLD"
LIBERTY BROAD & COLUMBIA AV. MATINEE DAILY FINEST LUTHERIC PRODUCTION "LOVES OF PHARAOH"
ORIENT Woodland Ave. at 62d St. WALLACE REID in "THE GHOST BREAKER"
OVERBROOK 63D & HAVERFORD HOUSE PETERS and CLAUDE WINDSOR in "RICH MEN'S WIVES"
PALM FRANKFORD AVE. & NORTH ST. RUPERT HUGHES PRODUCTION "REMEMBRANCE"
REGENT Market St. Below 17th 11 A. M. & 7:30 P. M. COLLEEN MOORE in "THE WALLFLOWER"
RIALTO GERMAN TOWN AVENUE AT THOMPSON ST. LIONEL BARRYMORE in "THE FACE IN THE FOG"
SAVOY 1217 MARKET ST. 11:30 A. M. & 8:15 P. M. HOOT GIBSON in "SINNERS' WILD"
333 MARKET ST. RUPERT HUGHES THEATRE JOHNNY HINES in "SURE FIRE FLINT"
The NIXON-NIRDLINGER THEATRES
NIXON'S AMBASSADOR 90th & Bell Av. 2:15, 7 & 9 P. M. TOM MIX in "JUST TONY"
BALTIMORE 61ST & BALTIMORE 2:15, 7:30, 9:30 P. M. DOROTHY DALTON in "THE SIREN CALL"
BELMONT 62D ABOVE MARKET 1:30 & 3:15 & 7 and 9 P. M. ALICE BRADY in "ANNA ASCENDS"
CEDAR 60TH & CHANDLER AVENUE DOROTHY DALTON in "THE SIREN CALL"
COLISEUM Market bet. 59th & 60th 1:30 & 3:15 & 7 and 9 P. M. DOROTHY DALTON in "THE SIREN CALL"
JUMBO PHOENIX ST. AND GINARD AVE. Jumbo Jans, Co. Standard "A FOOL THERE WAS"
LEADER 51ST & LANCASTER AVE. 2:15, 7:30 & 9 P. M. DOROTHY DALTON in "THE SIREN CALL"
LOCUST 62D AND LOCUST STREETS BETTY COMPTON and BERT LITTLE in "TO HAVE AND TO HOLD"
NIXON 62D AND MARKET STS. 2:15, 7 and 9 P. M. HOOT GIBSON in "THE GALLOPING KID"
RIVOLI 62D & BANSLOW STS. 1:30 & 3:15 & 7:30 & 9 P. M. JOHNNY HINES in "FOR REAL, HAZARD"
SHERWOOD 64th & Baltimore Av. MAT. 2; 7:30 & 9:30 P. M. DUSTIN FARNUM in "CATHOUROUD"
69TH ST. Theatre Opp. "L" Terminal 2:30, 7:30 & 9 P. M. BEBE DANIELS in "PINK GODS"
STRAND German town Av. at Venango 2:30, 7:30 & 9 P. M. BETTY COMPTON and BERT LITTLE in "TO HAVE AND TO HOLD"
AT OTHER THEATRES MEMBERS OF M. P. T. O. A.
GERMANTOWN 6010 Germantown Av. 2:30, 7:30 & 9 P. M. WESLEY BARRY in "CREAKS TO SIGHNS"
GRANT 4622 GILKIN AV. 7:30 & 9 P. M. ALICE LAKE in "MORE TO BE FITTED THAN SPOONED"

on the question of 'Foolish Wives.' Money, effort, lavishness, yes, even genius, were expended on that production, yet the sordid story remained, completely tarnishing its setting. Could you call the production beautiful? 'Griffith is accused of sentimentality. I draw a distinction between sentiment and sentimentality; the former involves the tenderness, pathos, comedy and tragedy of life, while the latter exaggerates these phases of existence for the purpose of creating emotional effect. 'Over the Hill' is the best example that I know of sentimentality, while 'Tollable David' is an excellent example of the use of sentiment. In producing plays or pictures which are merely cross sections of life at one particular time, there is always a temptation to step over the border line between sentiment and sentimentality. I must admit frankly that Griffith approaches that borderline at times and occasionally steps over to the side of sentimentality, but as a whole he remains on the safe side, so that I think these lapses may be forgiven. 'Griffith's creative ability is questioned. Who else could have produced 'Broken Blossoms' and endowed it with such exquisite beauty? Was that the product of a small-town mind? Surely, I have been able to learn, was a financial failure. What about 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,' 'The Loves of Pharaoh,' 'Peter Ibbotson,' 'The Golem' and other pictures which may be termed masterpieces? Have they not shared very much the same fate? Where, then, is the incentive to produce masterpieces? A tremendous amount of money is involved in the making of a picture, and it must bring returns or the producer fails. I prefer to consider Griffith as a

Returned to H. E. F.'s letter, is it necessary to be 'ironically complimentary' in order to avoid having a small-town viewpoint? I never thought so before, but I am always willing to learn. My idea of a small-town viewpoint is this: It means an utter incapacity to interpret phases of society outside the scope of a very limited personal experience, together with an unwillingness to understand anything outside of their own views. The small-town mind cannot create and therefore cannot create, and tries to crush it. I might add that this type of mind is not found exclusively in small towns."

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