

ON THE TRAIL OF THE MOTION PICTURE

The Dazzling Sameness of Douglas Fairbanks

By Virginia Tracy

During the latter days of the year of our Lord 1918 something happened. We saw something. We saw a printed likeness of Douglas Fairbanks, and it wasn't smiling.

It not only wasn't smiling, but it was frowning. Not for the sake of cuteness, either, but to look angry. And our heart behaved like Hiawatha's, for the heart of Hiawatha throbbed and shouted and exulted.

All because we said to ourselves: "He's going to play a real part again. For if he were only going to jump he would jump smiling."

Past as the young movie makes ancient history there must be other Rip Van Winkles still alive who remember "The Lamb," produced three years ago last fall, as Fairbanks's first picture and a smashing success.

"The Lamb" starts out as a comedy of character—the character of a young millionaire whose lady love is obliged to dismiss him as a coward.

Now, this lamb is no lion, because he has never studied the lion's part; he has never in his life done anything but lap, cream, and facing danger as if impenetrable for him as raw meat.

So the poor little lamb starts a regular course in courage, and the scenario goes sliding along a very delicately graduated incline from comedy to farce, from farce to fantasy, so that it may then turn to the fantastic to the heroic with no strain.

We need not say that when the heroic reenters so does the heroine, who trembles to find herself alone among infuriated savages with nobody for her defence but the lamb she left behind her.

There comes a time when she knows better; when he and she lie in a little hollow of the plain with their last shot gone and the savages creeping in upon them in an ever-tightening circle, and she kisses his sleeve, pressing her face close against his shoulder, so that she may keep it there until she dies.

His face you can still see, and if you deny a rub of sympathy then, just because a melodrama and last shots and savages are "old stuff," away with you to your little theatre, for you will never know one picture from another.

In any case, you will hardly be smitten with the lockjaw of astonishment to hear that all the while a regiment has been riding to your rescue, but we can't help hoping you feel at least an amused indulgence for the heroine when she is with some difficulty detached from her hero and driven to the fort a little nervous about there being nobody but the army to protect her; that you smile with the lamb when, reviewing this result of his busy day in which he fought a war, he says to himself, "Sherman was wrong!"

Well, in "The Lamb" Fairbanks as a character is with some adorably diverting stunts; our piece roared out at sight of them, and when they continued to grow more and more numerous in each picture they continued also to astonish and to charm.

They still were used only as snap to the fun's eventual whip-up of smilingly thrilling romance, never interfering with the hero's reactions to all the delights and dilemmas which a young-American-very-human-being is liable to on his way through the world.

the design altogether and left nothing whatever but themselves, swinging irrelevantly in midair like trapezes.

And this seemed actually admitted when they began to be advertised by a wide smile, just such a smile exactly as a trapeze artist favors his audience with when he trips in, ready for his act. It is a smile of announcement, not of expression; if you wish stunts, prepare to see them now!

Indeed, it was easy to gauge their popularity and the tremendous pressure put upon their perpetrator to perpetrate nothing else, simply by observing how that smile spread over the composite likeness of the movie male.

Every firm possessing an athletic star set him smiling till the movie magazines looked like pamphlets advertising tooth powder, even the Olympian Farmers showing their teeth from every page. George Walsh ceased to be a hero, a lover and an actor, and took to hopping over things, and when the face of Wallace Reid appeared cleft in twain by that same smile we felt that our trust must never stray again beyond Hart, Keenan and the vamps, who can be relied upon occasionally to shut their mouths.

Not that we have a prejudice against smiles; we should be sorry to see even a comedian always sad. It is the "always" in any kind that affronts us, the cut-and-dried, the inescapable, the smile that won't come off. From any flexibility become hard and fast good Lord deliver us!

But then came the frown, the rainbow! It was in an advance advertisement of Fairbanks as Lieutenant Denton in "Arizona." For ourselves we should never have selected Denton as a Fairbanks vehicle, because Denton is a purely conventional hero in a purely conventional situation; still, we did not doubt that he could limber up such a part, that he would fill it full of simplicity and freshness and nature no matter how he tripped up the romantic gait of a "straight lead" to do it.

We thought, "He has rebelled. And he is using the name and fame of 'Arizona' as the opening wedge to get back into acting again." We even had hopes that the public had shown signs of rebelling with him against himself and that that was why he had undertaken such imposing troubles as Denton's. Alas, the frown was no true snow, but a mirage!

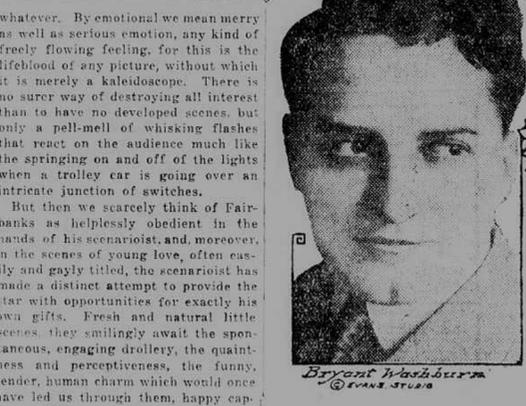
The truth about "Arizona" is so bad that we have to stop and say our prayers before we utter it. For though we went twice to see what a Fairbanks performance of Lieutenant Denton would be like we never did see it. It wasn't there. In its place was just a sort of smear across the film, as if an automobile had shot past and vanished.

Remember the heavenly repose of him there at the table in "Manhattan Madness," and now observe him unable even to get seated at the table in "Arizona" without giving three backward kicks at the bench behind him! Time was when he achieved with little conspicuous movement a great variety of expression; now he achieves every movement all the time with no expression at all. Finally, to the mania for doing something every moment he has added the mania for doing it so fast that nobody can see what he does do.

Yet in the occasional seconds—all funeral—when his head is still enough for us to see his face, that face is crossed by none but the most obvious changes and few enough of those. The comic and serious elements of his Denton form not a blond but a sandwich. The seriousness he plays as solemnly as he would Othello; he does the lighter scenes as if he were a mechanical toy. And not only do the mechanical toy and Othello never blend into one, but no communication ever takes place between them; they live in absolutely separate air-tight boxes out of which each is let to do its turn at a given cue, but no identity or motive of mutual life exists between them. Now, as a poor little lamb trying to be a lion you may be as funny and as sad as you like in a single breath and then your next breath may be as profound as any lion ever drew and every pulse in the audience will stand still until you draw it, but you cannot be a mechanical toy standing on your head in one scene and then somersault through the window and land into the next scene as Othello with any sort of convincing effect.

We clutch to ourselves the hope that this lack of consciousness is due partly to the wretchedly old-fashioned stiltedness of both riding and directing in the serious scenes; still more to the extreme chopiness of the scenario's construction which makes impossible any emotional continuity

For while in "Manhattan Madness" they were essential to the idea's happy nonsense, now there has to be so many of them that there isn't room for any idea. As first ornaments in the design, they became its centre; then they ate up



When the Triangle Was The Sign of Genius

By Kenneth Macgowan

Speaking of "titles," as Harriette Underhill and I were doing the other week by the water cooler, what is sadder in the short and complex annals of filmdom than the decline and fall of that splendid organization from which the two great schools of subtitles sprang—the Triangle Film Corporation?

Only three years ago The Tribune was printing two-column advertisements like the following, in which the "82 movies" of Griffith, Ince & Sennett daily viewed their mighty youth:

Why Nero Burned Rome—New! The nation match to Rome because he had tried of the brand of entertainment served up by the Greek and Roman Drama Worker's Union.

This country is full of Neros. Fortunately, they lack the audacious Emperor's facilities for decisive criticism. If the Royal Virgin had been sent through our Triangle Sign, her name would have changed his plan and built a new theatre every hundred feet along the Apian Way.

If he could have had a Griffith, Ince and Sennett to construct his dramatic entertainment, for him there would have been fewer tragedies. After seeing a Griffith romance he would have invited the Christian Martyr to dinner, after witnessing a Sennett-Keystone comedy he would have ordered the works of Antonine out of the public library, and by the time he had seen a few reels of an Ince Drama the Warm Doings in the Colonies would have been discontinued without the usual two weeks' notice.

Every night at the Knickerbocker Theatre would have been devoted to yourself what Nero might have enjoyed if he had not made the mistake of leaving his hair down.

TRIANGLE FILM CORPORATION. To-day you find small ads in the moving picture trade papers about small stars and small directors in very small productions got out from time to time by the firm that was Griffith, Ince & Sennett.

It was a wonderful set of men and women that worked with those three geniuses. Griffith had Alan Dwan, Christy Cabanne, Chester Withey, Paul Powell, Eddie Dillon, the Franklins, and John Emerson as directors. Ince had Reginald Parker, Charles Gibby, Charles Miller, and Raymond B. West. Between the invaluable Frank Woods, the mysterious "Granville Warwick," and his directors, Griffith got along very well with only one notable scenario writer, the inimitable Anita Loos.

Ince rejoiced in C. Gardner Sullivan, J. G. Hawks and Monte M. Katerjohn. As for stars, who can forget the Griffith constellation: Douglas Fairbanks, Wilfred Lucas, the Gishes, Mae Marsh, Norma Talmdage, Marie Doro, Bessie Love, Tully Marshall, Bobbie Harron and Frank Campeau, not to mention code the comedy number, Mack Sennett's "Never Too Old."

Dorothy Phillips in the "Heart of Humanity" will be presented for the sixth and final week at the Broadway Theatre, Broadway and Forty-first Street.

Louisa M. Alcott's "Little Women," with a star cast, including Dorothy Bernard, Henry Hull, Conrad Nagel, Kate Lester and Julia Hurley will be shown at Loew's New York Theatre and Roof Monday.

"The Squaw Man," produced by Cecil B. de Mille from the celebrated stage success of the same name, will be shown on Tuesday.

The daily attractions for the balance of the week will be Gladys Brockwell in "The Call of the Soul" on Wednesday; Mary Miles Minter in "The Amazing Impostor" on Thursday; Edith Roberts in "Sun of the South" and Vivian Martin in "Jane Goes A-Wooding" on Friday; Montagu Love in "The Roughneck" on Saturday and Bert Lytell in "Faith" on Sunday.

New Films at the Theatres

D. W. Griffith's latest Arcturic photoplay, "A Romance of Happy Valley," is the feature at the Strand Theatre.

For the first time in five years Mr. Griffith has wrapped his film around homespun humanity, and he has found a classic in its folds, vivid in action, laughable in details and tense in effort. Chief among the players are Lillian Gish, Robert Harron, George Fawcett, Kate Bruce and Lillian Yeaman Titus.

A comedy cartoon entitled "Bobby Bump's First Smoke," a scenic study, the Strand Typical Review, "Topics of the Day," called from the press of the world by "The Literary Digest" and a new comedy, complete the film part of the programme.

A pleasing musical programme will be presented with Alois Morrice, violinist, rendering "Tarantella," Kreisler, and "The Rosary," Nevil-Kreier. The Strand Quartette, singing a medley of Southern airs, and an overture, "Mignon" by the symphony orchestra under the direction of Carl Edwards.

"Cheating Cheaters," with Clara Kimball Young, is the feature attraction at the Rivoli this week. There will also be a dash of Prima natural color picture, a sprig of comedy, some dancing and two orchestral numbers. The story of "Cheating Cheaters," because of its success on the stage, is probably rather well known to Rivoli patrons.

Miss Young plays the role of Nan Carey. The cast includes Anna Q. Nilsson, Tully Marshall, Mayme Kelso and several other players. The picture is from Kathryn Stuart's scenario version of Max Marcin's play, directed by Alan Dwan. The feature will be given a bit of introduction with a pantomime performance of "The Dance of the Yaggenfeld," a happy thought by Hugo Riesendorf, managing director. The comedy is "Ask Father," a Harold Lloyd picture. The Prizma production is entitled "Bird Island."

The programme opens with the "Raymond" overture, rendered by the Rivoli orchestra, Erno Rapee conducting. James Harrod will sing "Bonnie Sweet Bessie," an old Scotch ballad. The second orchestral number is "Old Times' Waltz."

A programme built about the feature attraction, Tom Moore in "Go West, Young Man," is offered at the Rialto this week.

The entertainment opens with the Rialto orchestra's rendition of the First Hungarian Rhapsody, Hugo Reisendorf and Nat W. Finston conducting. This number will include a cymbalom solo played by Bella Nyray.

Helen Ramsey, contralto, will sing McDowell's "To a Wild Rose." Then follows the Rialto Pictorial. The second solo will be "Perche," sung by Edoardo Albano, barytone.

Tom Moore in Goldwyn's screen version of Willard Mack's "Go West, Young Man" offers a drama of sudden contrasts and continuous action.

There is love, bang, bang stuff, reconciliations and happy ever after, etc. The cast includes Ora Carew, Jack Richardson, a famous Western character man; Edward Coxen, Melbourne McDowell and Mollie McConnell. The scenic picture of the week is Bruce's "The Little High Horse." The second orchestral number by the orchestra in lighter vein will pre-

Some Startling Information About Bryant Washburn

By Harriette Underhill

Some one asked us not so long ago if Bryant Washburn's dimple was painted on or if it grew that way.

We were immediately covered with embarrassment and shame. We refused to answer.

Not because the subject of dimples was taboo, but because we really did not know, and it is our business to know. At the earnest solicitations of our millions of readers we have learned that Billie Burke's hair is all her own; that Olga Petrova's figure is all her own; what color eyes Elsie Ferguson has; how old Mary Pickford is; how tall Marguerite Clark is; that Charlie Chaplin is fascinating off the screen; that Douglas Fairbanks acts like that in real life, and that Bill Hart doesn't have any one to double for him.

Therefore, it was our place to know whether or not Bryant Washburn's chin was concave or convex, and we determined to find out at the earliest opportunity. It arrived soon. Mr. Washburn joined the Paramount forces and came East, and we went to see him. His dimple is his own. This much we discovered right away, and accompanying this story (slang for article) is a picture which might be labelled, "And we can prove it."

However, pictures cannot always be relied upon. For instance, we didn't care much for the one of which appeared as a part of the border in "The Globe" to-day. In it we seemed to be entertaining a string of petty officers in the pergola at Ninety-seventh Street and Riverside Drive. We liked the one of Heywood Brown much better with the bunches of cherries dangling from a quaint but stylish headgear; or even the one of Clara Briggs, though we never saw him with a mustache like that.

But we can assure you that the picture of Bryant Washburn is much better than any of these. We wish to dwell at length on this dimple, for it is really about all we learned about Mr. Washburn.

We always have boasted that we could get an interview in five minutes—yes, in one if necessary—but that was before we tried interviewing some one who has infantile predilections.

We encountered this one day a long time ago, when we attempted to interview Frank Keenan, and all he would talk about was "that great little kid, my grandson."

Bryant Washburn is like that, too, only his is a son, Bryant Washburn, 4th, three years old, and familiarly known as "Sonny."

"Can it be possible?" said Washburn. "You actually want a story about me? Well, you're the first interviewer in six

months who has. I can't believe it! But I'm delighted!"

Yes, he was—not. It was simply a cue he was giving himself to introduce the subject nearest his heart. "Oh, of course, lots of interviewers call on me. They tell me they must have something exceptionally interesting from me. They assure me that their readers want to hear all about me. But do they ever write a story about me? No! After I have talked five minutes they forget about me, and when the interview appears in print it isn't about me at all, but about my greatest rival."

"Your greatest rival is who? No whom—no who?" we asked, just as we should.

"He's a gentleman named Bryant Washburn, 4th. He's the one that all the interviewers insist on writing up. If he weren't a well balanced child, with a very level head and a proper scorn of fame, it would be impossible to live with him. He isn't a star yet," said Mr. Washburn, "but he insists he is going to be. What do you think he did last week?"

Now, wasn't that a silly question—what did we think he did last week? "Why," we said, trying to consider the question seriously, "cried, perhaps."

"No, indeed," said Mr. Washburn radiantly. "He followed me to the studio and applied for a job!"

"Yes," we answered. "No doubt he said, 'Mr. Lasky, I have come to see you relative to an engagement in the movies.'"

"Not in those very words, perhaps, but the equivalent. You see, being a logical infant, he probably thought this way: 'Daddy is nice, to be sure, but he really isn't much. And if he can act, so can I.' Whereupon he departed on his errand. How he got by the doorman I don't know. He probably slipped through the gate without being even noticed."

"Which picture of all you have made do you like the best?"

"'Skinner's Baby,' I guess, though that kid would never be like mine."

"It's surprising the number of presents he gets from admirers. I have to be satisfied with nice letters from people, but Sonny gets silver mugs and things like that. We have almost a room full of the trophies he has received. 'Nobody ever sends me anything like that at all. But then nobody ever writes anything about me, either.'"

So we said to him ingratiatingly, "Well, tell us about yourself. We'll forget Sonny, and we guarantee to write a story all about you this time. What do you think of—"

"And you know," interrupted Mr. Washburn, "that he is the best behaved child I have ever known. Why, he—"

"—of your new Paramount picture?" we finished, as though no interruption had occurred.

"Oh, go ahead," he laughed. "Say anything you like. I know what you'll write about, anyway. And maybe sometime I'll become famous—for being his father." So we let it go at that.

But we can assure you his dimple is absolutely his own. It is known as a cleft chin and is popularly supposed to be due to an angel's kiss.

exhaustive but always interesting subtitles of Griffith and the pioneer of sparse but decorated dialogue which passed under the hand of Ince's Irvin Willett, who first made illustrated subtitles.

What fan of those days who remembers this record and its high-water mark—that perfect photoplay "The Coward," with Frank Keenan and Charles Ray—can look with anything but Olympian sorrow upon the financial mishaps of one company and the commercial acumen of the other which finally drove the three great ones out of their own property into the fold of Zukor, Lasky and De Mille, where only hotchines and inferior imitation had languished.

The Triangle fan has learned a bit of Latin: Ave atque vale!

Advertisement for Strand Theatre featuring D.W. Griffith's 'A Romance of Happy Valley' and 'The Strand Ladies Quartet'.

Advertisement for Rialto Theatre featuring Tom Moore in 'Go West, Young Man' and 'The Little High Horse'.

Advertisement for Rialto Theatre featuring Clara Kimball Young in 'Cheating Cheaters' and 'Prizma's Bird Island'.

Advertisement for Broadway Theatre featuring 'The Heart of Humanity' and 'A piece of Fannie Hurst's mind'.