

Personal Side of D. W. Griffith as Human As His Professional Achievements Are Inspiring

Genius of the Screen, Whose Masterly Work in "The Birth of a Nation" Has Placed Him So High Above His Fellows, Is Gentle, Unassuming, Neighborly and Altogether a "Regular Guy."

There is a human interest story in Griffith, who has won an American epic. His work is known to millions, but the man himself is not known. He has kept himself back of the camera, out of the picture, but now that he has made Broadway sit back and look at the films at Broadway prices and has got the so-called classes to drop their veneered classics and join the masses at a "movie" exhibition, the blue stockings and men of books rise to inquire what manner of man is he.

In the first place, Griffith was born in La Grange, near Louisville, Ky. He is thirty-five and has a strain of the Celt. The blend of the canny Scot and the bubbling Irishman that came down to him from his overseas ancestry shows at times in his climaxes. His father served under Lee in the Civil War, and the man who now stands at the head of his profession in this country, and perhaps the world, has not lost the spirit of the old Southland.

Today he stages the great outdoors and blends the purr of a kitten with the crash of artillery, runs the whole scale of emotion in his film portraits of life, and he gets the heartbeats of the poet and the orator. He had designs on grand opera when he looked about for a career, but he found his voice suited for the speaking stage. Griffith's friends say he was better than the average as an actor, but he stuck to the stage for two years and quit for a place with a film company. Here is where he began to develop his talents and get his grip on the psychology of the world of make-believe.

Blessings of Dramatic "Pop."

No one questions his dramatic instincts. He "puts over" his scenes. Every "movie" fan knows that. But to see him at work! He takes excellent care of himself and is a bunch of live wires. He has speed and power, but he never wastes energy. Working night and day at his side, one wonders if he is ever going to let up. On observing closely one sees that he is easing the strain, just as in the big crashes of his "Birth of a Nation" the tense situation is relieved by a flash of field flowers or golden grain or kittens at play.

He can tune up a player to the highest pitch of nervous energy, and when it strikes the right key he relaxes. If this director has a bad fit is relaxation. His occupation is work, and he seeks relaxation in dancing. There is a story going along Broadway that recently Griffith turned down an offer from the manager of a restaurant cabaret for \$250 a week to perform in the trotter. The director enjoyed the compliment, but he did not tell the Boniface why he couldn't afford to take the job. This offer came at the close of a fourteen hour day of hard work in the studio, and he rested by dancing and making good at it.

Griffith is about five feet ten inches in height. He carries no superfluous flesh, and he is chubby when off duty. He has written several short stories, but he is committed absolutely to the silent drama. He looks upon it as the youngest sister of the fine arts, and he hates censorship.

His Sense of Tone Colors.

The director has a fine appreciation of the tone and color of good music. He sees dramatic situations in blending of tone and color. It was this attribute which supplied the musical score to "The Birth of a Nation." In the tedious and torturing months when he was putting the finishing touches to this great production he correlated tone to every action and unconsciously hummed the several tunes and chords which now form a part of the wonderful score which Brel has synchronized so well to this stirring action. These notes were caught on the fly, as it were, by Brel while Griffith was working like a Trojan to finish his work and then blended into the whole with

its present startling effect. This is another Griffith innovation and the first time in history that a score was conceived and utilized under such circumstances.

Griffith's memory is highly disciplined. He directed the great spectacle without a scrap of paper before him, and after taking portions of it in odd lots all over the country he sat down in the late nights in the studio in California and there worked out in dramatic sequence the story as it is unfolded on the screen.

One statistician has figured out Griffith kept in mind a million scenes, actions, incidents and details before he ever began the work of assembling it in narrative form. Not a hitch or an inaccuracy got by him. As an evidence of this his secretary tells of a soldier who came into view on the film as a bugler all decked out in a spick and span uniform.

"Great heavens! What were you thinking of?" cried Griffith from the dim shadows of the projecting room. "Why, my boy, you've been fighting through the hell of war for four years, with a half starved and half clothed army. Go back and get a battered old uniform, and let's do it all over."

The evolution of the motion picture that measured up to the Broadway standard of dramatic worth is not surprising in view of the big strides of the mechanical and the concentration of big minds with the big ideas on the silent drama. It may be said that Darwin's theory of the law of natural selection has worked out in the case of the motion picture and that the man with the imaginative faculties has won out. Griffith grew fast with the development of the silent drama. He got too big for the battered trenches, and he leaped out into the open. He wanted to spread himself and had to have room.

His larger pictures had run the customary course of "feature releases" with increasing success, but after all they were confined within the limitations of the business side of the presentation of motion pictures. This meant that they would be seen over the different circuits that are laid out in filmland and then pass out the same as others. Their distinctiveness was noticed. They surpassed other features, but after all they were just Griffith features and could only go so far.

What was there to do to find an outlet? The time came when he had finished "The Birth of a Nation." He knew he had a fine piece of work. His vision extended further than that of the men who control the finances of the motion picture business. A great sum of money had been invested in this undertaking—more than was ever expended in the making of a great spectacle. Nearly a year of ceaseless toil lay behind this enormous expense, and here was the man who had seen ahead of his contemporaries, who had evolved the great American epic, who had multiplied detail until it was staggering, and with this behind him the foregone was not inspiring.

There were so many theaters and so many states and so many channels through which it could pass and then he was done. Griffith is not an easy going sort. He knew the limitations of the business, and he wanted to break from this narrow field and go before that great public which had never seriously regarded the motion picture as an art possibility.

Behind him he had the record of several great pictures which had been hidden like the lights under a bushel. There was "Judith of Bethulia," as fine a piece of poetic imagery and rhythmic grouping as the art had ever developed in America.

For contemporary study of the seamy side of American life he had vastly improved upon the late Paul Armstrong's somewhat superficial study in heredity, "The Escape," and made a virile thing of punch and power. He had combined



D. W. GRIFFITH.

the short story by Poe, "The Telltale Heart," with the fanciful and lyrical quality of "Annabel Lee" and brought forth a classic in weird mysticism, which he called "The Avenging Conscience." In the trade channels these had been recognized as superfine works, but they had never gained that measure of recognition given many plays that were vastly inferior in art and poetry and power.

When He "Arrived."

With "The Birth of a Nation" completed, the man found himself facing the inexorable fact that he had created an art which his associates and contemporaries had been unable to breast up with in their advancement. He must conquer a new world if he would meet with a return in finances and artistic recognition commensurate with the thing he had done.

He demanded an outlet. His business affairs had always been looked after by others. These men were appealed to. They were willing to do everything within their power and resources, but the motion picture resources had not progressed as rapidly as Griffith. There was not a channel open which looked appealing to him. He insisted that there must be a way. In desperation it is said that Griffith was told he would be given a free rein and could go ahead with his own plans.

Having completed his big work, it seemed piling it on to put the burden on his shoulders. Griffith's success in direction had been enhanced by his uncanny ability to select able lieutenants and players. He brought this sense of ease with him after his labors in California. Quietly he set about sizing up the field, and he selected a young man who had been associated with the old line dramatic offerings. This man was J. J. McCarthy, who looks after all of Griffith's business interests in the east in the capacity of general manager of the controlling company which owns "The Birth of a Nation."

Playing For Big Stakes.

Then Griffith set about with this, beginning to gather other forces about him, and in a month's time "The Birth of a Nation" was launched. It's an old story now of how the wisecracks all predicted a dismal failure. Griffith

was undaunted, for he had nothing to lose. He knew he had a fine work, and he desired it seen and understood. He was playing for higher stakes. The anvil chorus rang with all that mellow depth which is the true sound of Broadway and Forty-second street. The plans for launching the big spectacle were never altered. The greatest promotion campaign in the way of publicity and advertising New York had ever seen for a show enterprise went merrily ahead. Then came the opening and the result. Once more Griffith was right. He had made an outlet. He put his art on a par with the best the highest priced theaters afford. He rented a theater and assumed all the risk. He worked as hard to get it under way as he had in the making of it. The people he had been trying for so long to reach discovered a new genius in the field. The man had been compelled to climb out of the narrow rut and the trenches on to a higher plane, and in doing it he raised the tone and standing of the cinematographic art with him. There is to be no going back. Griffith proved to his own satisfaction that it could be done. He looks ahead now with a clearer vision, for he knows that the best is none too good for the world if you have an opportunity of letting the people know.

"The Birth of a Nation" has had the most phenomenal run New York has ever seen—725 consecutive performances. If you would have a comparative idea of what this means look at some of the records. It is the only \$2 attraction which stretched through the summer from last season without a break. It has played to nearly 700,000 persons in New York. It is touring the country in the first class theaters, and old line attractions are changing their routes to get away from its opposition. It is estimated that more than 4,000,000 persons have seen the production in this country.

It cost \$500,000 to make and launch this success. That money has been earned twice over, and those who financed it originally are possessors of an Eldorado the like of which was never dreamed of in the theatrical world before.

such, Houdini declares, would retire him. His secret will die with him.

Arrangements have been made for the production of "Faust" by the Poli company. This will mark the first time the play has been produced by an American stock company.

The entire Ziegfeld's "Follies" from the New Amsterdam Roof will appear at the big banquet which his friends are giving to Marcus Loew in the gold room of the Astor Hotel this evening, in commemoration of his tenth anniversary in the theatrical business.

BETROTHAL NEWS.

In the spring, when the young man's fancy is lightly turning to thoughts of love, the young woman is beginning to think of engagement luncheons and showers and is trying to concoct some new and very clever idea.

Instead of the usual pink and white table for the engagement luncheon have the decorations yellow. A low bowl of jonquils and pussy willows would make a pretty centerpiece, with four glass candlesticks around it with tall yellow candles and no shades. At each place have a downy yellow chicken just peeping from a shell with a tiny card in its bill. Have the guest's name on one side and the word "Just Out." On the other side have the names of the betrothed.

One girl invited the members of her card club to luncheon one day, and as each guest entered the living-room she was given a piece of paper exactly like the slips used at Chinese laundries. When dessert was being served a young brother entered dressed like a Chinaman with a tray piled with small bundles done up like collars and each one had tucked under the string the rest of the slip. When the slips were matched the guests discovered they contained the names of the hostess and the man who was to marry.

The usual tin shower may be varied by asking every girl to bring some stran-

all that will hold just enough for two, with her favorite recipe so changed that it will provide only enough to serve two.

Another way to announce an engagement is to have little bright colored birds such as are sold at favor counters resting on the edge of each goblet when the guests are seated. Each bird has a tiny card round its neck with the names written on one side and "A little bird wants to tell you something" on the other.

Rebop Orchestra Concert.

The Rebop Orchestra, under direction of H. W. Weber, gave its last public rehearsal of the season Monday night in the lecture room of Keller Memorial Church, in the presence of a large audience. Miss Hilda Koehler, mezzo soprano; Miss Marguerite T. Harbers, violinist; and J. P. Roederer, basso, were the soloists. Miss Koehler gave a very pleasing rendition of "Merrily I Roam" (Horn), her encore being "Laddie" (Tribetskoy), while Mr. Roederer sang "Victims" (Hurg); "Joy in Strength" (Roederer); and "Der Schreiber" (Homer) showed his fine voice to excellent advantage. Miss Harbers delighted her audience with a splendid rendition of "Boler" (Bohm), "Drdia's" "Souvenir," and Mylarnak's "Masurka." Miss King, Miss Kernohan, and Miss Humphreys were the accompanists. The orchestra numbers included a march, "The Brownies," overture, "Marionetten"; "On the Dreamy Hudson"; waltzes; selection from "Erminie"; grand fantasia, "Home, Sweet Home, the World Over," and a march, "Military Days."

Tree Quotes History.

At a recent reception Sir Herbert Tree attended a lady was reproaching the Shakespearean actor for not going into society more frequently.

"You ought to give us more opportunities to lionize you," she complained.

"I never heard of but one man," replied Sir Herbert, "who wasn't spoiled by being lionized."

"And he was?" suggested the fair inquisitor.

"Ha," finished Tree, "was Daniel."

"NOBODY HOME" IS NOT NEW SLANG

The following foreword is used in the program of "Nobody Home," the musical comedy which comes to the Belasco Theater tomorrow evening for a return engagement.

Note—Students of American slang, and the humorous authors claiming priority in the use of the phrase, "Nobody Home," may be interested in knowing that Charles Dickens makes use of the expression in "Nicholas Nickleby." Squere, in presenting Smike to a victor, indicates the poor imbecile's lack of balance by tapping his forehead significantly with the remark: "Nobody home, no matter how hard you knock."

Dickens, himself, unquestionably took the expression from an epigram by Alexander Pope, who died in 1744, and whose saying was paraphrased by William Cowper, as follows: "You beat your pate, and fancy wit will come; Knock as you please, there's Nobody at Home."

Sister Sues Eddie Foy.

There is an interesting law suit pending in a New York court that reveals some domestic history of a popular stage star. Mrs. Mary A. Doyle is suing her brother Edwin Fitzgerald, who on the stage is the well-known comedian, Eddie Foy, for the expense of rearing and educating his oldest child.

For several years Foy and his seven children have been making a tour of

Paderewski Plays at National Thursday

Paderewski, the great pianist, will be heard in recital next Thursday afternoon, April 13, at 4:30, under the management of Mrs. Wilson-Greene. Standing aloof from the public, absorbed in his profession, he is the most interesting and significant figure in the world of pianoforte music. A poet in tone, he reveals the clinging sweetness of the lyric or the rolling progress of the epic. He makes his instrument sing a song as if with the human voice, or gives it the crashing colors of an orchestra.

Years that have passed since first he began to come to us have served only to ripen, mellow and broaden his art. The mystery of his presence now, as ever, casts its spell upon his audience. His hold on the public was never more firm. Unfortunate Poland gains glory and consolation in having such a son.

Only One Skating Charlotte Though.

Charlotte, the marvelous ice ballerina at the Hippodrome, says there are 1,450 Charlottes in greater New York. Her information is based upon the returns she has received since the announcement was made that every girl named Charlotte would be given a copy of her skating book upon application. Requests for that number of autographed copies have been received to date.

"Some" Interviewers!

Cyril Maude says that the funniest thing that ever happened to him during his American tours was when a Western reporter sought an interview, which was granted. The British actor was eating breakfast at the time and asked the questioner to proceed. "Well," began the reporter, "do you like eggs?"

Mrs. Langtry, when told of this experience, however, said that she could match it. A reporter approached her in the parlor of a hotel and asked to interview her. She consented, but added that she was about to take tea, and would talk as she did so. A waiter approached and Mrs. Langtry ordered Russian tea. "Imagine that," said the reporter, "and here all these years I had supposed that you were a French actress!"—Theater Magazine.

Maudie O'Neil, who appears in "Nobody Home," is the owner of a fashionable hotel in Boston, Mass.

Mrs. Jacques Martin, who appears in "Daddy Long Legs" in the part of Mrs. Semple, is well known in Washington and has many friends in the city.

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THEATRICAL BRIEFS.

Lawrence Grossmith, the English comedian, who scores such a pronounced hit in "Nobody Home," which comes to the Belasco this week, has made an independent fortune out of his art.

Jean Webster, author of "Daddy Long Legs" is said to be the highest paid woman writer of the English language. She is the author of five "best sellers" in addition to "Daddy Long Legs," and her book royalties average many thousands of dollars a year. In addition to this income, she receives royalties from three productions of "Daddy Long Legs." These play royalties have averaged from \$1,500 to \$3,000 a week. Miss Webster is a niece of the late Mark Twain. It is significant of improved conditions in the modern literary world that she has received more money from "Daddy Long Legs" than her distinguished uncle was paid for any three of his most famous stories.

"The Birth of a Nation" is now being presented in South Africa, Australia and London and Manchester, England. Besides these organizations twelve films are touring this country.

John Mason, on account of illness, has left the company playing "Common Clay" and will not resume his labors until next fall.

The Dramas Society of New York will produce "The Tempest" in April as its part of the American commemoration of the Shakespeare Tercentenary. The production will be made under the direction of Louis Calvert and John Corbin, who is secretary of the society.

Klaw & Erlanger have arranged with Hulbert Footner, the author of "The Sealed Valley" and other novels, for a comedy of American life for Elsie Ferguson. The scenario was submitted last week, and Mr. Footner agreed to deliver the completed manuscript on July 1. In the new comedy the role designed for Miss Ferguson is an up-to-date modish young woman, moving in smart society.

She is not an idler, but has distinct ideas of her own. The scenes are laid in a fashionable house on Long Island.

Elsie Plier is the only sister of Harry Plier, of Gaby Deslys notoriety, or fame, as you will, and Harry's plan of dressing her as an exact replica of the temperamental Gaby is said to have caused his split with the Frenchwoman. Later on he and Elsie are expected to work together.

Rose MacDonald has rejoined the Poli forces and will be seen this week as Vera Vernon in "The Full House." Miss MacDonald was a member of the company last year.

Henry Miller has just completed arrangements for a London production of "Daddy Long Legs." The engagement will be inaugurated at the beginning of the Easter holidays. The play will be interpreted by an arrangement with the Williamson estate, but under the direction of Henry Miller. "Daddy Long Legs" will begin a long tour of Australia and New Zealand.

A new face will be found in the personnel of the Poli Players this week when Bessie Warren makes her appearance.

Most every actress must have a hobby and Zoe Barnett, the ingenue prima donna in "Nobody Home," has a more than the ordinary man's, which is the collection of odd hats.

Princess Troubitskoy will shortly retire to her Virginia homestead, Castle Hill, in Albemarle County, in order to fulfill her contract with the Messrs. Shubert for another play, which, like "The Fear Market," now at the Comedy Theater, will treat of some startling phase of New York society life.

Houdini is a rich and studious, especially upon the subject of esthetic lore and black magic. He expects to retire at 20 unless some, somewhere, sometime, before then, invents a way to hold him, despite his efforts to escape. One