



When friendship turned to love. Mary and Doug doing their bit in the Liberty Loan Drive that brought them into close companionship.

# The Pickford-Fairbanks Wooing

The story of filmdom's greatest real life romance with a moonlight fade-out.

By  
BILLY BATES

*"Mrs. Charlotte Smith announces the wedding of her daughter, Mary, to Mr. Douglas Fairbanks at the home of Rev. F. Whitcomb Brougner. The bride wore white satin and tulle with a touch of apple green. The groom was garbed in conventional black. Mr. and Mrs. Fairbanks will be at home following a honeymoon trip to Niagara Falls and other points of interest in the East."*

**T**HAT'S the way they would have liked to see it in the papers. Just a quiet little ceremony, with the bride smiling—and perhaps weeping a little, as brides do—and the groom blushing and clumsy and nervous, as any plumber might be, facing the future and the installment plan collector with a high heart, a steady job and the woman of his choice.

Instead of that, astonishing newspaper headlines shrieked out the story in giant type. Telegraph and cable wires ticked the details across the world. In every home mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers chatted over the precious news. Cynical, worried old Wall street, harassed by an upset world and a humpty-dumpty market, smiled its cynical, worried smile over the event. It was not hard to imagine President Wilson pausing in the midst of his breakfast egg and remarking to the first lady of the land:

"Think of that, Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks are married."

After all, it was the only thing to expect. The wooing and wedding of the two great motion picture stars was a romance that the most hectic scribbler of scenarios might have hesitated to tap off on his wheezy typewriter.

It is one of the great love stories of all time.

Well may the two of them—Mary and Doug—long for the pure rays of the moon to silver their romance. It is the moonlight they will seek when they go far away from everything—just the two of them, alone. And it is high time the film of their narrative is tinted with the sentimental blue of eventide that so long has been lacking.

Instead of that they have been forced to their love-making in the glare of the mid-day sun of publicity. To them it has been as if their most intimate and personal moments were lived under the harsh light of noon with the relentless eye of the camera recording their slightest gesture and a case-hardened director criticising their action. To say nothing of the world and his wife, brimming with gossip, waiting for the screening of the scene.

There has been much talk already of the final fadeout. There are those skeptics who are whispering their expectation of still another reel, done once more in the blinding sun. The sad fact remains that this too wise world of ours is rather suspicious of moonlight.

It has reached the age where it loves to whisper during the emotional scene that the tears of the leading woman are achieved by glycerine and that the pair who seem such fond lovers on the screen do not speak to each other once the camera man ceases to mark his magic circles in the air.

But despite the cynic world and despite its wagging tongue, there is a great love story behind this famous wedding. Far above the sly eye-winking and the rib-poking of the scandal

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monger and the rumor-peddler, is the love of a woman—a love that has come after great sorrow; a love that would willingly sacrifice the fame that came before it; a love that brings with it the promise, at last, of the errant moonbeam's soothing luster.

When Mary Pickford stood before the minister she stood there as any woman might stand, radiant with love for the man at her side, a bit tearful perhaps for the tender memories left behind, but with smiling hope for the future. Except for the sensation-hungry world waiting just outside the door she might have been the plumber's bride looking forward to the honeymoon trip to Niagara Falls.

If the wily world will not believe this maybe it would consider the viewpoint of the film folk on the lot. Usually the moving picture lot is a place for gossip and careless chatter. Under ordinary circumstances, such a wedding would have the vampire snickering in the camera man's ear, the leading juvenile saying things confidentially to the electrician, and the director smilingly whispering to the animal trainer.

The film folk know all the story. And film folk, from property boy to producer, are hoping that Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks have found lasting happiness.

For all the fame and fortune that has come to her, "America's Sweetheart" has lived a life tinged with poignant sadness. There has come stalking on the trail of success an unhappiness that sometimes is reflected in her pictures in a way no coaching director could invent. There has been always a heartache and sorrow that might have broken a woman of less capacity.

It is not necessary to dip deeply into the girlhood of the actress. That story has been told and re-told. Just enough, then, to recall when she was only five her widowed mother was forced to go on the stage to support the family—Mary, Lottie and Jack. It was shortly after this that Mary first appeared on the stage as the child in "Bootle's Baby."

Players in the Princess theater in Toronto, Ont., speak today of their memory of her big, sorrowful eyes. Young as she was, she seemed to share her mother's worry over straitened family circumstances. To help her mother, she threw herself into her work with the fervor of a finished actress. The effort was rewarded when she was engaged by Belasco in "The Warrens of Virginia." But the big struggle still was ahead.

Then came the chance in motion pictures.

One of the spacious bed-chambers of the Fairbanks home at Beverly Hills, California.



The "little gray home in the West" of which Mary Pickford Fairbanks becomes mistress.

At once, real fame began to form for the young actress and it seemed that an end of the worrying, sad days was at hand. All over the country she became known as "the Biograph blonde." That was in the day when the names of film actors and actresses were not featured. But the Pickford charm and ability rose above such anonymity.

On the Biograph lot with her was Owen Moore. He acted as her leading man. Their love on the screen soon became the love of their life. It was while in Havana with the Biograph company that Moore proposed and was accepted. When she accepted Moore, Miss Pickford accepted the Catholic church.

Film folk saw in the union a perfect mating. They returned to their work before the camera. Day by day the fame of Owen Moore's talented young wife grew. But the folk on the lot saw that the true measure of happiness was not yet to be Mary's. Ugly rumors and malicious stories began to circulate.

It soon became known that what had

started out as glittering romance was ending in bickerings and quarrels. Mrs. Pickford remained always close to her daughter. There can be small doubt that she was jealous of the little girl she had guarded since the days of "Bootle's Baby." That's the way film folk looked at it. One story went the rounds that, during a visit to New York, Moore had engaged a suite of rooms at the Biltmore. Mrs. Pickford and Mary followed him. Mrs. Pickford, the story runs, surveyed the suite and said:

"Very fine, Owen; you take that room in there and Mary and I will sleep in here."

Similar stories came on the heels of this. The full force of the sun began to beat on the two. Moore had no word of complaint, even to his intimates. During this time, he arranged the terms of the first big Pickford contract. But the final reckoning was not far off. Sadly, Mary Pickford surveyed the wreck of her high hopes. Mournfully, she saw the coming of the end. She was a disappointed woman. The glory that had come to her through the living camera made her matrimonial failure the more ironic.

About this time another star began to glitter brilliantly on the moving picture horizon. The bounding personality of Douglas Fairbanks began to win the athletic young actor his place in the history of the silver screen. His career had been of the dashing sort. He had married Beth Sully, daughter of "Cotton King Sully," and had left the stage. Reversals in the "Cotton King's" fortunes had caused his return to the footlights and finally a venture in "the movies."

Under his bubbling optimism and limitless vigor there was a hint of sadness, too. Some spoke of domestic difficulties.

Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks first saw each other while they were working on the Lasky lot. He bounded on to the lot and saw her in a character in which she is familiar to millions. She looked up and saw him.

Thus the romance may have had its start—under the full glare of the sun—although the two saw little of each other until the Liberty Loan drive, in the interest of which Mary and Doug and Charlie Chaplin toured the country. At least, the budding of sentiment began with the whole world looking on. Mary Pickford, the saddest and the greatest motion picture actress, had found



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## The Pickford—Fairbanks Wooing

(Continued)

a true companionship. And once more she saw the hope of a ray of moonlight in her life.

One day there was an accident on the Lasky lot. Miss Pickford was suspended high in the air at a rope's end. It began to spin and twist. There was grave danger that she would be injured. Fairbanks, acting on instinct, climbed to her rescue. He carried her to safety and her arms went about his neck.

The story of the rescue and the tableau that finished it was made public. The eager tongue of the gossip began to wag. The friendship of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks was given a sinister significance. That the gossip might be downed, it seemed wiser that their friendship be abandoned. But it had been too strong. Both were too hungry for the comradeship and sympathy they found in each other.

Then there came a supper party at the Algonquin in New York. By this time mutual business had drawn the two closer together. Miss Pickford gave a party for Fairbanks. That capped the climax as far as the gossips were concerned.

Stories flew about that Moore had vowed to challenge Fairbanks to a duel. It was reported he had armed himself and was looking for Fairbanks. Moore is known as a very handy man in a rough-and-tumble affray. Fairbanks, the athlete, was not reckoned as averse to this test of strength with the love of the film star as its inspiration.

Half a dozen times friends intervened and stopped a desperate meeting between the husband and the man he looked upon as his greatest enemy. These stories, of course, went to Miss Pickford. Each time she was put to the torture of suspense and fear. The moonlight she had hoped for seemed a vain promise.

The strain began to tell on her. Fairbanks became worried. It was at this time that the world came close to losing its chosen stars. That their love might unfold its wings, Fairbanks and Miss Pickford had almost decided to leave the world behind, abandon their careers, disappear from the screen and begin life anew in the Orient.

About this time there spread the story that Fairbanks and Moore had met in a hotel lobby and that Moore had drawn a gun on his rival. In the struggle, the story said, Fairbanks was shot in the hand. One of the first versions was that Fairbanks had been killed.

The tragic course of her romance almost caused Mary's complete collapse. She went nowhere unless she was heavily veiled. She chose for her companion Margery Daw. Margery was usually with her when Mary met Fairbanks during discussions made necessary by their business affiliation.

"The Big Four" of the motion picture world—Griffith, Pickford, Fairbanks and Chaplin—had been formed. It is moving picture history that on the night that combination was discussed, friends prevailed upon Fairbanks to leave the dining room of the hotel in which he was stopping to avoid a scene with Moore.

But there never has been a clash. Owen Moore still cared for his wife and did nothing to cause her added trouble. Fairbanks, on his side, did his best to avoid an unpleasant encounter that might bring more pitiless publicity and add to Mary's burden.

"My whole life is ruined," Mary told Miss Daw, shortly afterward. "Just at a time when I should be at the height of my career I am surrounded by misery and sorrow. I can't stand the worry and strain much longer."

From an unexpected quarter there came a new promise of the moonlight. Mrs.

Fairbanks obtained a divorce from Douglas. At the time she made bitter accusations against "a certain woman." The name was not mentioned in the newspapers, but the gossips looked after that. By this time Mary Pickford had stopped weeping. She could only call upon her love of her art to rescue her from her melancholy. At other times they would find her sitting in her room, staring blindly with unseeing eyes.

Mary Pickford was fighting her greatest battle—with herself.

She was facing the whole troubled situation once and for all. She was nerving herself for the final ordeal—the move upon which she staked her future, her fame and her fortune.

The world learned of her decision on the day she obtained her divorce from Owen Moore in Nevada, and the world smiled a bit when it read that Miss Pickford appeared in somber clothes and heavily veiled. They saw in this an affectation and a pose, but it wasn't either. The black of Miss Pickford's garments matched the black sorrow in her heart. Not even the cynical world, had it seen within her heart, would have suspected glycerine in the film favorite's tears.

The gossips were not through with her yet. She was hounded and harassed. If she appeared on the same lot with Fairbanks, which her work required her to do, there was a fresh outburst of rumors.

Into the situation came another distressing point. That was her relation to the church whose faith she had professed when she married Moore. What her plans were at the time of her divorce from Moore cannot be flatly stated. It may be recalled that shortly afterward a story circulated that she would be excommunicated if she married again.

"Then I shall never be excommunicated," said Miss Pickford. "Only today I received a beautiful letter from the priest who knows me best. In the eyes of the church my divorce is not illegal. It sanctions such an act but would not sanction my second marriage, although recognizes my legal separation from Mr. Moore."

She was asked if she intended to marry Fairbanks.

"That rumor is absurd," she declared. "My divorce does not signify that. I just wanted to be free—free as I have wanted to be for years."

As has been stated, it is impossible to judge whether she meant what she said. But there can be no doubt that she was aware of what her move meant on the day she consented to marry Fairbanks. There can be no doubt that she realized she must consider herself no longer a communicant of the church.

It meant something more, too. Among her millions of admirers are many of the Catholic faith. In leaving the church, Miss Pickford realized that she might be risking their friendship and their support.

She knew, too, that her second marriage in any event would start the tongues wagging again. She would be made a symbol of the popular version of faithlessness on the stage.

All these things must have been placed in the balance against the yearning of her woman's heart—the longing for the light of the moon. But Mary made her choice.

That is why it was written in the beginning of this narrative that there is a real love story behind the most famous wedding of the century.

From the studios comes word that Mary Pickford already is a changed woman, infecting everyone on the lot with her buoyancy. At Beverly Hills they are busily

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packing up for the journey along the honeymoon trail to Europe in June—away from the sorrowful past.

The film folk are hoping that the sensation of the marriage will quiet down and leave the two to their work and their happiness. They hope Mary's days of trial and trouble are over, and they are sure the two great idols of the screen living their new life together, will bring a new charm to their art. Their hopes may seem optimistic with the gossips reluctant to leave so toothsome a topic and with an investigation of Mary Pickford's divorce from Moore started twenty-four hours after her marriage to Fairbanks.

But it hardly seems likely that her millions of friends on the other side of the silversheet are to turn from her and consign the one who once was "America's Sweetheart" to the limbo of forgotten loves. It would appear more reasonable that her pictures and Doug's—like their future—are to be just what they make them. But that is for time to decide.

After all, life is just one cross-roads after another, and this is probably the greatest problem of Mary Pickford's life. We must all choose our own roads to happiness. Friends or advisors can be of little help.

May the judgment of the future be gentle, and may the coming reels bring her the moonlight of romance she has so long sought. Whatever is ahead, the present seems the time for a suffusion of blue on the sympathetic screen.

For Mary Pickford has made her choice.

## Questions and Answers

(Continued)

JENNIE ALLEN, DEVILS LAKE, N. D.—You are indeed a tonic for this tired business man. Your consideration for my feelings touched me deeply. The best I can do in return is to give you the sorry information that Gladys Leslie is no longer with Vitagraph; however, you may be able to reach her care Ivan Abramson, for whose company she made a picture recently. She is not permanently affiliated with any company at present. I'll look it up for you.

B. B., ALBANY.—I have a good many "Tomboy" noms-de-plume among my correspondents, so we'll just let yours ride by. No no—you're wrong. The Wally Reids have only one child: his name is William Wallace Jr. You were under the impression evidently that they had two sons: one named William and one named Wallace. Wanda Hawley is married to J. Burton Hawley; she's a Realart star now.

ROBERT A. STONE, RALEIGH.—Mary is divorced; I am sure I do not know if she has any intention of marrying again. She has no children. She is twenty-six years old and will send you her picture. So you are not looking for a wife as you already have one and experience has taught you—or is it experience teaches all of us—that one is beaucoup at a time.

ALENE W., ST. LOUIS.—I am sure I don't know whether Eugene O'Brien reads his mail himself or lets his secretary do it for him. The best way to find out is to write to him and see if he answers personally—although he might even fool you then. I know this much: his wife doesn't act as his secretary because he hasn't any wife. Louise Lovely plays with Lew Cody in "The Butterfly Man."

... who could withstand  
The charms seen in the mirror she holds in her hand?—Jami

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