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Starting —
"OUR MARY"
By ARTHUR STRINGER

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Our Mary

An Intimate Appraisal, in Four Parts, of
the World's Most Widely Known
Motion-picture Actress

By Arthur Stringer

Illustrated by Photographs taken for "MacLean's Magazine"

"What message," I asked Mary Pickford, "have you for Canada?"
"What message?" she thoughtfully repeated. "There are so many messages, for Canada's my mother, you see, and we've always kept in touch. But just now there's one thing I think of very, very often. The world is always proud of courage. Women, even more than men, love a good fighter. And Canada has surely proved itself a nation of fighters. I'm more than proud of them, I love them, those Canadian boys who heard the call and went overseas singing 'Tipperary' and 'The Maple Leaf Forever.' They don't sing so much now, they tell me, but they fight and suffer and die as bravely as ever." She stopped and looked up quickly. "Don't think I'm saying this without feeling and knowing it's true. I've thought more about this war, perhaps, than you imagine. There were boys I knew in the Princess Pats, boys that are now dead and buried over in France, splendid boys, glorious boys. And of the twenty-nine cousins I have in Canada I know of eleven who are now serving at the front. I get letters from them. I get letters from other boys over there, wonderful letters, letters which by themselves would keep me from forgetting I was a Canadian, if I ever could forget it."

I STOPPED short, that first day I went to talk with Mary Pickford, as I saw an automobile filled with four big policemen round a corner and deliberately run down a white-faced fugitive with two custard pies under his arm.

For a moment, I repeat, I stopped short. And then I remembered. I realized that the policemen were padded and fat, that their night-sticks were made of rubber, that the flivver in which they rode was uncouthly diminutive for men of their weight, and that the victim of their assault wore a comedy moustache and a coat that was three sizes too small for him.

I remembered, even before I beheld the camera-man so solemnly turning his crank, that I was in the wilds of Hollywood, Hollywood the home-jungle of the screen-vampire, the city of the silver-sheets and the melodramacrobatic heroes, the stamping ground of vengeful Sioux and broncoed sheriffs, the idyllic suburb where the ordinary peace-loving citizen is apt to return to his rose-wreathed bungalow and find it the background for indescribably bloody carnage between train-robbers and mounted police, the town of valetudinarian tourists and retired octogenarians where the placid Old Veteran, with nothing to think about but the scenery and the tardiness of the rainy season, finds himself suddenly confronted by the roar of musketry and witnesses a regiment of yelling Rebels leap out of a lemon grove and do their little best to make a second Manassas by firing half-a-thousand blanks into the thick of a hundred equally active "Feds."

But it doesn't greatly disturb the Old Veteran. He is used to it. He has to be, if he elects to dwell in that fountain-head of the celluloid-drama, of which, according to recent official figures, exactly nineteen thousand five hundred miles are unreel every night in the United States alone.

That drama has put its mark on Southern California just as Southern California has put its mark on the drama. To say which gets the best of the bargain is not my present aim and purpose—but both seem to pay the price. So on those days when you are tired of the eternal Californian background, it might be well to remember that the climate which ripens the Valencia and the five-reel feature has proved itself exceptionally rich in those actinic rays so valuable



A photograph of Mary Pickford and Arthur Stringer taken outside the studios at Hollywood.

in motion-picture photography, to say nothing of providing for the camera man over three hundred working days in the year and at least a dozen sharply differentiated brands of "location" scenery in an extremely limited area of this earth's surface.

So, as I wandered somewhat erratically about those drama-scarred outskirts of Los Angeles, in search for a star whose orbit was still slightly bewildering to me, I caught sight of things in the open street, and in borrowed and bosky dells, and high above close-boarded enclosures, which gave small promise of appeasing one's perplexity of mind. I saw love's young dream next door to arson and pillage, and a row of Elizabethan facades hobnobbing with what was plainly a replica of the Bastille, and three Venetian gondolas in a ditch made of canvas-covered planks. I caught sight of animal-cages and of pintoes and cowboys waiting to do their turn in one of the "Westerns." I passed more than one Hope Alley where the "extra people" patiently roost and await their call—and saddening indeed was that army of extra people in its dimensions. I remarked eight-cylinder racing-cars as polished as the young and handsome movie-heroes who owned them, and a bronco-buster in hair-pants, and a strawberry-tinted sedan belonging to a strawberry-blonde vampire,



The Pickford family seeing Jack off on his way to join the U.S. Navy. Reading left to right: Mrs. Jack Pickford (Olive Thomas), Jack Pickford, Mrs. Charlotte Pickford, Mary Pickford holding Mary Pickford Rupp (Lottie's daughter), Lottie Pickford (Mrs. Rupp).

advertised as a Russian countess, I believe, but really emanating from the slums of Pittsburgh. I made note of actors in their cadaverous-looking movie make-up, and studios festooned with Cooper-Hewitts as thick as garlic-strings in a Neapolitan kitchen, and "trick" bridges and "break-away" habitations, and a "comedy" tank, and a domesticated riverbed that could be made to curl about any given scene as companionably as a kitten.

II.

BUT as I wandered further westward along Sunset Boulevard, and then turned north into Vine Street, I beheld a complete city block that was a crowded beehive of industry, only here, instead of spinning cotton and cobbling shoes, they spun dreams and revamped romance. Their capacity for this latter product, I might pause to add, is exactly one million positive feet, in film form, per week. For I had at last reached the home of that intricate and all but indecipherable amalgamation of producing concerns known as the Lasky Studios, which in some way embraces or is embraced by the Paramount-Artcraft corporation, and in turn includes the Mary Pickford Studios. But you must go to someone more initiated than I am to learn the fit and proper name for that city within a city, where, apparently, the

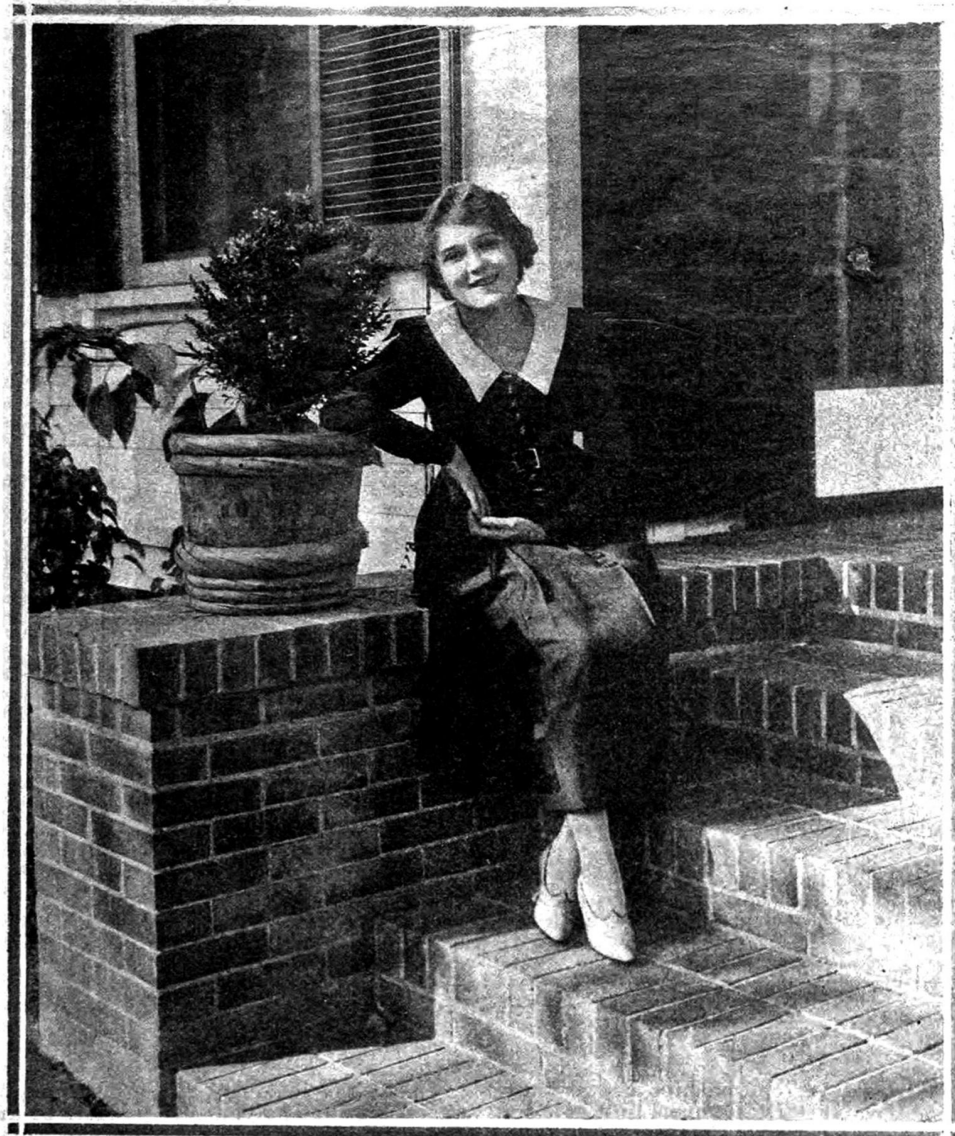
units and interrelationships are as inextricably mixed up as worms in a bait tin, or even as the royal families of Europe.



Mary Pickford at home; and at work.

Inside the jealously guarded temple of this somewhat polygamous goddess of art I was confronted by a community of workers, esoteric, and intent on their own ends, a community with its own carefully organized service department, including as it does its own police and patrol systems, its own fire, street-cleaning, water and electrical management, not to mention a cafeteria, a planing-mill, and a hospital. I saw glass stages and dark stages and scene docks and property rooms and paint frames and plaster shops and sailing ships and exterior sets and business offices and dressing rooms. Yet I could not tarry to digest my confusion of impressions, for I was late, and to keep a Queen waiting, I remembered, was the most unforgivable form of *lèse majesté*.

I also remembered, as I was passed on from functionary to functionary and from office to office along what seemed a grand tier of convict cells where everybody was ridiculously and inexcusably busy, that it was not the established custom to leave queens too accessible to the outside world. And I was led hither and thither and then outdoors again, this time out on "the lot"—it is remarkable how the moving-picture business has caught up and retained the language and spirit of the circus—and skirting that second bee-hive of invention denominated the Scenario Department, was introduced into a small



A picture of "Little Mary" taken on the steps of her magnificent home in Hollywood.

and secluded bungalow very simply and sedately done in mauve and grey.

IT wasn't impressive, that little dressing-room bungalow, except for its simplicity. The note that it sounded, in fact, was almost austerity. It was only later on that I discovered what that almost monastic adherence to essentials meant. It was, really, a deck cleared for action, a ring bared for bitter combat. It was not like the dressing-room of certain stage-stars I had known in my day. It was made up of two rooms which could be thrown into one, by means of sliding doors. There was no clutter of American Beauty boxes and no litter of slashingly autographed photographs and no untidy runway of newly opened letters. Your modern movie studio is much too sedulously organized for that sort of thing. The letters, I encountered later on, duly installed within the walls appointed for their harborage, for when you get five hundred letters every day of the week it is essential that System must be commanded as the handmaiden of popularity. There was a dressing-table, of course, and one solitary bowl of flowers, and the harmless necessary chairs, and an equally necessary telephone, and a very sensible-looking Japanese screen and a small table

and tea-set that were there for service but not for show. And that was about all.

In the meantime, however, I was once more shaking hands with Mary Pickford and reminding her that our acquaintance was rather an old one, dating all the way back as it did to "The Warrens of Virginia." And Little Mary's question was a patently shocking one, for with that heat-lightning smile of hers which is more or less familiar to countless thousands of picture-lovers she said: "Do you remember my pantalettes?"

I was able to say that I had a very distinct memory of those pantalettes, for little Mary in those days was still playing one of her "kid parts," arrayed in the archaic costume of the ante-bellum era. And she was an adorable kid, with an equally adorable big sister in the person of Charlotte Walker. In that same company I happened to have a brother-in-law, a gaunt and over-grown western boy of eighteen, with his first real part on Broadway. Belasco, with his genius for detail, had picked this boney newcomer from among a group of extra people because of his obvious and undeniable gauntness. That astute manager promptly made him the leader of his group of beleaguered Confederate soldiers, soldiers in their last extremity, dressed in rags, dining on only

a handful of parched corn, as you later saw them do in "The Birth of a Nation." Every trick of make-up was resorted to in the effort to accentuate an already lean and lanky boy's unfed misery of aspect. That starved Confederate soldier in his small part made a "hit," so distinct a hit that his proud and happy mother travelled all the way from Denver to New York City to witness his triumph in person. Belasco, on her arrival, very kindly gave her a box for a Saturday matinee. And when that anxious-eyed and affectionate parent saw her son in that devastating make-up, standing before her so starved and sick and ragged, she unthinkingly confounded romance with reality, as theatre-goers have the habit of doing, and fell to sobbing both uncontrollably and audibly. It "broke up" the company, of course; and as we sat there reminding each other of that historic afternoon, Mary Pickford bubbled with laughter, that light and golden laughter you catch only the thinnest shadows of in the fleeting picture-images of her face.

I REMEMBERED, as I saw Miss Pickford suddenly sober, answer a phone-call, and plunge deep into an explanation of why some certain scene should and must be done only in a certain way, how it was one of history's little ironies that the celebrity about whom so much is written, and has been written, usually remains the most nebulous of personalities. It is a case, I suppose, of the fixed stars, which appear to be always with us, really standing the most remote. Everything there is to say about Mary Pickford, I had been told, had already been said. Which naturally made me stop and ask: What has been said? For the personality of this young Canadian woman, quite as remarkable in her own particular way as was Maria Theresa or Aspasia or George Eliot or Mary Stuart or Ellen Key, remains more or less a mystery to those millions of men and women who clamor for a glimpse of her face and figure on the screen.

For this, there is more reason than one. All such stars, in the first place, seem destined to be caught up in that overwhelmingly complicated mechanism of publicity prevailing in modern stage-life exploitation, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred we find them turned out to the world as trim and conventionalized as a newly minted coin. For business reasons, they are Boswellized from mere persons into personages. They are, as a rule, glad to have this pleasantly polished shell of deception to creep into. Some of them, I know, become imposters to even themselves. But over and above this, it is plainly a perilous thing to be always in the public eye, for the more conspicuous the figure the more ineluctably must it stand as a sort of helpless wooden Hindenberg into which the casual passerby may drive his nail of gossip and the cross-eyed devotee hammer her spike of hearsay. We are never happy until we have pretty well dehumanized all such figures, making them something traditional and Olympian, the victims of that persistent tendency of the world to romanticize the professional exponent of romantic roles.

III.

YET Mary Pickford is romantic, I venture to claim, in a way which neither she nor her press-agents are actively conscious of. I am not, I may as well acknowledge, right out in meeting a Mary Pickford "fan," being too dolorously defi-

ient in that tendency towards hero worship which Chesterton denominates as the heart of all good biography. Nor am I an unqualified lover of the movie, though must not tarry here to go into either its deficiencies or its potentialities. But some seven or eight long years ago, when I was a dramatic critic in New York, I encountered and had the common-sense to recognize brilliance in a sixteen year old girl playing in a drama of Lavedah's put on by Belasco. Assuming the mantle of Moses, I then ventured to prophecy in print that this girl, if she kept on in the way in which she had begun, would some day fill the shoes of Maude Adams herself. That, of course, was a big prophecy. And it went wrong, as so many prophecies have the habit of doing, for this golden-haired girl, instead of keeping on in the way which I thought she would, went back to her earlier field of the motion-picture. She was lost to the speaking stage. She became a star, it is true, a star of unapproached magnitude, in the silent drama; but I find it hard to forgive Mary Pickford for thus confounding my prognostications. That affront, perhaps, will leave it easier for me to assert that Mary Pickford is not a miracle, even though there is much about her career that takes on the aspect of the miraculous. She is not always beautiful to the eye, though even in her most ruthlessly distorting make-up she is always the possessor of that mysterious something to which we apply the headbare word of charm. But from the standpoint of the psychologist she remains a phenomenon that is something more than arresting, something more than novel. For when an entire continent reaches out its arms, as it were, and parentally whispers "Our Mary"; when they make her face better known than was the face of Caesar to the Empire of the Romans; when they imitate her as they once imitated Marie Antoinette, until our towns are so full of "Mary Pickford curls" that Father Time himself must squint closer at the milestones that stand between eight and twenty-eight in a woman's life; when this new-born million-throated democracy of shadow-watchers figuratively drops to its knees and murmurs, "I love you," it is about time for the object of that diffused adoration to be in all seriousness subjected to the cathode rays of analysis.

In the face of all this, nevertheless, in spite of all this, Mary Pickford is simple. She is simple, and yet she is inscrutable, for it is the simple people, after all, who can prove so amazingly complex. I have found it hard to link her up with any of her rivals who have come before my eye with those solemn stage ladies so detached from the sustaining fabric of family life that the most meticulous circumspection must always be exercised to prevent their personal centres of gravity from falling without their base. What is more, Mary Pickford is a woman (and I write the word "woman" deliberately, remembering the fact that the subject of this study has outgrown that perennial girlhood which she is so dolorously though so successfully coerced into poring on the screen), a woman who knows life, and has thought deeply about its problems. One result of this thought has been the development of an instinctive self-criticism. And out of this almost febrile self-criticism has flowered that rare orchid known as taste, taste linked with authority. For the irreproachableness of her taste, even in her commercialized ebullitions of hoydenishness, is matched only on the American stage by Mrs. Fiske, a woman of whom Miss Pick-



Arriving for the day's work at the entrance to the wonderful Lasky-Famous Players plant.

ford spoke three different times during our talk, and of whom more shall be said later. The important part, accordingly, is not that "Our Mary" is to-day the best known woman in the world, or that her personal earnings now aggregate well over a million dollars a year, or that her income tax is four times as much as even Caruso's. But she stands intensely interesting to the impersonal student of life because she is a woman of so cerebral a type that the activities of the mind are plainly and continuously preying on the vigor of the none too robust body, a woman who, like Cassius, "thinks too much," and also a woman, notwithstanding the vitrifying influences of all colossal successes, who has encompassed that emotional subjugation of her fellow-beings which flowers in the phrase they have applied to her: "The Sweetheart of the World."

"Will you excuse me a minute, please, while I take my milk," requested Little Mary after I had been talking to her for a few minutes.

"Why milk?" I not unnaturally inquired.

"We worked very hard over our production of 'Stella Maris'—one time, twenty-three hours at a stretch. I worried a good deal over it all, and got ner-

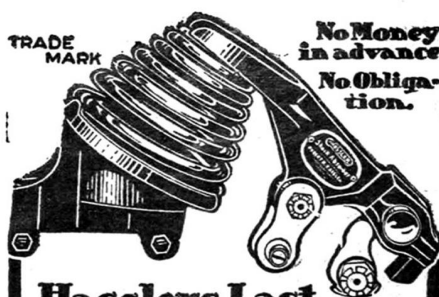
vous indigestion. So my doctor has put me on a milk diet."

A fresh thermos-bottle of pasteurized milk was brought from the big limousine somewhere in the offing, and as the girl who made over a million dollars a year partook of her regal sustenance out of a tumbler over which she went on talking as she sipped, I couldn't help thinking that life, after all, had its way of eventually evening things up.

She went on talking, I repeat, because the things of the mind were much more important to her than the refreshment of the body. As we sat in that mauve and grey Japanese bungalow, in fact, with a California mocking-bird singing in a pepper-tree just outside, we were interrupted by Marshall Nieland, her director, hurrying in to consult as to the details of a laboriously incubating "picture," and a wardrobe mistress—I don't know what they call them in the movies—who came in with a Red Cross dress which I later recognized in "Amarilly of Clothes-Line Alley." I was impressed, next to the way in which Miss Pickford knew just what she wanted and how she wanted it, by the fact that the body of this dress was not white, but of a pinkish shade.

"That's to help the camera," explained

Continued on page 98.



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cubbyholes of offices down twisting corridors earnest officials are busily at work behind huge stacks of documents. A casual visitor might say to himself: "What's all the fuss about? What are they all so busy over anyway? Surely it doesn't take so much fuss and feathers to decide that us common people can't have more than one slice of bread for lunch and that vermicelli soup is nutritious."

As a matter of fact, that department is seriously overworked. Down in Washington Hoover's department is just about as big as the whole of the Government machinery at Ottawa. Each decision arrived at means a great amount of investigation before and a whole world of detailed arrangement later. There are provincial committees and local committees by the hundred to be consulted and kept in touch with. There are legal points to be untangled, multitudinous detail in connection with the granting of licenses, prosecutions to be followed up and watched, deputations to be received, mail to be read by the sackful and answered by the thousands.

JUST consider this matter of mail alone. Writing to the Food Controller has become a national pastime. He is the confidant of the housewife in Vancouver and the recipient of the abuse of the irate fish-and-chip restaurateur of Halifax. A day's mail registers the whole gamut of human emotions. Here are some samples from one batch that has just been dumped in by the mail man.

"My neighbors tell me that you have ordered all hawks to be slaughtered by Aug. 1. I have two young hawks. To slaughter now will rob the Allies of at least one hundred pounds of meat. Please advise."

"Is it true that no marriages are to be allowed after this year because bachelors will have to keep on eating in boarding houses and restaurants where there are food rules and thus eat less?"

Dear Mr. Food Controller. Have you looked into the matter of whale meat? The whale is wholesome and fattening. I figure one adult whale would feed a regiment in France for 23½ days and all the fat could be saved for oil."

"When are you going to stop the eating of olives? Our boys at the front have to subsist on bully beef, and it's a shame that we at home, etc."

"I have a new kind of substitute for wheat that will save the Allies from starvation. It is made mostly from sawdust and is very nutritious. . . ."

One day of it and the average business man would reach his hat off the peg and make hasty tracks to the boiler factory or the counting office! These Food Board officials have to draw upon deep reservoirs of tact and patience; and the amount of detail that passes through their hands is astonishing.

To review what the Food Board has

accomplished during its half year or so of service is unnecessary because every step has been undertaken in the full white light of publicity and the whole programme is well known to the public who live up to it—or rather, down to it. It is sufficient to say that a system of restraints, some iron-bound and legal, others merely suggestive, have been erected around the production and sale of food on the one hand and the eating of food on the other. The farmer still runs his farm as he jolly well pleases and raises such crops as he sees fit, but the manufacturer of food has to operate under a license. If the Food Board saw fit it could probably close up many factories now running, and dispose of the raw material thus saved in any way it saw fit. The baker and merchant are also licensed and any infringement of the regulations would cost them their licenses promptly and inexorably. There are real restrictions also on the consumer. Meals in hotels and restaurants are subject to restrictions and rules, picnics may not be held in the old way, supplies of such essentials as sugar and flour may be purchased in restricted quantities only. The pressure laid on the consumer has been for the most part, however, of an educative nature.

The burden that has been imposed upon us has not been unbearable, in fact not even heavy. Nevertheless it has been effective and to-day it is a new feather in Canada's cap that *we have exceeded our objective*.

AS for the future, it may be that the Food Board will find it necessary to come down on us a little harder. One thing is certain, however. The officials know the situation fully and have a thorough appreciation of the fact that drastic measures that might upset existing conditions. Nothing rash will be done.

It is very doubtful if Canada will ever reach the stage where compulsory rationing is either practicable or necessary. Canada is too big. Imagine issuing bread tickets to the people of a country over 4,000 miles from coast to coast! What system could be devised to keep tab on the larders and the dinner tables and the lunch pails of eight million people thinly distributed over a continent? The Food Board considered this problem on a business basis and found that the cost of operating such a system would be eight million dollars a year and that a whole army of officers would be needed to keep it running.

It is certain, however, that a greater strain will have to be placed upon us if the needs of our allies, growing more exacting all the time, are to be met. Canadians must be prepared to take up another notch or two in the belt.

Now that the public has gained the right angle on the food control problem it is not likely that there will be any difficulty in exceeding any new food objectives that may be set.

Our Mary

Continued from page 25

the little star in answer to my question. "Pure white doesn't take so well." And that casual little question and answer sent me off into a trance and prompted me to sit back and study the girl who had grown into a woman since I had last seen her, to study her as impersonally and as impertinently as a visitor to the Louvre pores over that slab of wood which

Leonardo converted into the Mona Lisa.

I remembered, as I looked with a coerced detachment of mind at that over-familiar figure, an order which I had seen pasted up in a far-distant studio, commanding the extra people to wear nothing but blonde wigs, for the simple reason that blonde hair, like pink-tinted drapery, proves more satisfactory to the photo-

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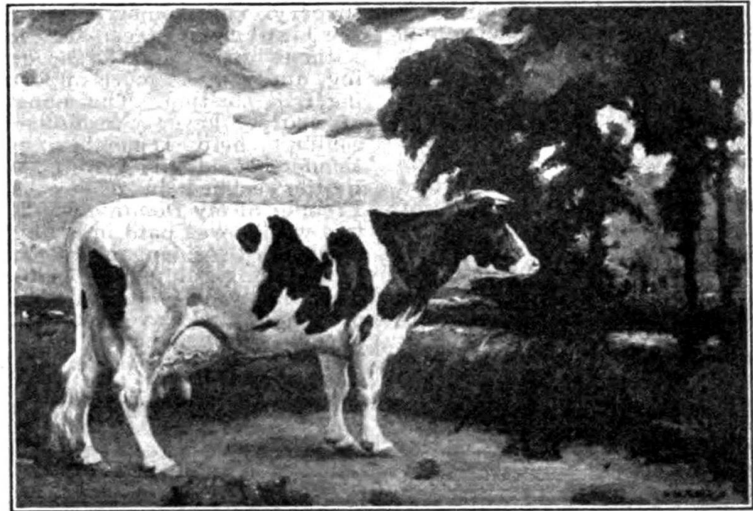


grapher. And that reminded me of the different ways in which Mary Pickford, with her pictorial asset of auburn curls, was fitted for "camera work." She was small; and a large woman can never be a screen heroine. She was still young. And she was the possessor of a face, quite outside its expressiveness, which was not too padded to smother character and not too bony to neutralize loveliness, that loveliness which we all seem to ask for in picture and story. Of her genius as an actress, too long denied her public and too long suppressed even in herself, I must speak in another place.

In Mary Pickford, as I have already said, I beheld a girl who was small and slender, slender almost to the verge of fragility, a wisp of a girl, as the Irish would say, scarcely five feet in height and a hundred pounds in weight. I saw the familiar enough Botticelli face crowned with its trivially important curls of Roman gold—and for the sake of those atavistic ladies who insist on such things I will state here and now that Mary's curls are not only golden, but are real and all her own, for I have seen her "do" them before going forth to face the camera, and I know.

BUT, candidly, I was not so much interested in the curls as I was in the brains behind them. I was more concerned as to the broad high brow which the coiled locks of the *ingenué* could not quite succeed in camouflaging, in the prominent and minutely bulbous frontal bone which betokened the fit chapel for the full congregation of ideas which it housed. Equally significant were the eyes, the eyes of lake blue, as blue as one of Urban's back-drops, with their level and lucid outlook on the world, with their cool light which so often took on a hint of hazel, oddly accentuating their meditative depths. They are wistful eyes, with a touch of melancholy to them even in their moments of laughter. That same air of wistfulness broods over the entire face, in fact, for with all its youth, life has written cryptic records there, written them much deeper than the mere observer of its professional and enforced facetiousness might imagine. It is a melancholy that is not easy to analyze. It is not the weariness of mere ennui and exhaustion, nor is it the autumnal weariness of hopes betrayed and faiths demolished. Miss Pickford is much too young to carry that iron crown of sorrow. But life, it must be remembered, began early with this small body and this over-active brain. It makes one feel that with all that has been accomplished, with all that has been acquired, something equally desired has been missed. For there is hunger in that still youthful face, an unarticulated protest against an indeterminate injustice, an ache for something unachieved. There is, too, a touch of almost rebel wilfulness, a smouldering threat of revolt, which is left more marked by the bee-stung upper lip with its habitual line of poutiness when in repose. But about that face, with its triangulated jaw, its shadowed cheekbone, its vague suggestion of Indian ancestry, is that persistent overtone of sadness which prompts one to feel that here is a woman, still young, who has already reached the knowledge that human powers are finite, that fame at its best is brief. It's the penalty of that ever-active critical faculty which eternally demands advance, growth, progress, the toll which intellect pays to emotion, the war-tax which the too lucid outlook on life wrings from our happiness.

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IV.

YET it must not be deduced from all this that Mary Pickford is in any way lachrymose. There is too much buoyancy, too much quickness of vision, too much bird-like alertness, to permit of any such impression. Just as there is an enduring sense of light about the compact head, due both to its aureole of fair hair and to the milky whiteness of the brow, so about this remarkable woman's personality there is a corresponding and alleviating sense of humor, a sense of humor which comes like mounted and galloping reserves when the front lines of endurance are pressed too hard.

That they are pressed hard, at times, is no secret between Mary Pickford and the world. It is another of life's little ironies that the creation of earth's amusement involves the sternest of human struggles. Why it should be, it is not here my task to explain. But I have seen enough of life on the stage and in the studio to realize

that earth's traffickers in emotion, its creative artists, are involved in something as stern as warfare and as exacting as surgery. One cannot, accordingly, become the best-known screen-star in the world without having ample reasons for achieving, and what is more important, retaining that position. The monetary test is, of course, never the final test, but I couldn't help remembering that this slender-bodied girl through her own activities earned in one week what the Premier of my Dominions earned in fifty-two weeks, was paid in a single fortnight what the President of the United States receives for guiding the ship of state for one whole year. That at least, in our age of dollars and day-books and efficiency-experts, implies power of some kind or another. And the power is there or the reward would never have been reaped. It is there, to protect a long and intricate frontier of interests, for nothing is so transient as a screen success and nothing more vulnerable than a motion-picture

actress's popularity. The real test, as Miss Pickford herself explains in her second talk with me, is in keeping up one's batting average, in allowing no relapses, in retaining the position once won—in other words, in being governed always by those grim wardens known as Growth, Advance, Progress. For if this seemingly guileless girl with the much-copied curls had been born in the days of the Medicis, I venture to assert, she would have been, not a sigh-provoker and a laugh-maker, but a map-changer and a throne-shaker. Into whatever field it might be projected (and mark this well, insipid village beauties who dream of soaring lazily into fame on the wings of the silver-sheet!) that mysterious and inalienable charm, combined with that essentially Pickfordian judicial clearheadedness and combative yet thought-controlled energy, would have first made itself felt and then made itself victorious. For Mary Pickford was born to rule. That imperial instinct cannot



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be smothered beneath Little Lord Fauntleroy masquerades and tomboy antics and Brete Harte comedies. Her success has not been an accident. It has been a campaign, and a conquest. The chariot that has carried her to her triumph has been the motion-picture, not so much that the motion-picture suited her as that she suited the motion-picture. But it was a chariot, remember, clattering, resplendent, spectacular, involving none of the undulations of the cantilever-spring.

I HAVE called Mary Pickford the best-known woman in the world, and with equal truth I think I can call her the best loved. Those significant phrases, those affectionately appropriating epithets, "Our Mary" and "Little Mary," have not clung to her without reason. My further analysis and explanation of this unprecedented subjugation must come in another and later article. I can here merely point out that from one end of this globe of ours to the other Mary Pickford is known. And associated with her name is that emotional affiliation which at first sight appears almost fanatic. It is the unquestioning adoration which in times more legendary was bestowed upon saints and in days more barbaric was lavished upon conquerors. Through this new instrument of emotional refreshment which has been made from the throwing of shadows across a cotton sheet, through this new-fangled combination of sunlight and shutters and nitrate of silver, the personality and the pictured person of Mary Pickford has crept about this earth of ours, so that to-day she is known to the coolie-workers of Kimberley as well as to the flat-dwellers of Harlem, to the peons of Mexico and the pearl-fishers of Samba-long. Her face, plastered on the hoardings of Madras, is not unknown to the Parsee of Gujarat; it is recognized by the Basuti Kaffir and the sampan-paddler of Hong-Kong and the miners of Alaska and the fellaheen who still plow the plains of Sharon with the same crude share that Elisha once used—and in case this last sounds like mere tall talk let it be remembered that a motion-picture exchange has flourished for some time in the Egyptian city of Alexandria. Wherever pictures have penetrated, and in their short life they have travelled wide and far, Mary Pickford, for reasons which I shall not now enumerate, has unquestionably, has invariably, established her premiership. She has made herself the uncrowned queen of the world. And queens, even when they are self-made, are not unworthy of analysis.

V.

AND that brings us back to our queen in question, whose slightly puzzled face plainly implied she was awaiting and fortifying herself against the customary fusillade of questions. But it was twenty long years since I had first been sent to interview stars, since I had faced the old parade of temperamental idiosyncracies and petty vanities, since I had beheld those familiar old ponies sired of the Conventional Idea trotted out for inspection. And this, I knew, was going to be something altogether different.

"I'm not going to ask you, Miss Pickford, what your hobbies are, or why you went into the pictures, or whether you like them or not, or any of those familiar old questions."

"Then this isn't to be an interview, after all?" inquired Little Mary, with a doubtful look creeping up into that lucid blue eye of hers. For a moment, I imagine, she strongly suspected I had come

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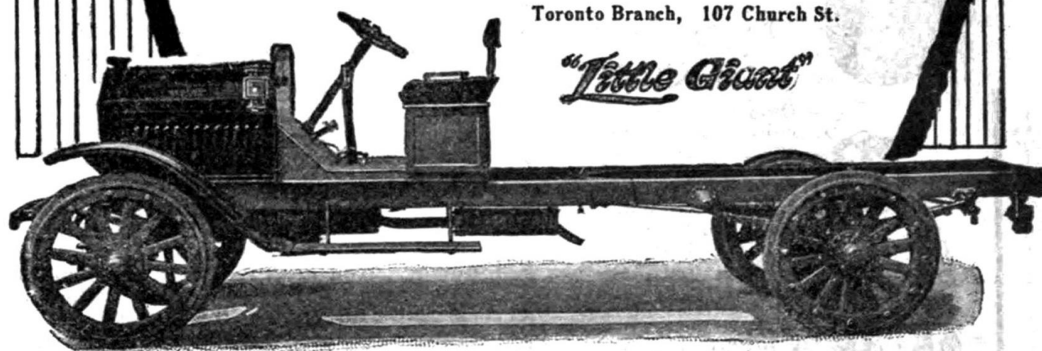
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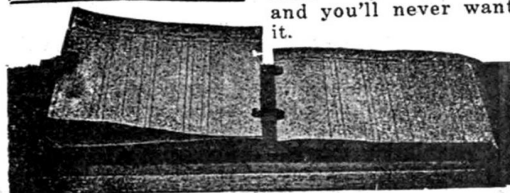
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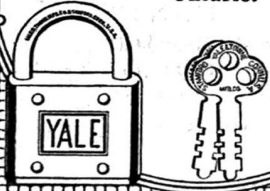
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to tell her how I wanted above all things to be an actor, a great actor. They do that with stars like Mary; they do it by the hundreds. This is why the guardian forces have to build a high board fence about these same stars and make them so dishearteningly hard to find. It's to keep the "nuts" away.

"I'd like to make it another sort of interview," I protested, for as I've said before, I wasn't so interested in the Pickfordian method of hairdressing as I was in the cerebrum behind the coiffure. I wasn't so much impressed by the fact that the girl beside me was wearing a brand new coat of Hudson seal as I was in the fact that she turned it up at the tail when she sat down on the bungalow steps. That last was a glimpse of the fugitive personality which statelier stars seem to prefer to keep shuttered from the casual eye.

"But you'll have to ask me those questions, after all, for we've got to get started, as our old friend Frank Tinney used to say," my hostess explained to me. She was talking, not in those studied bronchial tones of the regulation stage-star, with the trilled "r's" and the broadened "a's" and the hot-potato enunciation which so divorces the stage-voice from ordinary human speech, but in clear, crisp head-tones, the voice of any cultivated American girl west of Worcester and north of the Mason and Dixon line. There was no trace of affectation about that speech, no up-staginess, as the mummery phrase it. But in it, as in all her actions, I found directness, honesty, absence of vanity. And absence of mere personal vanity, I am persuaded, is Mary Pickford's big point. Even on the screen, you may remember, she does not hesitate to uglify herself if by so doing she can help out a picture effect—and to make Little Mary ugly, one of her best directors once told me, was "a blamed sight harder work than trying to make most stars attractive." And this, while I think of it, reminds me that before my last interview with Miss Pickford I asked the three persons most closely in touch with her what they regarded as her most conspicuous trait. Her director said, without hesitation: "Her memory." Her manager, in equal promptitude averred: "Her sense of humor." And Miss Pickford's own mother with quick conviction replied: "Her sincerity." So I leave it at that: you can pay your money and take your choice.

"Those things you mention seem bromidic, of course," Miss Pickford was explaining to me, "but they are realities, and if these are to be real interviews between us, you'll have to begin with realities. I prefer them. They're the foundation stones of—of careers such as mine, and if you're going to build I'm afraid you'll have to begin building from them. It's easier, and it's more comfortable."

"All right," I said, a little humbled. "Let's begin that way. Let's get it over with, and off the slate. What, Miss Pickford, do your hobbies happen to be?"

"My work," was that young lady's prompt reply.

"This isn't customary," I reproved. And Little Mary laughed.

"I know it isn't, but it's the truth. It's all I have a chance for, all I have energy for, except from what I can crowd in for my Red Cross work. People, I know, should have a hobby. But I don't seem to have the time to do what other people do."

"Then pictures are hard work?" I asked.

"My pictures are," acknowledged the star on the doorstep.

"Why?"

"I'll explain that later on," announced Miss Pickford. "What was the next question?"

"I suppose, since we've got to go back to the bromides, it ought to be who you are, and when and where you were born, and what started things along the way they went," I suggested, still wondering what good a million and a quarter dollars a year could be when you didn't have time for golf, or going fishing, or sitting in the sun like George Moore and meditating what a grand old muddle life was, anyway.

"Well, I was born on the eighth of April, in the year of our Lord, Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-Four, and as my father's name was John Smith, I was christened Gladys Mary Smith. It was later in life I took the name of Pickford, which was a family name. I was"—

"I think I ought to write that down, to keep it as authentic as possible," I suggested to the daughter of John Smith as she slipped into the little Madame Butterfly dressing-room to answer a telephone call.

"Yes, let's get it right for once," suggested Little Mary, and during the next few minutes I was busy covering the backs of all my envelopes and even ran over on the blank spaces of a perfectly good motor road map. "I'd especially like to have it put right, because I have been so often interviewed by people who never even saw me. They weren't even good mind-readers. I've been made responsible, in fact, for an amazing number of statements that were never really mine. But to get back to the realities: I was born in Canada, as you know, in the City of Toronto."

"Yes," I amended as I looked for a new envelope-back, "I had the house proudly pointed out to me last summer, a little rough-cast cottage with a frame front, standing on a side-street very close to University Avenue and facing the rear of the new Toronto General Hospital. And the quarter thus honored, Miss Pickford, ignominious as it is to acknowledge, has since then sadly degenerated into what might be called a Ghetto."

"So I've been told," acknowledged Mary, with her quick and companionable smile. "And I've a grandmother still living in Toronto, and she's over eighty-seven years old."

"May her granddaughter live as long," I ventured as I paused in my scribbling to remember the lordly home, hidden away in its lordly acres of palm and orange trees, which I had passed that afternoon north-west of where Western Avenue crosses Sunset Boulevard. These was, after all, romance in the contrast between that manorial city estate and the little rough-cast cottage on the side-street. It had all been brought about by the capitalized charm and brains of one small girl—and that girl, remarkably dissimilar to her smaller sister-stars, was still honest and simple and direct enough to abjure the fabrication of those pedigreed ancestors so dear to the heart of the garden variety of actresses. "But will you please tell me the rest," I continued, coming back to earth.

"My father died in February, 1898, before I was quite four years old. He died leaving my mother with three children, myself and my younger sister Lottie, and Jack, the baby, who is just twenty-one years old now. He didn't leave much else, I'm afraid, besides us three children. Mother—and always, you must remember,

mother has been and still is my world!—found it pretty hard to keep that little home intact. My childhood memory of Toronto is of a very strict city, for my father when he was alive wouldn't even let me ride a bicycle, and when I later went back to Toronto with Robert Hilliard in 'The Littlest Girl,' the city authorities contended that I was too young for the stage and tried to stop me from playing. But at the age of three I'd taken part in a cake-walk. I wore a gorgeous costume, and it was up on a big platform somewhere, I can't remember where. All I know is that it was an amateur performance and that it was my first appearance in public. I made people laugh, and I loved it. So in less than a year I became the bread-winner of our family by learning to play the part of 'Little Eva' in 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' and actually doing it on the professional stage. That was with the Valentine Stock Company."

"In New York?"

"No, in Toronto. It was, of course, my first professional appearance. I couldn't have been altogether a failure, for I was next given the part of 'Ned' in that old repertoire-company favorite, 'The Silver King.' We played in the Princess Theatre, the old Princess Theatre. A little later I was taken in as a member of the Cummings Stock Company, then playing in Toronto, and was promoted to the part of 'Cissie Denver' in the same 'Silver King.' I also played in 'East Lynne,' and in 'Bootsie's Baby.' Then I went into vaudeville with Robert Hilliard in that one-act piece that was made from Richard Harding Davis's wonderful story of 'The Littlest Girl.' Then Chauncey Olcott took me into his company and I played with that well-known star for several seasons. From Mr. Olcott's company I went into another playing that once popular melodrama, 'The Fatal Wedding.'"

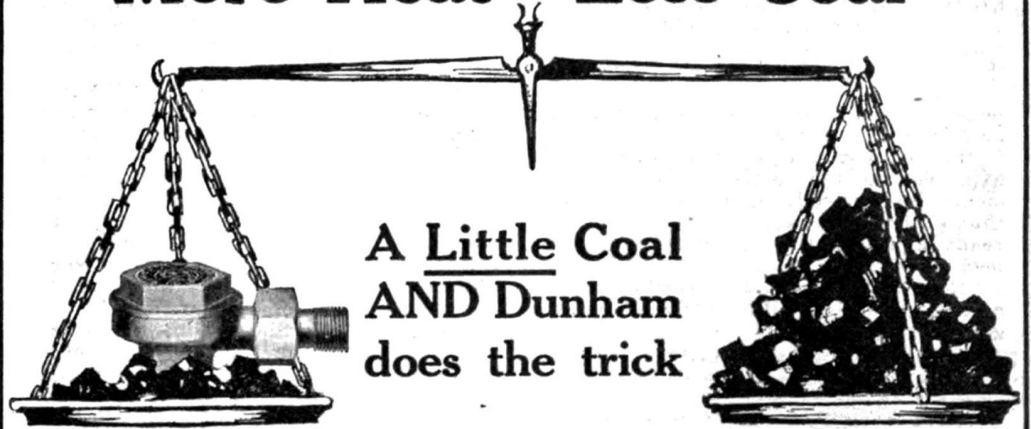
I HAD a distinct memory of that Littlest Girl who supported Hilliard, and the loveliest of littlest girls she had seemed to me; but Chauncey Olcott and "The Fatal Wedding" had come and gone beyond my ken.

"These, of course, were all what the profession called 'kid parts,'" continued Miss Pickford. "And I kept on at that sort of part for eight years. They were busy years. But they didn't altogether cheat me out of my childhood, for I always had the most wonderful of mothers there to take the bigger responsibilities on her own shoulders and to slip a hand between me and the rough edges of the world. And of course I had my playthings and my pets, as other girls do. But the life I led was very far from the normal girl's life. I can't say I either liked or disliked the parts I was playing. I'd been immersed in that work so early in life, you see, that such a thing as self-criticism was above and beyond me. I just went on, without caring much what came next, without conscious ambition or real interest in what I was appointed to do. And I can see," went on Mary Pickford with half-closed eyes, "how easily I might have kept on at that familiar old work in those familiar old parts."

"Most of them do," I commented.

"I suppose so. But when I was almost thirteen years old something happened. It was something which marked the Great Divide in the whole continent of my girlhood. It was a small thing, as so many of life's vital things seem at the time, but it swept the bandage of contentment from my eyes. It brought about what I've

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often been prompted to call a second birth. I'm not saying the forces weren't there, like a loaded gun-cartridge, waiting to explode. But nothing had happened to fire them, until that day in San Francisco, where I happened to be playing in one of Hal Reed's melodramas, the one called 'For a Human Life.'

"And what was this thing which happened on that particular day?" I asked as Miss Pickford rose to her feet.

"I'll tell you that when I come back," explained the diminutive star of the by no means diminutive Lasky Corporation, "for that's Mr. Nieland saying the set is ready, and I make it a point never to keep people waiting!"

"How about me?" I somewhat indignantly demanded. But Little Mary was gone.

(To be continued)

(Arthur Stringer's next article in this series of intimate studies of the world's greatest screen star will bear the title of "The Power of Mary Pickford," and will appear in the October Number.

Beluchistan League

Continued from page 21.

Bengal, who is as carrion, and have slain him, for he runs but slowly, and has great fear in his heart. But is not Carswell Sahib our Lord, whom to disobey is a great evil? And hath not Carswell Sahib delivered me, Shere Din, from death, when the coal fell upon me in the pit? And the Sahib was merciful, and bade me spare the man. 'For, lo!' saith the Sahib. 'Even he, the fat man from Bengal, is as God hath made him.' Which is true and pious, though the Sahib is but an Infidel."

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only this glove was far more great and terrible. We thought that Winstanley Sahib had done some evil, or that Carswell Sahib hath made war to take away from Winstanley Sahib the over-lordship of the Mines. But this is not so. The cage for the head, and the coat for the belly are to protect the body of the Sahib from being smitten by the magic ball.

"And sometimes the ball is smitten, and the player doth run, and there are other strange cries, as spoken by the Sahibs. *Sli—ide! You damn bone-edd, sli—ide!* and also *Oh misbegotten one! Wherefore didst thou not touch the little bag? and O, thou whelp of the devil, wherefore hast thou the fingers that are of butter when the weather is hot?*

"But they ever return to the misdeeds of the fat man from Bengal, cursing him greatly for his rottenness, and the fat man brings forth the book tremblingly, showing it to the Sahibs, who are compassionate, for who may know the purpose of Allah in the things he hath made? There is the wolf and tiger and snake, and also the fat man from Bengal."

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