

Mary Pickford:

Herself and Her Career

Conclusion

Illustrated by Photographic Studies of Miss Pickford in Recent Roles

THE FAMOUS PLAYERS; A CRITICAL
RÉSUMÉ, AND PERSONAL REMINISCENCE

By Julian Johnson

*A study of Miss Pickford in her California home, by
Photoplay Magazine's photographer. This picture was
taken just before Miss Pickford departed for the East*



ON September 10th, 1913, The Famous Players released their screen production, "In the Bishop's Carriage." Thus Mary Pickford came to her present state, for the piece was the first of the long line of comedies and dramas in which the Zukor-Porter corporation have presented her.

Like a queen on the throne of a great principality at peace with its neighbors, Miss Pickford in the Famous fold has led an outwardly quiet life. But also like a queen who rules over a great monarchy, hers has been an existence of arduous labor, and not at all that span of processions, exaltations and acclamations of which a queen's weeks are supposed to be made up.

No salary, it is safe to say, will ever receive the wonder and amaze accorded the Pickford hundred-thousand-a-year. This great emolument was press-agented by the newspapers of the country into false importance, and has been the little player's heaviest hurdle. Every man and woman who attends picture shows has seen a Pickford-Famous feature, and it is probable that every adult who has gazed screenward at Mary has asked, either audibly or inwardly:

"How can she be worth

t h a t
m u c h
m o n -

"Such a Little Queen."



ey?" In other words, people have looked for the tenth-of-a-million valuation on every Pickford photoplay! This is an absurd attitude, but a true statement. Salaries in the past six months have aviated incredibly. Here, there and yonder will be found shadow-personages who receive almost as much as Miss Pickford, and one young man, aggregating salary and percentage, certainly receives more. Yet the general public does not seem to be greatly impressed by these things; it still regards Mary Pickford as the fortunate little golden image before whom millions worshipped, bringing tithes.

This is a false attitude, born of one good news story wearisomely and continually repeated. As to whether The Famous Players have found Miss Pickford a profitable investment at \$104,000 a year (\$2,000 every week) I'm not prepared to say, but if they have, it has been on her work as a whole, on the sum-total of her pictures, and the unfailing charm of her utterly unique personality.

The popular success of Miss Pickford, to continue the analysis, has been a thing apart from her dramatic triumphs, even as Maude Adams' conquest of America had little to do with her true dramatic ability. In both instances a rare and wholly individual charm swept the land from sea to sea.

Mary Pickford's chief attributes have been her tender human sympathy, her utter sweetness, her steadfast sincerity. No one at any stage of Mary Pickford's career can point to a recorded exhibition of hauteur, a piece of deliberate "acting," a moment of artificial "showing off." David Belasco struck the nail of cause on the head when he so vividly described, in recent pages of this periodical, little Miss Pickford's utter repose, her matter-of-factness and almost impersonal calm.

The battle wages unceasingly between that faction which acclaims Mary Pickford an actress, and that faction which considers her merely a sweet enchantress.

I have seen the majority

of her pictures since she entered The Famous Players, and I hold with the disputers who say that she can really act. I have seen her give some wonderful impersonations of characters as far from her own as Tampico is from Hudson Bay.

For instance: "Hearts Adrift," released February 10, 1914. Here she was a soul and body regenerated into primitive strength and simplicity by sea and solitude. She revealed unsuspected suggestions of physical voluptuousness. She sounded depths of tenderness that her little plays of the workaday world had not hinted. At moments she flashed forth in magnificent emotions not at all kindred to that gentleness which uses *Pickford* as a synonym. And her tragedy was convincing, logical, soul-wrenching in its quaint piteousness.

On March 20 of the same year was released "Tess of the Storm Country," which I suspect, from several conversations, Miss Pickford considers her finest dramatic achievement as far as the screen is concerned—although she did not tell me so outright. If she does so hold it, her opinion is shared by a great many people. Personally, I must say that "Hearts Adrift" made an ineffaceable impression; had I not been really won to the little Pickford by that piece I too should probably acclaim "Tess," for it is, critically considered, a bigger, cleverer thing.

There have been all sorts of plays via The Famous. There is no certainty of invariably selecting a good vehicle under any artistic auspices. In some of the plays Miss Pickford has won dramatic triumphs, in others she has scored comedy hits of varying proportions, in still others she has gone very, very flat indeed.

"Rags."

Do you remember "The Eagle's Mate," a July release in 1914? Here was a vivid human story different from anything Miss Pickford had yet done. It was, in its way, a firm little milestone in her art-life.

Then, in mid-September, came "Such a Little Queen." An absolutely irresistible idea, but, somehow, it missed fire in the vocal play, and it missed fire again on the screen. It was enjoyable—but it lived up neither to its clever author's intentions nor to the Pickford abilities.

October 26th brought another maryplay in "Behind the Scenes," a homely but popularly effective story of Margaret Mayo's. This play was a real success because Miss Pickford combined her comic and pathetic resources in exquisite proportions. Realized, it was not the commonplace thing it might have been. It was that precious stage jewel: a laugh set in a tear.

In the last days of December came "Cinderella;" the first of February, 1915, "Mistress Nell." "Cinderella" was not convincing, in my estimation, because of a poor scenario; in "Mistress Nell" it seemed to me that Miss Pickford was terribly miscast. Whatever my opinion, both these plays were seen by millions of people, and received very generous and general applause.

"Fanchion the Cricket" was presented May 10th. That I did not see.

But I did see "The Dawn of a Tomorrow," which lighted the dark houses June 7th. What a photoplay! What a characterization was



Miss Pickford's *Glad!* Here was luminous tenderness in a steel band of gutter ferocity. Here was spiritual, almost unearthly faith shining out of a London slum. Here were feminine fascination, flame-spurts of primitive wit, inexorable determination, that sort of dewy sweetness which, beheld, often makes women weep and men curse.

"Little Pal," which followed July 1st, was a mighty poor play, but as the square-souled, square-bodied, square-headed little Indian, Mary Pickford built another story on her edifice of risible accomplishment. Who, seeing this piece, can forget her stolid, clomping departure for a bucket of water and bandages at every suggestion of debate in the frontier saloon?

"Rags,"
which



Above: "The Eagle's Mate."

Below: "Cinderella," with Owen Moore.



came August 2nd, showed her in astoundingly different phases. At first: the young married woman of inscrutable sorrows which only death could curtain. Then: an uproarious little ruffian in overalls—a Key-stonesque farceur. "Rags" was a mighty exhibition of the Pickford versatility.

I thought "Esmeralda" dreadful, and "The Girl of Tomorrow," (Miss Pickford, author) simply no play at all. I have expressed myself very recently on her latest enterprise, "Madame Butterfly."

Miss Pickford's Famous Players service has been in Los Angeles and in New York. For awhile she maintained a home in the California city, and in fact gave it up only early last summer, when returning to her New York apartment (on upper Broadway) for more or less permanent residence.



Above: A part of the scene shown on the opposite page.

Below: "Behind the Scenes," with James Kirkwood.

The proverb-makers love to chatter of the unvarying simplicity of the great—foolishness! for some of the great are complicated in soul and person, spiritually hyphenated to the last degree—and in Miss Pickford they might find their ultimate exhibition. Miss Pickford is simplicity itself, all that she does is based upon and springs from that simplicity and utter sincerity, and I believe that were she the crowned queen-absolute of half the world her naturalness would be unchanged.

Nothing hurts Mary Pickford as much as sly allusions to an aloofness, a snobbishness which some newspaper writers have pretended to find in her in recent months.

And just here it may truthfully be said that Mary Pickford, whose features are better-known than anyone's save Roosevelt or Kaiser Wilhelm's, is one of two or three people in

the world who are popular enough to cause a traffic-jam on the streets of New York City at any hour. This obsession of the populace does not distract her except when it interferes with her work, or her necessary outdoor strolls for relaxation and recreation.

Early last summer, when returning from California, she was far from well. She had been working hard, some of her plays had been disappointing, and the continual high-salary twaddle before referred to had gotten a bit on her nerves. She was coming back to New York, primarily, to work, and the strain of travel, in the dust and heat, had been especially enervating. As the Los Angeles Limited bearing the Pickford family approached Chicago the newspapers



printed the time of her arrival; also the station.

Miss Pickford ascertained this from a wire about other matters, received on the train, and consequently telegraphed Chicago friends to meet her and get her away from any crowd as quickly as possible.

She arrived shortly before noon, and train-time found the terminal literally jammed with that idle, morbid human throng which always springs serenely for fame, fight or funeral. There were, it is true, many sincere admirers of Mary Pickford in that crowd. But right up next the barrier—as always—were the mere impudently curious. Miss Pickford's friends met her, took her out a private entrance to a waiting limousine, and thence to the Hotel LaSalle. One Chicago newspaper headlined its story, next day: "Little Mary Just Can't Bear to Meet Her Worship-

pers"—and for many weeks the little girl suffered mental tortures from that wholly undeserved slash.

I believe I can prove the sincerity of that suffering: one evening-

"Little Pal"



ing, later in the summer, I gave a box-party in Miss Pickford's honor at the Palace Theatre, New York City. We entered late, the house was dark and the show well under way. Although a great audience had assembled, "little" Mary sat away from the rail, shrinking behind a velvet drape at one side, and I do not believe that more than half a dozen in the orchestra chairs knew she was in the house. Almost at the end of the bill came Trixie Friganza, and her unutterably funny song about the wretched maidenly antique who waited vainly at the altar. It won encore after encore. Suddenly Miss Friganza, responding for the tenth time at least, cried to the spotlight man in the heavens: "Put that on Mary Pickford!"

She pointed at our box, and instantly, on the cowering, shrinking little girl, fell a white glare like the birth of a new sun, while the house, momentarily amused by something really new, sent up a manual volley like a cloudburst on a tin roof.

That "spotted" Mary. There was no longer any possibility of a gentle get-away unattended. Had she left during the rest of the performance, I believe that dress-suited audience would have stamped after her.

I had a chance to get her to her car and away from the majority of the curious—had not a plainly dressed little child, accompanied by her mother, evidently a widow, called "Mary! Mary!" from the depths of the mob. Instantly the wee actress stopped her demure, head-down progress, and went directly toward the baby. Confidently the little tot looked up into the eyes of the only queen it may ever behold, as Mary took its hand in hers, and kissed it tenderly on the brow.

The crowd fell upon us in an instant. The baby, its little wish gratified, disappeared in the fleshly tornado. We were driven, hammered, whirled this way and that. Men in evening dress shoved like women at a Monday bargain-counter. Jewelled women curiously put out their hands, and smiled. They seemed to wish to touch her, just to see if she were real. They did touch her, twitching her skirt. A moment later I heard the stentorian voices of the ever-present New York police, with their throng-breaking "Move on!" "Move on, there!"

And this happened at the upper end of

Longacre square, every block of whose asphalt has been worn thin by celebrated soles.

Once we gained the outer edge of the crowd we found Mary's brother Jack, and her big machine.

"I saw you—why didn't you come straight through?" asked Jack, vexedly.

"Jack," said his sister, with meaning, "I would have answered that little girl's call no matter what happened!"

What the applause of a multitude, or the maudlin curiosity of scores of ornate adults could not arouse in Mary Pickford the voice of a child had brought forth instantly.

At the present time Miss Pickford and her remarkable mother, and her husband, too, are in New York. Mr. Moore is at the Triangle Fort Lee studios.

Mary Pickford is a devoted, sincere wife, and at some distant day I would not be at all surprised to see a little family clustering about her, for children are her adoration.

Mrs. Pickford is her daughter's best friend, confidante and business manager. This shrewd, kindly woman—so versed in the world's trickery that her managerial cleverness sometimes hides the big heart of her—I dare to say is responsible for the Mary Pickford of today. Mary Pickford in personality is entirely herself, but it is her mother, no other, who has smoothed away the obstacles on that personality's path toward full expression.

And of course everybody asks: "What does Mary Pickford do with her money?"

She doesn't squander it. She lives unostentatiously, but well. I had luncheon with Mrs. Pickford and her daughter not



"Caprice"

long ago; both wore simple, pretty frocks which, while unobtrusively in the mode, would not have been extravagance for the wife of a young tradesman. And in her plain black leather purse Mrs. Pickford carried \$16,000! Lest you think she habitually totes that tidy sum for carfare I may add that she was on the way to her bank.

Until a few months ago, at least, the principal form of Pickford investment was bonds of the United States. What better way of placing surplus income could you suggest? It was the sanity of the mother again.

Miss Pickford's contract with The Famous Players concludes just about the time this issue of PHOTOPLAY MAGAZINE reaches its readers. Many are the printed paragraphs which aver that this contract won't be renewed. Perhaps it will, and perhaps it won't, but as I am writing these lines the outlook is favorable for her continuance in the features of Adolf Zukor.

T H E E N D

A Girl Like Mine

SOMETIMES upon the screen is flashed
A girl who kisses just like mine;
She yields her lips not hastily,
But with a shyness sweet and fine.

Her breath comes soft—a dew of love—
Her eyes are liquid tenderness,
Which droop to veil naïve desire
To give and take the fond caress.

—H. J. Krier.