

# PHOTOPLAY

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Mary Pickford *Herself and  
Her Career*  
BEGINS IN THIS ISSUE

*"Beauty and Brains" Contest  
Fashions and the Screen*



# Mary Pickford:

## *Herself and Her Career*

### Part I

By Julian Johnson

*Illustrated by Henry A. Thiede*

#### THE GARDEN OF EYES

Mary Pickford blooms today,  
Blooms a thousand times an hour.  
Mary Pickford, I should say,  
Is the Nation's favorite flower.

Mary comes and Mary goes—  
On the screen in countless parts;  
But the little Pickford knows  
She is planted in our hearts.

R. H. Davis:



OCCASIONALLY a science, a trade, a craft or an art produces some single exponent who stands above all other exponents; who becomes not so much a famous individual as a symbol; whose very name, in any land, is a personification of the thing itself.

What the name of Maxim is to quick little guns, what Edison symbolizes in electricity, what Stephenson stands for in mechanical invention or Spencer in synthetic philosophy, *Mary Pickford* represents in the great new art world of *living shadows*.

No more illustrious actress ever lived—probably never will live—than Sarah Bernhardt, yet Mme. Bernhardt in the most vigorous of her stupendous years was unable to play to one-hundredth the number of people before whom the silent black-and-white Pickford performs. It might not be exaggeration to say that for one Bernhardt auditor Mary Pickford has a thousand.

So Mary Pickford has come to be the intimate possession of all the people, whereas the *great actress*, whether she be

Bernhardt or a celebrity from Albion or The States, remains more or less a tradition, more or less a mere soulless name. Mary Pickford is to be found every night in every city of consequence in the United States, and in most of the towns of large dimensions. All of the towns, little and big, see her several times in the course of a year, yet Mary Pickford's intimacy with the millions has not grown solely by this persistent and tremendous multiplication of herself. She is more nearly a universal favorite than any actor or actress who ever stepped before the camera. Why? Lots of people have tried to explain, and most of them have failed, for one explanation of the Pickford personality doesn't at all agree with some other explanation, and both are decidedly different from a third. That is neither here nor there. This story is to deal with facts; it is not a discussion of theories on the charm of an actress. And the pre-eminent fact is this: a theater in New York, Chicago, Savannah, Des Moines, Butte, St. Paul or San Diego doing fair business, will, any day, at any time of the year, draw a tremendous crowd merely



by depending that magic legend: *Mary Pickford Here Today* from the outer battlement.

More questions are asked magazine and newspaper editorial departments about Mary Pickford than about any other half dozen stage celebrities in the world. Scores of times the editorial department of PHOTOPLAY MAGAZINE has been asked to publish "the life of Mary Pickford." Every month the Answer Man finds in his mail concerning her a congestion of interrogative intimacies, some curious, some quite impertinent, some funny, some a bit sad, others wholly legitimate and respectful.

PHOTOPLAY MAGAZINE does not believe that the time has come to write "the life of Mary Pickford." Though married, she is just a grown-up child. However, there is much information that can be given, and the following chronicle, of which this month's section is only the first part, has been written to tell something of her ancestry, her life, her family, and above all, of her professional career, and of the successive steps she has taken on the high-road of art.

Moreover, *this is the first time that an attempt of serious nature has been made upon the Pickford annals.*

There have been countless "stories," some of human interest and others of no interest at all, and many brief-biographical sketches; but all of these have had a dearth of incident. Few, in their dull statistics, have given any true revelation of this shy, quiet, sweet girl whose glory is greater than any queen's, and whose kind and gentle eyes are twin scepters over an empire wider than Napoleon's. To convey in type some impressions of the real Mary Pickford throughout her short life is the only purpose of the series of account and reminiscence—pen, pictorial and photographic—here beginning.

**T**HERE are a very few publications which seem to take vicious delight in informing their readers that Mary Pickford's name is not Pickford at all, but Smith. Their inference is, of course, that "Pickford" is wholly a matter of fancy.

They are both right and wrong.

Mary Pickford's maiden name was Smith, but Pickford is hers not only by right of early assumption, but by ancestry.

The Pickford family is of pure Irish

strain, though for several generations in America. Originally they were North Ireland aristocrats, and several members of the house attained wealth and great distinction in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth centuries.

In those days Scotland, England and Ireland did not constitute the single United Kingdom which, as a matter of fact, needed even the present war to solidly cement its constituent parts. Then Scotland had just come sullenly under the London scepter, and Ireland still waited its foment of rebellion and patriotic outbreak, and many more turbulent disturbances.

The Pickfords were splendid Nationalists, although they were not traitors to the Anglo-Saxon hopes and traditions, by any means. One can easily imagine the direct progenitor of "Little Mary," in a strong, rough house on the Emerald Isle overlooking the Atlantic, biding the time when his homeland might be free.

About the middle of the last century the first Pickford to cross the Atlantic came to Canada. This was Elizabeth Pickford, who settled in Toronto.

From the Canadian marriage of Elizabeth Pickford was born John Pickford Hennessy, father of that Elizabeth Hennessy who became Mrs. Smith.

Mrs. Smith's three children, in order, were Mary (christened Gladys), Lottie and Jack.

It is commonly supposed that Lottie is the oldest of the Pickford children. Of dark coloring, taller than Mary, and of more athletic figure, she has always seemed an elder sister. Since the public assumed that she was an elder sister, it has always been one of the humorous conceits of the family to let her remain so.

Mary is twenty-two years of age.

Lottie is a year and a half younger.

Jack is nearing his nineteenth birthday.

This family is as proud of the ancestral *Pickford* name—and deservedly so—as are the Calverts of Baltimore of theirs, or to name other distinguished families, the Vanderbilts of New York or the Sutros of San Francisco. The Baltimoreans represent the pride of aristocracy, the San Franciscans herald pioneer ancestry, and Pickford is a name which spells pride of blood.

Very recently Mary Pickford and her mother have placed a splendid monument over the Canadian grave of John Pickford





When "Little Mary" went out as an actress "on her own" she appeared in pieces of blood, thunder and the triumph of right over might.



Hennessy. The story of John Hennessy and his mother, the original migrator, Elizabeth Pickford, is the world-old story of honest, hard-working, God-fearing pioneers who were building their bodies for a future generation, and a certain personified greatness of which they probably never dreamed.

The family in America was never rich, and generally it was poor, but they were always very happy, and never suffered from the rigors of real poverty.

For another thing, the artistic impulse was present from generation to generation.

**I**F you have seen all of the young Pickfords on the screen you know, of course, that each one of them has intuitive, well-developed histrionic ability. Mary, despite the public's preference for her in a line of pure "personality" roles, is a splendid actress; Lottie has shown herself a more than ordinary good actress; Jack is a very promising young actor.

Without doubt they inherited this talent from their mother. Yet—again contrary to popular impression—Mrs. Smith was not an actress until household necessity forced them all on the stage at one time, or nearly at one time.

Mrs. Smith, as a girl, often appeared in amateur theatricals, and as a reciter. Even after her marriage she indulged in occasional ventures in "elocutionary entertainments," a pasteurized form of dramatic art which swept all America coincidentally with the Lyceum and the Chautauqua.

People usually work only because they have to, and become great because they have to struggle or die, just as nations fight and expand and build themselves into empires when some other nations step on their corns of boundary or commerce.

A financial hiatus came to the Smith family about the beginning of Mary's fifth year. Mrs. Smith, a widow left alone to support the family, had to think seriously about the means of livelihood.

While the mother and her babies were by no means in a state of destitution, it became immediately necessary to procure not merely financial assistance, but the actual means of livelihood. In this crisis Mrs. Smith thought of her recitatory facility at evening parties; of the parts she had played, before her marriage, in amateur theatrical productions.

The Valentine Stock Company was playing in the Princess Theater, Toronto, and to the stage of the Princess, in search of any position which would yield her a salary big enough to put bread in the mouths of her babies, and clothes upon their wrigglesome little backs, went Mrs. Smith.

The mother says that Mary was her chief cause for living in those dark days, and her chief buoyancy and relief from care. A frail, tiny child of unutterable sweetness, with her halo of golden hair, her mystic hazel eyes and her quizzical smile—sometimes mirthful, sometimes melancholy—she had a habit of talking as if she were an old woman and her mother an infant. She was always promising her mother that she would care for and look after her.

Although Mrs. Smith was to demonstrate in a short time that she had real dramatic talent, it was hard for her to make managers believe that she could do anything worth while. She was a mature woman, she had never been on the stage in her life, and she had three children! Where, as far as ordinary theatrical conditions are concerned, could one find greater handicaps than confronted this dauntless granddaughter of Elizabeth Pickford, the emigrant?

But she was determined that she would not depend on the scornful charity of distant relatives for the sustenance of her babies; and, presently, she found a small-part opening.

**O**NE day the stage manager of the Valentine Stock Company took up the script of "Bootle's Baby," and remarked to Mrs. Smith, in little Mary's hearing: "Before this piece goes into rehearsal, I've got to find the proper youngster."

And he added that he would like to find a child as wistfully pretty as Mrs. Smith's baby—plus a bit of experience, which, in his judgment, was absolutely necessary.

"I'd like to play that little baby's part—and I can!" ventured little Mary, simply, but with startling suddenness.

"Why, my little girl," said the stage manager, smiling down benevolently at the tiny thing with its folded hands and wide, trustful eyes—eyes that were gazing fearlessly into his—"you've never been on the stage, and you can't read, even. You'd have no way to learn your part!"

"Mamma can teach it to me," continued





*"The tiny child used to tiptoe to the side of the stage and place the feline juveniles on the keyboard of our old 'prop' piano."*



the child, in her steadfast confidence. "Won't you please let me try?" she added, pleadingly.

He did.

And thus the future Queen of the Movies came to her first mimic role.

She was a great success in the wee assignment, and appeared to "live" her character with such unctious joy that the local critics trotted forth once more the oldest phrase ever pinned to budding talent. They proclaimed her "a born actress."

She remained at home more than a year, playing such child parts as came up in the company.

**H**ERE is an impression of little Mary at this time, from the pen of one of the foremost male stars in picturedom. He will be nameless here.

"I have never been Mary Pickford's leading man—but I am still hoping.

"In 1899 I had a near engagement with the Valentine Stock Company in Toronto, and made the acquaintance of a little miss also gaining her first experience on the stage.

"Her favorite amusement was playing with some excessively new kittens. Our rehearsals were solemn and arduous affairs, but this tiny child used to tiptoe to one side of the stage and place the feline juveniles on the keyboard of our old "prop" piano—which did duty in any sort of scene where a tinkle-box was required. Up and down would go these wee cats, one thundering out a monstrous bass while the other, in terror, pattered along on the treble. It was a literal concatenation of sounds. She usually broke up the rehearsal, but she 'got away with it' because the stage manager possessed a sense of humor and hadn't the heart to scold her.

"My recollection of her is as a very delicate child, with a well-worn shawl drawn tightly about her tiny shoulders. Her stockings were well darned, and her little shoes were not new, either, but she had a wonderful wealth of curls, and a wistful smile that instantly and universally appealed.

"I never see a picture of Mary Pickford, or read a story about her, that my mind does not go back to a photograph which I had until recently.

"It was exactly this elfish little being I have just described. The picture was

signed, in a careful, childish hand: 'Yours Truly, Gladys Smith, in The Silver King.'"

**M**RS. SMITH says that she was highly unwilling to play the role of the regulation stage mother, sitting idly by while her small prodigy supported her. Anyone familiar with Mrs. Smith's energetic nature; anyone who has brushed up against her large fund of common-sense, will take that statement at its full value.

At the end of Mary's year—and her mother's—in the Valentine Stock Company, a road show came along which took the family.

This piece bore the rurally attractive title, "The Little Red Schoolhouse."

In this Lottie made her professional bow, supporting her sister. Even then bigger and stronger physically, she played a little boy, while Mary played a little girl.

The melodrama period followed for Mary, and for her mother as well.

Mrs. Smith secured the Irish comedy role in a big road production of the spectacular and then popular melodrama, "The Fatal Wedding." This was the first melodrama in which little Mary acted. She played "Jessie, the Little Mother." As it happened, this was the first time that Mary and her mother had actually played a scene together on the stage.

Mrs. Smith says that the most interesting work of her professional career, and, on the whole, Mary's most interesting period of stage activity, was their engagement with Chauncey Olcott, which, for Mrs. Smith, lasted no less than three years.

The first Olcott play in which they appeared contained parts for all. It was "Edmund Burke," and brought the entire family together, in actual actorial participation, for the first time. Mrs. Smith had a really fine character role. She gave this assignment careful study, brought to it mature thought and discretion and labor—as well as native dramatic ability—and in it she won some remarkable notices from critics all over the country.

As far as the family Smith was concerned the cast ran in this wise:

<i>Mrs. Smith</i> .....	<i>Moir</i>
<i>Mary</i> .....	<i>Lord Bertie</i>
<i>Lottie</i> .....	<i>Lord Archie</i>
<i>Jack</i> .....	<i>Lady Phyllis</i>





*Chauncey Olcott and three little Pickfords in "Edmund Burke."*





*"The Fatal Wedding" in which Mary Pickford played "Jessie, the Little Mother."*

Thus, strangely enough, Jack, a tiny boy of good figure and soft, regular features, was cast for a little girl; while his to-be-illustrious sisters played noble little boys.

As has been stated, Mrs. Smith was doing really splendid dramatic work with Olcott, and as she was receiving a good salary and fine critical comment, she remained with him.

At this time, as most of older readers of PHOTOPLAY MAGAZINE will probably remember, melodramas were sweeping the country. With their unimpeachable virtues, their unrelieved villainies, their characters for pathos and their characters for comedy, they were the standard meat and drink of the "popular price" theaters from the Atlantic to the Pacific. And, as a matter of hard fact, only the photoplay sufficed to finally displace them in popular favor.

After the first part of the Olcott engagement, the melodramas claimed Mary for their favorite child.

The matter of family name was now internally adjudicated and settled. Surely no one had a better right than they, the first professionally artistic descendants of the

blooded and redoubtable Pickfords, to make public use of the name. They had first proved that, like a splendid brand, it could be wielded with honor. "Pickford," as a stage name, was carefully attached to four genuine successes; three of them very, very young; one in early maturity. "Gladys" had been used irregularly, and was dropped, too; so, enter, for all time and occasions: *Mary Pickford*.

As Mrs. Smith is now known by the name privately as well as publicly, she will, in the course of this story henceforth, be called "Mrs. Pickford."

When little Mary went out into the world as an actress "on her own," she appeared with triumph in such pieces of blood, thunder and the triumph of right over might as "Wedded, but No Wife;" "For a Human Life," and "The Gypsy Girl."

And here it is interesting to recall that as "The Little Red Schoolhouse" brought Lottie into the fold, so "The Fatal Wedding," which already contained Mary and her mother in its cast, swung little Jack, then three years of age, into line.

He was carried on hanging to a man's neck, and he had one line to speak. Sud-





*Jack Pickford's Debut—being carried across the chasm on a man's back, in "The Fatal Wedding."*

denly, one evening, he told his mother that as she and Mary were paid for their services, he would go on no more unless he received a salary. Nothing could persuade him, but his strike lasted for just two performances. He was confounded, not to say enraged, when he found that the play went on without him, and that another little lad—of course infinitely inferior—was, in the emergency, substituted. This lesson in the small value of self-importance was never forgotten by Jack. He went back to work, still minus his salary; glad to be again a figure of note in the realm of the play, but secretly convinced that the world was all wrong.

Lottie Pickford says, concerning this period of their lives:

"Childhood? We had none; that is, not as other children have it. Ever since I can remember, we were traveling, or playing in a resident theater, but as we were always under the care and surveillance of mother—at least during our first years—we were well off, and were happy.

"But our real mother wasn't the only one we had. Mary has always been 'Little Mother' to the whole family. She was

constantly looking after our needs, though she was only one year older than I, or a bit more, and not so big! I always used to think that she imagined Jack and I were just her big dolls.

"Our real mother instilled into us one of the most wonderful lessons that any mother can teach her children: to avoid petty quarrels; to be kind; never to be inflated with any success whatever, but always to remember that we were just hard-working human beings, and that the more we achieved, the harder we would have to work in order to achieve again.

"Mother was playing character leads with the Valentine Stock Company when Mary and I first entered it. It was then, and immediately thereafter, that mother looked after us so carefully.

"I can truthfully say that I believe Mary deserves even more than she has gained. I suppose there are lots of people who believe that I envy Mary—that I am jealous. I am prouder of her than I could possibly tell you. I hold her 'way up somewhere in another sphere!

"I remember clearly that when my mother bought us candy she would divide



it equally in four parts, for baby Jack, for Mary, and for me; and though she never ate candy herself, she would hold the fourth part just to teach us to be kind and generous. As for temper—I shudder to think of our penances if any of us 'got mad' and slammed a door!

"My father I remember very vaguely. You see, he died more than seventeen years ago, and his death made my mother immediately responsible for the whole care of her three babies. I possess the only heirloom he left us: a silver ring. I do remember his soft, white hands; that is all.

"When we played with Mr. Olcott my hair was blonde. I remember that the proudest moment of all our lives was a criticism by Alan Dale. I can almost quote it word for word. He said that the Smith family, as we had been known up to that time, while unknown, were a decided asset to the production; and that Lottie and Baby Mary, in their work, were good.

**A**N interesting feature of the young Pickfords' careers were their educations. Among many other wholesome beliefs,

their remarkable mother held staunchly for at least the solid fundamentals of learning, and for as much else, in the way of studious accomplishment, as could be put into their busy lives.

The equivalent of the primary studies—reading, penmanship, arithmetic and geography—was taught the three children by their mother.

Insisting on advanced education, Mrs. Pickford succeeded in removing Jack and Lottie from the stage for a period of years to secure it.

Lottie is a graduate of the Toronto College of Notre Dame; Jack of the Collegiate Institution of St. Francis Xavier.

You may have imagined that little Mary, in spite of her sweetness, had a will and a way of her own. She had. She refused to leave the stage for school. But, knowing that her mother's advice was sound, she has had numerous private tutors—no less than half a dozen, in fact—and today she is a remarkably cultured young woman. She has pursued the study of French and the classics, and, of late, has written a good deal herself.

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## Next Month

Will come the remarkable story of Mary's first appearance as a veritable little star in New York, under the patronage of David Belasco. This chapter in the life of the first lady of the photoplays will contain unpublished facts and will be of extraordinary interest.

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