

Mary Pickford's Ten



I DON'T think a star is really a star until he or she has lived through two slumps. When everybody says they're finished and they come back twice—then they're stars."

This was Mary Pickford's fundamental requirement for a place on the all-American film roll of honor which she chose. It seems to me an excellent requirement, and one which might well be extended to the identification of leaders in other arts and professions.

Certainly, it must be true that the novelist or the playwright who is always successful lacks something of courage and imagination. Anybody who never fails is pretty apt to be a person who has never really taken a chance.

And here are the stars of the screen as Mary Pickford sees them:

Charlie Chaplin	Bill Hart	John Gilbert
Douglas Fairbanks	Marguerite Clark	Alla Nazimova
Greta Garbo	Gloria Swanson	Also:
Rudolph Valentino	Harold Lloyd	Mickey Mouse

Now I shall continue with the stenographic notes of our chat. Nothing could be as effective:

MISS PICKFORD: If this list is to indicate mere acting ability, I should say that Lloyd, for instance, is a marvelous producer. But as an actor I don't think he is in a class with Valentino or Chaplin. Mickey Mouse is one of the greatest box-office stars the world has ever known. Jannings should go in there. And at one time Marguerite Clark was a tremendous favorite with the children. She gave me many uncomfortable hours and she was held over my head, too, by Mr. Zukor to keep me in line. Of course, I don't think Hart was an actor.

**Her
Honor Roll
and the Reasons
Why—In Her
Most Daring
Interview**

Greatest Film STARS



By

Heywood

Broun —

the Famous

Critic and

Author

IT seemed to me that Bill Hart was dealt with a little harshly by Miss Pickford, even though he made the team. For it is my impression that though he always played the same role he—and this is your correspondent commenting now—always played it well.

I am not among those who feel that versatility is essential in an actor or any other artist, for that matter. I remember it was held against John Barrymore in his stage days that whether the play was Richard III or Hamlet, the personality projected before the audience was invariably John Barrymore. Yet that is not an essential fault. Not if you like Barrymore.

Hamlet, for instance, can be ever so many men. There isn't one particular standardized interpretation, thank Heaven. And for me an interesting performance was provided even though I did see Hamlet in terms of John Barrymore rather than the other way around.

One difficulty lingered in Miss Pickford's mind. She felt that in naming the great of the screen some distinction might be necessary between those actors who are established as great box-office attractions and those who have manifested distinctly artistic proficiency. But on the screen, at least, the gap is not as wide as in the theater.

For instance, when I asked Mary Pickford to name me a few people who seemed to her highly talented and comparatively unsuccessful she could bring to mind only one name.

IT was my notion that I must be armed with all sorts of notes in order to carry on a discussion with the first lady of the pictures. I consulted friends and jotted down the names of various players who appealed to them. But as it turned



JANNINGS



NAZIMOVA



CHAPLIN



HART

out, I didn't have to talk very much or offer any opinions to speak of. Mary Pickford knows her own mind concerning the art in which she functions. And she is both eloquent and articulate in expressing her point of view. Only by great effort could I get a word or so in edgewise. Remember, this is not a complaint, but a confession.

After all, an interview really should concern the person who is being interrogated. The interviewer ought by every rule to be only a still, small voice casting out an occasional hint.

So we will return immediately to the testimony of the chief witness and let her comment on box-office attractions and the art of acting. I asked her about Nazimova.

MISS PICKFORD: She, I think, falls into the category of an interesting performer. . . . You see, there are two groups. There are the outstanding artists like Garbo. Out of the industry, including Jannings and excluding myself, there

Douglas Fairbanks—telling Miss Pickford and Mr. Broun they're ordered to include him in the list.

are five great personalities—Chaplin, Fairbanks, Garbo, Jannings and Valentino. . . . I don't think Lloyd or Bill Hart are artists.

To me the supreme artist is Chaplin.

Harold Lloyd's box-office appeal is his presentation of himself. He is a very clever producer. Someone else could probably do the same thing. Buster Keaton, for instance. Give him the gags and routine and he would be a serious competitor of Chaplin's. He has that peculiar pathetic quality, together with his artistry and knowledge of the theater and pictures, which Lloyd has always seemed to lack.

Keaton hasn't got the business ability and organization. Harold is an organizer. He can sit around a table with eight or ten men and pick and choose the best gags. He knows when and where it is wrong and has the courage to go back, throw it out and do it over again.

MR. BROUN: Now, about some of the people who haven't stood this test about not being supreme since they have not gone through a couple of slumps. How about Ruth Chatterton?

MISS PICKFORD: I haven't really considered them. Joan Crawford, for instance, is an enormous box-office attraction and shows great promise. I think this is also true of Ruth Chatterton and Norma Shearer.

MR. BROUN: Why is it more peculiarly true of the pictures than the stage that a person may be effective and then fade out of sight?

MISS PICKFORD: They have failed in getting proper vehicles. Furthermore, they may have miscast the director. Good directors are rare. They may be just as badly miscast as an actor. For instance, Louis Milestone makes "Front Page" a success. Yet he may make the most stupid picture. There are women and men directors. I mean, some are good for men, and others for women. Lubitsch is a man's director. That's why he and Jannings get along so beautifully. Griffith was always a woman's director. He never developed a man. Well, Barthelmess was one exception and he didn't stay with him. Also Bobby Harron. But I am speaking of the great stars. (Please turn to page 84)

SWANSON

FAIRBANKS



Mary Pickford's 10 Great Film Stars

(Continued from page 29)

DeMille is a woman's director. Vidor and Brown, Vic Fleming and Alan Dwan are men's directors. Marshall Neilan is a woman's director. Brown may be able to direct Greta Garbo and not me. I have never had anything to do with the direction of a picture. Mine is a house divided. I have to stop producing and go on and act and then get to the business end.

MR. BROWN: Why aren't there any women directors?

MISS PICKFORD: The strain is too great on a woman. I don't think she is physically equipped to stand it.

MR. BROWN: Do you think she has less executive capacity? There are lots of women directing on the stage.

MISS PICKFORD: Yes, but the hours aren't so long. In pictures it means every day and every night. The world doesn't exist beyond those lights. Very often for two weeks they work without a day off.

MR. BROWN: Could women be as superb directors as some of the men?

MISS PICKFORD: The feminine mind, I have found in pictures, runs a little too much to detail and not the general scheme of things. A man can see the thing as a whole. I think the feminine note is necessary to a picture, however, with a man collaborating with her.

MR. BROWN: How about George Arliss?

MISS PICKFORD: He is capable and a fine actor. But it is on the shoulders of people like Chaplin and Jannings that the industry has rested. It's been because of them that it has gone on. These other people have come in and made good pictures. Miss Chatterton, at the moment, doesn't belong in the same class with Chaplin or Douglas Fairbanks. Swanson has not been consistently successful. She failed and succeeded twice. Gilbert hasn't come out of his talkie slump. I think Mickey Mouse is due for a very long and prosperous life.

MR. BROWN: But you said that until an artist has failed he cannot be great.

MISS PICKFORD: Until Minnie Mouse runs off with another mouse we won't know just what sort of a man Mickey is. It's a surprising thing to me they haven't tried to start a scandal about them before this.

MR. BROWN: Can you think of the names of one or two superb artists on the screen who have had no popular success at all?

MISS PICKFORD: There is one not considered a star. I think he's a real artist, and that's Jean Hersholt. He's never twice alike and his make-up is always different. Chic Sale once said in a talk to some school children that his make-ups are in the inside and not the outside. That to me is real artistry. And Hersholt has that. He had a part in Von Stroheim's "Greed," in "Stella

Dallas" and played with Douglas in "Don Q." When I was doing "Tess of the Storm Country," I wanted a brute, someone with a heavy underlip and a dreadful face. I interviewed a lot of men, and it's very difficult for me to turn people away. One day, some one came to me and said:

"Miss Pickford, there's a man outside anxious to see you. He's been waiting all day long and won't take 'no' for an answer."

I saw him. It was Jean Hersholt. "But," I said, "you have a lovely face and kind eyes. I'm sorry, you won't do."

"Just give me a chance," he replied, "twenty minutes?"

"Why, yes. But you know what type of part this is. The man is absolutely a beast."

He went upstairs and I proceeded to forget all about him in the meantime. I was talking about the baby that we

We Have Made Pictures More Complicated, Says Mary. We're Dealing With Two Faculties—Sight and Hearing—Where Before We Only Had One To Please

were going to use in the picture. Then suddenly this face came out of the corner and actually frightened me, it was so terrible. Of course he got the part and from that has gone on in pictures.

MISS PICKFORD: Well, first let me tell you the pictures which I think are the best. They are: "Seventh Heaven," "Cimarron," "Birth of a Nation," "Over the Hill," "Three Musketeers," "The Kid," "The Freshman," "Big Parade," "What Price Glory?" "Robin Hood," "Beau Geste," "All Quiet on the Western Front."

MR. BROWN: What about "Tol'able David"? I always liked that.

MISS PICKFORD: Yes, that was a good picture. But I was mad about "Three Musketeers." Also, I think "Robin Hood" one of the finest ever done.

MR. BROWN: Miss Pickford, are you thoroughly converted to the talking pictures, or have you some affection left for the silent ones?

MISS PICKFORD: I enjoy much more doing talkies, but would rather see the silent pictures.

MR. BROWN: I am completely converted to the talkies now. But I wasn't so much in the beginning. And the silent ones sometimes puzzled me.

MISS PICKFORD: I think we have distinctly lost something. Instead of simplifying things we have made them more complicated. The ultimate goal in all forms of art is directness. In the silent pictures we left more to the imagination of the audience.

MR. BROWN: You mean, I suppose, that here, for instance, is a love scene, not spoken. And if you use your imagination you can have the scene interpreted in whatever phases you like. Spoken it may not be just what your imagination dictates. If you take it in the form of a mood it may be more exciting. Two people may look at each other in a way which cannot be expressed.

MISS PICKFORD: Exactly. And now we are dealing with two faculties—sight and hearing; whereas before we had only one to please.

MR. BROWN: Why do you think the talking pictures seem at the moment to have conquered the silent pictures? Is there a chance that the silent ones will come back?

MISS PICKFORD: I am hoping we will compromise, which we haven't done as yet. First of all, Warner Bros. caught the rest of the industry napping. And they, in their hurry and excitement to get equipment in, hadn't much time to think of their stories and took many things from the theater. I invariably see the ghost, in every picture, of the proscenium arch, the footlights and the wings. Gone are the days of movement. I resent very much two people standing up for a long time and talking to me. It is poor work on the part of either the adapter or the director.

MR. BROWN: You mean that even in pictures the chief charm lies in movement and action?

MISS PICKFORD: That's our great privilege. The theater, of necessity, must crowd everything within three walls.

MR. BROWN: That's a familiar thing about the theater. The playwright tears down the fourth wall. The silent picture tore down all four walls. I think it's a mistake to take a play which has to be devised for three sets. Say, a man leaves the room, he's gone, and you know he's rushing to the hospital to see his dying mother, but you don't know what he's doing on his way, what he's thinking about.

MISS PICKFORD: That's the mistake. In writing plays haven't you noticed there are always things that remain vague? I have seen plays changed entirely and yet there will be bits of scenes that were placed in the original for some reason, of no use to the picture.

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Mary Pickford's 10 Great Film Stars

(Continued from page 84)

ture, very often left in. That's our difficulty in taking a story written for the theater. The novel is much better for pictures. But still, even that is not ideal because it deals entirely in words.

MR. BROWN: One thing has always puzzled me. I don't see how the farce and comedy pictures get along. You can't tell for certain where your laugh is going to come in.

MISS PICKFORD: There has been a lot of controversy in Hollywood as to whether they should or shouldn't wait for laughs. The consensus of opinion is that they shouldn't.

MR. BROWN: Most people think that for a comedy a certain sense of timing is necessary; at least, let your laughs get part of the way. You do have to make those pauses. Will Rogers, for instance, on the radio would tell his gag and pause a second and put in his own little laugh.

MISS PICKFORD: Mr. Ziegfeld once said that Hollywood was ideal for plays like "Whoopie." You know where the laughs come. But they differ. For instance, I have noticed that a matinee women's audience is very different from an evening audience. Women don't laugh as much. They are more responsive to the dramatic and sympathetic and love scenes. But not to comedy.

MR. BROWN: But the tragic or pathetic scene is more universal. People will cry at the same place, but not laugh at the same place.

MISS PICKFORD: Then again, a friend of mine went to two performances of a recent comedy picture the other day. At the six o'clock performance the audience was hilarious. And at the nine o'clock show there wasn't a laugh. But then, you have to take into consideration the physical condition of the audience. At nine o'clock many people are a little tired.

MR. BROWN: And sometimes the audience is not sufficiently well rehearsed. You say that you like acting in the talking pictures better than in the silent ones?

MISS PICKFORD: Well, in the last three or four years, before talking pictures had attained the technique they now have, it was necessary to have twelve or fourteen hundred set-ups and the character had to go over and over the same scene. It required twelve to seventeen weeks to complete a picture. Now it is only necessary to have 250 set-ups as against 1400 before.

THOUGH I sat throughout the interview as a novice learning wisdom, I did go away feeling that the lady of the interview had committed one tragic and palpable blunder in choosing the stars of the screen. It is an error which even a schoolboy or an interviewer should be able to correct.

The team as picked by her is wholly incomplete. Another name must certainly be added. And I will take it upon myself to add as quarter-back and captain—Mary Pickford!

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