Douglas and I—of course, to Douglas Fairbanks, my husband—were concluding our seventh trip abroad. We had gone to Switzerland, where my little niece had been placed in school, and instead of returning as before, over the Atlantic, we decided to roam back through Egypt, India, China, Japan, and thence to Los Angeles over the Pacific.

On previous trips to Europe we had had some hectic and thrilling experiences with street mobs—particularly in London and Moscow. Somehow we counted upon

I had to talk to him for some time. "This is cordiality," I said. "A great expression of friendliness. It becomes violence only because there is a mob which cannot control itself. Sop and think—what a remarkable tribute it is to the motion picture."

That very day, as we steamed into the inland sea of Japan, an aeroplane had encircled our ship. It was a tribute, rarely given, from the Japanese Government. A tribute of good will—to America, I shall say! Yes, and to the motion picture!

And so it had been from the time we left Paris. In the towns of Jugoslavia people brought to the train their cleverly made little gifts of local manufacture. Our pictures had shown them the things America could produce; they wanted to show us their own skill in creation. And the motion picture, because we were its representatives, made a common meeting ground.

In Alexandria our car was all but wrecked with the weight of the stevedores who clambered upon the running boards. They screamed for autographs, mementos of any kind. From some grinning faces the ears were extended in a suppliant way.

"What on earth do they want?" I exclaimed.

It was explained to me that they wished our ears autographed so they could have the words permanently tattooed.

In Athens the constant gallery of observers was all but shut from view the things we had to see, and when we left our boat we had to turn back to deliver on shore a young Greek newspaper woman who had hidden in a stateroom. At Port Arthur several thousand people waited after midnight for the arrival of

Douglas and Mary on Vacation

O

E day last spring I happened to be motoring away down in Southern California, in San Diego County, a marvelous land where the great ranches of the early Spanish days sweep in from the ocean over solemn hills and canyons to the wild inland grazing plains.

We stopped at a small ranch house. The farmer and his wife, fine alert young Americans, came out to greet us. Their children came romping in from the barn.

It was a beautiful day. The fields were lush with green; the quail were whistling, the meadow larks singing.

"It is lovely here," I said to the farmer's wife. "You must be very happy."

She let her eyes rove over the high horizon and they clouded. "I got tired of the hills," she said soberly, and her husband nodded.

Then suddenly she smiled and her eyes sparkled.

"But there's a talkie now in Encinitas. Just opened a few weeks ago, and we can drive in as soon as the dishes are washed." And for some minutes she talked breathlessly of the pictures she had seen and what they meant to her.

"We never did see many shows," her husband explained. "We got to San Diego now and then, and maybe once a year to Los Angeles. But we're too tired at night to dress up enough for the highfalutin' places. Now we have the shows right here. And they sure do let the world in."

Opening the Hills to Romance

THAT little experience made me thoughtful all the way home. Perhaps it was the rare quality of symbolism, for I have often talked with people about pictures, it is the one way to know of their appeal. But the words of the farm woman went straight to my heart.

Here were people shut in by the hills. And a near-by picture theater opened the hills and let the world in!

And so it is everywhere; quite the same, I have found, in the far-off lands. All of us, the millions upon millions of us, are shut in by hills of some kind or another. The hills of the tenement houses of a big city, the hills of Main Street, the hills of the country—all are the same. They are the hills that circumscribe our workaday lives; prosaic lives as they must be, in the tense struggle for existence. The screen of the picture theater lets in the light of romance. It illumined the eyes of a farmer's wife. It illumines the eyes of the world. So my thoughts ran, and to them I added the ones formulated in my mind on a long steamer trip home from Japan last winter.

Los Angeles Children Having the Thrill of Their Lives. Being Photographed With Mary

this new journey into Northern Africa and the Far East as one on which we could go as we pleased, unobserved and free willed. But it was not to be so. It turned, increasingly, into the most remarkable reception we have ever had. We rarely knew our own plans ahead, from one embarkation to another; and, once decided upon, we tried faithfully to keep the news to ourselves. But, somehow or other, the word went winging ahead.

I shall never forget the dismay, and then the utter indignation, of Karl Kitchen, newspaper writer, who happened to be with us when our train pulled into Kyoto and the mob at the station engulfed us. I was rescued just in time and sat perched upon Douglas' shoulders until the mounted police, with drawn sabers, cleared a lane for us. Poor Mr. Kitchen was thrown down and trampled over. When he got to his feet he sent his fists swinging right and left. When, after a violent struggle, we finally reached our rooms at the hotel by way of a rear elevator, the disheveled Mr. Kitchen exclaimed:

"This is outrageous! How can you keep taking it with a smile?"
our train. And, above all, I shall never forget the sight that greeted us one early morning as our boat crept up to the wharf at Colombo. Fully five thousand dark faces looked up at us with smiling eyes and flashing white teeth. And a great roar arose of, “Hola! Mariel!”

Always, at each place of arrival on our trip, there was a sea of happy faces. That is my vivid and lasting impression of the entire trip.

A splendid stimulant to one’s vanity, such an experience as this, except that Douglas and I had long since analyzed the personal element out of these receptions. Overtures, I have come to believe, are seldom or never accorded to persons, but to ideas.

U. S. Ambassadors of the Cinema

WHEN our boys returned from overseas their reception in New York could not have been given to their personalities: the great outburst was a tribute to the idea they represented. At the time of Lindbergh’s magnificent exploit his personality was certainly unknown to the French populace. He typified to them the spirit of indomitable youth.

So it follows that a celebrity at the time of receiving the acclaim of a crowd of people is in a position of great influence. For the moment, the crowd is very receptive. Impressions are easily absorbed. That is why ovations to our public characters abroad make the basis of a message I have long wished to deliver.

I hope that the District of Columbia is listening.

I do not believe that any person in the world is big enough for the acclaim of many thousand earnest people. The cheering crowds of the Far East were shouting not for me but for the American motion picture and the American people and for the world of make-believe. Therefore I hold that, in a large sense, we were ambassadors, not only of the motion-picture industry but of our country. This being true, is it not reasonable to suggest that our Government take cognizance of the possibilities of such situations? If, as we are often told, international anxiety comes through understanding, the American motion picture is indeed a tremendous influence abroad. It is in the most forceful and direct manner introduced American life to millions who could not possibly have understood us otherwise.

There is another phase of this important situation that I want to mention in passing: it seems to be overlooked by many who have commented upon it. The emotionalist of the average American story is undoubtedly a factor in the popularity of our films abroad.

As a whole, the people of most countries lead restricted and industrious lives. The promise of prosperity, success and happiness does not seem to intimate a thing as in our country, where opportunity is open to the lowest.

We have been criticized for stories that are not sufficiently sophisticated, but I shall always believe that any audience will find greatest entertainment in the show that takes them away from the grimmer realities and reveals to each individual a happier state than his own daily life offers.

Foreign peoples have a warm spot in their hearts for our pictures and for those of us who make them. This is true of all countries, all classes. I have seen a little Arab boy amusing his playmates with imitations of Charlie Chaplin. In Milan a little girl told me to give her love to Janet Gaynor. An English noblewoman pried me with whispered questions about Richard Barthelmess. A servant in a Chinese hotel showed me a picture of Lillian Gish which he always carried with him.

I shall always remember an experience in Spain. Douglas and I had attended a race meet, at which were present King Alphonso, the Queen Mother and the Queen of Portugal. As we passed through the gate a beggar woman darted through the crowd and plucked my sleeve.

I turned, expecting the usual request for alms, but something in the swarthy, wrinkled face made me pause and listen. In a torrent of Spanish the poor old woman was telling me that my pictures warmed her heart—that she would hold this a gala day in her life because she had seen and touched me.

Later in the afternoon, the Queen of Portugal, learning that we were present, sent for us. I can see her now, all in black, a regal figure, the shadow of her sorrows upon her fine face. She bowed deeply as I stood before her, and in a manner so formal as to make an ovation of her kindly words, said: “Through all my dark days of heartache you have been a ray of light. Your pictures have been my only pleasure and diversion.”

I stood there, I am afraid, too long silent with the realization that a queen was saying what I had just heard from the lips of a beggar. But, after all, it was only the same spirit that had similar expression from such incongruous peoples as the savages of the New Guinea Islands, the students of Luxor, the tourists at the Parthenon, the great, grinning mobs of Tokio and Kyoto, the calm scholarly Chinese who put forth the plow, courteously, but not the less intently, that our pictures portray their people as they truly are. It is my thought, and my recital thus far is only given to lead up to it, that the motion picture, and its clearly evident satisfaction of the soul hunger of the world’s millions—practically all its millions—is a thing of such tremendous substance and consequence that it should be given the best thought of us all. “Us” includes the governments of the world, and its leaders of thought and action. I say it in all humility, but I feel that I know the hearts of the people in whose lives motion pictures mean so much. I, therefore, can give forth a message for them, it will be a joy and satisfaction.

The Elemental Appeal in Palestine

FOR one thing, and a basic thing, I hope that pictures will never depart too much from the elemental appeal that goes home to the human breast everywhere.

Most people must remember Chaplin’s famous picture, The Gold Rush. It tells the story of the pathetic little man who was always on the fringe of life, who never could quite get into the swirl of those who knew the joys of life. Do you know that this picture, which we call a comedy, was and still is solemnly received throughout Palestine as a symbol of the age-old struggle of the peoples of Israel? Richard Wallace, the director, who has just returned from the Holy Land, tells me this fact. It is marvelous, I think, that a picture should go so deep into life as to have so wide a circle of such varied appeal.

The only universal story has always been the Cinderella story—the story that never departs too far from the Cinderella spirit—which, as in my own life, leads every little...
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Several methods of reaching foreign markets with American-made talkies have been tried. Some Hollywood studios, after finishing English versions, have remade their pictures with French and Spanish casts. In some instances foreign speech has been dubbed in. All this has been purely experimental, only certain stories having been chosen as most likely to appeal to foreign taste. The American producer hopes to see the foreign market slipping away and will not lose it without a struggle. The difficulty with the situation does not lie in our inability to make foreign-language pictures, but in the fact that the returns may not justify the high cost of our careful production methods. The potential market for a picture in any one language could not begin to absorb, profitably, our more pretentious productions.

Then, too, the attitude of several foreign governments is anything but encouraging. Germany, France and England have been, for some time, passing regulating and restrictive measures designed to cut down the leadership of American pictures in favor of their own. I mention this, not as a criticism but because the very opposition that American pictures meet is a recognition by foreign governments of the power of our films upon their people. The quota laws were aimed directly at our films. In effect, they provide for the manufacture or release of an arbitrary proportion of home-made pictures to American-made pictures. Some American producers have engaged to make German pictures in Germany, English pictures in England and French pictures in France. Whether this will solve the problem arising from quotas remains to be seen.

**The High Barrier of Language**

The silent film has made several American stars so popular abroad that they have become almost national idols in many countries. From all this, one thing is very evident: There is no chance of any new American screen players becoming known in all the far corners of the world. In thousands of places where our pictures were understood our language is a barrier to shut us out. The stereotapes who greeted us so vociferously in Alexandria, the students who clamored for autographs at Laxor, the crowds that followed us to the Louvre, must feel when we recall memories of us on old silent pictures, for we cannot reach them with our strange language.

"Well, what of it?" the cynic asks, and in answering that question I deliver my message.

Turn to the best possible account the contact of American celebrities with foreign peoples. The fine, efficient service of our consulates may be made to go a bit further and realize to the fullest the good-will value of cordial ovations. Our outstanding aviators, golfers, scientists and actors are our ambassadors. Would it not be wise to guide them to the way in which they can make the most friends for us?

The problems that have arisen from the far-reaching effect of motion pictures on the thought of the world demand a broader consideration than has yet been given to them. We can accomplish nothing definite by hit-or-miss discussion and editorial flights. It is a matter of world importance, and as such should take into account the interests of all nations.

**A World Court of Motion Pictures**

For any country to take selfish methods of protecting itself would not be necessary if there could be some great concerted effort to use the influence of all good pictures for the good of all people. A promising step has already been taken at Washington. Congress voted an appropriation for a Division of Films in the Department of Commerce. It is functioning in most capable hands; a competent trade commissioner is active abroad.

But there is so much to be done in behalf of that which, undoubtedly, has so vital a part in world relations. I have spoken of Lindbergh, shining exponent of a new way to bring the countries of the world closer together. This modest and fine young American would have won his way, unaided, to the high esteem and affection he received. But our excellent ambassador to France was quick to extend to him his good will. It is not difficult to suggest that our motion pictures abroad, also ambassadors of good will, also agents of closer and better world contact, should have the same intelligent and effective patronage.

As I write this an important world conference on motion pictures is under way in Paris. That is a good sign, and some good is bound to come forth from it, if only a clearer understanding of some of the many problems of the world relations of motion pictures. Such conferences should continue. I feel that there should be a World Court of motion pictures, a permanent one with regular sessions, at least once a year, and with the world's leading figures in active attendance. I make the suggestion with temerity; it is a solemn one, and perhaps the very same idea is already in the minds of some of the foremost filmmakers and men of whom we have had memories of us on old silent pictures, for we cannot reach them with our strange language.

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