

# AMBASSADORS

By MARY PICKFORD



PHOTO BY COURTESY OF UNITED ARTISTS  
Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford on Vacation

ONE 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 dons 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 get 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 get 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 its 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 illumines 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.

Douglas and I—I refer, 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 and 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. Stop 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, shall I say? Yes, and to the motion picture!

And so it had been from the time we left Paris. In the towns of Jugo-Slavia 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 their ears autographed so they could have the words permanently tattooed.

In Athens the constant gallery of observers all but shut from view the things we had longed 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



PHOTO BY R. D. SARIN  
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?"



Douglas and Mary in "The Taming of the Shrew"



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! Marie!"

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. Ovarious, 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 in.

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 so often are told, international amity comes through understanding, the American motion picture is indeed a tremendous

influence abroad. It has 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 have been overlooked by many who have commented upon it. The hopeful outlook 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 so intimate a thing as in our country, where opportunity is open to the lowliest.

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



PHOTO BY UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD, INC., N. Y. C.  
With Another New Coiffure for the "Coquette" Filming



PHOTO BY COURTESY METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER  
The Third Day of the "Hollywood Revue's"  
Run in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



Doing Egypt on Their Recent Tour of the Far East

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 plied 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 oration 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 stevedores of Alexandria, 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 plea, courteously, but not the less intensely, 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. If, therefore, I 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 ages-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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and Mr. Krinsky said it was now time to let old Ivan have a chance at the controls. I had him take the driver's seat and I sat beside him. We started off. We followed the last furrow which I had made across the field, and at first we got along fairly well. But when we reached the far end, I was startled to observe that Ivan made no effort either to stop the machine or to turn it around. The stupid brute merely sat perfectly still with his tremendous hands tightly grasping the steering wheel.

"It is time to turn!" I yelled.

Ivan did nothing.

"Turn it around!" I yelled.

Still Ivan did nothing. I grabbed the wheel myself, but Ivan was such a powerful creature, and he was holding it so rigidly, that I could not do a thing. And all this time we were rapidly approaching the edge of the bluff which overlooked the Bug River.

"You poor sap!" I yelled. "Turn that wheel!"

At last the huge gorilla seemed to get the idea. He gave one terrific heave with his massive arms. And the wheel, the steering post, and the entire precision-movement, super-delicate steering mechanism came out by the roots. Ivan twisted the fragments hither and thither in a vain effort to steer. But it was no use; everything was completely disconnected. And the tractor was almost at the edge of the bluff. I reached over and cut off the ignition. With my other hand, I jammed on the emergency brake, which I had readjusted so that it took hold all right. The machine stopped on the very brink of the bluff, with the front end of it hanging out in space.

For a moment, I thought we were safe, but I was mistaken. I suddenly felt that the edge of the bluff was beginning to crumble beneath the weight of the tractor. Apparently Ivan had enough sense to know what was going on. With a clumsy apelike bound, he jumped out of one side, while I leaped gracefully out the other. And the next instant my beautiful new-model thirty-horse-power Earthworm, with all its artistic red paint and everything, disappeared.

I stuck my head over the edge and looked down. I saw the great machine rolling and bounding across the sloping ground at the foot of the almost perpendicular cliff. Finally it came to rest on the level bottom land, a couple of hundred feet below me. And then, for the second time in two days, it burst into flames. This time there was no chance to throw on dirt. And there was a full tank of fifty gallons of gasoline. Obviously there was nothing to do but let it burn. The poor machine was such a complete wreck that I didn't even take the trouble to climb down the cliff to look at it.

The villagers all came rushing up in a high state of excitement, but I paid no attention to them. All at once I got mad. My disposition had not been improved by the uncomfortable night I had spent, and this disaster was more than I could stand. I walked right up to Mr. Krinsky and told him exactly what I thought of him and of the Soviet Government. After a certain amount of more or less general derogatory remarks, which I will not repeat, I ended up as follows:

"This is all the fault of your silly communist theories. You want to throw out all the good, intelligent, efficient farmers like Comrade Chipkoff, and you insist on turning over the important jobs to mental defectives like this Ivan the Terrible. I should think when you are getting up a new system of government you'd get up one that has some sense to it."

About this time Mr. Krinsky himself began to get a little sore. "You are all wrong," he said. "It was not Ivan's fault; he tried to turn the machine around. The trouble is all with your boasted super-delicate steering mechanism. 'One touch from a baby's hand and the whole machine turns around.' Indeed! One touch from anybody else's hand and it comes to pieces. I should think that when you people build a new model you would get out one that had some sense to it."

[NOTE: I will have to admit that there was a little justice in what Mr. Krinsky said. I would suggest that you tell the engineering department that there is such a thing as making a tractor a little too super-delicate. But, of course, I wouldn't admit anything like that to Mr. Krinsky.]

"I do not care to argue with you," I said in a very loud voice, while all the villagers gathered around. "I only want to tell you that your whole Bolshevik system of government here is rotten, and it would be better for the country if you had some sort of a Czar back again who would run the country properly."

"You had better be careful," snarled Mr. Krinsky. "There may be agents of the Gay-Pay-Oo in this crowd, and some of them may understand English."

"And what," I asked, "is the Gay-Pay-Oo?"

"It is the secret police who are charged with suppressing just such counter-revolutionary sentiments as you have expressed. It may interest you to know that they would have the power to send you to Siberia, or to the dreadful prison on Solovyetzky Island."

"I care not that," I replied, snapping my fingers with a magnificent gesture, "for your old Google-Goo-Gay, or whatever it is. I only hope they are here and can understand what I say. My wife and I are completely through with you and your so-called government. We are going back to

Odessa at once, and from there we are sailing on the first boat to sunny Italy. Good-by."

I took Gadget by the arm and we marched back to the village and down to the railroad station. Fortunately, there was a train for Odessa in just a few minutes, and we got aboard. I noticed that Mr. Krinsky got on the same train, but he had sense enough to ride in another car. The trip to Odessa was uneventful, except for the fact that my angry passions began to subside.

As you know, I am naturally of a pleasant, friendly disposition, and I do not stay mad at anybody for very long. Consequently, by the time we reached Odessa I had regained my usual poise and had decided that, after all, there is no sense in nourishing grudges against people—particularly people like Mr. Krinsky, who is, at bottom, a fairly decent chap.

Apparently Mr. Krinsky had the same idea. Gadget and I met him on the station platform and we all shook hands most cordially and apologized for our lack of courtesy earlier in the afternoon. Mr. Krinsky suggested that we might still be able to do business together. I agreed. And sometime later in the week we are going to put on a demonstration with the old-model sixty-horse-power tractor. In a future report I will let you know how we come out.

As we started for the hotel, Mr. Krinsky said: "I have the greatest admiration for you tractor people and for the way you are developing a new model with so many novel and improved ideas. You are public benefactors. Keep up the good work. But, whatever you do, don't try to sell me your new model until you have it working a lot better than it is now."

"Well spoken," I said. "And my sentiments toward you are exactly the same."

"How so?"

"I have the greatest admiration," I said, "for you Bolsheviks and for the way you are developing a new system of government with so many novel and improved ideas. You are public benefactors. Keep up the good work. But, whatever you do, don't try to sell me your new ideas until you have them working a whole lot better than they are now."

"That also was well spoken," said Mr. Krinsky.

"Of course it was," I replied. "And before I wish you good evening I have one more message. I want to present you with the remains of that poor old tractor out there on the banks of the River Bug. I hope you will accept it, with the compliments of the Earthworm Tractor Company, as our contribution to National Junk Week."

And that is all at present from your hard-working salesman,

ALEXANDER BOTTS.

## AMBASSADORS

(Continued from Page 7)

girl born into this world along life's pathway to the Prince Charming who beckons her on—even though, at the end of the road, he remains only a vision.

Let me say a word here, if I may, about the picture folk of Hollywood. I refer to those whose life is devoted to creative work. It is devotion. The plain fact is that one's life is not one's own. Measure or appraise it as the outside world will, the fact remains that it is earnest, absorbing and self-sacrificing. The big world does not know the little world of Hollywood. And often the situation is saddening. There is much I might say in this connection, but I must be content here to point to a phase that concerns pictures. Hollywood is assailed with an overbalance of don'ts. It is a tribute, of course, to the power of the picture that so very many people and so many important agencies should concern themselves so greatly with it. But some do's would be greatly appreciated. It is not encouragement that is asked for, although all creative people can use it to advantage. Nor are

yeses wanted, but rather that broad and intelligent interest that suggests the things of real progress. It is my earnest hope that picture creation will always have that measure of freedom which is so necessary to the spirit of creative work.

But to return to my theme: Each year America sends abroad many of its citizens who in some branch of effort have won public recognition. All these people are, in a large sense, ambassadors of their nation. I hold that our Government should consider them as valuable contacts between the people of America and the peoples of other nations. Let me interpose an emphatic negation here to a possible inference that I refer to anything as blatant as studied propaganda. I mean that our consuls, attachés and ambassadors should extend a friendly guidance; that is all.

When an American creates a good impression abroad he creates a good impression for America. A bad impression, likewise, is charged to one's country. Often a friendly hint regarding certain sectional or national

prejudices, a suggestion regarding local conditions, may make a great difference.

American travelers must now carry the burden of representing America abroad, because we can no longer depend upon the motion picture. The silent picture, understandable to all, universal in its appeal, brought us close to natives of every corner of the world. The talking picture limits our message to those who understand the words we speak; in fact, some of those who understand the words may resent our intonation, accent and idiom. The silent picture has created a number of international idols, but the talking picture will not do so. The appeal of each American screen player is now limited to the audiences of the American theaters. Those stars who won their world-wide following before the advent of the talking pictures have a right to be proud, because when we pass, there will very likely be no such successors from the ranks of talking-picture favorites. Their languages circumscribe their sphere of appeal and influence.

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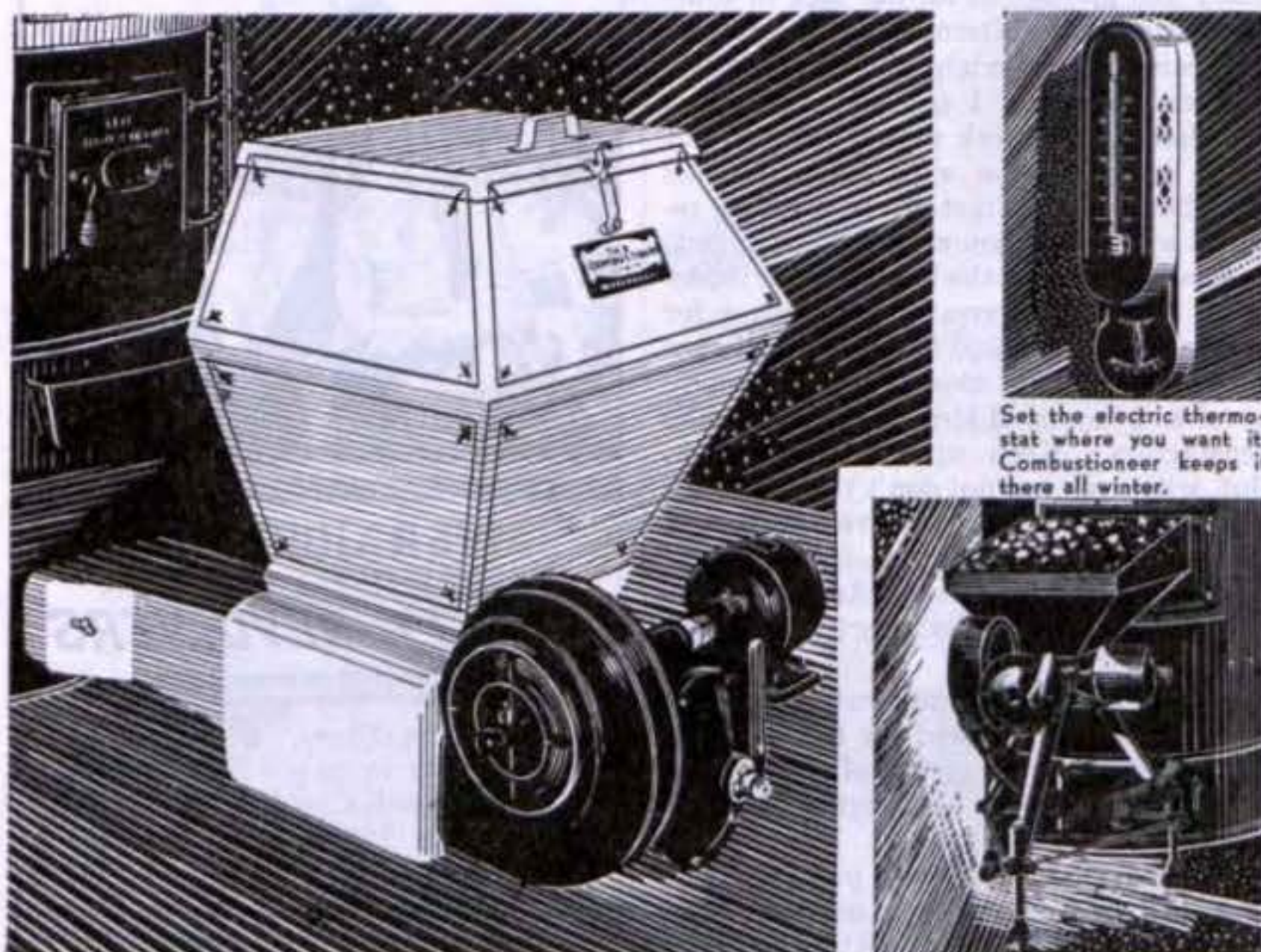
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(warm air, hot water, vapor, etc.)

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 hates 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 regulatory 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 powerful hold 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 stevedores who greeted us so vociferously in Alexandria, the students who clamored for autographs at Luxor, the crowds that followed us to the Parthenon, must feed their 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.

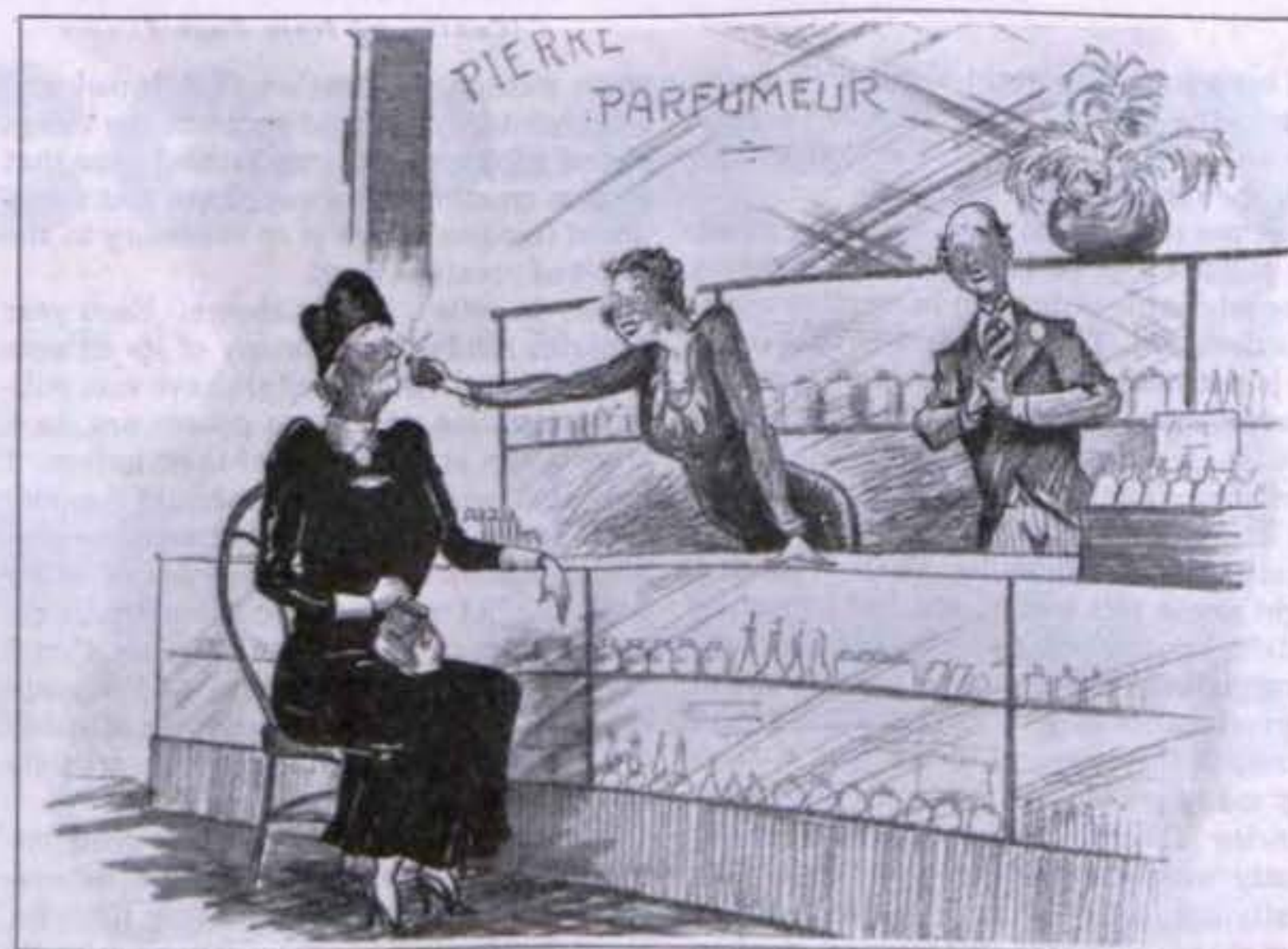
But there is so much to be done in behalf of that which, undeniably, has so vital a part in world relations.

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 offices. Is it not fitting 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 the efficient organizations that concern themselves with motion-picture progress.

Nevertheless, I feel deeply in the matter. The picture is basic; it is international; it holds a foremost place alongside the forces that are shaping the world's progress. Governments should not be at odds about it, and need not be. There should be common meeting grounds for understanding; then cooperative effort will follow, and the results will be of vital benefit to all concerned. I am sure that there are men in every country who see in the broader phases of this matter the necessity for some such action.



DRINK BY SHAW HUNTER

"Sniff, Madame! It's Pierre's Supreme Contribution to Civilization!"