

## = The Mad Hermit =

The Mad Hermit is a 1910 American silent short drama film produced by the Thanhouser Company . The story focuses on Harry Willard , who becomes a hermit after his wife and daughter leave him . He spends a quarter of a century in isolation , but he stumbles across a runaway carriage and the woman tosses her baby to him . He runs into the wilderness and prepares to kill it , but he stays his hand when he sees the baby 's locket . The parents survive the carriage crash and seek out the hermit , and it is revealed that the baby 's mother is the daughter of Harry Willard . Created by a staff of twenty , it was the first film to be produced by the Thanhouser Company . The film was released in August 9 , 1910 , after the success of the company was ensured , and met with positive reception by critics . The film is presumed lost .

## = = Plot = =

Though the film is presumed lost , a synopsis survives in The Moving Picture World from August 13 , 1910 . It states : " The story centers on Harry Willard , a plodding farmer . A city gentleman promises Harry 's frivolous wife a life of ease and luxury - and it is the old , old story . She takes her tiny daughter , Agnes , with her , and leaves a note announcing the fact for Harry . The young farmer , who loves his wife and child with an all @-@ consuming love , loses his reason as he reads the announcement of his betrayal . Although without the bare means for his subsistence , he searches for days for his loved ones . Eventually the strain , mental and physical , tells on him - he comes out of it all a maniac . His wrath takes the form of an aversion to all mankind . He wants to forget the world that has treated him so ill - he decides to become a hermit and betakes himself to a desolate cave , where he spends the years execrating humanity . A quarter century goes by . Rarely in that time does he venture on beaten paths for fear that he may meet a hated human , but one day he forgets his resolve long enough to cross a carriage drive . He hears the clatter of hooves and sights a horse tearing toward him with a swaying carriage and screaming occupants - runaway ! As the carriage passes by him , a woman flings a bundle to him ; he catches it and finds it a pink and white bit of humanity . Dazed he runs into the wilderness with a baby and makes for his cave . Arrived at the cave the maniac resolves to even his score with society by taking the babe 's life . But his eyes light on the baby 's locket and his hand is stayed . For the locket bears a picture of the child of the wife who betrayed him ! "

" The parents of the baby have miraculously escaped death in the crash of their carriage and trace the strange creature who rescued the child to his lair . They arrive as he ponders upon the picture in the locket and tries to recall the original of it . The babe is the daughter of the original and its mother the hermit 's daughter , Agnes - the one @-@ time tot whom the deserting wife took with her . A wife and mother , she is quite a mature woman now - but her features are unchanged . The face appears familiar to the hermit and he tries to place it . Eventually he succeeds . The shock of recognition dazes him - and changes him . The light of sanity returns to his eyes . His reason is restored . He takes to his breast the daughter whom he had lost and found again . She takes him from his forest home and back to the civilization that had tricked him . But the kindly care and love his daughter bestows on him to act in a measure as a recompense for the wrong done him in the long ago , and with the passing years the bitterness passes from his being . The picture touches the heartstrings ; it will please to a certainty . "

## = = Production = =

The Mad Hermit was the first film to be produced by the Thanhouser Company , but the first release was The Actor 's Children . The writer of the scenario is unknown . The film was shot in the autumn of 1909 . Edwin Thanhouser would later describe the production as , " ... a rather lamentable affair . It included everything from murder through robbery and a love story . It boasted enough material for 15 plots . " According to Q. David Bowers , Edwin Thanhouser felt that the production had many amateurish aspects and held off on releasing the film until the reputation of the company was

secured . The film was directed by Barry O 'Neil , the stage name of Thomas J. McCarthy . O 'Neil would direct many important Thanhouser pictures , including its first two @-@ reeler , Romeo and Juliet . There are no known credits for the cast , but Anna Rosemond and Frank H. Crane are two possible actors that were prominent players in 1910 . Involved with the company since its beginnings , Anna Rosemond was one of two leading ladies of the Thanhouser company in this era . Frank H. Crane was a leading male actor of the company and also involved since the very beginnings of the Thanhouser Company . Bowers states that most of the credits are fragmentary for 1910 Thanhouser productions . A later statement by Edwin Thanhouser would state that 20 persons , including the director and cameraman , were involved in the production . A surviving film still leaves open the possibility of identifying two characters .

= = Release and reception = =

The single reel drama , approximately 1 @,@ 000 feet long , was released on August 9 , 1910 . The film had a wide national release , with advertisements including those in Kansas , California , Arizona , Nebraska , Washington , South Dakota , Pennsylvania , and Texas . An advertisement for the Province Theatre suggests that the film arrived in British Columbia , Canada within days of its release .

The film received praise from critics with The Moving Picture World stating , " [ It is a ] picture which touches the heart and arouses the strongest emotions . It can be readily understood how a man might become a maniac under such circumstances . The loss of a wife and daughter is sufficient to overthrow reason . That a man should be a hermit afterward seems not unusual . Then comes the excitement of the runaway , the rescue of the baby and the discovery of his daughter , with returning reason and love to follow during his declining years . The emotions will be strongly aroused by this picture , and that will make it popular . Whatever touches the heart is always popular , and this seems to appeal with unusual power . " The New York Dramatic Mirror offered minor praise for the film for the production and its acting .