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THE ART OF THE MOVING PICTURE

By

VACHEL LINDSAY

Intended, First of All, for the New Art Museums Springing Up All over the

Country. But the Book Is for Our Universities and Institutions of

Learning. It Contains an Appeal to Our Whole Critical and Literary World,

and to Our Creators of Sculpture, Architecture, Painting, and the

American Cities They Are Building. Being the 1922 Revision of the Book

First Issued in 1915, and Beginning With an Ample Discourse on the Great

New Prospects of 1922

"Hail, all ye gods in the house of the soul, who weigh Heaven and

Earth in a balance, and who give celestial food."

From the book of the scribe Ani, translated from the

original Egyptian hieroglyphics by Professor E.A.

Wallis Budge

Dedicated

TO GEORGE MATHER RICHARDS

IN MEMORY OF THE ART STUDENT DAYS WE SPENT TOGETHER

WHEN THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM WAS OUR PICTURE-DRAMA

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A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE DENVER ART ASSOCIATION

The Art of the Moving Picture, as it appeared six years ago, possessed

among many elements of beauty at least one peculiarity. It viewed art as

a reality, and one of our most familiar and popular realities as an art.

This should have made the book either a revelation or utter Greek to most

of us, and those who read it probably dropped it easily into one or the

other of the two categories.

For myself, long a propagandist for its doctrines in another but related

field, the book came as a great solace. In it I found, not an appeal to

have the art museum used--which would have been an old though welcome

story--not this, but much to my surprise, the art museum actually at

work, one of the very wheels on which our culture rolled forward upon its

hopeful way. I saw among other museums the one whose destinies I was

tenderly guiding, playing in Lindsay's book the part that is played by

the classic myths in Milton, or by the dictionary in the writings of the

rest of us. For once the museum and its contents appeared, not as a

lovely curiosity, but as one of the basic, and in a sense humble

necessities of life. To paraphrase the author's own text, the art museum,

like the furniture in a good movie, was actually "in motion"--a character

in the play. On this point of view as on a pivot turns the whole book.

In The Art of the Moving Picture the nature and domain of a new Muse is

defined. She is the first legitimate addition to the family since classic

times. And as it required trained painters of pictures like Fulton and

Morse to visualize the possibility of the steamboat and the telegraph, so

the bold seer who perceived the true nature of this new star in our

nightly heavens, it should here be recorded, acquired much of the vision

of his seeing eye through an early training in art. Vachel Lindsay (as he

himself proudly asserts) was a student at the Institute in Chicago for

four years, spent one more at the League and at Chase's in New York, and

for four more haunted the Metropolitan Museum, lecturing to his fellows

on every art there shown from the Egyptian to that of Arthur B. Davies.

Only such a background as this could have evolved the conception of

"Architecture, sculpture, and painting in motion" and given authenticity

to its presentation. The validity of Lindsay's analysis is attested by

Freeburg's helpful characterization, "Composition in fluid forms," which

it seems to have suggested. To Lindsay's category one would be tempted to

add, "pattern in motion," applying it to such a film as the "Caligari"

which he and I have seen together and discussed during these past few

days. Pattern in this connection would imply an emphasis on the intrinsic

suggestion of the spot and shape apart from their immediate relation to

the appearance of natural objects. But this is a digression. It simply

serves to show the breadth and adaptability of Lindsay's method.

The book was written for a visual-minded public and for those who would

be its leaders. A long, long line of picture-readers trailing from the

dawn of history, stimulated all the masterpieces of pictorial art from

Altamira to Michelangelo. For less than five centuries now Gutenberg has

had them scurrying to learn their A, B, C's, but they are drifting back

to their old ways again, and nightly are forming themselves in cues at

the doorways of the "Isis," the "Tivoli," and the "Riviera," the while

it is sadly noted that "'the pictures' are driving literature off the

parlor table."

With the creative implications of this new pictorial art, with the whole

visual-minded race clamoring for more, what may we not dream in the way

of a new renaissance? How are we to step in to the possession of such a

destiny? Are the institutions with a purely literary theory of life going

to meet the need? Are the art schools and the art museums making

themselves ready to assimilate a new art form? Or what is the type of

institution that will ultimately take the position of leadership in

culture through this new universal instrument?

What possibilities lie in this art, once it is understood and developed,

to plant new conceptions of civic and national idealism? How far may it

go in cultivating concerted emotion in the now ungoverned crowd? Such

questions as these can be answered only by minds with the imagination to

see art as a reality; with faith to visualize for the little mid-western

"home town" a new and living Pallas Athena; with courage to raze the very

houses of the city to make new and greater forums and "civic centres."

For ourselves in Denver, we shall try to do justice to the new Muse. In

the museum which we build we shall provide a shrine for her. We shall

first endeavor by those simple means which lie to our hands, to know the

areas of charm and imagination which remain as yet an untilled field of

her domain. Plowing is a simple art, but it requires much sweat. This at

least we know--to the expenditure we cheerfully consent. So much for the

beginning. It would be boastful to describe plans to keep pace with the

enlarging of the motion picture field before a real beginning is made.

But with youth in its favor, the Denver Art Museum hopes yet to see this

art set in its rightful place with painting, sculpture, architecture, and

the handicrafts--hopes yet to be an instrument in the great work of

making this art real as those others are being even now made real, to the

expanding vision of an eager people.

GEORGE WILLIAM EGGERS

Director

The Denver Art Association

DENVER, COLORADO,

New Year's Day, 1922.

BOOK I--THE GENERAL PHOTOPLAY SITUATION IN AMERICA, JANUARY 1, 1922

Especially as Viewed from the Heights of the Civic Centre at Denver,

Colorado, and the Denver Art Museum, Which Is to Be a Leading Feature of

This Civic Centre

In the second chapter of book two, on page 8, the theoretical outline

begins, with a discussion of the Photoplay of Action. I put there on

record the first crude commercial films that in any way establish the

principle. There can never be but one first of anything, and if the

negatives of these films survive the shrinking and the warping that comes

with time, they will still be, in a certain sense, classic, and ten years

hence or two years hence will still be better remembered than any films

of the current releases, which come on like newspapers, and as George Ade

says:--"Nothing is so dead as yesterday's newspaper." But the first

newspapers, and the first imprints of Addison's Spectator, and the first

Almanacs of Benjamin Franklin, and the first broadside ballads and the

like, are ever collected and remembered. And the lists of films given in

books two and three of this work are the only critical and carefully

sorted lists of the early motion pictures that I happen to know anything

about. I hope to be corrected if I am too boastful, but I boast that my

lists must be referred to by all those who desire to study these

experiments in their beginnings. So I let them remain, as still vivid in

the memory of all true lovers of the photoplay who have watched its

growth, fascinated from the first. But I would add to the list of Action

Films of chapter two the recent popular example, Douglas Fairbanks in The

Three Musketeers. That is perhaps the most literal "Chase-Picture" that

was ever really successful in the commercial world. The story is cut to

one episode. The whole task of the four famous swordsmen of Dumas is to

get the Queen's token that is in the hands of Buckingham in England, and

return with it to Paris in time for the great ball. It is one long race

with the Cardinal's guards who are at last left behind. It is the same

plot as Reynard the Fox, John Masefield's poem--Reynard successfully

eluding the huntsmen and the dogs. If that poem is ever put on in an Art

Museum film, it will have to be staged like one of Æsop's Fables, with a

\_man\_ acting the Fox, for the children's delight. And I earnestly urge

all who would understand the deeper significance of the "chase-picture"

or the "Action Picture" to give more thought to Masefield's poem than to

Fairbanks' marvellous acting in the school of the younger Salvini. The

Mood of the \_intimate photoplay\_, chapter three, still remains indicated

in the current films by the acting of Lillian Gish and Mary Pickford,

when they are not roused up by their directors to turn handsprings to

keep the people staring. Mary Pickford in particular has been stimulated

to be over-athletic, and in all her career she has been given just one

chance to be her more delicate self, and that was in the almost forgotten

film:--A Romance of the Redwoods. This is one of the serious commercial

attempts that should be revived and studied, in spite of its crudities of

plot, by our Art Museums. There is something of the grandeur of the

redwoods in it, in contrast to the sustained Botticelli grace of "Our

Mary."

I am the one poet who has a right to claim for his muses Blanche Sweet,

Mary Pickford, and Mae Marsh. I am the one poet who wrote them songs when

they were Biograph heroines, before their names were put on the screen,

or the name of their director. Woman's clubs are always asking me for

bits of delicious gossip about myself to fill up literary essays. Now

there's a bit. There are two things to be said for those poems. First,

they were heartfelt. Second, any one could improve on them.

In the fourth chapter of book two I discourse elaborately and formally on

The Motion Picture of Fairy Splendor. And to this carefully balanced

technical discourse I would add the informal word, this New Year's Day,

that this type is best illustrated by such fairy-tales as have been most

ingratiatingly retold in the books of Padraic Colum, and dazzlingly

illustrated by Willy Pogany. The Colum-Pogany School of Thought is one

which the commercial producers have not yet condescended to illustrate in

celluloid, and it remains a special province for the Art Museum Film.

Fairy-tales need not be more than one-tenth of a reel long. Some of the

best fairy-tales in the whole history of man can be told in a breath.

And the best motion picture story for fifty years may turn out to be a

reel ten minutes long. Do not let the length of the commercial film

tyrannize over your mind, O young art museum photoplay director. Remember

the brevity of Lincoln's Gettysburg address....

And so my commentary, New Year's Day, 1922, proceeds, using for points of

more and more extensive departure the refrains and old catch-phrases of

books two and three.

Chapter V--The Picture of Crowd Splendor, being the type illustrated by

Griffith's Intolerance.

Chapter VI--The Picture of Patriotic Splendor, which was illustrated by

all the War Films, the one most recently approved and accepted by the

public being The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

Chapter VII--The Picture of Religious Splendor, which has no examples,

that remain in the memory with any sharpness in 1922, except The Faith

Healer, founded on the play by William Vaughn Moody, the poet, with much

of the directing and scenario by Mrs. William Vaughn Moody, and a more

talked-of commercial film, The Miracle Man. But not until the religious

film is taken out of the commercial field, and allowed to develop

unhampered under the Church and the Art Museum, will the splendid

religious and ritualistic opportunity be realized.

Chapter VIII--Sculpture-in-Motion, being a continuation of the argument

of chapter two. The Photoplay of Action. Like the Action Film, this

aspect of composition is much better understood by the commercial people

than some other sides of the art. Some of the best of the William S. Hart

productions show appreciation of this quality by the director, the

photographer, and the public. Not only is the man but the horse allowed

to be moving bronze, and not mere cowboy pasteboard. Many of the pictures

of Charles Ray make the hero quite a bronze-looking sculpturesque person,

despite his yokel raiment.

Chapter IX--Painting-in-Motion, being a continuation on a higher terrace

of chapter three, The Intimate Photoplay. Charlie Chaplin has intimate

and painter's qualities in his acting, and he makes himself into a

painting or an etching in the midst of furious slapstick. But he has been

in no films that were themselves paintings. The argument of this chapter

has been carried much further in Freeburg's book, The Art of Photoplay

Making.

Chapter X--Furniture, Trappings, and Inventions in Motion, being a

continuation of the chapter on Fairy Splendor. In this field we find one

of the worst failures of the commercial films, and their utterly

unimaginative corporation promoters. Again I must refer them to such

fairy books as those of Padraic Colum, where neither sword nor wing nor

boat is found to move, except for a fairy reason.

I have just returned this very afternoon from a special showing of the

famous imported film, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari. Some of the earnest

spirits of the Denver Art Association, finding it was in storage in the

town, had it privately brought forth to study it with reference to its

bearing on their new policies. What influence it will have in that most

vital group, time will show.

Meanwhile it is a marvellous illustration of the meaning of this chapter

and the chapter on Fairy Splendor, though it is a diabolical not a

beneficent vitality that is given to inanimate things. The furniture,

trappings, and inventions are in motion to express the haunted mind, as

in Griffith's Avenging Conscience, described pages 121 through 132. The

two should be shown together in the same afternoon, in the Art Museum

study rooms. Caligari is undoubtedly the most important imported film

since that work of D'Annunzio, Cabiria, described pages 55 through 57.

But it is the opposite type of film. Cabiria is all out-doors and

splendor on the Mediterranean scale. In general, imported films do not

concern Americans, for we have now a vast range of technique. All we lack

is the sense to use it.

The cabinet of Caligari is indeed a cabinet, and the feeling of being in

a cell, and smothered by all the oppressions of a weary mind, does not

desert the spectator for a minute.

The play is more important, technically, than in its subject-matter and

mood. It proves in a hundred new ways the resources of the film in making

all the inanimate things which, on the spoken stage, cannot act at all,

the leading actors in the films. But they need not necessarily act to a

diabolical end. An angel could have as well been brought from the cabinet

as a murderous somnambulist, and every act of his could have been a work

of beneficence and health and healing. I could not help but think that

the ancient miracle play of the resurrection of Osiris could have been

acted out with similar simple means, with a mummy case and great

sarcophagus. The wings of Isis and Nephthys could have been spread over

the sky instead of the oppressive walls of the crooked city. Lights

instead of shadows could have been made actors and real hieroglyphic

inscriptions instead of scrawls.

As it was, the alleged insane man was more sensible than most motion

picture directors, for his scenery acted with him, and not according to

accident or silly formula. I make these points as an antidote to the

general description of this production by those who praise it.

They speak of the scenery as grotesque, strained, and experimental, and

the plot as sinister. But this does not get to the root of the matter.

There is rather the implication in most of the criticisms and praises

that the scenery is abstract. Quite the contrary is the case. Indoors

looks like indoors. Streets are always streets, roofs are always roofs.

The actors do not move about in a kind of crazy geometry as I was led to

believe. The scenery is oppressive, but sane, and the obsession is for

the most part expressed in the acting and plot. The fair looks like a

fair and the library looks like a library. There is nothing experimental

about any of the setting, nothing unconsidered or strained or

over-considered. It seems experimental because it is thrown into contrast

with extreme commercial formulas in the regular line of the "movie

trade." But compare The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari with a book of Rackham or

Du Lac or Dürer, or Rembrandt's etchings, and Dr. Caligari is more

realistic. And Eggers insists the whole film is replete with suggestions

of the work of Pieter Breughel, the painter. Hundreds of indoor stories

will be along such lines, once the merely commercial motive is

eliminated, and the artist is set free. This film is an extraordinary

variation of the intimate, as expounded in chapter three. It is

drawing-in-motion, instead of painting-in-motion. Because it was drawing

instead of painting, literary-minded people stepped to the hasty

conclusion it was experimental. Half-tone effects are, for the most part,

eliminated. Line is dominant everywhere. It is the opposite of vast

conceptions like Theodora--which are architecture-in-motion. All the

architecture of the Caligari film seems pasteboard. The whole thing

happens in a cabinet.

It is the most overwhelming contrast to Griffith's Intolerance that could

be in any way imagined. It contains, one may say, all the effects left

out of Intolerance. The word cabinet is a quadruple pun. Not only does it

mean a mystery box and a box holding a somnambulist, but a kind of

treasury of tiny twisted thoughts. There is not one line or conception in

it on the grand scale, or even the grandiose. It is a devil's toy-house.

One feels like a mouse in a mouse-trap so small one cannot turn around.

In Intolerance, Griffith hurls nation at nation, race at race, century

against century, and his camera is not only a telescope across the plains

of Babylon, but across the ages. Griffith is, in Intolerance, the

ungrammatical Byron of the films, but certainly as magnificent as Byron,

and since he is the first of his kind I, for one, am willing to name him

with Marlowe.

But for technical study for Art Schools, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari is

more profitable. It shows how masterpieces can be made, with the

second-hand furniture of any attic. But I hope fairy-tales, not

diabolical stories, will come from these attics. Fairy-tales are

inherent in the genius of the motion picture and are a thousand times

hinted at in the commercial films, though the commercial films are not

willing to stop to tell them. Lillian Gish could be given wings and a

wand if she only had directors and scenario writers who believed in

fairies. And the same can most heartily be said of Mae Marsh.

Chapter XI--Architecture-in-Motion, being a continuation of the argument

about the Splendor Pictures, in chapters five, six, and seven. This is an

element constantly re-illustrated in a magnificent but fragmentary way by

the News Films. Any picture of a seagull flying so close to the camera

that it becomes as large as a flying machine, or any flying machine made

by man and photographed in epic flight captures the eye because it is

architecture and in motion, motion which is the mysterious fourth

dimension of its grace and glory. So likewise, and in kind, any picture

of a tossing ship. The most superb example of architecture-in-motion in

the commercial history of the films is the march of the moving war-towers

against the walls of Babylon in Griffith's Intolerance. But Griffith is

the only person so far who has known how to put a fighting soul into a

moving tower.

The only real war that has occurred in the films with the world's

greatest war going on outside was Griffith's War Against Babylon. The

rest was news.

Chapter XII--Thirty Differences between the Photoplays and the Stage. The

argument of the whole of the 1915 edition has been accepted by the

studios, the motion picture magazines, and the daily motion picture

columns throughout the land. I have read hundreds of editorials and

magazines, and scarcely one that differed from it in theory. Most of them

read like paraphrases of this work. And of all arguments made, the one in

this chapter is the one oftenest accepted in its entirety. The people who

dominate the films are obviously those who grew up with them from the

very beginning, and the merely stage actors who rushed in with the

highest tide of prosperity now have to take second rank if they remain in

the films. But most of these have gone back to the stage by this time,

with their managers as well, and certainly this chapter is abundantly

proved out.

Chapter XIII--Hieroglyphics. One of the implications of this chapter and

the one preceding is that the fewer words printed on the screen the

better, and that the ideal film has no words printed on it at all, but is

one unbroken sheet of photography. This is admitted in theory in all the

studios now, though the only film of the kind ever produced of general

popular success was The Old Swimmin' Hole, acted by Charles Ray. If I

remember, there was not one word on the screen, after the cast of

characters was given. The whole story was clearly and beautifully told by

Photoplay Hieroglyphics. For this feature alone, despite many defects of

the film, it should be studied in every art school in America.

Meanwhile "Title writing" remains a commercial necessity. In this field

there is but one person who has won distinction--Anita Loos. She is one

of the four or five important and thoroughly artistic brains in the

photoplay game. Among them is the distinguished John Emerson. In

combination with John Emerson, director, producer, etc., she has done so

many other things well, her talents as a title writer are incidental, but

certainly to be mentioned in this place.

The outline we are discussing continues through

\_Book III--More Personal Speculations and Afterthoughts Not Brought

Forward so Dogmatically\_.

Chapter XIV--The Orchestra, Conversation, and the Censorship. In this

chapter, on page 189, I suggest suppressing the orchestra entirely and

encouraging the audience to talk about the film. No photoplay people have

risen to contradict this theory, but it is a chapter that once caused me

great embarrassment. With Christopher Morley, the well-known author of

Shandygaff and other temperance literature, I was trying to prove out

this chapter. As soon as the orchestra stopped, while the show rolled on

in glory, I talked about the main points in this book, illustrating it by

the film before us. Almost everything that happened was a happy

illustration of my ideas. But there were two shop girls in front of us

awfully in love with a certain second-rate actor who insisted on kissing

the heroine every so often, and with her apparent approval. Every time we

talked about that those shop girls glared at us as though we were robbing

them of their time and money. Finally one of them dragged the other out

into the aisle, and dashed out of the house with her dear chum, saying,

so all could hear: "Well, come on, Terasa, we might as well go, if these

two talking \_pests\_ are going to keep this up behind us." The poor girl's

voice trembled. She was in tears. She was gone before we could apologize

or offer flowers. So I say in applying this chapter, in our present stage

of civilization, sit on the front seat, where no one can hear your

whisperings but Mary Pickford on the screen. She is but a shadow there,

and will not mind.

Chapter XV--The Substitute for the Saloon. I leave this argument as a

monument, just as it was written, in 1914 and '15. It indicates a certain

power of forecasting on the part of the writer. We drys have certainly

won a great victory. Some of the photoplay people agree with this

temperance sermon, and some of them do not. The wets make one mistake

above all. They do not realize that the drys can still keep on voting

dry, with intense conviction, and great battle cries, and still have a

sense of humor.

Chapter XVI--California and America. This chapter was quoted and

paraphrased almost bodily as the preface to my volume of verses, The

Golden Whales of California. "I Know All This When Gipsy Fiddles Cry," a

song of some length recently published in the New Republic and the London

Nation, further expresses the sentiment of this chapter in what I hope is

a fraternal way, and I hope suggests the day when California will have

power over India, Asia, and all the world, and plant giant redwood trees

of the spirit the world around.

Chapter XVII--Progress and Endowment. I allow this discourse, also, to

stand as written in 1914 and '15. It shows the condition just before the

war, better than any new words of mine could do it. The main change now

is the growing hope of a backing, not only from Universities, but great

Art Museums.

Chapter XVIII--Architects as Crusaders. The sermon in this chapter has

been carried out on a limited scale, and as a result of the suggestion,

or from pure American instinct, we now have handsome gasoline filling

stations from one end of America to the other, and really gorgeous Ford

garages. Our Union depots and our magazine stands in the leading hotels,

and our big Soda fountains are more and more attractive all the time.

Having recited of late about twice around the United States and,

continuing the pilgrimage, I can testify that they are all alike from New

York to San Francisco. One has to ask the hotel clerk to find out whether

it is New York or ----. And the motion picture discipline of the American

eye has had a deal to do with this increasing tendency to news-stand and

architectural standardization and architectural thinking, such as it is.

But I meant this suggestion to go further, and to be taken in a higher

sense, so I ask these people to read this chapter again. I have carried

out the idea, in a parable, perhaps more clearly in The Golden Book of

Springfield, when I speak of the World's Fair of the University of

Springfield, to be built one hundred years hence. And I would recommend

to those who have already taken seriously chapter eighteen, to reread it

in two towns, amply worth the car fare it costs to go to both of them.

First, Santa Fe, New Mexico, at the end of the Santa Fe Trail, the oldest

city in the United States, the richest in living traditions, and with the

oldest and the newest architecture in the United States; not a stone or a

stick of it standardized, a city with a soul, Jerusalem and Mecca and

Benares and Thebes for any artist or any poet of America's future, or

any one who would dream of great cities born of great architectural

photoplays, or great photoplays born of great cities. And the other city,

symbolized by The Golden Rain Tree in The Golden Book of Springfield, is

New Harmony, Indiana. That was the Greenwich Village of America more than

one hundred years ago, when it was yet in the heart of the wilderness,

millions of miles from the sea. It has a tradition already as dusty and

wonderful as Abydos and Gem Aten. And every stone is still eloquent of

individualism, and standardization has not yet set its foot there. Is it

not possible for the architects to brood in such places and then say to

one another:--"Build from your hearts buildings and films which shall be

your individual Hieroglyphics, each according to his own loves and

fancies?"

Chapter XIX--On Coming Forth by Day. This is the second Egyptian chapter.

It has its direct relation to the Hieroglyphic chapter, page 171. I note

that I say here it costs a dime to go to the show. Well, now it costs

around thirty cents to go to a good show in a respectable suburb,

sometimes fifty cents. But we will let that dime remain there, as a

matter of historic interest, and pass on, to higher themes.

Certainly the Hieroglyphic chapter is in words of one syllable and any

kindergarten teacher can understand it. Chapter nineteen adds a bit to

the idea. I do not know how warranted I am in displaying Egyptian

learning. Newspaper reporters never tire of getting me to talk about

hieroglyphics in their relation to the photoplays, and always give me

respectful headlines on the theme. I can only say that up to this hour,

every time I have toured art museums, I have begun with the Egyptian

exhibit, and if my patient guest was willing, lectured on every period on

to the present time, giving a little time to the principal exhibits in

each room, but I have always found myself returning to Egypt as a

standard. It seems my natural classic land of art. So when I took up

hieroglyphics more seriously last summer, I found them extraordinarily

easy as though I were looking at a "movie" in a book. I think Egyptian

picture-writing came easy because I have analyzed so many hundreds of

photoplay films, merely for recreation, and the same style of composition

is in both. Any child who reads one can read the other. But of course

the literal translation must be there at hand to correct all wrong

guesses. I figure that in just one thousand years I can read

hieroglyphics without a pony. But meanwhile, I tour museums and I ride

Pharaoh's "horse," and suggest to all photoplay enthusiasts they do the

same. I recommend these two books most heartily: Elementary Egyptian

Grammar, by Margaret A. Murray, London, Bernard Quaritch, 11 Grafton

Street, Bond Street, W., and the three volumes of the Book of the Dead,

which are, indeed, the Papyrus of Ani, referred to in this chapter, pages

255-258. It is edited, translated, and reproduced in fac-simile by the

keeper of the Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum,

Professor E.A. Wallis Budge; published by G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York,

and Philip Lee Warner, London. This book is certainly the greatest motion

picture I ever attended. I have gone through it several times, and it is

the only book one can read twelve hours at a stretch, on the Pullman,

when he is making thirty-six hour and forty-eight hour jumps from town to

town.

American civilization grows more hieroglyphic every day. The cartoons of

Darling, the advertisements in the back of the magazines and on the

bill-boards and in the street-cars, the acres of photographs in the

Sunday newspapers, make us into a hieroglyphic civilization far nearer to

Egypt than to England. Let us then accept for our classic land, for our

standard of form, the country naturally our own. Hieroglyphics are so

much nearer to the American mood than the rest of the Egyptian legacy,

that Americans seldom get as far as the Hieroglyphics to discover how

congenial they are. Seeing the mummies, good Americans flee. But there is

not a man in America writing advertisements or making cartoons or films

but would find delightful the standard books of Hieroglyphics sent out by

the British Museum, once he gave them a chance. They represent that very

aspect of visual life which Europe understands so little in America, and

which has been expanding so enormously even the last year. Hallowe'en,

for instance, lasts a whole week now, with mummers on the streets every

night, October 25-31.

Chapter XX--The Prophet-Wizard. Who do we mean by The Prophet-Wizard? We

mean not only artists, such as are named in this chapter, but dreamers

and workers like Johnny Appleseed, or Abraham Lincoln. The best account

of Johnny Appleseed is in Harper's Monthly for November, 1871. People do

not know Abraham Lincoln till they have visited the grave of Anne

Rutledge, at Petersburg, Illinois, then New Old Salem a mile away. New

Old Salem is a prophet's hill, on the edge of the Sangamon, with lovely

woods all around. Here a brooding soul could be born, and here the

dreamer Abraham Lincoln spent his real youth. I do not call him a dreamer

in a cheap and sentimental effort to describe a man of aspiration.

Lincoln told and interpreted his visions like Joseph and Daniel in the

Old Testament, revealing them to the members of his cabinet, in great

trials of the Civil War. People who do not see visions and dream dreams

in the good Old Testament sense have no right to leadership in America. I

would prefer photoplays filled with such visions and oracles to the state

papers written by "practical men." As it is, we are ruled indirectly by

photoplays owned and controlled by men who should be in the shoe-string

and hook-and-eye trade. Apparently their digestions are good, they are in

excellent health, and they keep out of jail.

Chapter XXI--The Acceptable Year of the Lord. If I may be pardoned for

referring again to the same book, I assumed, in The Golden Book of

Springfield, Illinois, that the Acceptable Year of the Lord would come

for my city beginning November 1, 2018, and that up to that time, amid

much of joy, there would also be much of thwarting and tribulation. But

in the beginning of that mystic November, the Soul of My City, named

Avanel, would become as much a part of the city as Pallas Athena was

Athens, and indeed I wrote into the book much of the spirit of the

photoplay outlined, pages 147 through 150. But in The Golden Book I

changed the lady the city worshipped from a golden image into a living,

breathing young girl, descendant of that great American, Daniel Boone,

and her name, obviously, Avanel Boone. With her tribe she incarnates all

the mystic ideals of the Boones of Kentucky.

All this but a prelude to saying that I have just passed through the city

of Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is a Santa Fe full of the glory of the New

Architecture of which I have spoken, and the issuing of a book of cowboy

songs collected, and many of them written, by N. Howard Thorp, a citizen

of Santa Fe, and thrilling with the issuing of a book of poems about the

Glory of New Mexico. This book is called Red Earth. It is by Alice Corbin

Henderson. And Santa Fe is full of the glory of a magnificent State

Capitol that is an art gallery of the whole southwest, and the glories of

the studio of William Penhallow Henderson, who has painted our New Arabia

more splendidly than it was ever painted before, with the real character

thereof, and no theatricals. This is just the kind of a town I hoped for

when I wrote my first draft of The Art of the Moving Picture. Here now is

literature and art. When they become one art as of old in Egypt, we will

have New Mexico Hieroglyphics from the Hendersons and their kind, and

their surrounding Indian pupils, a basis for the American Motion Picture

more acceptable, and more patriotic, and more organic for us than the

Egyptian.

And I come the same month to Denver, and find a New Art Museum projected,

which I hope has much indeed to do with the Acceptable Year of the Lord,

when films as vital as the Santa Fe songs and pictures and architecture

can be made, and in common spirit with them, in this New Arabia. George

W. Eggers, the director of the newly projected Denver Art Museum, assures

me that a photoplay policy can be formulated, amid the problems of such

an all around undertaking as building a great Art Museum in Denver. He

expects to give the photoplay the attention a new art deserves,

especially when it affects almost every person in the whole country. So I

prophesy Denver to be the Museum and Art-school capital of New Arabia, as

Santa Fe is the artistic, architectural, and song capital at this hour.

And I hope it may become the motion picture capital of America from the

standpoint of pure art, not manufacture.

What do I mean by New Arabia?

When I was in London in the fall of 1920 the editor of The Landmark, the

organ of The English Speaking Union, asked me to draw my map of the

United States. I marked out the various regions under various names. For

instance I called the coast states, Washington, Oregon, and California,

New Italy. The reasons may be found in the chapter in this book on

California. Then I named the states just west of the Middle West, and

east of New Italy, New Arabia. These states are New Mexico, Arizona,

Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana. These are the states which

carry the Rocky Mountains north toward the Aurora Borealis, and south

toward the tropics. Here individualism, Andrew Jacksonism, will forever

prevail, and American standardization can never prevail. In cabins that

cannot be reached by automobile and deserts that cannot be crossed by

boulevards, the John the Baptists, the hermits and the prophets can

strengthen their souls. Here are lonely places as sweet for the spirit as

was little old New Salem, Illinois, one hundred years ago, or the

wilderness in which walked Johnny Appleseed.

Now it is the independence of Spirit of this New Arabia that I hope the

Denver Art Museum can interpret in its photoplay films, and send them on

circuits to the Art Museums springing up all over America, where

sculpture, architecture, and painting are now constantly sent on circuit.

Let that already established convention--the "circuit-exhibition"--be

applied to this new art.

And after Denver has shown the way, I devoutly hope that Great City of

Los Angeles may follow her example. Consider, O Great City of Los

Angeles, now almost the equal of New York in power and splendor,

consider what it would do for the souls of all your film artists if you

projected just such a museum as Denver is now projecting. Your fate is

coming toward you. Denver is halfway between Chicago, with the greatest

art institute in the country, and Los Angeles, the natural capital of the

photoplay. The art museums of America should rule the universities, and

the photoplay studios as well. In the art museums should be set the final

standards of civic life, rather than in any musty libraries or routine

classrooms. And the great weapon of the art museums of all the land

should be the hieroglyphic of the future, the truly artistic photoplay.

And now for book two, at length. It is a detailed analysis of the films,

first proclaimed in 1915, and never challenged or overthrown, and, for

the most part, accepted intact by the photoplay people, and the critics

and the theorists, as well.

BOOK II--THE UNCHALLENGED OUTLINE OF PHOTOPLAY CRITICAL METHOD

CHAPTER I

THE POINT OF VIEW

While there is a great deal of literary reference in all the following

argument, I realize, looking back over many attempts to paraphrase it for

various audiences, that its appeal is to those who spend the best part of

their student life in classifying, and judging, and producing works of

sculpture, painting, and architecture. I find the eyes of all others

wandering when I make talks upon the plastic artist's point of view.

This book tries to find that fourth dimension of architecture, painting,

and sculpture, which is the human soul in action, that arrow with wings

which is the flash of fire from the film, or the heart of man, or

Pygmalion's image, when it becomes a woman.

The 1915 edition was used by Victor O. Freeburg as one of the text-books

in the Columbia University School of Journalism, in his classes in

photoplay writing. I was invited several times to address those classes

on my yearly visits to New York. I have addressed many other academic

classes, the invitation being based on this book. Now I realize that

those who approach the theory from the general University standpoint, or

from the history of the drama, had best begin with Freeburg's book, for

he is not only learned in both matters, but presents the special

analogies with skill. Freeburg has an excellent education in the history

of music, and some of the happiest passages in his work relate the

photoplay to the musical theory of the world, as my book relates it to

the general Art Museum point of view of the world. Emphatically, my book

belongs in the Art Institutes as a beginning, or in such religious and

civic bodies as think architecturally. From there it must work its way

out. Of course those bodies touch on a thousand others.

The work is being used as one basis of the campaign for the New Denver

Art Museum, and I like to tell the story of how George W. Eggers of

Denver first began to apply the book when the Director of the Art

Institute, Chicago, that it may not seem to the merely University type of

mind a work of lost abstractions. One of the most gratifying recognitions

I ever received was the invitation to talk on the films in Fullerton

Hall, Chicago Art Institute. Then there came invitations to speak at

Chicago University, and before the Fortnightly Club, Chicago, all around

1916-17. One difficulty was getting the film to \_prove\_ my case from out

the commercial whirl. I talked at these three and other places, but

hardly knew how to go about crossing the commercial bridge. At last, with

the cooperation of Director Eggers, we staged, in the sacred precincts of

Fullerton Hall, Mae Marsh in The Wild Girl of the Sierras. The film was

in battered condition, and was turned so fast I could not talk with it

satisfactorily and fulfil the well-known principles of chapter fourteen.

But at least I had converted one Art Institute Director to the idea that

an ex-student of the Institute could not only write a book about

painting-in-motion, but the painting could be shown in an Art Museum as

promise of greater things in this world. It took a deal of will and

breaking of precedent, on the part of all concerned, to show this film,

The Wild Girl of the Sierras, and I retired from the field a long time.

But now this same Eggers is starting, in Denver, an Art Museum from its

very foundations, but on the same constructive scale. So this enterprise,

in my fond and fatuous fancy, is associated with the sweet Mae Marsh as

The Wild Girl of the Sierras--one of the loveliest bits of poetry ever

put into screen or fable.

For about one year, off and on, I had the honor to be the photoplay

critic of The New Republic, this invitation also based on the first

edition of this book. Looking back upon that experience I am delighted to

affirm that not only The New Republic constituency but the world of the

college and the university where I moved at that time, while at loss for

a policy, were not only willing but eager to take the films with

seriousness.

But when I was through with all these dashes into the field, and went

back to reciting verses again, no one had given me any light as to who

should make the disinterested, non-commercial film for these immediate

times, the film that would class, in our civilization, with The New

Republic or The Atlantic Monthly or the poems of Edwin Arlington

Robinson. That is, the production not for the trade, but for the soul.

Anita Loos, that good crusader, came out several years ago with the

flaming announcement that there was now hope, since a school of films had

been heavily endowed for the University of Rochester. The school was to

be largely devoted to producing music for the photoplay, in defiance of

chapter fourteen. But incidentally there were to be motion pictures made

to fit good music. Neither music nor films have as yet shaken the world.

I liked this Rochester idea. I felt that once it was started the films

would take their proper place and dominate the project, disinterested

non-commercial films to be classed with the dramas so well stimulated by

the great drama department under Professor Baker of Harvard.

As I look back over this history I see that the printed page had counted

too much, and the real forces of the visible arts in America had not been

definitely enlisted. They should take the lead. I would suggest as the

three people to interview first on building any Art Museum Photoplay

project: Victor Freeburg, with his long experience of teaching the

subject in Columbia, and John Emerson and Anita Loos, who are as brainy

as people dare to be and still remain in the department store film

business. No three people would more welcome opportunities to outline the

idealistic possibilities of this future art. And a well-known American

painter was talking to me of a midnight scolding Charlie Chaplin gave to

some Los Angeles producer, in a little restaurant, preaching the really

beautiful film, and denouncing commerce like a member of Coxey's

illustrious army. And I have heard rumors from all sides that Charlie

Chaplin has a soul. He is the comedian most often proclaimed an artist by

the fastidious, and most often forgiven for his slapstick. He is praised

for a kind of O. Henry double meaning to his antics. He is said to be

like one of O. Henry's misquotations of the classics. He looks to me like

that artist Edgar Poe, if Poe had been obliged to make millions laugh. I

do not like Chaplin's work, but I have to admit the good intentions and

the enviable laurels. Let all the Art Museums invite him in, as tentative

adviser, if not a chastened performer. Let him be given as good a chance

as Mae Marsh was given by Eggers in Fullerton Hall. Only let him come in

person, not in film, till we hear him speak, and consider his

suggestions, and make sure he has eaten of the mystic Amaranth Apples of

Johnny Appleseed.

CHAPTER II

THE PHOTOPLAY OF ACTION

Let us assume, friendly reader, that it is eight o'clock in the evening

when you make yourself comfortable in your den, to peruse this chapter. I

want to tell you about the Action Film, the simplest, the type most often

seen. In the mind of the habitué of the cheaper theatre it is the only

sort in existence. It dominates the slums, is announced there by red and

green posters of the melodrama sort, and retains its original elements,

more deftly handled, in places more expensive. The story goes at the

highest possible speed to be still credible. When it is a poor thing,

which is the case too often, the St. Vitus dance destroys the

pleasure-value. The rhythmic quality of the picture-motions is twitched

to death. In the bad photoplay even the picture of an express train more

than exaggerates itself. Yet when the photoplay chooses to behave it can

reproduce a race far more joyously than the stage. On that fact is based

the opportunity of this form. Many Action Pictures are indoors, but the

abstract theory of the Action Film is based on the out-of-door chase. You

remember the first one you saw where the policeman pursues the comical

tramp over hill and dale and across the town lots. You remember that

other where the cowboy follows the horse thief across the desert, spies

him at last and chases him faster, faster, faster, and faster, and

finally catches him. If the film was made in the days before the National

Board of Censorship, it ends with the cowboy cheerfully hanging the

villain; all details given to the last kick of the deceased.

One of the best Action Pictures is an old Griffith Biograph, recently

reissued, the story entitled "Man's Genesis." In the time when

cave-men-gorillas had no weapons, Weak-Hands (impersonated by Robert

Harron) invents the stone club. He vanquishes his gorilla-like rival,

Brute-Force (impersonated by Wilfred Lucas). Strange but credible manners

and customs of the cave-men are detailed. They live in picturesque caves.

Their half-monkey gestures are wonderful to see. But these things are

beheld on the fly. It is the chronicle of a race between the brain of

Weak-Hands and the body of the other, symbolized by the chasing of poor

Weak-Hands in and out among the rocks until the climax. Brain desperately

triumphs. Weak-Hands slays Brute-Force with the startling invention. He

wins back his stolen bride, Lily-White (impersonated by Mae Marsh). It is

a Griffith masterpiece, and every actor does sound work. The audience,

mechanical Americans, fond of crawling on their stomachs to tinker their

automobiles, are eager over the evolution of the first weapon from a

stick to a hammer. They are as full of curiosity as they could well be

over the history of Langley or the Wright brothers.

The dire perils of the motion pictures provoke the ingenuity of the

audience, not their passionate sympathy. When, in the minds of the

deluded producers, the beholders should be weeping or sighing with

desire, they are prophesying the next step to one another in worldly

George Ade slang. This is illustrated in another good Action Photoplay:

the dramatization of The Spoilers. The original novel was written by Rex

Beach. The gallant William Farnum as Glenister dominates the play. He has

excellent support. Their team-work makes them worthy of chronicle: Thomas

Santschi as McNamara, Kathlyn Williams as Cherry Malotte, Bessie Eyton

as Helen Chester, Frank Clark as Dextry, Wheeler Oakman as Bronco Kid,

and Jack McDonald as Slapjack.

There are, in The Spoilers, inspiriting ocean scenes and mountain views.

There are interesting sketches of mining-camp manners and customs. There

is a well-acted love-interest in it, and the element of the comradeship

of loyal pals. But the chase rushes past these things to the climax, as

in a policeman picture it whirls past blossoming gardens and front lawns

till the tramp is arrested. The difficulties are commented on by the

people in the audience as rah-rah boys on the side lines comment on

hurdles cleared or knocked over by the men running in college field-day.

The sudden cut-backs into side branches of the story are but hurdles

also, not plot complications in the stage sense. This is as it should be.

The pursuit progresses without St. Vitus dance or hysteria to the end of

the film. There the spoilers are discomfited, the gold mine is

recaptured, the incidental girls are won, in a flash, by the rightful

owners.

These shows work like the express elevators in the Metropolitan Tower.

The ideal is the maximum of speed in descending or ascending, not to be

jolted into insensibility. There are two girl parts as beautifully

thought out as the parts of ladies in love can be expected to be in

Action Films. But in the end the love is not much more romantic in the

eye of the spectator than it would be to behold a man on a motorcycle

with the girl of his choice riding on the same machine behind him. And

the highest type of Action Picture romance is not attained by having

Juliet triumph over the motorcycle handicap. It is not achieved by

weaving in a Sherlock Holmes plot. Action Picture romance comes when each

hurdle is a tableau, when there is indeed an art-gallery-beauty in each

one of these swift glimpses: when it is a race, but with a proper and

golden-linked grace from action to action, and the goal is the most

beautiful glimpse in the whole reel.

In the Action Picture there is no adequate means for the development of

any full grown personal passion. The distinguished character-study that

makes genuine the personal emotions in the legitimate drama, has no

chance. People are but types, swiftly moved chessmen. More elaborate

discourse on this subject may be found in chapter twelve on the

differences between the films and the stage. But here, briefly: the

Action Pictures are falsely advertised as having heart-interest, or

abounding in tragedy. But though the actors glower and wrestle and even

if they are the most skilful lambasters in the profession, the audience

gossips and chews gum.

Why does the audience keep coming to this type of photoplay if neither

lust, love, hate, nor hunger is adequately conveyed? Simply because such

spectacles gratify the incipient or rampant speed-mania in every

American.

To make the elevator go faster than the one in the Metropolitan Tower is

to destroy even this emotion. To elaborate unduly any of the agonies or

seductions in the hope of arousing lust, love, hate, or hunger, is to

produce on the screen a series of misplaced figures of the order

Frankenstein.

How often we have been horrified by these galvanized and ogling corpses.

These are the things that cause the outcry for more censors. It is not

that our moral codes are insulted, but what is far worse, our nervous

systems are temporarily racked to pieces. These wriggling half-dead men,

these over-bloody burglars, are public nuisances, no worse and no better

than dead cats being hurled about by street urchins.

The cry for more censors is but the cry for the man with the broom.

Sometimes it is a matter as simple as when a child is scratching with a

pin on a slate. While one would not have the child locked up by the chief

of police, after five minutes of it almost every one wants to smack him

till his little jaws ache. It is the very cold-bloodedness of the

proceeding that ruins our kindness of heart. And the best Action Film is

impersonal and unsympathetic even if it has no scratching pins. Because

it is cold-blooded it must take extra pains to be tactful. Cold-blooded

means that the hero as we see him on the screen is a variety of amiable

or violent ghost. Nothing makes his lack of human charm plainer than when

we as audience enter the theatre at the middle of what purports to be the

most passionate of scenes when the goal of the chase is unknown to us and

the alleged "situation" appeals on its magnetic merits. Here is neither

the psychic telepathy of Forbes Robertson's Cæsar, nor the fire-breath of

E.H. Sothern's Don Quixote. The audience is not worked up into the

deadly still mob-unity of the speaking theatre. We late comers wait for

the whole reel to start over and the goal to be indicated in the

preliminary, before we can get the least bit wrought up. The prize may

be a lady's heart, the restoration of a lost reputation, or the ownership

of the patent for a churn. In the more effective Action Plays it is often

what would be secondary on the stage, the recovery of a certain glove,

spade, bull-calf, or rock-quarry. And to begin, we are shown a clean-cut

picture of said glove, spade, bull-calf, or rock-quarry. Then when these

disappear from ownership or sight, the suspense continues till they are

again visible on the screen in the hands of the rightful owner.

In brief, the actors hurry through what would be tremendous passions on

the stage to recover something that can be really photographed. For

instance, there came to our town long ago a film of a fight between

Federals and Confederates, with the loss of many lives, all for the

recapture of a steam-engine that took on more personality in the end than

private or general on either side, alive or dead. It was based on the

history of the very engine photographed, or else that engine was given in

replica. The old locomotive was full of character and humor amidst the

tragedy, leaking steam at every orifice. The original is in one of the

Southern Civil War museums. This engine in its capacity as a principal

actor is going to be referred to more than several times in this work.

The highest type of Action Picture gives us neither the quality of

Macbeth or Henry Fifth, the Comedy of Errors, or the Taming of the Shrew.

It gives us rather that fine and special quality that was in the

ink-bottle of Robert Louis Stevenson, that brought about the limitations

and the nobility of the stories of Kidnapped, Treasure Island, and the

New Arabian Nights.

This discussion will be resumed on another plane in the eighth chapter:

Sculpture-in-Motion.

Having read thus far, why not close the book and go round the corner to a

photoplay theatre? Give the preference to the cheapest one. \_The Action

Picture will be inevitable. Since this chapter was written, Charlie

Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks have given complete department store

examples of the method, especially Chaplin in the brilliantly constructed

Shoulder Arms, and Fairbanks in his one great piece of acting, in The

Three Musketeers\_.

CHAPTER III

THE INTIMATE PHOTOPLAY

Let us take for our platform this sentence: THE MOTION PICTURE ART IS A

GREAT HIGH ART, NOT A PROCESS OF COMMERCIAL MANUFACTURE. The people I

hope to convince of this are (1) The great art museums of America,

including the people who support them in any way, the people who give the

current exhibitions there or attend them, the art school students in the

corridors below coming on in the same field; (2) the departments of

English, of the history of the drama, of the practice of the drama, and

the history and practice of "art" in that amazingly long list of our

colleges and universities--to be found, for instance, in the World

Almanac; (3) the critical and literary world generally. Somewhere in this

enormous field, piled with endowments mountain high, it should be

possible to establish the theory and practice of the photoplay as a fine

art. Readers who do not care for the history of any art, readers who

have neither curiosity nor aspiration in regard to any of the ten or

eleven muses who now dance around Apollo, such shabby readers had best

lay the book down now. Shabby readers do not like great issues. My poor

little sermon is concerned with a great issue, the clearing of the way

for a critical standard, whereby the ultimate photoplay may be judged. I

cannot teach office-boys ways to make "quick money" in the "movies." That

seems to be the delicately implied purpose of the mass of books on the

photoplay subject. They are, indeed, a sickening array. Freeburg's book

is one of the noble exceptions. And I have paid tribute elsewhere to John

Emerson and Anita Loos. They have written a crusading book, and many

crusading articles.

After five years of exceedingly lonely art study, in which I had always

specialized in museum exhibits, prowling around like a lost dog, I began

to intensify my museum study, and at the same time shout about what I was

discovering. From nineteen hundred and five on I did orate my opinions to

a group of advanced students. We assembled weekly for several winters in

the Metropolitan Museum, New York, for the discussion of the

masterpieces in historic order, from Egypt to America. From that

standpoint, the work least often found, hardest to make, least popular in

the street, may be in the end the one most treasured in a world-museum as

a counsellor and stimulus of mankind. Throughout this book I try to bring

to bear the same simple standards of form, composition, mood, and motive

that we used in finding the fundamental exhibits; the standards which are

taken for granted in art histories and schools, radical or conservative,

anywhere.

Again we assume it is eight o'clock in the evening, friend reader, when

the chapter begins.

Just as the Action Picture has its photographic basis or fundamental

metaphor in the long chase down the highway, so the Intimate Film has its

photographic basis in the fact that any photoplay interior has a very

small ground plan, and the cosiest of enclosing walls. Many a worth-while

scene is acted out in a space no bigger than that which is occupied by an

office boy's stool and hat. If there is a table in this room, it is often

so near it is half out of the picture or perhaps it is against the front

line of the triangular ground-plan. Only the top of the table is seen,

and nothing close up to us is pictured below that. We in the audience are

privileged characters. Generally attending the show in bunches of two or

three, we are members of the household on the screen. Sometimes we are

sitting on the near side of the family board. Or we are gossiping

whispering neighbors, of the shoemaker, we will say, with our noses

pressed against the pane of a metaphoric window.

Take for contrast the old-fashioned stage production showing the room and

work table of a shoemaker. As it were the whole side of the house has

been removed. The shop is as big as a banquet hall. There is something

essentially false in what we see, no matter how the stage manager fills

in with old boxes, broken chairs, and the like. But the photoplay

interior is the size such a work-room should be. And there the awl and

pegs and bits of leather, speaking the silent language of picture

writing, can be clearly shown. They are sometimes like the engine in

chapter two, the principal actors.

Though the Intimate-and-friendly Photoplay may be carried out of doors to

the row of loafers in front of the country store, or the gossiping

streets of the village, it takes its origin and theory from the snugness

of the interior.

The restless reader replies that he has seen photoplays that showed

ballrooms that were grandiose, not the least cosy. These are to be

classed as out-of-door scenery so far as theory goes, and are to be

discussed under the head of Splendor Pictures. Masses of human beings

pour by like waves, the personalities of none made plain. The only

definite people are the hero and heroine in the foreground, and maybe one

other. Though these three be in ball-costume, the little triangle they

occupy next to the camera is in sort an interior, while the impersonal

guests behind them conform to the pageant principles of out-of-doors, and

the dancers are to the main actor as is the wind-shaken forest to the

charcoal-burner, or the bending grain to the reaper.

The Intimate Motion Picture is the world's new medium for studying, not

the great passions, such as black hate, transcendent love, devouring

ambition, but rather the half relaxed or gently restrained moods of human

creatures. It gives also our idiosyncrasies. It is gossip \_in extremis\_.

It is apt to chronicle our petty little skirmishes, rather than our

feuds. In it Colin Clout and his comrades return.

The Intimate Photoplay should not crowd its characters. It should not

choke itself trying to dramatize the whole big bloody plot of Lorna

Doone, or any other novel with a dozen leading people. Yet some gentle

episode from the John Ridd farm, some half-chapter when Lorna and the

Doones are almost forgotten, would be fitting. Let the duck-yard be

parading its best, and Annie among the milk-pails, her work for the

evening well nigh done. The Vicar of Wakefield has his place in this

form. The Intimate-and-friendly Motion Picture might very well give

humorous moments in the lives of the great, King Alfred burning the

cakes, and other legendary incidents of him. Plato's writings give us

glimpses of Socrates, in between the long dialogues. And there are

intimate scraps in Plutarch.

Prospective author-producer, do you remember Landor's Imaginary

Conversations, and Lang's Letters to Dead Authors? Can you not attain to

that informal understanding in pictorial delineations of such people?

The photoplay has been unjust to itself in comedies. The late John

Bunny's important place in my memory comes from the first picture in

which I saw him. It is a story of high life below stairs. The hero is the

butler at a governor's reception. John Bunny's work as this man is a

delightful piece of acting. The servants are growing tipsier downstairs,

but the more afraid of the chief functionary every time he appears,

frozen into sobriety by his glance. At the last moment this god of the

basement catches them at their worst and gives them a condescending but

forgiving smile. The lid comes off completely. He himself has been

imbibing. His surviving dignity in waiting on the governor's guests is

worthy of the stage of Goldsmith and Sheridan. This film should be

reissued in time as a Bunny memorial.

So far as my experience has gone, the best of the comedians is Sidney

Drew. He could shine in the atmosphere of Pride and Prejudice or

Cranford. But the best things I have seen of his are far from such. I beg

the pardon of Miss Jane Austen and Mrs. Gaskell while I mention Who's Who

in Hogg's Hollow, and A Regiment of Two. Over these I rejoiced like a

yokel with a pocketful of butterscotch and peanuts. The opportunities to

laugh on a higher plane than this, to laugh like Olympians, are seldom

given us in this world.

The most successful motion picture drama of the intimate type ever placed

before mine eyes was Enoch Arden, produced by Cabanne.

Lillian Gish takes the part of Annie, Alfred Paget impersonates Enoch

Arden, and Wallace Reid takes the part of Philip Ray. The play is in four

reels of twenty minutes each. It should have been made into three reels

by shortening every scene just a bit. Otherwise it is satisfying, and I

and my friends have watched it through many times as it has returned to

Springfield.

The mood of the original poem is approximated. The story is told with

fireside friendliness. The pale Lillian Gish surrounded by happy children

gives us many a genre painting on the theme of domesticity. It is a

photographic rendering in many ways as fastidious as Tennyson's

versification. The scenes on the desert island are some of them

commonplace. The shipwreck and the like remind one of other photoplays,

but the rest of the production has a mood of its own. Seen several months

ago it fills my eye-imagination and eye-memory more than that particular

piece of Tennyson's fills word-imagination and word-memory. Perhaps this

is because it is pleasing to me as a theorist. It is a sound example of

the type of film to which this chapter is devoted. If you cannot get your

local manager to bring Enoch Arden, reread that poem of Tennyson's and

translate it in your own mind's eye into a gallery of six hundred

delicately toned photographs hung in logical order, most of them cosy

interior scenes, some of the faces five feet from chin to forehead in the

more personal episodes, yet exquisitely fair. Fill in the out-of-door

scenes and general gatherings with the appointments of an idyllic English

fisher-village, and you will get an approximate conception of what we

mean by the Intimate-and-friendly Motion Picture, or the Intimate

Picture, as I generally call it, for convenience.

It is a quality, not a defect, of all photoplays that human beings tend

to become dolls and mechanisms, and dolls and mechanisms tend to become

human. But the haughty, who scorn the moving pictures, cannot rid

themselves of the feeling that they are being seduced into going into

some sort of a Punch-and-Judy show. And they think that of course one

should not take seriously anything so cheap in price and so appealing to

the cross-roads taste. But it is very well to begin in the

Punch-and-Judy-show state of mind, and reconcile ourselves to it, and

then like good democrats await discoveries. Punch and Judy is the

simplest form of marionette performance, and the marionette has a place

in every street in history just as the dolls' house has its corner in

every palace and cottage. The French in particular have had their great

periods of puppet shows; and the Italian tradition survived in America's

Little Italy, in New York for many a day; and I will mention in passing

that one of Pavlowa's unforgettable dance dramas is The Fairy Doll.

Prospective author-producer, why not spend a deal of energy on the

photoplay successors of the puppet-plays?

We have the queen of the marionettes already, without the play.

One description of the Intimate-and-friendly Comedy would be the Mary

Pickford kind of a story. None has as yet appeared. But we know the Mary

Pickford mood. When it is gentlest, most roguish, most exalted, it is a

prophecy of what this type should be, not only in the actress, but in the

scenario and setting.

Mary Pickford can be a doll, a village belle, or a church angel. Her

powers as a doll are hinted at in the title of the production: Such a

Little Queen. I remember her when she was a village belle in that film

that came out before producers or actors were known by name. It was

sugar-sweet. It was called: What the Daisy Said. If these productions had

conformed to their titles sincerely, with the highest photoplay art we

would have had two more examples for this chapter.

Why do the people love Mary? Not on account of the Daniel Frohman style

of handling her appearances. He presents her to us in what are almost the

old-fashioned stage terms: the productions energetic and full of

painstaking detail but dominated by a dream that is a theatrical hybrid.

It is neither good moving picture nor good stage play. Yet Mary could be

cast as a cloudy Olympian or a church angel if her managers wanted her to

be such. She herself was transfigured in the Dawn of Tomorrow, but the

film-version of that play was merely a well mounted melodrama.

Why do the people love Mary? Because of a certain aspect of her face in

her highest mood. Botticelli painted her portrait many centuries ago

when by some necromancy she appeared to him in this phase of herself.

There is in the Chicago Art Institute at the top of the stairs on the

north wall a noble copy of a fresco by that painter, the copy by Mrs.

MacMonnies. It is very near the Winged Victory of Samothrace. In the

picture the muses sit enthroned. The loveliest of them all is a startling

replica of Mary.

The people are hungry for this fine and spiritual thing that Botticelli

painted in the faces of his muses and heavenly creatures. Because the mob

catch the very glimpse of it in Mary's face, they follow her night after

night in the films. They are never quite satisfied with the plays,

because the managers are not artists enough to know they should sometimes

put her into sacred pictures and not have her always the village hoyden,

in plays not even hoydenish. But perhaps in this argument I have but

betrayed myself as Mary's infatuated partisan.

So let there be recorded here the name of another actress who is always

in the intimate-and-friendly mood and adapted to close-up interiors,

Marguerite Clark. She is endowed by nature to act, in the same film, the

eight-year-old village pet, the irrepressible sixteen-year-old, and

finally the shining bride of twenty. But no production in which she acts

that has happened to come under my eye has done justice to these

possibilities. The transitions from one of these stages to the other are

not marked by the producer with sufficient delicate graduation, emphasis,

and contrast. Her plots have been but sugared nonsense, or swashbuckling

ups and downs. She shines in a bevy of girls. She has sometimes been

given the bevy.

But it is easier to find performers who fit this chapter, than to find

films. Having read so far, it is probably not quite nine o'clock in the

evening. Go around the corner to the nearest theatre. You will not be apt

to find a pure example of the Intimate-and-friendly Moving Picture, but

some one or two scenes will make plain the intent of the phrase. Imagine

the most winsome tableau that passes before you, extended logically

through one or three reels, with no melodramatic interruptions or awful

smashes. For a further discussion of these smashes, and other items in

this chapter, read the ninth chapter, entitled "Painting-in-Motion."

CHAPTER IV

THE MOTION PICTURE OF FAIRY SPLENDOR

Again, kind reader, let us assume it is eight o'clock in the evening, for

purposes of future climax which you no doubt anticipate.

Just as the Action Motion Picture has its photographic basis in the race

down the high-road, just as the Intimate Motion Picture has its

photographic basis in the close-up interior scene, so the Photoplay of

Splendor, in its four forms, is based on the fact that the kinetoscope

can take in the most varied of out-of-door landscapes. It can reproduce

fairy dells. It can give every ripple of the lily-pond. It can show us

cathedrals within and without. It can take in the panorama of cyclopæan

cloud, bending forest, storm-hung mountain. In like manner it can put on

the screen great impersonal mobs of men. It can give us tremendous

armies, moving as oceans move. The pictures of Fairy Splendor, Crowd

Splendor, Patriotic Splendor, and Religious Splendor are but the

embodiments of these backgrounds.

And a photographic corollary quite useful in these four forms is that the

camera has a kind of Hallowe'en witch-power. This power is the subject of

this chapter.

The world-old legends and revelations of men in connection with the

lovely out of doors, or lonely shrines, or derived from inspired

crusading humanity moving in masses, can now be fitly retold. Also the

fairy wand can do its work, the little dryad can come from the tree. And

the spirits that guard the Republic can be seen walking on the clouds

above the harvest-fields.

But we are concerned with the humblest voodooism at present.

Perhaps the world's oldest motion picture plot is a tale in Mother Goose.

It ends somewhat in this fashion:--

The old lady said to the cat:--

"Cat, cat, kill rat.

Rat will not gnaw rope,

Rope will not hang butcher,

Butcher will not kill ox,

Ox will not drink water,

Water will not quench fire,

Fire will not burn stick,

Stick will not beat dog,

Dog will not bite pig,

Pig will not jump over the stile,

And I cannot get home to-night."

By some means the present writer does not remember, the cat was persuaded

to approach the rat. The rest was like a tale of European diplomacy:--

The rat began to gnaw the rope,

The rope began to hang the butcher,

The butcher began to kill the ox,

The ox began to drink the water,

The water began to quench the fire,

The fire began to burn the stick,

The stick began to beat the dog,

The dog began to bite the pig,

The frightened little pig jumped over the stile,

And the old lady was able to get home that night.

Put yourself back to the state of mind in which you enjoyed this bit of

verse.

Though the photoplay fairy-tale may rise to exquisite heights, it begins

with pictures akin to this rhyme. Mankind in his childhood has always

wanted his furniture to do such things. Arthur names his blade

Excalibur. It becomes a person. The man in the Arabian tale speaks to

the magic carpet. It carries him whithersoever he desires. This yearning

for personality in furniture begins to be crudely worked upon in the

so-called trick-scenes. The typical commercialized comedy of this sort is

Moving Day. Lyman H. Howe, among many excellent reels of a different

kind, has films allied to Moving Day.

But let us examine at this point, as even more typical, an old Pathé Film

from France. The representatives of the moving-firm are sent for. They

appear in the middle of the room with an astonishing jump. They are told

that this household desires to have its goods and hearthstone gods

transplanted two streets east. The agents salute. They disappear. Yet

their wireless orders are obeyed with a military crispness. The books and

newspapers climb out of the window. They go soberly down the street. In

their wake are the dishes from the table. Then the more delicate

porcelains climb down the shelves and follow. Then follow the

hobble-de-hoy kitchen dishes, then the chairs, then the clothing, and the

carpets from over the house. The most joyous and curious spectacle is to

behold the shoes walking down the boulevard, from father's large boots

to those of the youngest child. They form a complete satire of the

family, yet have a masterful air of their own, as though they were the

most important part of a human being.

The new apartment is shown. Everything enters in procession. In contrast

to the general certainty of the rest, one or two pieces of furniture grow

confused trying to find their places. A plate, in leaping upon a high

shelf, misses and falls broken. The broom and dustpan sweep up the

pieces, and consign them to the dustbin. Then the human family comes in,

delighted to find everything in order. The moving agents appear and

salute. They are paid their fee. They salute again and disappear with

another gigantic leap.

The ability to do this kind of a thing is fundamental in the destinies of

the art. Yet this resource is neglected because its special province is

not understood. "People do not like to be tricked," the manager says.

Certainly they become tired of mere contraptions. But they never grow

weary of imagination. There is possible many a highly imaginative

fairy-tale on this basis if we revert to the sound principles of the

story of the old lady and the pig.

Moving Day is at present too crassly material. It has not the touch of

the creative imagination. We are overwhelmed with a whole van of

furniture. Now the mechanical or non-human object, beginning with the

engine in the second chapter, is apt to be the hero in most any sort of

photoplay while the producer remains utterly unconscious of the fact. Why

not face this idiosyncrasy of the camera and make the non-human object

the hero indeed? Not by filling the story with ropes, buckets,

fire-brands, and sticks, but by having these four unique. Make the fire

the loveliest of torches, the water the most graceful of springs. Let the

rope be the humorist. Let the stick be the outstanding hero, the

D'Artagnan of the group, full of queer gestures and hoppings about. Let

him be both polite and obdurate. Finally let him beat the dog most

heroically.

\* \* \* \* \*

Then, after the purely trick-picture is disciplined till it has fewer

tricks, and those more human and yet more fanciful, the producer can move

on up into the higher realms of the fairy-tale, carrying with him this

riper workmanship.

Mabel Taliaferro's Cinderella, seen long ago, is the best film

fairy-tale the present writer remembers. It has more of the fireside

wonder-spirit and Hallowe'en-witch-spirit than the Cinderella of Mary

Pickford.

There is a Japanese actor, Sessue Hayakawa, who takes the leading part

with Blanche Sweet in The Clew, and is the hero in the film version of

The Typhoon. He looks like all the actors in the old Japanese prints. He

has a general dramatic equipment which enables him to force through the

stubborn screen such stagy plays as these, that are more worth while in

the speaking theatre. But he has that atmosphere of pictorial romance

which would make him a valuable man for the retelling of the old Japanese

legends of Kwannon and other tales that are rich, unused moving picture

material, tales such as have been hinted at in the gleaming English of

Lafcadio Hearn. The Japanese genius is eminently pictorial. Rightly

viewed, every Japanese screen or bit of lacquer is from the Ancient Asia

Columbus set sail to find.

It would be a noble thing if American experts in the Japanese principles

of decoration, of the school of Arthur W. Dow, should tell stories of old

Japan with the assistance of such men as Sessue Hayakawa. Such things go

further than peace treaties. Dooming a talent like that of Mr. Hayakawa

to the task of interpreting the Japanese spy does not conduce to accord

with Japan, however the technique may move us to admiration. Let such of

us as are at peace get together, and tell the tales of our happy

childhood to one another.

This chapter is ended. You will of course expect to be exhorted to visit

some photoplay emporium. But you need not look for fairy-tales. They are

much harder to find than they should be. But you can observe even in the

advertisements and cartoons the technical elements of the story of the

old lady and the pig. And you can note several other things that show how

much more quickly than on the stage the borderline of All Saints' Day and

Hallowe'en can be crossed. Note how easily memories are called up, and

appear in the midst of the room. In any plays whatever, you will find

these apparitions and recollections. The dullest hero is given glorious

visualizing power. Note the "fadeaway" at the beginning and the end of

the reel, whereby all things emerge from the twilight and sink back into

the twilight at last. These are some of the indestructible least common

denominators of folk stories old and new. When skilfully used, they can

all exercise a power over the audience, such as the crystal has over the

crystal-gazer.

But this discussion will be resumed, on another plane, in the tenth

chapter: "Furniture, Trappings, and Inventions in Motion."

CHAPTER V

THE PICTURE OF CROWD SPLENDOR

Henceforth the reader will use his discretion as to when he will read the

chapter and when he will go to the picture show to verify it.

The shoddiest silent drama may contain noble views of the sea. This part

is almost sure to be good. It is a fundamental resource.

A special development of this aptitude in the hands of an expert gives

the sea of humanity, not metaphorically but literally: the whirling of

dancers in ballrooms, handkerchief-waving masses of people in balconies,

hat-waving political ratification meetings, ragged glowering strikers,

and gossiping, dickering people in the marketplace. Only Griffith and his

close disciples can do these as well as almost any manager can reproduce

the ocean. Yet the sea of humanity is dramatically blood-brother to the

Pacific, Atlantic, or Mediterranean. It takes this new invention, the

kinetoscope, to bring us these panoramic drama-elements. By the law of

compensation, while the motion picture is shallow in showing private

passion, it is powerful in conveying the passions of masses of men.

Bernard Shaw, in a recent number of the Metropolitan, answered several

questions in regard to the photoplay. Here are two bits from his

discourse:--

"Strike the dialogue from Molière's Tartuffe, and what audience would

bear its mere stage-business? Imagine the scene in which Iago poisons

Othello's mind against Desdemona, conveyed in dumb show. What becomes of

the difference between Shakespeare and Sheridan Knowles in the film? Or

between Shakespeare's Lear and any one else's Lear? No, it seems to me

that all the interest lies in the new opening for the mass of dramatic

talent formerly disabled by incidental deficiencies of one sort or

another that do not matter in the picture-theatre...."

"Failures of the spoken drama may become the stars of the picture palace.

And there are the authors with imagination, visualization and first-rate

verbal gifts who can write novels and epics, but cannot for the life of

them write plays. Well, the film lends itself admirably to the

succession of events proper to narrative and epic, but physically

impracticable on the stage. Paradise Lost would make a far better film

than Ibsen's John Gabriel Borkman, though Borkman is a dramatic

masterpiece, and Milton could not write an effective play."

Note in especial what Shaw says about narrative, epic, and Paradise Lost.

He has in mind, no doubt, the pouring hosts of demons and angels. This is

one kind of a Crowd Picture.

There is another sort to be seen where George Beban impersonates The

Italian in a film of that title, by Thomas H. Ince and G. Gardener

Sullivan. The first part, taken ostensibly in Venice, delineates the

festival spirit of the people on the bridges and in gondolas. It gives

out the atmosphere of town-crowd happiness. Then comes the vineyard, the

crowd sentiment of a merry grape-harvest, then the massed emotion of many

people embarking on an Atlantic liner telling good-by to their kindred on

the piers, then the drama of arrival in New York. The wonder of the

steerage people pouring down their proper gangway is contrasted with the

conventional at-home-ness of the first-class passengers above. Then we

behold the seething human cauldron of the East Side, then the jolly

little wedding-dance, then the life of the East Side, from the policeman

to the peanut-man, and including the bar tender, for the crowd is treated

on two separate occasions.

It is hot weather. The mobs of children follow the ice-wagon for chips of

ice. They besiege the fountain-end of the street-sprinkling wagon quite

closely, rejoicing to have their clothes soaked. They gather round the

fire-plug that is turned on for their benefit, and again become wet as

drowned rats.

Passing through these crowds are George Beban and Clara Williams as The

Italian and his sweetheart. They owe the force of their acting to the

fact that they express each mass of humanity in turn. Their child is

born. It does not flourish. It represents in an acuter way another phase

of the same child-struggle with the heat that the gamins indicate in

their pursuit of the water-cart.

Then a deeper matter. The hero represents in a fashion the adventures of

the whole Italian race coming to America: its natural southern gayety set

in contrast to the drab East Side. The gondolier becomes boot-black. The

grape-gathering peasant girl becomes the suffering slum mother. They are

not specialized characters like Pendennis or Becky Sharp in the Novels of

Thackeray.

Omitting the last episode, the entrance into the house of Corrigan, The

Italian is a strong piece of work.

Another kind of Crowd Picture is The Battle, an old Griffith Biograph,

first issued in 1911, before Griffith's name or that of any actor in

films was advertised. Blanche Sweet is the leading lady, and Charles H.

West the leading man. The psychology of a bevy of village lovers is

conveyed in a lively sweet-hearting dance. Then the boy and his comrades

go forth to war. The lines pass between hand-waving crowds of friends

from the entire neighborhood. These friends give the sense of patriotism

in mass. Then as the consequence of this feeling, as the special agents

to express it, the soldiers are in battle. By the fortunes of war the

onset is unexpectedly near to the house where once was the dance.

The boy is at first a coward. He enters the old familiar door. He appeals

to the girl to hide him, and for the time breaks her heart. He goes forth

a fugitive not only from battle, but from her terrible girlish anger.

But later he rallies. He brings a train of powder wagons through fires

built in his path by the enemy's scouts. He loses every one of his men,

and all but the last wagon, which he drives himself. His return with that

ammunition saves the hard-fought day.

And through all this, glimpses of the battle are given with a splendor

that only Griffith has attained.

Blanche Sweet stands as the representative of the bevy of girls in the

house of the dance, and the whole body social of the village. How the

costumes flash and the handkerchiefs wave around her! In the battle the

hero represents the cowardice that all the men are resisting within

themselves. When he returns, he is the incarnation of the hardihood they

have all hoped to display. Only the girl knows he was first a failure.

The wounded general honors him as the hero above all. Now she is radiant,

she cannot help but be triumphant, though the side of the house is blown

out by a shell and the dying are everywhere.

This one-reel work of art has been reissued of late by the Biograph

Company. It should be kept in the libraries of the Universities as a

standard. One-reel films are unfortunate in this sense that in order to

see a favorite the student must wait through five other reels of a mixed

programme that usually is bad. That is the reason one-reel masterpieces

seldom appear now. The producer in a mood to make a special effort wants

to feel that he has the entire evening, and that nothing before or after

is going to be a bore or destroy the impression. So at present the

painstaking films are apt to be five or six reels of twenty minutes each.

These have the advantage that if they please at all, one can see them

again at once without sitting through irrelevant slapstick work put there

to fill out the time. But now, having the whole evening to work in, the

producer takes too much time for his good ideas. I shall reiterate

throughout this work the necessity for restraint. A one hour programme is

long enough for any one. If the observer is pleased, he will sit it

through again and take another hour. There is not a good film in the

world but is the better for being seen in immediate succession to itself.

Six-reel programmes are a weariness to the flesh. The best of the old

one-reel Biographs of Griffith contained more in twenty minutes than

these ambitious incontinent six-reel displays give us in two hours. It

would pay a manager to hang out a sign: "This show is only twenty minutes

long, but it is Griffith's great film 'The Battle.'"

But I am digressing. To continue the contrast between private passion in

the theatre and crowd-passion in the photoplay, let us turn to Shaw

again. Consider his illustration of Iago, Othello, and Lear. These parts,

as he implies, would fall flat in motion pictures. The minor situations

of dramatic intensity might in many cases be built up. The crisis would

inevitably fail. Iago and Othello and Lear, whatever their offices in

their governments, are essentially private persons, individuals \_in

extremis\_. If you go to a motion picture and feel yourself suddenly

gripped by the highest dramatic tension, as on the old stage, and reflect

afterward that it was a fight between only two or three men in a room

otherwise empty, stop to analyze what they stood for. They were probably

representatives of groups or races that had been pursuing each other

earlier in the film. Otherwise the conflict, however violent, appealed

mainly to the sense of speed.

So, in The Birth of a Nation, which could better be called The Overthrow

of Negro Rule, the Ku Klux Klan dashes down the road as powerfully as

Niagara pours over the cliff. Finally the white girl Elsie Stoneman

(impersonated by Lillian Gish) is rescued by the Ku Klux Klan from the

mulatto politician, Silas Lynch (impersonated by George Seigmann). The

lady is brought forward as a typical helpless white maiden. The white

leader, Col. Ben Cameron (impersonated by Henry B. Walthall), enters not

as an individual, but as representing the whole Anglo-Saxon Niagara. He

has the mask of the Ku Klux Klan on his face till the crisis has passed.

The wrath of the Southerner against the blacks and their Northern

organizers has been piled up through many previous scenes. As a result

this rescue is a real climax, something the photoplays that trace

strictly personal hatreds cannot achieve.

The Birth of a Nation is a Crowd Picture in a triple sense. On the films,

as in the audience, it turns the crowd into a mob that is either for or

against the Reverend Thomas Dixon's poisonous hatred of the negro.

Griffith is a chameleon in interpreting his authors. Wherever the

scenario shows traces of The Clansman, the original book, by Thomas

Dixon, it is bad. Wherever it is unadulterated Griffith, which is half

the time, it is good. The Reverend Thomas Dixon is a rather stagy Simon

Legree: in his avowed views a deal like the gentleman with the spiritual

hydrophobia in the latter end of Uncle Tom's Cabin. Unconsciously Mr.

Dixon has done his best to prove that Legree was not a fictitious

character.

\* \* \* \* \*

Joel Chandler Harris, Harry Stillwell Edwards, George W. Cable, Thomas

Nelson Page, James Lane Allen, and Mark Twain are Southern men in Mr.

Griffith's class. I recommend their works to him as a better basis for

future Southern scenarios.

The Birth of a Nation has been very properly denounced for its Simon

Legree qualities by Francis Hackett, Jane Addams, and others. But it is

still true that it is a wonder in its Griffith sections. In its handling

of masses of men it further illustrates the principles that made notable

the old one-reel Battle film described in the beginning of this chapter.

The Battle in the end is greater, because of its self-possession and

concentration: all packed into twenty minutes.

When, in The Birth of a Nation, Lincoln (impersonated by Joseph Henabery)

goes down before the assassin, it is a master-scene. He falls as the

representative of the government and a thousand high and noble crowd

aspirations. The mimic audience in the restored Ford's Theatre rises in

panic. This crowd is interpreted in especial for us by the two young

people in the seats nearest, and the freezing horror of the treason

sweeps from the Ford's Theatre audience to the real audience beyond them.

The real crowd touched with terror beholds its natural face in the glass.

Later come the pictures of the rioting negroes in the streets of the

Southern town, mobs splendidly handled, tossing wildly and rhythmically

like the sea. Then is delineated the rise of the Ku Klux Klan, of which

we have already spoken. For comment on the musical accompaniment to The

Birth of a Nation, read the fourteenth chapter entitled "The Orchestra,

Conversation and the Censorship."

In the future development of motion pictures mob-movements of anger and

joy will go through fanatical and provincial whirlwinds into great

national movements of anger and joy.

A book by Gerald Stanley Lee that has a score of future scenarios in it,

a book that might well be dipped into by the reader before he goes to

such a play as The Italian or The Battle, is the work which bears the

title of this chapter: "Crowds."

Mr. Lee is far from infallible in his remedies for factory and industrial

relations. But in sensitiveness to the flowing street of humanity he is

indeed a man. Listen to the names of some of the divisions of his book:

"Crowds and Machines; Letting the Crowds be Good; Letting the Crowds be

Beautiful; Crowds and Heroes; Where are we Going? The Crowd Scare; The

Strike, an Invention for making Crowds Think; The Crowd's Imagination

about People; Speaking as One of the Crowd; Touching the Imagination of

Crowds." Films in the spirit of these titles would help to make

world-voters of us all.

The World State is indeed far away. But as we peer into the Mirror Screen

some of us dare to look forward to the time when the pouring streets of

men will become sacred in each other's eyes, in pictures and in fact.

A further discussion of this theme on other planes will be found in the

eleventh chapter, entitled "Architecture-in-Motion," and the fifteenth

chapter, entitled "The Substitute for the Saloon."

CHAPTER VI

PATRIOTIC SPLENDOR

The Patriotic Picture need not necessarily be in terms of splendor. It

generally is. Beginning the chronicle is one that waves no banners.

The Typhoon, a film produced by Thomas H. Ince, is a story of the

Japanese love of Nippon in which a very little of the landscape of the

nation is shown, and that in the beginning. The hero (acted by Sessue

Hayakawa), living in the heart of Paris, represents the far-off Empire.

He is making a secret military report. He is a responsible member of a

colony of Japanese gentlemen. The bevy of them appear before or after his

every important action. He still represents this crowd when alone.

The unfortunate Parisian heroine, unable to fathom the mystery of the

fanatical hearts of the colony, ventures to think that her love for the

Japanese hero and his equally great devotion to her is the important

human relation on the horizon. She flouts his obscure work, pits her

charms against it. In the end there is a quarrel. The irresistible meets

the immovable, and in madness or half by accident, he kills the girl.

The youth is protected by the colony, for he alone can make the report.

He is the machine-like representative of the Japanese patriotic formula,

till the document is complete. A new arrival in the colony, who obviously

cannot write the book, confesses the murder and is executed. The other

high fanatic dies soon after, of a broken heart, with the completed

manuscript volume in his hand. The one impression of the play is that

Japanese patriotism is a peculiar and fearful thing. The particular

quality of the private romance is but vaguely given, for such things in

their rise and culmination can only be traced by the novelist, or by the

gentle alternations of silence and speech on the speaking stage, aided by

the hot blood of players actually before us.

Here, as in most photoplays, the attempted lover-conversations in

pantomime are but indifferent things. The details of the hero's last

quarrel with the heroine and the precise thoughts that went with it are

muffled by the inability to speak. The power of the play is in the

adequate style the man represents the colony. Sessue Hayakawa should give

us Japanese tales more adapted to the films. We should have stories of

Iyeyasu and Hideyoshi, written from the ground up for the photoplay

theatre. We should have the story of the Forty-seven Ronin, not a

Japanese stage version, but a work from the source-material. We should

have legends of the various clans, picturizations of the code of the

Samurai.

The Typhoon is largely indoors. But the Patriotic Motion Picture is

generally a landscape. This is for deeper reasons than that it requires

large fields in which to manoeuvre armies. Flags are shown for other

causes than that they are the nominal signs of a love of the native land.

In a comedy of the history of a newspaper, the very columns of the

publication are actors, and may be photographed oftener than the human

hero. And in the higher realms this same tendency gives particular power

to the panorama and trappings. It makes the natural and artificial

magnificence more than a narrative, more than a color-scheme, something

other than a drama. In a photoplay by a master, when the American flag is

shown, the thirteen stripes are columns of history and the stars are

headlines. The woods and the templed hills are their printing press,

almost in a literal sense.

Going back to the illustration of the engine, in chapter two, the

non-human thing is a personality, even if it is not beautiful. When it

takes on the ritual of decorative design, this new vitality is made

seductive, and when it is an object of nature, this seductive ritual

becomes a new pantheism. The armies upon the mountains they are defending

are rooted in the soil like trees. They resist invasion with the same

elementary stubbornness with which the oak resists the storm or the cliff

resists the wave.

\* \* \* \* \*

Let the reader consider Antony and Cleopatra, the Cines film. It was

brought to America from Italy by George Klein. This and several ambitious

spectacles like it are direct violations of the foregoing principles.

True, it glorifies Rome. It is equivalent to waving the Italian above the

Egyptian flag, quite slowly for two hours. From the stage standpoint,

the magnificence is thoroughgoing. Viewed as a circus, the acting is

elephantine in its grandeur. All that is needed is pink lemonade sold in

the audience.

The famous Cabiria, a tale of war between Rome and Carthage, by

D'Annunzio, is a prime example of a success, where Antony and Cleopatra

and many European films founded upon the classics have been failures.

With obvious defects as a producer, D'Annunzio appreciates spectacular

symbolism. He has an instinct for the strange and the beautifully

infernal, as they are related to decorative design. Therefore he is able

to show us Carthage indeed. He has an Italian patriotism that amounts to

frenzy. So Rome emerges body and soul from the past, in this spectacle.

He gives us the cruelty of Baal, the intrepidity of the Roman legions.

Everything Punic or Italian in the middle distance or massed background

speaks of the very genius of the people concerned and actively generates

their kind of lightning.

The principals do not carry out the momentum of this immense resource.

The half a score of leading characters, with the costumes, gestures, and

aspects of gods, are after all works of the taxidermist. They are

stuffed gods. They conduct a silly nickelodeon romance while Carthage

rolls on toward her doom. They are like sparrows fighting for grain on

the edge of the battle.

The doings of his principals are sufficiently evident to be grasped with

a word or two of printed insert on the films. But he sentimentalizes

about them. He adds side-elaborations of the plot that would require much

time to make clear, and a hard working novelist to make interesting. We

are sentenced to stop and gaze long upon this array of printing in the

darkness, just at the moment the tenth wave of glory seems ready to sweep

in. But one hundred words cannot be a photoplay climax. The climax must

be in a tableau that is to the eye as the rising sun itself, that follows

the thousand flags of the dawn.

In the New York performance, and presumably in other large cities, there

was also an orchestra. Behold then, one layer of great photoplay, one

layer of bad melodrama, one layer of explanation, and a final cement of

music. It is as though in an art museum there should be a man at the door

selling would-be masterly short-stories about the paintings, and a man

with a violin playing the catalogue. But for further discourse on the

orchestra read the fourteenth chapter.

I left Cabiria with mixed emotions. And I had to forget the distressful

eye-strain. Few eyes submit without destruction to three hours of film.

But the mistakes of Cabiria are those of the pioneer work of genius. It

has in it twenty great productions. It abounds in suggestions. Once the

classic rules of this art-unit are established, men with equal genius

with D'Annunzio and no more devotion, will give us the world's

masterpieces. As it is, the background and mass-movements must stand as

monumental achievements in vital patriotic splendor.

D'Annunzio is Griffith's most inspired rival in these things. He lacks

Griffith's knowledge of what is photoplay and what is not. He lacks

Griffith's simplicity of hurdle-race plot. He lacks his avalanche-like

action. The Italian needs the American's health and clean winds. He needs

his foregrounds, leading actors, and types of plot. But the American has

never gone as deep as the Italian into landscapes that are their own

tragedians, and into Satanic and celestial ceremonials.

Judith of Bethulia and The Battle Hymn of the Republic have impressed me

as the two most significant photoplays I have ever encountered. They may

be classed with equal justice as religious or patriotic productions. But

for reasons which will appear, The Battle Hymn of the Republic will be

classed as a film of devotion and Judith as a patriotic one. The latter

was produced by D.W. Griffith, and released by the Biograph Company in

1914. The original stage drama was once played by the famous Boston

actress, Nance O'Neil. It is the work of Thomas Bailey Aldrich. The

motion picture scenario, when Griffith had done with it, had no especial

Aldrich flavor, though it contained several of the characters and events

as Aldrich conceived them. It was principally the old apocryphal story

plus the genius of Griffith and that inner circle of players whom he has

endowed with much of his point of view.

This is his cast of characters:--

Judith Blanche Sweet

Holofernes Henry Walthall

His servant J.J. Lance

Captain of the Guards H. Hyde

Judith's maid Miss Bruce

General of the Jews C.H. Mailes

Priests Messrs. Oppleman and Lestina

Nathan Robert Harron

Naomi Mae Marsh

Keeper of the slaves for Holofernes Alfred Paget

The Jewish mother Lillian Gish

The Biograph Company advertises the production with the following Barnum

and Bailey enumeration: "In four parts. Produced in California. Most

expensive Biograph ever produced. More than one thousand people and about

three hundred horsemen. The following were built expressly for the

production: a replica of the ancient city of Bethulia; the mammoth wall

that protected Bethulia; a faithful reproduction of the ancient army

camps, embodying all their barbaric splendor and dances; chariots,

battering rams, scaling ladders, archer towers, and other special war

paraphernalia of the period.

"The following spectacular effects: the storming of the walls of the

city of Bethulia; the hand-to-hand conflicts; the death-defying chariot

charges at break-neck speed; the rearing and plunging horses infuriated

by the din of battle; the wonderful camp of the terrible Holofernes,

equipped with rugs brought from the far East; the dancing girls in their

exhibition of the exquisite and peculiar dances of the period; the

routing of the command of the terrible Holofernes, and the destruction of

the camp by fire. And overshadowing all, the heroism of the beautiful

Judith."

This advertisement should be compared with the notice of Your Girl and

Mine transcribed in the seventeenth chapter.

But there is another point of view by which this Judith of Bethulia

production may be approached, however striking the advertising notice.

There are four sorts of scenes alternated: (1) the particular history of

Judith; (2) the gentle courtship of Nathan and Naomi, types of the

inhabitants of Bethulia; (3) pictures of the streets, with the population

flowing like a sluggish river; (4) scenes of raid, camp, and battle,

interpolated between these, tying the whole together. The real plot is

the balanced alternation of all the elements. So many minutes of one,

then so many minutes of another. As was proper, very little of the tale

was thrown on the screen in reading matter, and no climax was ever a

printed word, but always an enthralling tableau.

The particular history of Judith begins with the picture of her as the

devout widow. She is austerely garbed, at prayer for her city, in her own

quiet house. Then later she is shown decked for the eyes of man in the

camp of Holofernes, where all is Assyrian glory. Judith struggles between

her unexpected love for the dynamic general and the resolve to destroy

him that brought her there. In either type of scene, the first gray and

silver, the other painted with Paul Veronese splendor, Judith moves with

a delicate deliberation. Over her face the emotions play like winds on a

meadow lake. Holofernes is the composite picture of all the Biblical

heathen chieftains. His every action breathes power. He is an Assyrian

bull, a winged lion, and a god at the same time, and divine honors are

paid to him every moment.

Nathan and Naomi are two Arcadian lovers. In their shy meetings they

express the life of the normal Bethulia. They are seen among the reapers

outside the city or at the well near the wall, or on the streets of the

ancient town. They are generally doing the things the crowd behind them

is doing, meanwhile evolving their own little heart affair. Finally when

the Assyrian comes down like a wolf on the fold, the gentle Naomi becomes

a prisoner in Holofernes' camp. She is in the foreground, a

representative of the crowd of prisoners. Nathan is photographed on the

wall as the particular defender of the town in whom we are most

interested.

The pictures of the crowd's normal activities avoid jerkiness and haste.

They do not abound in the boresome self-conscious quietude that some

producers have substituted for the usual twitching. Each actor in the

assemblies has a refreshing equipment in gentle gesticulation; for the

manners and customs of Bethulia must needs be different from those of

America. Though the population moves together as a river, each citizen is

quite preoccupied. To the furthest corner of the picture, they are

egotistical as human beings. The elder goes by, in theological

conversation with his friend. He thinks his theology is important. The

mother goes by, all absorbed in her child. To her it is the only child in

the world.

Alternated with these scenes is the terrible rush of the Assyrian army,

on to exploration, battle, and glory. The speed of their setting out

becomes actual, because it is contrasted with the deliberation of the

Jewish town. At length the Assyrians are along those hills and valleys

and below the wall of defence. The population is on top of the

battlements, beating them back the more desperately because they are

separated from the water-supply, the wells in the fields where once the

lovers met. In a lull in the siege, by a connivance of the elders, Judith

is let out of a little door in the wall. And while the fortune of her

people is most desperate she is shown in the quiet shelter of the tent of

Holofernes. Sinuous in grace, tranced, passionately in love, she has

forgotten her peculiar task. She is in a sense Bethulia itself, the race

of Israel made over into a woman, while Holofernes is the embodiment of

the besieging army. Though in a quiet tent, and on the terms of love, it

is the essential warfare of the hot Assyrian blood and the pure and

peculiar Jewish thoroughbredness.

Blanche Sweet as Judith is indeed dignified and ensnaring, the more so

because in her abandoned quarter of an hour the Jewish sanctity does not

leave her. And her aged woman attendant, coming in and out, sentinel and

conscience, with austere face and lifted finger, symbolizes the fire of

Israel that shall yet awaken within her. When her love for her city and

God finally becomes paramount, she shakes off the spell of the divine

honors which she has followed all the camp in according to that living

heathen deity Holofernes, and by the very transfiguration of her figure

and countenance we know that the deliverance of Israel is at hand. She

beheads the dark Assyrian. Soon she is back in the city, by way of the

little gate by which she emerged. The elders receive her and her bloody

trophy.

The people who have been dying of thirst arise in a final whirlwind of

courage. Bereft of their military genius, the Assyrians flee from the

burning camp. Naomi is delivered by her lover Nathan. This act is taken

by the audience as a type of the setting free of all the captives. Then

we have the final return of the citizens to their town. As for Judith,

hers is no crass triumph. She is shown in her gray and silvery room in

her former widow's dress, but not the same woman. There is thwarted love

in her face. The sword of sorrow is there. But there is also the prayer

of thanksgiving. She goes forth. She is hailed as her city's deliverer.

She stands among the nobles like a holy candle.

Providing the picture may be preserved in its original delicacy, it has

every chance to retain a place in the affections of the wise, if a humble

pioneer of criticism may speak his honest mind.

Though in this story the archaic flavor is well-preserved, the way the

producer has pictured the population at peace, in battle, in despair, in

victory gives me hope that he or men like unto him will illustrate the

American patriotic crowd-prophecies. We must have Whitmanesque scenarios,

based on moods akin to that of the poem By Blue Ontario's Shore. The

possibility of showing the entire American population its own face in the

Mirror Screen has at last come. Whitman brought the idea of democracy to

our sophisticated literati, but did not persuade the democracy itself to

read his democratic poems. Sooner or later the kinetoscope will do what

he could not, bring the nobler side of the equality idea to the people

who are so crassly equal.

The photoplay penetrates in our land to the haunts of the wildest or the

dullest. The isolated prospector rides twenty miles to see the same film

that is displayed on Broadway. There is not a civilized or half-civilized

land but may read the Whitmanesque message in time, if once it is put on

the films with power. Photoplay theatres are set up in ports where

sailors revel, in heathen towns where gentlemen adventurers are willing

to make one last throw with fate.

On the other hand, as a recorder Whitman approaches the wildest, rawest

American material and conquers it, at the same time keeping his nerves in

the state in which Swinburne wrote Only the Song of Secret Bird, or

Lanier composed The Ballad of Trees and The Master. J.W. Alexander's

portrait of Whitman in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, is not too

sophisticated. The out-of-door profoundness of this poet is far richer

than one will realize unless he has just returned from some cross-country

adventure afoot. Then if one reads breathlessly by the page and the score

of pages, there is a glory transcendent. For films of American

patriotism to parallel the splendors of Cabiria and Judith of Bethulia,

and to excel them, let us have Whitmanesque scenarios based on moods like

that of By Blue Ontario's Shore, The Salute au Monde, and The Passage to

India. Then the people's message will reach the people at last.

The average Crowd Picture will cling close to the streets that are, and

the usual Patriotic Picture will but remind us of nationality as it is at

present conceived and aflame, and the Religious Picture will for the most

part be close to the standard orthodoxies. The final forms of these merge

into each other, though they approach the heights by different avenues.

We Americans should look for the great photoplay of to-morrow, that will

mark a decade or a century, that prophesies of the flags made one, the

crowds in brotherhood.

CHAPTER VII

RELIGIOUS SPLENDOR

As far as the photoplay is concerned, religious emotion is a form of

crowd-emotion. In the most conventional and rigid church sense this phase

can be conveyed more adequately by the motion picture than by the stage.

There is little, of course, for the anti-ritualist in the art-world

anywhere. The thing that makes cathedrals real shrines in the eye of the

reverent traveller makes them, with their religious processions and the

like, impressive in splendor-films.

For instance, I have long remembered the essentials of the film, The

Death of Thomas Becket. It may not compare in technique with some of our

present moving picture achievements, but the idea must have been

particularly adapted to the film medium. The story has stayed in my mind

with great persistence, not only as a narrative, but as the first hint to

me that orthodox religious feeling has here an undeveloped field.

Green tells the story in this way, in his History of the English

People:--

"Four knights of the King's court, stirred to outrage by a passionate

outburst of their master's wrath, crossed the sea and on the twenty-ninth

of December forced their way into the Archbishop's palace. After a stormy

parley with him in his chamber they withdrew to arm. Thomas was hurried

by his clerks into the cathedral, but as he reached the steps leading

from the transept into the choir his pursuers burst in from the

cloisters. 'Where,' cried Reginald Fitzurse, 'is the traitor, Thomas

Becket?' 'Here am I, no traitor, but a priest of God,' he replied. And

again descending the steps he placed himself with his back against a

pillar and fronted his foes.... The brutal murder was received with a

thrill of horror throughout Christendom. Miracles were wrought at the

martyr's tomb, etc...."

It is one of the few deaths in moving pictures that have given me the

sense that I was watching a tragedy. Most of them affect one, if they

have any effect, like exhibits in an art gallery, as does Josef Israels'

oil painting, Alone in the World. We admire the technique, and as for

emotion, we feel the picturesqueness only. But here the church

procession, the robes, the candles, the vaulting overhead, the whole

visualized cathedral mood has the power over the reverent eye it has in

life, and a touch more.

It is not a private citizen who is struck down. Such a taking off would

have been but nominally impressive, no matter how well acted. Private

deaths in the films, to put it another way, are but narrative statements.

It is not easy to convey their spiritual significance. Take, for

instance, the death of John Goderic, in the film version of Gilbert

Parker's The Seats of the Mighty. The major leaves this world in the

first third of the story. The photoplay use of his death is, that he may

whisper in the ear of Robert Moray to keep certain letters of La

Pompadour well hidden. The fact that it is the desire of a dying man

gives sharpness to his request. Later in the story Moray is hard-pressed

by the villain for those same papers. Then the scene of the death is

flashed for an instant on the screen, representing the hero's memory of

the event. It is as though he should recollect and renew a solemn oath.

The documents are more important than John Goderic. His departure is but

one of their attributes. So it is in any film. There is no emotional

stimulation in the final departure of a non-public character to bring

tears, such tears as have been provoked by the novel or the stage over

the death of Sidney Carton or Faust's Marguerite or the like.

All this, to make sharper the fact that the murder of Becket the

archbishop is a climax. The great Church and hierarchy are profaned. The

audience feels the same thrill of horror that went through Christendom.

We understand why miracles were wrought at the martyr's tomb.

In the motion pictures the entrance of a child into the world is a mere

family episode, not a climax, when it is the history of private people.

For instance, several little strangers come into the story of Enoch

Arden. They add beauty, and are links in the chain of events. Still they

are only one of many elements of idyllic charm in the village of Annie.

Something that in real life is less valuable than a child is the goal of

each tiny tableau, some coming or departure or the like that affects the

total plot. But let us imagine a production that would chronicle the

promise to Abraham, and the vision that came with it. Let the film show

the final gift of Isaac to the aged Sarah, even the boy who is the

beginning of a race that shall be as the stars of heaven and the sands of

the sea for multitude. This could be made a pageant of power and glory.

The crowd-emotions, patriotic fires, and religious exaltations on which

it turns could be given in noble procession and the tiny fellow on the

pillow made the mystic centre of the whole. The story of the coming of

Samuel, the dedicated little prophet, might be told on similar terms.

The real death in the photoplay is the ritualistic death, the real birth

is the ritualistic birth, and the cathedral mood of the motion picture

which goes with these and is close to these in many of its phases, is an

inexhaustible resource.

The film corporations fear religious questions, lest offence be given to

this sect or that. So let such denominations as are in the habit of

cooperating, themselves take over this medium, not gingerly, but

whole-heartedly, as in mediæval time the hierarchy strengthened its hold

on the people with the marvels of Romanesque and Gothic architecture.

This matter is further discussed in the seventeenth chapter, entitled

"Progress and Endowment."

But there is a field wherein the commercial man will not be accused of

heresy or sacrilege, which builds on ritualistic birth and death and

elements akin thereto. This the established producer may enter without

fear. Which brings us to The Battle Hymn of the Republic, issued by the

American Vitagraph Company in 1911. This film should be studied in the

High Schools and Universities till the canons of art for which it stands

are established in America. The director was Larry Trimble. All honor to

him.

The patriotism of The Battle Hymn of the Republic, if taken literally,

deals with certain aspects of the Civil War. But the picture is

transfigured by so marked a devotion, that it is the main illustration in

this work of the religious photoplay.

The beginning shows President Lincoln in the White House brooding over

the lack of response to his last call for troops. (He is impersonated by

Ralph Ince.) He and Julia Ward Howe are looking out of the window on a

recruiting headquarters that is not busy. (Mrs. Howe is impersonated by

Julia S. Gordon.) Another scene shows an old mother in the West refusing

to let her son enlist. (This woman is impersonated by Mrs. Maurice.) The

father has died in the war. The sword hangs on the wall. Later Julia Ward

Howe is shown in her room asleep at midnight, then rising in a trance and

writing the Battle Hymn at a table by the bed.

The pictures that might possibly have passed before her mind during the

trance are thrown upon the screen. The phrases they illustrate are not in

the final order of the poem, but in the possible sequence in which they

went on the paper in the first sketch. The dream panorama is not a

literal discussion of abolitionism or states' rights. It illustrates

rather the Hebraic exultation applied to all lands and times. "Mine eyes

have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord"; a gracious picture of the

nativity. (Edith Storey impersonates Mary the Virgin.) "I have seen him

in the watchfires of a hundred circling camps" and "They have builded him

an altar in the evening dews and damps"--for these are given symbolic

pageants of the Holy Sepulchre crusaders.

Then there is a visible parable, showing a marketplace in some wicked

capital, neither Babylon, Tyre, nor Nineveh, but all of them in essential

character. First come spectacles of rejoicing, cruelty, and waste. Then

from Heaven descend flood and fire, brimstone and lightning. It is like

the judgment of the Cities of the Plain. Just before the overthrow, the

line is projected upon the screen: "He hath loosed the fateful lightning

of his terrible swift sword." Then the heavenly host becomes gradually

visible upon the air, marching toward the audience, almost crossing the

footlights, and blowing their solemn trumpets. With this picture the line

is given us to read: "Our God is marching on." This host appears in the

photoplay as often as the refrain sweeps into the poem. The celestial

company, its imperceptible emergence, its spiritual power when in the

ascendant, is a thing never to be forgotten, a tableau that proves the

motion picture a great religious instrument.

Then comes a procession indeed. It is as though the audience were

standing at the side of the throne at Doomsday looking down the hill of

Zion toward the little earth. There is a line of those who are to be

judged, leaders from the beginning of history, barbarians with their

crude weapons, classic characters, Cæsar and his rivals for fame;

mediæval figures including Dante meditating; later figures, Richelieu,

Napoleon. Many people march toward the strange glorifying eye of the

camera, growing larger than men, filling the entire field of vision,

disappearing when they are almost upon us. The audience weighs the worth

of their work to the world as the men themselves with downcast eyes seem

to be doing also. The most thrilling figure is Tolstoi in his peasant

smock, coming after the bitter egotists and conquerors. (The

impersonation is by Edward Thomas.) I shall never forget that presence

marching up to the throne invisible with bowed head. This procession is

to illustrate the line: "He is sifting out the hearts of men before his

Judgment Seat." Later Lincoln is pictured on the steps of the White

House. It is a quaint tableau, in the spirit of the old-fashioned Rogers

group. Yet it is masterful for all that. Lincoln is taking the chains

from a cowering slave. This tableau is to illustrate the line: "Let the

hero born of woman crush the serpent with his heel." Now it is the end of

the series of visions. It is morning in Mrs. Howe's room. She rises. She

is filled with wonder to find the poem on her table.

Written to the rousing glory-tune of John Brown's Body the song goes over

the North like wildfire. The far-off home of the widow is shown. She and

the boy read the famous chant in the morning news column. She takes the

old sword from the wall. She gives it to her son and sends him to enlist

with her blessing. In the next picture Lincoln and Mrs. Howe are looking

out of the window where was once the idle recruiting tent. A new army is

pouring by, singing the words that have rallied the nation. Ritualistic

birth and death have been discussed. This film might be said to

illustrate ritualistic birth, death, and resurrection.

The writer has seen hundreds of productions since this one. He has

described it from memory. It came out in a time when the American people

paid no attention to the producer or the cast. It may have many technical

crudities by present-day standards. But the root of the matter is there.

And Springfield knew it. It was brought back to our town many times. It

was popular in both the fashionable picture show houses and the cheapest,

dirtiest hole in the town. It will soon be reissued by the Vitagraph

Company. Every student of American Art should see this film.

The same exultation that went into it, the faculty for commanding the

great spirits of history and making visible the unseen powers of the

air, should be applied to Crowd Pictures which interpret the

non-sectarian prayers of the broad human race.

The pageant of Religious Splendor is the final photoplay form in the

classification which this work seeks to establish. Much of what follows

will be to reënforce the heads of these first discourses. Further comment

on the Religious Photoplay may be found in the eleventh chapter, entitled

"Architecture-in-Motion."

CHAPTER VIII

SCULPTURE-IN-MOTION

The outline is complete. Now to reënforce it. Pictures of Action Intimacy

and Splendor are the foundation colors in the photoplay, as red, blue,

and yellow are the basis of the rainbow. Action Films might be called the

red section; Intimate Motion Pictures, being colder and quieter, might be

called blue; and Splendor Photoplays called yellow, since that is the hue

of pageants and sunshine.

Another way of showing the distinction is to review the types of gesture.

The Action Photoplay deals with generalized pantomime: the gesture of the

conventional policeman in contrast with the mannerism of the stereotyped

preacher. The Intimate Film gives us more elusive personal gestures: the

difference between the table manners of two preachers in the same

restaurant, or two policemen. A mark of the Fairy Play is the gesture of

incantation, the sweep of the arm whereby Mab would transform a prince

into a hawk. The other Splendor Films deal with the total gestures of

crowds: the pantomime of a torch-waving mass of men, the drill of an army

on the march, or the bending of the heads of a congregation receiving the

benediction.

Another way to demonstrate the thesis is to use the old classification of

poetry: dramatic, lyric, epic. The Action Play is a narrow form of the

dramatic. The Intimate Motion Picture is an equivalent of the lyric. In

the seventeenth chapter it is shown that one type of the Intimate might

be classed as imagist. And obviously the Splendor Pictures are the

equivalent of the epic.

But perhaps the most adequate way of showing the meaning of this outline

is to say that the Action Film is sculpture-in-motion, the Intimate

Photoplay is painting-in-motion, and the Fairy Pageant, along with the

rest of the Splendor Pictures, may be described as architecture-in-motion.

This chapter will discuss the bearing of the phrase sculpture-in-motion.

It will relate directly to chapter two.

First, gentle and kindly reader, let us discuss sculpture in its most

literal sense: after that, less realistically, but perhaps more

adequately. Let us begin with Annette Kellerman in Neptune's Daughter.

This film has a crude plot constructed to show off Annette's various

athletic resources. It is good photography, and a big idea so far as the

swimming episodes are concerned. An artist haunted by picture-conceptions

equivalent to the musical thoughts back of Wagner's Rhine-maidens could

have made of Annette, in her mermaid's dress, a notable figure. Or a

story akin to the mermaid tale of Hans Christian Andersen, or Matthew

Arnold's poem of the forsaken merman, could have made this picturesque

witch of the salt water truly significant, and still retained the most

beautiful parts of the photoplay as it was exhibited. It is an

exceedingly irrelevant imagination that shows her in other scenes as a

duellist, for instance, because forsooth she can fence. As a child of the

ocean, half fish, half woman, she is indeed convincing. Such mermaids as

this have haunted sailors, and lured them on the rocks to their doom,

from the day the siren sang till the hour the Lorelei sang no more. The

scene with the baby mermaid, when she swims with the pretty creature on

her back, is irresistible. Why are our managers so mechanical? Why do

they flatten out at the moment the fancy of the tiniest reader of

fairy-tales begins to be alive? Most of Annette's support were stage

dummies. Neptune was a lame Santa Claus with cotton whiskers.

But as for the bearing of the film on this chapter: the human figure is

within its rights whenever it is as free from self-consciousness as was

the life-radiating Annette in the heavenly clear waters of Bermuda. On

the other hand, Neptune and his pasteboard diadem and wooden-pointed

pitchfork, should have put on his dressing-gown and retired. As a toe

dancer in an alleged court scene, on land, Annette was a mere simperer.

Possibly Pavlowa as a swimmer in Bermuda waters would have been as much

of a mistake. Each queen to her kingdom.

For living, moving sculpture, the human eye requires a costume and a part

in unity with the meaning of that particular figure. There is the Greek

dress of Mordkin in the arrow dance. There is Annette's breast covering

of shells, and wonderful flowing mermaid hair, clothing her as the

midnight does the moon. The new costume freedom of the photoplay allows

such limitation of clothing as would be probable when one is honestly in

touch with wild nature and preoccupied with vigorous exercise. Thus the

cave-man and desert island narratives, though seldom well done, when

produced with verisimilitude, give an opportunity for the native human

frame in the logical wrappings of reeds and skins. But those who in a

silly hurry seek excuses, are generally merely ridiculous, like the

barefoot man who is terribly tender about walking on the pebbles, or the

wild man who is white as celery or grass under a board. There is no short

cut to vitality.

A successful literal use of sculpture is in the film Oil and Water.

Blanche Sweet is the leader of the play within a play which occupies the

first reel. Here the Olympians and the Muses, with a grace that we fancy

was Greek, lead a dance that traces the story of the spring, summer, and

autumn of life. Finally the supple dancers turn gray and old and die, but

not before they have given us a vision from the Ionian islands. The play

might have been inspired from reading Keats' Lamia, but is probably

derived from the work of Isadora Duncan. This chapter has hereafter only

a passing word or two on literal sculptural effects. It has more in mind

the carver's attitude toward all that passes before the eye.

The sculptor George Gray Barnard is responsible for none of the views in

this discourse, but he has talked to me at length about his sense of

discovery in watching the most ordinary motion pictures, and his delight

in following them with their endless combinations of masses and flowing

surfaces.

The little far-away people on the old-fashioned speaking stage do not

appeal to the plastic sense in this way. They are, by comparison, mere

bits of pasteboard with sweet voices, while, on the other hand, the

photoplay foreground is full of dumb giants. The bodies of these giants

are in high sculptural relief. Where the lights are quite glaring and the

photography is bad, many of the figures are as hard in their impact on

the eye as lime-white plaster-casts, no matter what the clothing. There

are several passages of this sort in the otherwise beautiful Enoch Arden,

where the shipwrecked sailor is depicted on his desert island in the

glaring sun.

What materials should the photoplay figures suggest? There are as many

possible materials as there are subjects for pictures and tone schemes

to be considered. But we will take for illustration wood, bronze, and

marble, since they have been used in the old sculptural art.

There is found in most art shows a type of carved wood gargoyle where the

work and the subject are at one, not only in the color of the wood, but

in the way the material masses itself, in bulk betrays its qualities. We

will suppose a moving picture humorist who is in the same mood as the

carver. He chooses a story of quaint old ladies, street gamins, and fat

aldermen. Imagine the figures with the same massing and interplay

suddenly invested with life, yet giving to the eye a pleasure kindred to

that which is found in carved wood, and bringing to the fancy a similar

humor.

Or there is a type of Action Story where the mood of the figures is that

of bronze, with the æsthetic resources of that metal: its elasticity; its

emphasis on the tendon, ligament, and bone, rather than on the muscle;

and an attribute that we will call the panther-like quality. Hermon A.

MacNeil has a memorable piece of work in the yard of the architect Shaw,

at Lake Forest, Illinois. It is called "The Sun Vow." A little Indian is

shooting toward the sun, while the old warrior, crouching immediately

behind him, follows with his eye the direction of the arrow. Few pieces

of sculpture come readily to mind that show more happily the qualities of

bronze as distinguished from other materials. To imagine such a group

done in marble, carved wood, or Della Robbia ware is to destroy the very

image in the fancy.

The photoplay of the American Indian should in most instances be planned

as bronze in action. The tribes should not move so rapidly that the

panther-like elasticity is lost in the riding, running, and scalping. On

the other hand, the aborigines should be far from the temperateness of

marble.

Mr. Edward S. Curtis, the super-photographer, has made an Ethnological

collection of photographs of our American Indians. This work of a

life-time, a supreme art achievement, shows the native as a figure in

bronze. Mr. Curtis' photoplay, The Land of the Head Hunters (World Film

Corporation), a romance of the Indians of the North-West, abounds in

noble bronzes.

I have gone through my old territories as an art student, in the Chicago

Art Institute and the Metropolitan Museum, of late, in special

excursions, looking for sculpture, painting, and architecture that might

be the basis for the photoplays of the future.

The Bacchante of Frederick MacMonnies is in bronze in the Metropolitan

Museum and in bronze replica in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. There is

probably no work that more rejoices the hearts of the young art students

in either city. The youthful creature illustrates a most joyous leap into

the air. She is high on one foot with the other knee lifted. She holds a

bunch of grapes full-arm's length. Her baby, clutched in the other hand,

is reaching up with greedy mouth toward the fruit. The bacchante body is

glistening in the light. This is joy-in-bronze as the Sun Vow is

power-in-bronze. This special story could not be told in another medium.

I have seen in Paris a marble copy of this Bacchante. It is as though it

were done in soap. On the other hand, many of the renaissance Italian

sculptors have given us children in marble in low relief, dancing like

lilies in the wind. They could not be put into bronze.

The plot of the Action Photoplay is literally or metaphorically a chase

down the road or a hurdle-race. It might be well to consider how typical

figures for such have been put into carved material. There are two bronze

statues that have their replicas in all museums. They are generally one

on either side of the main hall, towering above the second-story

balustrade. First, the statue of Gattamelata, a Venetian general, by

Donatello. The original is in Padua. Then there is the figure of

Bartolommeo Colleoni. The original is in Venice. It is by Verrocchio and

Leopardi. These equestrians radiate authority. There is more action in

them than in any cowboy hordes I have ever beheld zipping across the

screen. Look upon them and ponder long, prospective author-producer. Even

in a simple chase-picture, the speed must not destroy the chance to enjoy

the modelling. If you would give us mounted legions, destined to conquer,

let any one section of the film, if it is stopped and studied, be

grounded in the same bronze conception. The Assyrian commanders in

Griffith's Judith would, without great embarrassment, stand this test.

But it may not be the pursuit of an enemy we have in mind. It may be a

spring celebration, horsemen in Arcadia, going to some happy tournament.

Where will we find our precedents for such a cavalcade? Go to any museum.

Find the Parthenon room. High on the wall is the copy of the famous

marble frieze of the young citizens who are in the procession in praise

of Athena. Such a rhythm of bodies and heads and the feet of proud

steeds, and above all the profiles of thoroughbred youths, no city has

seen since that day. The delicate composition relations, ever varying,

ever refreshing, amid the seeming sameness of formula of rider behind

rider, have been the delight of art students the world over, and shall so

remain. No serious observer escapes the exhilaration of this company. Let

it be studied by the author-producer though it be but an idyl in disguise

that his scenario calls for: merry young farmers hurrying to the State

Fair parade, boys making all speed to the political rally.

Buy any three moving picture magazines you please. Mark the illustrations

that are massive, in high relief, with long lines in their edges. Cut out

and sort some of these. I have done it on the table where I write. After

throwing away all but the best specimens, I have four different kinds of

sculpture. First, behold the inevitable cowboy. He is on a ramping

horse, filling the entire outlook. The steed rears, while facing us. The

cowboy waves his hat. There is quite such an animal by Frederick

MacMonnies, wrought in bronze, set up on a gate to a park in Brooklyn. It

is not the identical color of the photoplay animal, but the bronze

elasticity is the joy in both.

Here is a scene of a masked monk, carrying off a fainting girl. The hero

intercepts him. The figures of the lady and the monk are in sufficient

sculptural harmony to make a formal sculptural group for an art

exhibition. The picture of the hero, strong, with well-massed surfaces,

is related to both. The fact that he is in evening dress does not alter

his monumental quality. All three are on a stone balcony that relates

itself to the general largeness of spirit in the group, and the

semi-classic dress of the maiden. No doubt the title is: The Morning

Following the Masquerade Ball. This group could be made in unglazed clay,

in four colors.

Here is an American lieutenant with two ladies. The three are suddenly

alert over the approach of the villain, who is not yet in the picture.

In costume it is an everyday group, but those three figures are related

to one another, and the trees behind them, in simple sculptural terms.

The lieutenant, as is to be expected, looks forth in fierce readiness.

One girl stands with clasped hands. The other points to the danger. The

relations of these people to one another may seem merely dramatic to the

superficial observer, but the power of the group is in the fact that it

is monumental. I could imagine it done in four different kinds of rare

tropical wood, carved unpolished.

Here is a scene of storm and stress in an office where the hero is caught

with seemingly incriminating papers. The table is in confusion. The room

is filling with people, led by one accusing woman. Is this also

sculpture? Yes. The figures are in high relief. Even the surfaces of the

chairs and the littered table are massive, and the eye travels without

weariness, as it should do in sculpture, from the hero to the furious

woman, then to the attorney behind her, then to the two other revilers,

then to the crowd in three loose rhythmic ranks. The eye makes this

journey, not from space to space, or fabric to fabric, but first of all

from mass to mass. It is sculpture, but it is the sort that can be done

in no medium but the moving picture itself, and therefore it is one goal

of this argument.

But there are several other goals. One of the sculpturesque resources of

the photoplay is that the human countenance can be magnified many times,

till it fills the entire screen. Some examples are in rather low relief,

portraits approximating certain painters. But if they are on sculptural

terms, and are studies of the faces of thinking men, let the producer

make a pilgrimage to Washington for his precedent. There, in the rotunda

of the capitol, is the face of Lincoln by Gutzon Borglum. It is one of

the eminently successful attempts to get at the secret of the countenance

by enlarging it much, and concentrating the whole consideration there.

The photoplay producer, seemingly without taking thought, is apt to show

a sculptural sense in giving us Newfoundland fishermen, clad in oilskins.

The background may have an unconscious Winslow Homer reminiscence. In the

foreground our hardy heroes fill the screen, and dripping with sea-water

become wave-beaten granite, yet living creatures none the less. Imagine

some one chapter from the story of Little Em'ly in David Copperfield,

retold in the films. Show us Ham Peggotty and old Mr. Peggotty in

colloquy over their nets. There are many powerful bronze groups to be had

from these two, on to the heroic and unselfish death of Ham, rescuing his

enemy in storm and lightning.

I have seen one rich picture of alleged cannibal tribes. It was a comedy

about a missionary. But the aborigines were like living ebony and silver.

That was long ago. Such things come too much by accident. The producer is

not sufficiently aware that any artistic element in his list of

productions that is allowed to go wild, that has not had full analysis,

reanalysis, and final conservation, wastes his chance to attain supreme

mastery.

Open your history of sculpture, and dwell upon those illustrations which

are not the normal, reposeful statues, but the exceptional, such as have

been listed for this chapter. Imagine that each dancing, galloping, or

fighting figure comes down into the room life-size. Watch it against a

dark curtain. Let it go through a series of gestures in harmony with the

spirit of the original conception, and as rapidly as possible, not to

lose nobility. If you have the necessary elasticity, imagine the figures

wearing the costumes of another period, yet retaining in their motions

the same essential spirit. Combine them in your mind with one or two

kindred figures, enlarged till they fill the end of the room. You have

now created the beginning of an Action Photoplay in your own fancy.

Do this with each most energetic classic till your imagination flags. I

do not want to be too dogmatic, but it seems to me this is one way to

evolve real Action Plays. It would, perhaps, be well to substitute this

for the usual method of evolving them from old stage material or

newspaper clippings.

There is in the Metropolitan Museum a noble modern group, the Mares of

Diomedes, by the aforementioned Gutzon Borglum. It is full of material

for the meditations of a man who wants to make a film of a stampede. The

idea is that Hercules, riding his steed bareback, guides it in a circle.

He is fascinating the horses he has been told to capture. They are held

by the mesmerism of the circular path and follow him round and round till

they finally fall from exhaustion. Thus the Indians of the West capture

wild ponies, and Borglum, a far western man, imputes the method to

Hercules. The bronze group shows a segment of this circle. The whirlwind

is at its height. The mares are wild to taste the flesh of Hercules.

Whoever is to photograph horses, let him study the play of light and

color and muscle-texture in this bronze. And let no group of horses ever

run faster than these of Borglum.

An occasional hint of a Michelangelo figure or gesture appears for a

flash in the films. Young artist in the audience, does it pass you by?

Open your history of sculpture again and look at the usual list of

Michelangelo groups. Suppose the seated majesty of Moses should rise,

what would be the quality of the action? Suppose the sleeping figures of

the Medician tombs should wake, or those famous slaves should break their

bands, or David again hurl the stone. Would not their action be as heroic

as their quietness? Is it not possible to have a Michelangelo of

photoplay sculpture? Should we not look for him in the fulness of time?

His figures might come to us in the skins of the desert island solitary,

or as cave men and women, or as mermaids and mermen, and yet have a force

and grandeur akin to that of the old Italian.

Rodin's famous group of the citizens of Calais is an example of the

expression of one particular idea by a special technical treatment. The

producer who tells a kindred story to that of the siege of Calais, and

the final going of these humble men to their doom, will have a hero-tale

indeed. It will be not only sculpture-in-action, but a great Crowd

Picture. It begins to be seen that the possibilities of monumental

achievement in the films transcend the narrow boundaries of the Action

Photoplay. Why not conceptions as heroic as Rodin's Hand of God, where

the first pair are clasped in the gigantic fingers of their maker in the

clay from which they came?

Finally, I desire in moving pictures, not the stillness, but the majesty

of sculpture. I do not advocate for the photoplay the mood of the Venus

of Milo. But let us turn to that sister of hers, the great Victory of

Samothrace, that spreads her wings at the head of the steps of the

Louvre, and in many an art gallery beside. When you are appraising a new

film, ask yourself: "Is this motion as rapid, as godlike, as the sweep of

the wings of the Samothracian?" Let her be the touchstone of the Action

Drama, for nothing can be more swift than the winged Gods, nothing can be

more powerful than the oncoming of the immortals.

CHAPTER IX

PAINTING-IN-MOTION

This chapter is founded on the delicate effects that may be worked out

from cosy interior scenes, close to the camera. It relates directly to

chapter three.

While the Intimate-and-friendly Motion Picture may be in high sculptural

relief, its characteristic manifestations are in low relief. The

situations show to better advantage when they seem to be paintings rather

than monumental groups.

Turn to your handful of motion picture magazines and mark the

illustrations that look the most like paintings. Cut them out. Winnow

them several times. I have before me, as a final threshing from such an

experiment, five pictures. Each one approximates a different school.

Here is a colonial Virginia maiden by the hearth of the inn. Bending over

her in a cherishing way is the negro maid. On the other side, the

innkeeper shows a kindred solicitude. A dishevelled traveller sleeps

huddled up in the corner. The costume of the man fades into the velvety

shadows of the wall. His face is concealed. His hair blends with the soft

background. The clothing of the other three makes a patch of light gray.

Added to this is the gayety of special textures: the turban of the

negress, a trimming on the skirt of the heroine, the silkiness of the

innkeeper's locks, the fabric of the broom in the hearthlight, the

pattern of the mortar lines round the bricks of the hearth. The tableau

is a satisfying scheme in two planes and many textures. Here is another

sort of painting. The young mother in her pretty bed is smiling on her

infant. The cot and covers and flesh tints have gentle scales of

difference, all within one tone of the softest gray. Her hair is quite

dark. It relates to the less luminous black of the coat of the physician

behind the bed and the dress of the girl-friend bending over her. The

nurse standing by the doctor is a figure of the same gray-white as the

bed. Within the pattern of the velvety-blacks there are as many subtle

gradations as in the pattern of the gray-whites. The tableau is a

satisfying scheme in black and gray, with practically one non-obtrusive

texture throughout.

Here is a picture of an Englishman and his wife, in India. It might be

called sculptural, but for the magnificence of the turban of the rajah

who converses with them, the glitter of the light round his shoulders,

and the scheme of shadow out of which the three figures rise. The

arrangement remotely reminds one of several of Rembrandt's semi-oriental

musings.

Here is a picture of Mary Pickford as Fanchon the Cricket. She is in the

cottage with the strange old mother. I have seen a painting in this mood

by the Greek Nickolas Gysis.

The Intimate-and-friendly Moving Picture, the photoplay of

painting-in-motion, need not be indoors as long as it has the

native-heath mood. It is generally keyed to the hearthstone, and keeps

quite close to it. But how well I remember when the first French

photoplays began to come. Though unintelligent in some respects, the

photography and subject-matter of many of them made one think of that

painter of gentle out-of-door scenes, Jean Charles Cazin. Here is our

last clipping, which is also in a spirit allied to Cazin. The heroine,

accompanied by an aged shepherd and his dog, are in the foreground. The

sheep are in the middle distance on the edge of the river. There is a

noble hill beyond the gently flowing water. Here is intimacy and

friendliness in the midst of the big out of doors.

If these five photo-paintings were on good paper enlarged to twenty by

twenty-four inches, they would do to frame and hang on the wall of any

study, for a month or so. And after the relentless test of time, I would

venture that some one of the five would prove a permanent addition to the

household gods.

Hastily made photographs selected from the films are often put in front

of the better theatres to advertise the show. Of late they are making

them two by three feet and sometimes several times larger. Here is a

commercial beginning of an art gallery, but not enough pains are taken to

give the selections a complete art gallery dignity. Why not have the most

beautiful scenes in front of the theatres, instead of those alleged to be

the most thrilling? Why not rest the fevered and wandering eye, rather

than make one more attempt to take it by force?

Let the reader supply another side of the argument by looking at the

illustrations in any history of painting. Let him select the pictures

that charm him most, and think of them enlarged and transferred bodily to

one corner of the room, as he has thought of the sculpture. Let them take

on motion without losing their charm of low relief, or their serene

composition within the four walls of the frame. As for the motion, let it

be a further extension of the drawing. Let every gesture be a bolder but

not less graceful brush-stroke.

The Metropolitan Museum has a Van Dyck that appeals equally to one's sense

of beauty and one's feeling for humor. It is a portrait of James Stuart,

Duke of Lennox, and I cannot see how the author-producer-photographer can

look upon it without having it set his imagination in a glow. Every small

town dancing set has a James like this. The man and the greyhound are the

same witless breed, the kind that achieve a result by their clean-limbed

elegance alone. Van Dyck has painted the two with what might be called a

greyhound brush-stroke, a style of handling that is nothing but courtly

convention and strut to the point of genius. He is as far from the

meditative spirituality of Rembrandt as could well be imagined.

Conjure up a scene in the hereditary hall after a hunt (or golf

tournament), in which a man like this Duke of Lennox has a noble parley

with his lady (or dancing partner), she being a sweet and stupid swan (or

a white rabbit) by the same sign that he is a noble and stupid greyhound.

Be it an ancient or modern episode, the story could be told in the tone

and with well-nigh the brushwork of Van Dyck.

Then there is a picture my teachers, Chase and Henri, were never weary of

praising, the Girl with the Parrot, by Manet. Here continence in nervous

force, expressed by low relief and restraint in tone, is carried to its

ultimate point. I should call this an imagist painting, made before there

were such people as imagist poets. It is a perpetual sermon to those that

would thresh around to no avail, be they orators, melodramatists, or

makers of photoplays with an alleged heart-interest.

Let us consider Gilbert Stuart's portrait of Washington. This painter's

notion of personal dignity has far more of the intellectual quality than

Van Dyck. He loves to give us stately, able, fairly conscientious gentry,

rather than overdone royalty. His work represents a certain mood in

design that in architecture is called colonial. Such portraits go with

houses like Mount Vernon. Let the photographer study the flat blacks in

the garments. Let him note the transparent impression of the laces and

flesh-tints that seem to be painted on glass, observing especially the

crystalline whiteness of the wigs. Let him inspect also the

silhouette-like outlines, noting the courtly self-possession they convey.

Then let the photographer, the producer, and the author, be they one man

or six men, stick to this type of picturization through one entire

production, till any artist in the audience will say, "This photoplay was

painted by a pupil of Gilbert Stuart"; and the layman will say, "It looks

like those stately days." And let us not have battle, but a Mount Vernon

fireside tale.

Both the Chicago and New York museums contain many phases of one same

family group, painted by George de Forest Brush. There is a touch of the

hearthstone priestess about the woman. The force of sex has turned to the

austere comforting passion of motherhood. From the children, under the

wings of this spirit, come special delicate powers of life. There is

nothing tense or restless about them, yet they embody action, the beating

of the inner fire, without which all outer action is mockery.

Hearthstone tales keyed to the mood and using the brush stroke that

delineates this especial circle would be unmistakable in their

distinction.

Charles W. Hawthorne has pictures in Chicago and New York that imply the

Intimate-and-friendly Photoplay. The Trousseau in the Metropolitan Museum

shows a gentle girl, an unfashionable home-body with a sweetly sheltered

air. Behind her glimmers the patient mother's face. The older woman is

busy about fitting the dress. The picture is a tribute to the qualities

of many unknown gentlewomen. Such an illumination as this, on faces so

innocently eloquent, is the light that should shine on the countenance of

the photoplay actress who really desires greatness in the field of the

Intimate Motion Picture. There is in Chicago, Hawthorne's painting of

Sylvia: a little girl standing with her back to a mirror, a few blossoms

in one hand and a vase of flowers on the mirror shelf. It is as sound a

composition as Hawthorne ever produced. The painting of the child is

another tribute to the physical-spiritual textures from which humanity is

made. Ah, you producer who have grown squeaky whipping your people into

what you called action, consider the dynamics of these figures that

would be almost motionless in real life. Remember there must be a

spirit-action under the other, or all is dead.

Yet that soul may be the muse of Comedy. If Hawthorne and his kind are

not your fashion, turn to models that have their feet on the earth

always, yet successfully aspire. Key some of your intimate humorous

scenes to the Dutch Little Masters of Painting, such pictures as Gerard

Terburg's Music Lesson in the Chicago Art Institute. The thing is as well

designed as a Dutch house, wind-mill, or clock. And it is more elegant

than any of these. There is humor enough in the picture to last one reel

through. The society dame of the period, in her pretty raiment, fingers

the strings of her musical instrument, while the master stands by her

with the baton. The painter has enjoyed the satire, from her elegant

little hands to the teacher's well-combed locks. It is very plain that

she does not want to study music with any sincerity, and he does not

desire to develop the ability of this particular person. There may be a

flirtation in the background. Yet these people are not hollow as gourds,

and they are not caricatured. The Dutch Little Masters have indulged in

numberless characterizations of mundane humanity. But they are never so

preoccupied with the story that it is an anecdote rather than a picture.

It is, first of all, a piece of elegant painting-fabric. Next it is a

scrap of Dutch philosophy or aspiration.

Let Whistler turn over in his grave while we enlist him for the cause of

democracy. One view of the technique of this man might summarize it thus:

fastidiousness in choice of subject, the picture well within the frame,

low relief, a Velasquez study of tones and a Japanese study of spaces.

Let us, dear and patient reader, particularly dwell upon the spacing. A

Whistler, or a good Japanese print, might be described as a kaleidoscope

suddenly arrested and transfixed at the moment of most exquisite

relations in the pieces of glass. An Intimate Play of a kindred sort

would start to turning the kaleidoscope again, losing fine relations only

to gain those which are more exquisite and novel. All motion pictures

might be characterized as \_space measured without sound, plus time

measured without sound\_. This description fits in a special way the

delicate form of the Intimate Motion Picture, and there can be studied

out, free from irrelevant issues.

As to \_space measured without sound\_. Suppose it is a humorous

characterization of comfortable family life, founded on some Dutch Little

Master. The picture measures off its spaces in harmony. The triangle

occupied by the little child's dress is in definite relation to the

triangle occupied by the mother's costume. To these two patterns the

space measured off by the boy's figure is adjusted, and all of them are

as carefully related to the shapes cut out of the background by the

figures. No matter how the characters move about in the photoplay, these

pattern shapes should relate to one another in a definite design. The

exact tone value of each one and their precise nearness or distance to

one another have a deal to do with the final effect.

We go to the photoplay to enjoy right and splendid picture-motions, to

feel a certain thrill when the pieces of kaleidoscope glass slide into

new places. Instead of moving on straight lines, as they do in the

mechanical toy, they progress in strange curves that are part of the very

shapes into which they fall.

Consider: first came the photograph. Then motion was added to the

photograph. We must use this order in our judgment. If it is ever to

evolve into a national art, it must first be good picture, then good

motion.

Belasco's attitude toward the stage has been denounced by the purists

because he makes settings too large a portion of his story-telling, and

transforms his theatre into the paradise of the property-man. But this

very quality of the well spaced setting, if you please, has made his

chance for the world's moving picture anthology. As reproduced by Jesse

K. Lasky the Belasco production is the only type of the old-line drama

that seems really made to be the basis of a moving picture play. Not

always, but as a general rule, Belasco suffers less detriment in the

films than other men. Take, for instance, the Belasco-Lasky production of

The Rose of the Rancho with Bessie Barriscale as the heroine. It has many

highly modelled action-tableaus, and others that come under the

classification of this chapter. When I was attending it not long ago,

here in my home town, the fair companion at my side said that one scene

looked like a painting by Sorolla y Bastida, the Spaniard. It is the

episode where the Rose sends back her servant to inquire the hero's

name. As a matter of fact there were Sorollas and Zuloagas all through

the piece. The betrothal reception with flying confetti was a satisfying

piece of Spanish splendor. It was space music indeed, space measured

without sound. Incidentally the cast is to be congratulated on its

picturesque acting, especially Miss Barriscale in her impersonation of

the Rose.

It is harder to grasp the other side of the paradox, picture-motions

considered as \_time measured without sound\_. But think of a lively and

humoresque clock that does not tick and takes only an hour to record a

day. Think of a noiseless electric vehicle, where you are looking out of

the windows, going down the smooth boulevard of Wonderland. Consider a

film with three simple time-elements: (1) that of the pursuer, (2) the

pursued, (3) the observation vehicle of the camera following the road and

watching both of them, now faster, now slower than they, as the

photographer overtakes the actors or allows them to hurry ahead. The

plain chase is a bore because there are only these three time-elements.

But the chase principle survives in every motion picture and we simply

need more of this sort of time measurement, better considered. The more

the non-human objects, the human actors, and the observer move at a

varying pace, the greater chances there are for what might be called

time-and-space music.

No two people in the same room should gesture at one mechanical rate, or

lift their forks or spoons, keeping obviously together. Yet it stands to

reason that each successive tableau should be not only a charming

picture, but the totals of motion should be an orchestration of various

speeds, of abrupt, graceful, and seemingly awkward progress, worked into

a silent symphony.

Supposing it is a fisher-maiden's romance. In the background the waves

toss in one tempo. Owing to the sail, the boat rocks in another. In the

foreground the tree alternately bends and recovers itself in the breeze,

making more opposition than the sail. In still another time-unit the

smoke rolls from the chimney, making no resistance to the wind. In

another unit, the lovers pace the sand. Yet there is one least common

multiple in which all move. This the producing genius should sense and

make part of the dramatic structure, and it would have its bearing on the

periodic appearance of the minor and major crises.

Films like this, you say, would be hard to make. Yes. Here is the place

to affirm that the one-reel Intimate Photoplay will no doubt be the form

in which this type of time-and-space music is developed. The music of

silent motion is the most abstract of moving picture attributes and will

probably remain the least comprehended. Like the quality of Walter

Pater's Marius the Epicurean, or that of Shelley's Hymn to Intellectual

Beauty, it will not satisfy the sudden and the brash.

\* \* \* \* \*

The reader will find in his round of the picture theatres many single

scenes and parts of plays that elucidate the title of this chapter. Often

the first two-thirds of the story will fit it well. Then the producers,

finding that, for reasons they do not understand, with the best and most

earnest actors they cannot work the three reels into an emotional climax,

introduce some stupid disaster and rescue utterly irrelevant to the

character-parts and the paintings that have preceded. Whether the alleged

thesis be love, hate, or ambition, cottage charm, daisy dell sweetness,

or the ivy beauty of an ancient estate, the resource for the final punch

seems to be something like a train-wreck. But the transfiguration of the

actors, not their destruction or rescue, is the goal. The last moment of

the play is great, not when it is a grandiose salvation from a burning

house, that knocks every delicate preceding idea in the head, but a

tableau that is as logical as the awakening of the Sleeping Beauty after

the hero has explored all the charmed castle.

CHAPTER X

FURNITURE, TRAPPINGS, AND INVENTIONS IN MOTION

The Action Pictures are sculpture-in-motion, the Intimate Pictures,

paintings-in-motion, the Splendor Pictures, many and diverse. It seems

far-fetched, perhaps, to complete the analogy and say they are

architecture-in-motion; yet, patient reader, unless I am mistaken, that

assumption can be given a value in time without straining your

imagination.

Landscape gardening, mural painting, church building, and furniture

making as well, are some of the things that come under the head of

architecture. They are discussed between the covers of any architectural

magazine. There is a particular relation in the photoplay between Crowd

Pictures and landscape conceptions, between Patriotic Films and mural

paintings, between Religious Films and architecture. And there is just as

much of a relation between Fairy Tales and furniture, which same is

discussed in this chapter.

Let us return to Moving Day, chapter four. This idea has been represented

many times with a certain sameness because the producers have not thought

out the philosophy behind it. A picture that is all action is a plague,

one that is all elephantine and pachydermatous pageant is a bore, and,

most emphatically, a film that is all mechanical legerdemain is a

nuisance. The possible charm in a so-called trick picture is in

eliminating the tricks, giving them dignity till they are no longer such,

but thoughts in motion and made visible. In Moving Day the shoes are the

most potent. They go through a drama that is natural to them. To march

without human feet inside is but to exaggerate themselves. It would not

be amusing to have them walk upside down, for instance. As long as the

worn soles touch the pavement, we unconsciously conjure up the character

of the absent owners, about whom the shoes are indeed gossiping. So let

the remainder of the furniture keep still while the shoes do their best.

Let us call to mind a classic fairy-tale involving shoes that are

magical: The Seven Leagued Boots, for example, or The Enchanted

Moccasins, or the footwear of Puss in Boots. How gorgeous and embroidered

any of these should be, and at a crisis what sly antics they should be

brought to play, without fidgeting all over the shop! Cinderella's

Slipper is not sufficiently the heroine in moving pictures of that story.

It should be the tiny leading lady of the piece, in the same sense the

mighty steam-engine is the hero of the story in chapter two. The peasants

when they used to tell the tale by the hearth fire said the shoe was made

of glass. This was in mediæval Europe, at a time when glass was much more

of a rarity. The material was chosen to imply a sort of jewelled

strangeness from the start. When Cinderella loses it in her haste, it

should flee at once like a white mouse, to hide under the sofa. It should

be pictured there with special artifice, so that the sensuous little foot

of every girl-child in the audience will tingle to wear it. It should

move a bit when the prince comes frantically hunting his lady, and peep

out just in time for that royal personage to spy it. Even at the

coronation it should be the centre of the ritual, more gazed at than the

crown, and on as dazzling a cushion. The final taking on of the slipper

by the lady should be as stately a ceremony as the putting of the circlet

of gold on her aureole hair. So much for Cinderella. But there are novel

stories that should be evolved by preference, about new sorts of magic

shoes.

We have not exhausted Moving Day. The chairs kept still through the

Cinderella discourse. Now let them take their innings. Instead of having

all of them dance about, invest but one with an inner life. Let its

special attributes show themselves but gradually, reaching their climax

at the highest point of excitement in the reel, and being an integral

part of that enthusiasm. Perhaps, though we be inventing a new

fairy-tale, it will resemble the Siege Perilous in the Arthurian story,

the chair where none but the perfect knight could sit. A dim row of

flaming swords might surround it. When the soul entitled to use this

throne appears, the swords might fade away and the gray cover hanging in

slack folds roll back because of an inner energy and the chair might turn

from gray to white, and with a subtle change of line become a throne.

The photoplay imagination which is able to impart vital individuality to

furniture will not stop there. Let the buildings emanate conscious life.

The author-producer-photographer, or one or all three, will make into a

personality some place akin to the House of the Seven Gables till the

ancient building dominates the fancy as it does in Hawthorne's tale.

There are various ways to bring about this result: by having its outlines

waver in the twilight, by touches of phosphorescence, or by the passing

of inexplicable shadows or the like. It depends upon what might be called

the genius of the building. There is the Poe story of The Fall of the

House of Usher, where with the death of the last heir the castle falls

crumbling into the tarn. There are other possible tales on such terms,

never yet imagined, to be born to-morrow. Great structures may become in

sort villains, as in the old Bible narrative of the origin of the various

languages. The producer can show the impious Babel Tower, going higher

and higher into the sky, fascinating and tempting the architects till a

confusion of tongues turns those masons into quarrelling mobs that become

departing caravans, leaving her blasted and forsaken, a symbol of every

Babylon that rose after her.

There are fables where the rocks and the mountains speak. Emerson has

given us one where the Mountain and the Squirrel had a quarrel. The

Mountain called the Squirrel "Little Prig." And then continues a clash of

personalities more possible to illustrate than at first appears. Here we

come to the second stage of the fairy-tale where the creature seems so

unmanageable in his physical aspect that some actor must be substituted

who will embody the essence of him. To properly illustrate the quarrel of

the Mountain and the Squirrel, the steep height should quiver and heave

and then give forth its personality in the figure of a vague smoky giant,

capable of human argument, but with oak-roots in his hair, and Bun,

perhaps, become a jester in squirrel's dress.

Or it may be our subject matter is a tall Dutch clock. Father Time

himself might emerge therefrom. Or supposing it is a chapel, in a

knight's adventure. An angel should step from the carving by the door: a

design that is half angel, half flower. But let the clock first tremble a

bit. Let the carving stir a little, and then let the spirit come forth,

that there may be a fine relation between the impersonator and the thing

represented. A statue too often takes on life by having the actor

abruptly substituted. The actor cannot logically take on more personality

than the statue has. He can only give that personality expression in a

new channel. In the realm of letters, a real transformation scene,

rendered credible to the higher fancy by its slow cumulative movement, is

the tale of the change of the dying Rowena to the living triumphant

Ligeia in Poe's story of that name. Substitution is not the fairy-story.

It is transformation, transfiguration, that is the fairy-story, be it a

divine or a diabolical change. There is never more than one witch in a

forest, one Siege Perilous at any Round Table. But she is indeed a witch

and the other is surely a Siege Perilous.

We might define Fairy Splendor as furniture transfigured, for without

transfiguration there is no spiritual motion of any kind. But the phrase

"furniture-in-motion" serves a purpose. It gets us back to the earth for

a reason. Furniture is architecture, and the fairy-tale picture should

certainly be drawn with architectural lines. The normal fairy-tale is a

sort of tiny informal child's religion, the baby's secular temple, and it

should have for the most part that touch of delicate sublimity that we

see in the mountain chapel or grotto, or fancy in the dwellings of

Aucassin and Nicolette. When such lines are drawn by the truly

sophisticated producer, there lies in them the secret of a more than

ritualistic power. Good fairy architecture amounts to an incantation in

itself.

If it is a grown-up legend, it must be more than monumental in its lines,

like the great stone face of Hawthorne's tale. Even a chair can reach

this estate. For instance, let it be the throne of Wodin, illustrating

some passage in Norse mythology. If this throne has a language, it speaks

with the lightning; if it shakes with its threat, it moves the entire

mountain range beneath it. Let the wizard-author-producer climb up from

the tricks of Moving Day to the foot-hills where he can see this throne

against the sky, as a superarchitect would draw it. But even if he can

give this vision in the films, his task will not be worth while if he is

simply a teller of old stories. Let us have magic shoes about which are

more golden dreams than those concerning Cinderella. Let us have stranger

castles than that of Usher, more dazzling chairs than the Siege Perilous.

Let us have the throne of Liberty, not the throne of Wodin.

There is one outstanding photoplay that I always have in mind when I

think of film magic. It illustrates some principles of this chapter and

chapter four, as well as many others through the book. It is Griffith's

production of The Avenging Conscience. It is also an example of that rare

thing, a use of old material that is so inspired that it has the dignity

of a new creation. The raw stuff of the plot is pieced together from the

story of The Tell-tale Heart and the poem Annabel Lee. It has behind it,

in the further distance, Poe's conscience stories of The Black Cat, and

William Wilson. I will describe the film here at length, and apply it to

whatever chapters it illustrates.

An austere and cranky bachelor (well impersonated by Spottiswoode Aitken)

brings up his orphan nephew with an awkward affection. The nephew is

impersonated by Henry B. Walthall. The uncle has an ambition that the boy

will become a man of letters. In his attempts at literature the youth is

influenced by Poe. This brings about the Poe quality of his dreams at the

crisis. The uncle is silently exasperated when he sees his boy's

writing-time broken into, and wasted, as he thinks, by an affair with a

lovely Annabel (Blanche Sweet). The intimacy and confidence of the lovers

has progressed so far that it is a natural thing for the artless girl to

cross the gardens and after hesitation knock at the door. She wants to

know what has delayed her boy. She is all in a flutter on account of the

overdue appointment to go to a party together. The scene of the pretty

hesitancy on the step, her knocking, and the final impatient tapping with

her foot is one of the best illustrations of the intimate mood in

photoplay episodes. On the girl's entrance the uncle overwhelms her and

the boy by saying she is pursuing his nephew like a common woman of the

town. The words actually burst through the film, not as a melodramatic,

but as an actual insult. This is a thing almost impossible to do in the

photoplay. This outrage in the midst of an atmosphere of chivalry is one

of Griffith's master-moments. It accounts for the volcanic fury of the

nephew that takes such trouble to burn itself out afterwards. It is not

easy for the young to learn that they must let those people flay them for

an hour who have made every sacrifice for them through a life-time.

This scene of insult and the confession scene, later in this film, moved

me as similar passages in high drama would do; and their very rareness,

even in the hands of photoplay masters, indicates that such purely

dramatic climaxes cannot be the main asset of the moving picture. Over

and over, with the best talent and producers, they fail.

The boy and girl go to the party in spite of the uncle. It is while on

the way that the boy looks on the face of a stranger who afterwards mixes

up in his dream as the detective. There is a mistake in the printing

here. There are several minutes of a worldly-wise oriental dance to amuse

the guests, while the lovers are alone at another end of the garden. It

is, possibly, the aptest contrast with the seriousness of our hero and

heroine. But the social affair could have had a better title than the one

that is printed on the film "An Old-fashioned Sweetheart Party." Possibly

the dance was put in after the title.

The lovers part forever. The girl's pride has had a mortal wound. About

this time is thrown on the screen the kind of a climax quite surely

possible to the photoplay. It reminds one, not of the mood of Poe's

verse, but of the spirit of the paintings of George Frederick Watts. It

is allied in some way, in my mind, with his "Love and Life," though but a

single draped figure within doors, and "Love and Life" are undraped

figures, climbing a mountain.

The boy, having said good-by, remembers the lady Annabel. It is a crisis

after the event. In his vision she is shown in a darkened passageway, all

in white, looking out of the window upon the moonlit sky. Simple enough

in its elements, this vision is shown twice in glory. The third replica

has not the same glamour. The first two are transfigurations into

divinity. The phrase thrown on the screen is "The moon never beams

without bringing me dreams of the beautiful Annabel Lee." And the sense

of loss goes through and through one like a flight of arrows. Another

noble picture, more realistic, more sculpturesque, is of Annabel mourning

on her knees in her room. Her bended head makes her akin to "Niobe, all

tears."

The boy meditating on a park-path is meanwhile watching the spider in his

web devour the fly. Then he sees the ants in turn destroy the spider.

These pictures are shown on so large a scale that the spiderweb fills the

end of the theatre. Then the ant-tragedy does the same. They can be

classed as particularly apt hieroglyphics in the sense of chapter

thirteen. Their horror and decorative iridescence are of the Poe sort.

It is the first hint of the Poe hieroglyphic we have had except the black

patch over the eye of the uncle, along with his jaundiced, cadaverous

face. The boy meditates on how all nature turns on cruelty and the

survival of the fittest.

He passes just now an Italian laborer (impersonated by George Seigmann).

This laborer enters later into his dream. He finally goes to sleep in his

chair, the resolve to kill his uncle rankling in his heart.

The audience is not told that a dream begins. To understand that, one

must see the film through twice. But it is perfectly legitimate to

deceive us. Through our ignorance we share the young man's

hallucinations, entering into them as imperceptibly as he does. We think

it is the next morning. Poe would start the story just here, and here the

veritable Poe-esque quality begins.

After debate within himself as to means, the nephew murders his uncle and

buries him in the thick wall of the chimney. The Italian laborer

witnesses the death-struggle through the window. While our consciences

are aching and the world crashes round us, he levies black-mail. Then

for due compensation the Italian becomes an armed sentinel. The boy fears

detection.

Yet the foolish youth thinks he will be happy. But every time he runs to

meet his sweetheart he is appalled by hallucinations over her shoulder.

The cadaverous ghost of the uncle is shown on the screen several times.

It is an appearance visible to the young man and the audience only. Later

the ghost is implied by the actions of the guilty one. We merely imagine

it. This is a piece of sound technique. We no more need a dray full of

ghosts than a dray full of jumping furniture.

The village in general has never suspected the nephew. Only two people

suspect him: the broken-hearted girl and an old friend of his father.

This gentleman puts a detective on the trail. (The detective is

impersonated by Ralph Lewis.) The gradual breakdown of the victim is

traced by dramatic degrees. This is the second case of the thing I have

argued as being generally impossible in a photoplay chronicle of a

private person, and which the considerations of chapter twelve indicate

as exceptional. We trace the innermost psychology of one special citizen

step by step to the crisis, and that path is actually the primary

interest of the story. The climax is the confession to the detective.

With this self-exposure the direct Poe-quality of the technique comes to

an end. Moreover, Poe would end the story here. But the Poe-dream is set

like a dark jewel in a gold ring, of which more anon.

Let us dwell upon the confession. The first stage of this

conscience-climax is reached by the dramatization of The Tell-tale Heart

reminiscence in the memory of the dreaming man. The episode makes a

singular application of the theories with which this chapter begins. For

furniture-in-motion we have the detective's pencil. For trappings and

inventions in motion we have his tapping shoe and the busy clock

pendulum. Because this scene is so powerful the photoplay is described in

this chapter rather than any other, though the application is more

spiritual than literal. The half-mad boy begins to divulge that he thinks

that the habitual ticking of the clock is satanically timed to the

beating of the dead man's heart. Here more unearthliness hovers round a

pendulum than any merely mechanical trick-movements could impart. Then

the merest commonplace of the detective tapping his pencil in the same

time--the boy trying in vain to ignore it--increases the strain, till the

audience has well-nigh the hallucinations of the victim. Then the bold

tapping of the detective's foot, who would do all his accusing without

saying a word, and the startling coincidence of the owl hoot-hooting

outside the window to the same measure, bring us close to the final

breakdown. These realistic material actors are as potent as the actual

apparitions of the dead man that preceded them. Those visions prepared

the mind to invest trifles with significance. The pencil and the pendulum

conducting themselves in an apparently everyday fashion, satisfy in a far

nobler way the thing in the cave-man attending the show that made him

take note in other centuries of the rope that began to hang the butcher,

the fire that began to burn the stick, and the stick that began to beat

the dog.

Now the play takes a higher demoniacal plane reminiscent of Poe's Bells.

The boy opens the door. He peers into the darkness. There he sees them.

They are the nearest to the sinister Poe quality of any illustrations I

recall that attempt it. "They are neither man nor woman, they are neither

brute nor human; they are ghouls." The scenes are designed with the

architectural dignity that the first part of this chapter has insisted

wizard trappings should take on. Now it is that the boy confesses and the

Poe story ends.

Then comes what the photoplay people call the punch. It is discussed at

the end of chapter nine. It is a kind of solar plexus blow to the

sensibilities, certainly by this time an unnecessary part of the film.

Usually every soul movement carefully built up to where the punch begins

is forgotten in the material smash or rescue. It is not so bad in this

case, but it is a too conventional proceeding for Griffith.

The boy flees interminably to a barn too far away. There is a siege by a

posse, led by the detective. It is veritable border warfare. The Italian

leads an unsuccessful rescue party. The unfortunate youth finally hangs

himself. The beautiful Annabel bursts through the siege a moment too

late; then, heart broken, kills herself. These things are carried out by

good technicians. But it would have been better to have had the suicide

with but a tiny part of the battle, and the story five reels long instead

of six. This physical turmoil is carried into the spiritual world only

by the psychic momentum acquired through the previous confession scene.

The one thing with intrinsic pictorial heart-power is the death of

Annabel by jumping off the sea cliff.

Then comes the awakening. To every one who sees the film for the first

time it is like the forgiveness of sins. The boy finds his uncle still

alive. In revulsion from himself, he takes the old man into his arms. The

uncle has already begun to be ashamed of his terrible words, and has

prayed for a contrite heart. The radiant Annabel is shown in the early

dawn rising and hurrying to her lover in spite of her pride. She will

bravely take back her last night's final word. She cannot live without

him. The uncle makes amends to the girl. The three are in the

inconsistent but very human mood of sweet forgiveness for love's sake,

that sometimes overtakes the bitterest of us after some crisis in our

days.

The happy pair are shown, walking through the hills. Thrown upon the

clouds for them are the moods of the poet-lover's heart. They look into

the woods and see his fancies of Spring, the things that he will some day

write. These pageants might be longer. They furnish the great climax.

They make a consistent parallel and contrast with the ghoul-visions that

end with the confession to the detective. They wipe that terror from the

mind. They do not represent Poe. The rabbits, the leopard, the fairies,

Cupid and Psyche in the clouds, and the little loves from the hollow

trees are contributions to the original poetry of the eye.

Finally, the central part of this production of the Avenging Conscience

is no dilution of Poe, but an adequate interpretation, a story he might

have written. Those who have the European respect for Poe's work will be

most apt to be satisfied with this section, including the photographic

texture which may be said to be an authentic equivalent of his prose. How

often Poe has been primly patronized for his majestic quality, the wizard

power which looms above all his method and subject-matter and furnishes

the only reason for its existence!

For Griffith to embroider this Poe Interpretation in the centre of a

fairly consistent fabric, and move on into a radiant climax of his own

that is in organic relation to the whole, is an achievement indeed. The

final criticism is that the play is derivative. It is not built from new

material in all its parts, as was the original story. One must be a

student of Poe to get its ultimate flavor. But in reading Poe's own

stories, one need not be a reader of any one special preceding writer to

get the strange and solemn exultation of that literary enchanter. He is

the quintessence of his own lonely soul.

Though the wizard element is paramount in the Poe episode of this film,

the appeal to the conscience is only secondary to this. It is keener than

in Poe, owing to the human elements before and after. The Chameleon

producer approximates in The Avenging Conscience the type of mystic

teacher, discussed in the twentieth chapter: "The Prophet-Wizard."

CHAPTER XI

ARCHITECTURE-IN-MOTION

This chapter is a superstructure upon the foundations of chapters five,

six, and seven.

I have said that it is a quality, not a defect, of the photoplays that

while the actors tend to become types and hieroglyphics and dolls, on the

other hand, dolls and hieroglyphics and mechanisms tend to become human.

By an extension of this principle, non-human tones, textures, lines, and

spaces take on a vitality almost like that of flesh and blood. It is

partly for this reason that some energy is hereby given to the matter of

reënforcing the idea that the people with the proper training to take the

higher photoplays in hand are not veteran managers of vaudeville

circuits, but rather painters, sculptors, and architects, preferably

those who are in the flush of their first reputation in these crafts. Let

us imagine the centres of the experimental drama, such as the Drama

League, the Universities, and the stage societies, calling in people of

these professions and starting photoplay competitions and enterprises.

Let the thesis be here emphasized that the architects, above all, are the

men to advance the work in the ultra-creative photoplay. "But few

architects," you say, "are creative, even in their own profession."

Let us begin with the point of view of the highly trained pedantic young

builder, the type that, in the past few years, has honored our landscape

with those paradoxical memorials of Abraham Lincoln the railsplitter,

memorials whose Ionic columns are straight from Paris. Pericles is the

real hero of such a man, not Lincoln. So let him for the time surrender

completely to that great Greek. He is worthy of a monument nobler than

any America has set up to any one. The final pictures may be taken in

front of buildings with which the architect or his favorite master has

already edified this republic, or if the war is over, before some

surviving old-world models. But whatever the method, let him study to

express at last the thing that moves within him as a creeping fire, which

Americans do not yet understand and the loss of which makes the classic

in our architecture a mere piling of elegant stones upon one another. In

the arrangement of crowds and flow of costuming and study of tableau

climaxes, let the architect bring an illusion of that delicate flowering,

that brilliant instant of time before the Peloponnesian war. It does not

seem impossible when one remembers the achievements of the author of

Cabiria in approximating Rome and Carthage.

Let the principal figure of the pageant be the virgin Athena, walking as

a presence visible only to us, yet among her own people, and robed and

armed and panoplied, the guardian of Pericles, appearing in those streets

that were herself. Let the architect show her as she came only in a

vision to Phidias, while the dramatic writers and mathematicians and

poets and philosophers go by. The crowds should be like pillars of

Athens, and she like a great pillar. The crowds should be like the

tossing waves of the Ionic Sea and Athena like the white ship upon the

waves. The audiences in the tragedies should be shown like wheat-fields

on the hill-sides, always stately yet blown by the wind, and Athena the

one sower and reaper. Crowds should descend the steps of the Acropolis,

nymphs and fauns and Olympians, carved as it were from the marble, yet

flowing like a white cataract down into the town, bearing with them

Athena, their soul. All this in the Photoplay of Pericles.

No civic or national incarnation since that time appeals to the poets

like the French worship of the Maid of Orleans. In Percy MacKaye's book,

The Present Hour, he says on the French attitude toward the war:--

"Half artist and half anchorite,

Part siren and part Socrates,

Her face--alluring fair, yet recondite--

Smiled through her salons and academies.

"Lightly she wore her double mask,

Till sudden, at war's kindling spark,

Her inmost self, in shining mail and casque,

Blazed to the world her single soul--Jeanne d'Arc!"

To make a more elaborate showing of what is meant by

architecture-in-motion, let us progress through the centuries and suppose

that the builder has this enthusiasm for France, that he is slowly

setting about to build a photoplay around the idea of the Maid.

First let him take the mural painting point of view. Bear in mind these

characteristics of that art: it is wall-painting that is an organic part

of the surface on which it appears: it is on the same lines as the

building and adapted to the colors and forms of the structure of which it

is a part.

The wall-splendors of America that are the most scattered about in

inexpensive copies are the decorations of the Boston Public Library. Note

the pillar-like quality of Sargent's prophets, the solemn dignity of

Abbey's Holy Grail series, the grand horizontals and perpendiculars of

the work of Puvis de Chavannes. The last is the orthodox mural painter of

the world, but the other two will serve the present purpose also. These

architectural paintings if they were dramatized, still retaining their

powerful lines, would be three exceedingly varied examples of what is

meant by architecture-in-motion. The visions that appear to Jeanne d'Arc

might be delineated in the mood of some one of these three painters. The

styles will not mix in the same episode.

A painter from old time we mention here, not because he was orthodox, but

because of his genius for the drawing of action, and because he covered

tremendous wall-spaces with Venetian tone and color, is Tintoretto. If

there is a mistrust that the mural painting standard will tend to destroy

the sense of action, Tintoretto will restore confidence in that regard.

As the Winged Victory represents flying in sculpture, so his work is the

extreme example of action with the brush. The Venetians called him the

furious painter. One must understand a man through his admirers. So

explore Ruskin's sayings on Tintoretto.

I have a dozen moving picture magazine clippings, which are in their

humble way first or second cousins of mural paintings. I will describe

but two, since the method of selection has already been amply indicated,

and the reader can find his own examples. For a Crowd Picture, for

instance, here is a scene at a masquerade ball. The glitter of the

costumes is an extension of the glitter of the candelabra overhead. The

people are as it were chandeliers, hung lower down. The lines of the

candelabra relate to the very ribbon streamers of the heroine, and the

massive wood-work is the big brother of the square-shouldered heroes in

the foreground, though one is a clown, one is a Russian Duke, and one is

Don Cæsar De Bazan. The building is the father of the people. These

relations can be kept in the court scenes of the production of Jeanne

d'Arc.

Here is a night picture from a war story in which the light is furnished

by two fires whose coals and brands are hidden by earth heaped in front.

The sentiment of tenting on the old camp-ground pervades the scene. The

far end of the line of those keeping bivouac disappears into the

distance, and the depths of the ranks behind them fade into the thick

shadows. The flag, a little above the line, catches the light. One great

tree overhead spreads its leafless half-lit arms through the gloom.

Behind all this is unmitigated black. The composition reminds one of a

Hiroshige study of midnight. These men are certainly a part of the

architecture of out of doors, and mysterious as the vault of Heaven. This

type of a camp-fire is possible in our Jeanne d'Arc.

These pictures, new and old, great and unknown, indicate some of the

standards of judgment and types of vision whereby our conception of the

play is to be evolved.

By what means shall we block it in? Our friend Tintoretto made use of

methods which are here described from one of his biographers, W. Roscoe

Osler: "They have been much enlarged upon in the different biographies as

the means whereby Tintoretto obtained his power. They constituted,

however, his habitual method of determining the effect and general

grouping of his compositions. He moulded with extreme care small models

of his figures in wax and clay. Titian and other painters as well as

Tintoretto employed this method as the means of determining the light and

shade of their design. Afterwards the later stages of their work were

painted from the life. But in Tintoretto's compositions the position and

arrangement of his figures as he began to dwell upon his great

conceptions were such as to render the study from the living model a

matter of great difficulty and at times an impossibility.... He ...

modelled his sculptures ... imparting to his models a far more complete

character than had been customary. These firmly moulded figures,

sometimes draped, sometimes free, he suspended in a box made of wood, or

of cardboard for his smaller work, in whose walls he made an aperture to

admit a lighted candle.... He sits moving the light about amidst his

assemblage of figures. Every aspect of sublimity of light suitable to a

Madonna surrounded with angels, or a heavenly choir, finds its miniature

response among the figures as the light moves.

"This was the method by which, in conjunction with a profound study of

outward nature, sympathy with the beauty of different types of face and

varieties of form, with the many changing hues of the Venetian scene,

with the great laws of color and a knowledge of literature and history,

he was able to shadow forth his great imagery of the intuitional world."

This method of Tintoretto suggests several possible derivatives in the

preparation of motion pictures. Let the painters and sculptors be now

called upon for painting models and sculptural models, while the

architect, already present, supplies the architectural models, all three

giving us visible scenarios to furnish the cardinal motives for the

acting, from which the amateur photoplay company of the university can

begin their interpretation.

For episodes that follow the precedent of the simple Action Film tiny wax

models of the figures, toned and costumed to the heart's delight, would

tell the high points of the story. Let them represent, perhaps, seven

crucial situations from the proposed photoplay. Let them be designed as

uniquely in their dresses as are the Russian dancers' dresses, by Léon

Bakst. Then to alternate with these, seven little paintings of episodes,

designed in blacks, whites, and grays, each representing some elusive

point in the intimate aspects of the story. Let there be a definite

system of space and texture relations retained throughout the set.

The models for the splendor scenes would, of course, be designed by the

architect, and these other scenes alternated with and subordinated to his

work. The effects which he would conceive would be on a grander scale.

The models for these might be mere extensions of the methods of those

others, but in the typical and highest let us imagine ourselves going

beyond Tintoretto in preparation.

Let the principal splendor moods and effects be indicated by actual

structures, such miniatures as architects offer along with their plans of

public buildings, but transfigured beyond that standard by the light of

inspiration combined with experimental candle-light, spot-light,

sunlight, or torchlight. They must not be conceived as stage arrangements

of wax figures with harmonious and fitting backgrounds, but as

backgrounds that clamor for utterance through the figures in front of

them, as Athens finds her soul in the Athena with which we began. These

three sorts of models, properly harmonized, should have with them a

written scenario constructed to indicate all the scenes between. The

scenario will lead up to these models for climaxes and hold them together

in the celestial hurdle-race.

We have in our museums some definite architectural suggestions as to the

style of these models. There are in Blackstone Hall in the Chicago Art

Institute several great Romanesque and Gothic portals, pillars, and

statues that might tell directly upon certain settings of our Jeanne

d'Arc pageant. They are from Notre Dame du Port at Clermont-Ferrand, the

Abbey church of St. Gilles, the Abbey of Charlieu, the Cathedral of

Amiens, Notre Dame at Paris, the Cathedral of Bordeaux, and the Cathedral

of Rheims. Perhaps the object I care for most in the Metropolitan Museum,

New York, is the complete model of Notre Dame, Paris, by M. Joly. Why was

this model of Notre Dame made with such exquisite pains? Certainly not as

a matter of mere information or cultivation. I venture the first right

these things have to be taken care of in museums is to stimulate to new

creative effort.

I went to look over the Chicago collection with a friend and poet Arthur

Davison Ficke. He said something to this effect: "The first thing I see

when I look at these fragments is the whole cathedral in all its original

proportions. Then I behold the mediæval marketplace hunched against the

building, burying the foundations, the life of man growing rank and

weedlike around it. Then I see the bishop coming from the door with his

impressive train. But a crusade may go by on the way to the Holy Land. A

crusade may come home battered and in rags. I get the sense of life, as

of a rapid in a river flowing round a great rock."

The cathedral stands for the age-long meditation of the ascetics in the

midst of battling tribes. This brooding architecture has a

blood-brotherhood with the meditating, saint-seeing Jeanne d'Arc.

There is in the Metropolitan Museum a large and famous canvas painted by

the dying Bastien-Lepage;--Jeanne Listening to the Voices. It is a

picture of which the technicians and the poets are equally enamored. The

tale of Jeanne d'Arc could be told, carrying this particular peasant girl

through the story. And for a piece of architectural pageantry akin to the

photoplay ballroom scene already described, yet far above it, there is

nothing more apt for our purpose than the painting by Boutet de Monvel

filling the space at the top of the stair at the Chicago Art Institute.

Though the Bastien-Lepage is a large painting, this is many times the

size. It shows Joan's visit at the court of Chinon. It is big without

being empty. It conveys a glitter which expresses one of the things that

is meant by the phrase: Splendor Photoplay. But for moving picture

purposes it is the Bastien-Lepage Joan that should appear here, set in

dramatic contrast to the Boutet de Monvel Court. Two valuable neighbors

to whom I have read this chapter suggest that the whole Boutet de Monvel

illustrated child's book about our heroine could be used on this grand

scale, for a background.

The Inness room at the Chicago Art Institute is another school for the

meditative producer, if he would evolve his tribute to France on American

soil. Though no photoplay tableau has yet approximated the brush of

Inness, why not attempt to lead Jeanne through an Inness landscape? The

Bastien-Lepage trees are in France. But here is an American world in

which one could see visions and hear voices. Where is the inspired camera

that will record something of what Inness beheld?

Thus much for the atmosphere and trappings of our Jeanne d'Arc scenario.

Where will we get our story? It should, of course, be written from the

ground up for this production, but as good Americans we would probably

find a mass of suggestions in Mark Twain's Joan of Arc.

Quite recently a moving picture company sent its photographers to

Springfield, Illinois, and produced a story with our city for a

background, using our social set for actors. Backed by the local

commercial association for whose benefit the thing was made, the

resources of the place were at the command of routine producers.

Springfield dressed its best, and acted with fair skill. The heroine was

a charming débutante, the hero the son of Governor Dunne. The Mine

Owner's Daughter was at best a mediocre photoplay. But this type of

social-artistic event, that happened once, may be attempted a hundred

times, each time slowly improving. Which brings us to something that is

in the end very far from The Mine Owner's Daughter. By what scenario

method the following film or series of films is to be produced I will not

venture to say. No doubt the way will come if once the dream has a

sufficient hold.

I have long maintained that my home-town should have a goddess like

Athena. The legend should be forthcoming. The producer, while not

employing armies, should use many actors and the tale be told with the

same power with which the productions of Judith of Bethulia and The

Battle Hymn of the Republic were evolved. While the following story may

not be the form which Springfield civic religion will ultimately take, it

is here recorded as a second cousin of the dream that I hope will some

day be set forth.

Late in an afternoon in October, a light is seen in the zenith like a

dancing star. The clouds form round it in the approximation of a circle.

Now there becomes visible a group of heads and shoulders of presences

that are looking down through the ring of clouds, watching the star, like

giant children that peep down a well. The jewel descends by four

sparkling chains, so far away they look to be dewy threads of silk. As

the bright mystery grows larger it appears to be approaching the treeless

hill of Washington Park, a hill that is surrounded by many wooded ridges.

The people come running from everywhere to watch. Here indeed will be a

Crowd Picture with as many phases as a stormy ocean. Flying machines

appear from the Fair Ground north of the city, and circle round and round

as they go up, trying to reach the slowly descending plummet.

\* \* \* \* \*

At last, while the throng cheers, one bird-man has attained it. He brings

back his message that the gift is an image, covered loosely with a

wrapping that seems to be of spun gold. Now the many aviators whirl round

the descending wonder, like seagulls playing about a ship's mast. Soon,

amid an awestruck throng, the image is on the hillock. The golden chains,

and the giant children holding them there above, have melted into threads

of mist and nothingness. The shining wrapping falls away. The people look

upon a seated statue of marble and gold. There is a branch of

wrought-gold maple leaves in her hands. Then beside the image is a

fluttering transfigured presence of which the image seems to be a

representation. This spirit, carrying a living maple branch in her hand,

says to the people: "Men and Women of Springfield, this carving is the

Lady Springfield sent by your Lord from Heaven. Build no canopy over her.

Let her ever be under the prairie-sky. Do her perpetual honor." The

messenger, who is the soul and voice of Springfield, fades into the

crowd, to emerge on great and terrible occasions.

This is only one story. Round this public event let the photoplay

romancer weave what tales of private fortune he will, narratives bound up

with the events of that October day, as the story of Nathan and Naomi is

woven into Judith of Bethulia.

Henceforth the city officers are secular priests of Our Lady Springfield.

Their failure in duty is a profanation of her name. A yearly pledge of

the first voters is taken in her presence like the old Athenian oath of

citizenship. The seasonal pageants march to the statue's feet, scattering

flowers. The important outdoor festivals are given on the edge of her

hill. All the roads lead to her footstool. Pilgrims come from the Seven

Seas to look upon her face that is carved by Invisible Powers. Moreover,

the living messenger that is her actual soul appears in dreams, or

visions of the open day, when the days are dark for the city, when her

patriots are irresolute, and her children are put to shame. This spirit

with the maple branch rallies them, leads them to victories like those

that were won of old in the name of Jeanne d'Arc or Pallas Athena

herself.

CHAPTER XII

THIRTY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PHOTOPLAYS AND THE STAGE

The stage is dependent upon three lines of tradition: first, that of

Greece and Rome that came down through the French. Second, the English

style, ripened from the miracle play and the Shakespearian stage. And

third, the Ibsen precedent from Norway, now so firmly established it is

classic. These methods are obscured by the commercialized dramas, but

they are behind them all. Let us discuss for illustration the Ibsen

tradition.

Ibsen is generally the vitriolic foe of pageant. He must be read aloud.

He stands for the spoken word, for the iron power of life that may be

concentrated in a phrase like the "All or nothing" of Brand. Though Peer

Gynt has its spectacular side, Ibsen generally comes in through the ear

alone. He can be acted in essentials from end to end with one table and

four chairs in any parlor. The alleged punch with which the "movie"

culminates has occurred three or ten years before the Ibsen curtain goes

up. At the close of every act of the dramas of this Norwegian one might

inscribe on the curtain "This the magnificent moving picture cannot

achieve." Likewise after every successful film described in this book

could be inscribed "This the trenchant Ibsen cannot do."

But a photoplay of Ghosts came to our town. The humor of the prospect was

the sort too deep for tears. My pastor and I reread the William Archer

translation that we might be alert for every antithesis. Together we went

to the services. Since then the film has been furiously denounced by the

literati. Floyd Dell's discriminating assault upon it is quoted in

Current Opinion, October, 1915, and Margaret Anderson prints a

denunciation of it in a recent number of The Little Review. But it is not

such a bad film in itself. It is not Ibsen. It should be advertised "The

Iniquities of the Fathers, an American drama of Eugenics, in a Palatial

Setting."

Henry Walthall as Alving, afterward as his son, shows the men much as

Ibsen outlines their characters. Of course the only way to be Ibsen is to

be so precisely. In the new plot all is open as the day. The world is

welcome, and generally present when the man or his son go forth to see

the elephant and hear the owl. Provincial hypocrisy is not implied. But

Ibsen can scarcely exist without an atmosphere of secrecy for his human

volcanoes to burst through in the end.

Mary Alden as Mrs. Alving shows in her intelligent and sensitive

countenance that she has a conception of that character. She does not

always have the chance to act the woman written in her face, the tart,

thinking, handsome creature that Ibsen prefers. Nigel Debrullier looks

the buttoned-up Pastor Manders, even to caricature. But the crawling,

bootlicking carpenter, Jacob Engstrand, is changed into a respectable,

guileless man with an income. And his wife and daughter are helpless,

conventional, upper-class rabbits. They do not remind one of the saucy

originals.

The original Ibsen drama is the result of mixing up five particular

characters through three acts. There is not a situation but would go to

pieces if one personality were altered. Here are two, sadly tampered

with: Engstrand and his daughter. Here is the mother, who is only

referred to in Ibsen. Here is the elder Alving, who disappears before

the original play starts. So the twenty great Ibsen situations in the

stage production are gone. One new crisis has an Ibsen irony and psychic

tension. The boy is taken with the dreaded intermittent pains in the back

of his head. He is painting the order that is to make him famous: the

King's portrait. While the room empties of people he writhes on the

floor. If this were all, it would have been one more moving picture

failure to put through a tragic scene. But the thing is reiterated in

tableau-symbol. He is looking sideways in terror. A hairy arm with

clutching demon claws comes thrusting in toward the back of his neck. He

writhes in deadly fear. The audience is appalled for him.

This visible clutch of heredity is the nearest equivalent that is offered

for the whispered refrain: "Ghosts," in the original masterpiece. This

hand should also be reiterated as a refrain, three times at least, before

this tableau, each time more dreadful and threatening. It appears but the

once, and has no chance to become a part of the accepted hieroglyphics of

the piece, as it should be, to realize its full power.

The father's previous sins have been acted out. The boy's consequent

struggle with the malady has been traced step by step, so the play should

end here. It would then be a rough equivalent of the Ibsen irony in a

contrary medium. Instead of that, it wanders on through paraphrases of

scraps of the play, sometimes literal, then quite alien, on to the

alleged motion picture punch, when the Doctor is the god from the

machine. There is no doctor on the stage in the original Ghosts. But

there is a physician in the Doll's House, a scientific, quietly moving

oracle, crisp, Spartan, sophisticated.

Is this photoplay physician such a one? The boy and his half-sister are

in their wedding-clothes in the big church. Pastor Manders is saying the

ceremony. The audience and building are indeed showy. The doctor charges

up the aisle at the moment people are told to speak or forever hold their

peace. He has tact. He simply breaks up the marriage right there. He does

not tell the guests why. But he takes the wedding party into the pastor's

study and there blazes at the bride and groom the long-suppressed truth

that they are brother and sister. Always an orotund man, he has the

Chautauqua manner indeed in this exigency.

He brings to one's mind the tearful book, much loved in childhood, Parted

at the Altar, or Why Was it Thus? And four able actors have the task of

telling the audience by facial expression only, that they have been

struck by moral lightning. They stand in a row, facing the people,

endeavoring to make the crisis of an alleged Ibsen play out of a crashing

melodrama.

The final death of young Alving is depicted with an approximation of

Ibsen's mood. But the only ways to suggest such feelings in silence, do

not convey them in full to the audience, but merely narrate them.

Wherever in Ghosts we have quiet voices that are like the slow drip of

hydrochloric acid, in the photoplay we have no quiet gestures that will

do trenchant work. Instead there are endless writhings and rushings

about, done with a deal of skill, but destructive of the last remnants of

Ibsen.

Up past the point of the clutching hand this film is the prime example

for study for the person who would know once for all the differences

between the photoplays and the stage dramas. Along with it might be

classed Mrs. Fiske's decorative moving picture Tess, in which there is

every determination to convey the original Mrs. Fiske illusion without

her voice and breathing presence. To people who know her well it is a

surprisingly good tintype of our beloved friend, for the family album.

The relentless Thomas Hardy is nowhere to be found. There are two moments

of dramatic life set among many of delicious pictorial quality: when Tess

baptizes her child, and when she smooths its little grave with a wavering

hand. But in the stage-version the dramatic poignancy begins with the

going up of the curtain, and lasts till it descends.

The prime example of complete failure is Sarah Bernhardt's Camille. It is

indeed a tintype of the consumptive heroine, with every group entire, and

taken at full length. Much space is occupied by the floor and the

overhead portions of the stage setting. It lasts as long as would the

spoken performance, and wherever there is a dialogue we must imagine said

conversation if we can. It might be compared to watching Camille from the

top gallery through smoked glass, with one's ears stopped with cotton.

It would be well for the beginning student to find some way to see the

first two of these three, or some other attempts to revamp the classic,

for instance Mrs. Fiske's painstaking reproduction of Vanity Fair,

bearing in mind the list of differences which this chapter now furnishes.

There is no denying that many stage managers who have taken up photoplays

are struggling with the Shakespearian French and Norwegian traditions in

the new medium. Many of the moving pictures discussed in this book are

rewritten stage dramas, and one, Judith of Bethulia, is a pronounced

success. But in order to be real photoplays the stage dramas must be

overhauled indeed, turned inside out and upside down. The successful

motion picture expresses itself through mechanical devices that are being

evolved every hour. Upon those many new bits of machinery are founded

novel methods of combination in another field of logic, not dramatic

logic, but tableau logic. But the old-line managers, taking up

photoplays, begin by making curious miniatures of stage presentations.

They try to have most things as before. Later they take on the moving

picture technique in a superficial way, but they, and the host of

talented actors in the prime of life and Broadway success, retain the

dramatic state of mind.

It is a principle of criticism, the world over, that the distinctions

between the arts must be clearly marked, even by those who afterwards mix

those arts. Take, for instance, the perpetual quarrel between the artists

and the half-educated about literary painting. Whistler fought that

battle in England. He tried to beat it into the head of John Bull that a

painting is one thing, a mere illustration for a story another thing. But

the novice is always stubborn. To him Hindu and Arabic are both foreign

languages, therefore just alike. The book illustration may be said to

come in through the ear, by reading the title aloud in imagination. And

the other is effective with no title at all. The scenario writer who will

study to the bottom of the matter in Whistler's Gentle Art of Making

Enemies will be equipped to welcome the distinction between the

old-fashioned stage, where the word rules, and the photoplay, where

splendor and ritual are all. It is not the same distinction, but a

kindred one.

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But let us consider the details of the matter. The stage has its exits

and entrances at the side and back. The standard photoplays have their

exits and entrances across the imaginary footlight line, even in the

most stirring mob and battle scenes. In Judith of Bethulia, though the

people seem to be coming from everywhere and going everywhere, when we

watch close, we see that the individuals enter at the near right-hand

corner and exit at the near left-hand corner, or enter at the near

left-hand corner and exit at the near right-hand corner.

Consider the devices whereby the stage actor holds the audience as he

goes out at the side and back. He sighs, gestures, howls, and strides.

With what studious preparation he ripens his quietness, if he goes out

that way. In the new contraption, the moving picture, the hero or villain

in exit strides past the nose of the camera, growing much bigger than a

human being, marching toward us as though he would step on our heads,

disappearing when largest. There is an explosive power about the mildest

motion picture exit, be the actor skilful or the reverse. The people left

in the scene are pygmies compared with each disappearing cyclops.

Likewise, when the actor enters again, his mechanical importance is

overwhelming. Therefore, for his first entrance the motion picture star

does not require the preparations that are made on the stage. The

support does not need to warm the spectators to the problem, then talk

them into surrender.

When the veteran stage-producer as a beginning photoplay producer tries

to give us a dialogue in the motion pictures, he makes it so dull no one

follows. He does not realize that his camera-born opportunity to magnify

persons and things instantly, to interweave them as actors on one level,

to alternate scenes at the slightest whim, are the big substitutes for

dialogue. By alternating scenes rapidly, flash after flash: cottage,

field, mountain-top, field, mountain-top, cottage, we have a conversation

between three places rather than three persons. By alternating the

picture of a man and the check he is forging, we have his soliloquy. When

two people talk to each other, it is by lifting and lowering objects

rather than their voices. The collector presents a bill: the adventurer

shows him the door. The boy plucks a rose: the girl accepts it. Moving

objects, not moving lips, make the words of the photoplay.

The old-fashioned stage producer, feeling he is getting nowhere, but

still helpless, puts the climax of some puzzling lip-debate, often the

climax of the whole film, as a sentence on the screen. Sentences should

be used to show changes of time and place and a few such elementary

matters before the episode is fully started. The climax of a motion

picture scene cannot be one word or fifty words. As has been discussed in

connection with Cabiria, the crisis must be an action sharper than any

that has gone before in organic union with a tableau more beautiful than

any that has preceded: the breaking of the tenth wave upon the sand. Such

remnants of pantomimic dialogue as remain in the main chase of the

photoplay film are but guide-posts in the race toward the goal. They

should not be elaborate toll-gates of plot, to be laboriously lifted and

lowered while the horses stop, mid-career.

The Venus of Milo, that comes directly to the soul through the silence,

requires no quotation from Keats to explain her, though Keats is the

equivalent in verse. Her setting in the great French Museum is enough. We

do not know that her name is Venus. She is thought by many to be another

statue of Victory. We may some day evolve scenarios that will require

nothing more than a title thrown upon the screen at the beginning, they

come to the eye so perfectly. This is not the only possible sort, but

the self-imposed limitation in certain films might give them a charm akin

to that of the Songs without Words.

The stage audience is a unit of three hundred or a thousand. In the

beginning of the first act there is much moving about and extra talk on

the part of the actors, to hold the crowd while it is settling down, and

enable the late-comer to be in his seat before the vital part of the

story starts. If he appears later, he is glared at. In the motion picture

art gallery, on the other hand, the audience is around two hundred, and

these are not a unit, and the only crime is to obstruct the line of

vision. The high-school girls can do a moderate amount of giggling

without breaking the spell. There is no spell, in the stage sense, to

break. People can climb over each other's knees to get in or out. If the

picture is political, they murmur war-cries to one another. If the film

suggests what some of the neighbors have been doing, they can regale each

other with the richest sewing society report.

The people in the motion picture audience total about two hundred, any

time, but they come in groups of two or three at no specified hour. The

newcomers do not, as in Vaudeville, make themselves part of a jocular

army. Strictly as individuals they judge the panorama. If they

disapprove, there is grumbling under their breath, but no hissing. I have

never heard an audience in a photoplay theatre clap its hands even when

the house was bursting with people. Yet they often see the film through

twice. When they have had enough, they stroll home. They manifest their

favorable verdict by sending some other member of the family to "see the

picture." If the people so delegated are likewise satisfied, they may ask

the man at the door if he is going to bring it back. That is the moving

picture kind of cheering.

It was a theatrical sin when the old-fashioned stage actor was rendered

unimportant by his scenery. But the motion picture actor is but the mood

of the mob or the landscape or the department store behind him, reduced

to a single hieroglyphic.

The stage-interior is large. The motion-picture interior is small. The

stage out-of-door scene is at best artificial and little and is generally

at rest, or its movement is tainted with artificiality. The waves dash,

but not dashingly, the water flows, but not flowingly. The motion

picture out-of-door scene is as big as the universe. And only pictures of

the Sahara are without magnificent motion.

The photoplay is as far from the stage on the one hand as it is from the

novel on the other. Its nearest analogy in literature is, perhaps, the

short story, or the lyric poem. The key-words of the stage are \_passion\_

and \_character\_; of the photoplay, \_splendor\_ and \_speed\_. The stage in

its greatest power deals with pity for some one especially unfortunate,

with whom we grow well acquainted; with some private revenge against some

particular despoiler; traces the beginning and culmination of joy based

on the gratification of some preference, or love for some person, whose

charm is all his own. The drama is concerned with the slow, inevitable

approaches to these intensities. On the other hand, the motion picture,

though often appearing to deal with these things, as a matter of fact

uses substitutes, many of which have been listed. But to review: its

first substitute is the excitement of speed-mania stretched on the

framework of an obvious plot. Or it deals with delicate informal anecdote

as the short story does, or fairy legerdemain, or patriotic banners, or

great surging mobs of the proletariat, or big scenic outlooks, or

miraculous beings made visible. And the further it gets from Euripides,

Ibsen, Shakespeare, or Molière--the more it becomes like a mural painting

from which flashes of lightning come--the more it realizes its genius.

Men like Gordon Craig and Granville Barker are almost wasting their

genius on the theatre. The Splendor Photoplays are the great outlet for

their type of imagination.

The typical stage performance is from two hours and a half upward. The

movie show generally lasts five reels, that is, an hour and forty

minutes. And it should last but three reels, that is, an hour. Edgar Poe

said there was no such thing as a long poem. There is certainly no such

thing as a long moving picture masterpiece.

The stage-production depends most largely upon the power of the actors,

the movie show upon the genius of the producer. The performers and the

dumb objects are on equal terms in his paint-buckets. The star-system is

bad for the stage because the minor parts are smothered and the

situations distorted to give the favorite an orbit. It is bad for the

motion pictures because it obscures the producer. While the leading actor

is entitled to his glory, as are all the actors, their mannerisms should

not overshadow the latest inspirations of the creator of the films.

The display of the name of the corporation is no substitute for giving

the glory to the producer. An artistic photoplay is not the result of a

military efficiency system. It is not a factory-made staple article, but

the product of the creative force of one soul, the flowering of a spirit

that has the habit of perpetually renewing itself.

Once I saw Mary Fuller in a classic. It was the life and death of Mary

Queen of Scots. Not only was the tense, fidgety, over-American Mary

Fuller transformed into a being who was a poppy and a tiger-lily and a

snow-queen and a rose, but she and her company, including Marc

Macdermott, radiated the old Scotch patriotism. They made the picture a

memorial. It reminded one of Maurice Hewlett's novel The Queen's Quair.

Evidently all the actors were fused by some noble managerial mood.

There can be no doubt that so able a group have evolved many good films

that have escaped me. But though I did go again and again, never did I

see them act with the same deliberation and distinction, and I laid the

difference to a change in the state of mind of the producer. Even

baseball players must have managers. A team cannot pick itself, or it

surely would. And this rule may apply to the stage. But by comparison to

motion picture performers, stage-actors are their own managers, for they

have an approximate notion of how they look in the eye of the audience,

which is but the human eye. They can hear and gauge their own voices.

They have the same ears as their listeners. But the picture producer

holds to his eyes the seven-leagued demon spy-glass called the

kinetoscope, as the audience will do later. The actors have not the least

notion of their appearance. Also the words in the motion picture are not

things whose force the actor can gauge. The book under the table is one

word, the dog behind the chair is another, the window curtain flying in

the breeze is another.

This chapter has implied that the performers were but paint on the

canvas. They are both paint and models. They are models in the sense that

the young Ellen Terry was the inspiration for Watts' Sir Galahad. They

resemble the persons in private life who furnish the basis for novels.

Dickens' mother was the original of Mrs. Nickleby. His father entered

into Wilkins Micawber. But these people are not perpetually thrust upon

us as Mr. and Mrs. Dickens. We are glad to find them in the Dickens

biographies. When the stories begin, it is Micawber and Mrs. Nickleby we

want, and the Charles Dickens atmosphere.

The photoplays of the future will be written from the foundations for the

films. The soundest actors, photographers, and producers will be those

who emphasize the points wherein the photoplay is unique. What is adapted

to complete expression in one art generally secures but half expression

in another. The supreme photoplay will give us things that have been but

half expressed in all other mediums allied to it.

Once this principle is grasped there is every reason why the same people

who have interested themselves in the advanced experimental drama should

take hold of the super-photoplay. The good citizens who can most easily

grasp the distinction should be there to perpetuate the higher welfare of

these institutions side by side. This parallel development should come,

if for no other reason, because the two arts are still roughly classed

together by the public. The elect cannot teach the public what the drama

is till they show them precisely what the photoplay is and is not. Just

as the university has departments of both History and English teaching in

amity, each one illuminating the work of the other, so these two forms

should live in each other's sight in fine and friendly contrast. At

present they are in blind and jealous warfare.

CHAPTER XIII

HIEROGLYPHICS

I have read this chapter to a pretty neighbor who has approved of the

preceding portions of the book, whose mind, therefore, I cannot but

respect. My neighbor classes this discussion of hieroglyphics as a

fanciful flight rather than a sober argument. I submit the verdict, then

struggle against it while you read.

The invention of the photoplay is as great a step as was the beginning of

picture-writing in the stone age. And the cave-men and women of our slums

seem to be the people most affected by this novelty, which is but an

expression of the old in that spiral of life which is going higher while

seeming to repeat the ancient phase.

There happens to be here on the table a book on Egypt by Rawlinson that I

used to thumb long ago. A footnote says: "The font of hieroglyphic type

used in this work contains eight hundred forms. But there are many other

forms beside." There is more light on Egypt in later works than in

Rawlinson, but the statement quoted will serve for our text.

Several complex methods of making visible scenarios are listed in this

work. Here is one that is mechanically simple. Let the man searching for

tableau combinations, even if he is of the practical commercial type,

prepare himself with eight hundred signs from Egypt. He can construct the

outlines of his scenarios by placing these little pictures in rows. It

may not be impractical to cut his hundreds of them from black cardboard

and shuffle them on his table every morning. The list will contain all

elementary and familiar things. Let him first give the most literal

meaning to the patterns. Then if he desires to rise above the commercial

field, let him turn over each cardboard, making the white undersurface

uppermost, and there write a more abstract meaning of the hieroglyphic,

one that has a fairly close relation to his way of thinking about the

primary form. From a proper balance of primary and secondary meanings

photoplays with souls could come. Not that he must needs become an expert

Egyptologist. Yet it would profit any photoplay man to study to think

like the Egyptians, the great picture-writing people. There is as much

reason for this course as for the Bible student's apprenticeship in

Hebrew.

Hieroglyphics can prove their worth, even without the help of an Egyptian

history. Humorous and startling analogies can be pointed out by opening

the Standard Dictionary, page fifty-nine. Look under the word \_alphabet\_.

There is the diagram of the evolution of inscriptions from the Egyptian

and Phoenician idea of what letters should be, on through the Greek and

Roman systems.

In the Egyptian row is the picture of a throne, [Illustration] that has

its equivalent in the Roman letter C. And a throne has as much place in

what might be called the moving-picture alphabet as the letter C has in

ours. There are sometimes three thrones in this small town of Springfield

in an evening. When you see one flashed on the screen, you know instantly

you are dealing with royalty or its implications. The last one I saw that

made any particular impression was when Mary Pickford acted in Such a

Little Queen. I only wished then that she had a more convincing throne.

Let us cut one out of black cardboard. Turning the cardboard over to

write on it the spirit-meaning, we inscribe some such phrase as The

Throne of Wisdom or The Throne of Liberty.

Here is the hieroglyphic of a hand: [Illustration] Roman equivalent, the

letter D. The human hand, magnified till it is as big as the whole

screen, is as useful in the moving picture alphabet as the letter D in

the printed alphabet. This hand may open a lock. It may pour poison in a

bottle. It may work a telegraph key. Then turning the white side of the

cardboard uppermost we inscribe something to the effect that this hand

may write on the wall, as at the feast of Belshazzar. Or it may represent

some such conception as Rodin's Hand of God, discussed in the

Sculpture-in-motion chapter.

Here is a duck: [Illustration] Roman equivalent, the letter Z. In the

motion pictures this bird, a somewhat z-shaped animal, suggests the

finality of Arcadian peace. It is the last and fittest ornament of the

mill-pond. Nothing very terrible can happen with a duck in the

foreground. There is no use turning it over. It would take Maeterlinck or

Swedenborg to find the mystic meaning of a duck. A duck looks to me like

a caricature of an alderman.

Here is a sieve: [Illustration] Roman equivalent, H. A sieve placed on

the kitchen-table, close-up, suggests domesticity, hired girl humors,

broad farce. We will expect the bride to make her first cake, or the

flour to begin to fly into the face of the intrusive ice-man. But, as to

the other side of the cardboard, the sieve has its place in higher

symbolism. It has been recorded by many a sage and singer that the

Almighty Powers sift men like wheat.

Here is the picture of a bowl: [Illustration] Roman equivalent, the

letter K. A bowl seen through the photoplay window on the cottage table

suggests Johnny's early supper of bread and milk. But as to the white

side of the cardboard, out of a bowl of kindred form Omar may take his

moonlit wine, or the higher gods may lift up the very wine of time to the

lips of men, as Swinburne sings in Atalanta in Calydon.

Here is a lioness: [Illustration] Roman equivalent, the letter L. The

lion or lioness creeps through the photoplay jungle to give the primary

picture-word of terror in this new universal alphabet. The present writer

has seen several valuable lions unmistakably shot and killed in the

motion pictures, and charged up to profit and loss, just as

steam-engines or houses are sometimes blown up or burned down. But of

late there is a disposition to use the trained lion (or lioness) for all

sorts of effects. No doubt the king and queen of beasts will become as

versatile and humbly useful as the letter L itself: that is, in the

commonplace routine photoplay. We turn the cardboard over and the lion

becomes a resource of glory and terror, a symbol of cruel persecutions or

deathless courage, sign of the zodiac that Poe in Ulalume calls the Lair

of the Lion.

Here is an owl: [Illustration] Roman equivalent, the letter M. The only

use of the owl I can record is to be inscribed on the white surface. In

The Avenging Conscience, as described in chapter ten, the murderer marks

the ticking of the heart of his victim while watching the swinging of the

pendulum of the old clock, then in watching the tapping of the

detective's pencil on the table, then in the tapping of his foot on the

floor. Finally a handsome owl is shown in the branches outside

hoot-hooting in time with the action of the pencil, and the pendulum, and

the dead man's heart.

But here is a wonderful thing, an actual picture that has lived on,

retaining its ancient imitative sound and form: [Illustration] the

letter N, the drawing of a wave, with the sound of a wave still within

it. One could well imagine the Nile in the winds of the dawn making such

a sound: "NN, N, N," lapping at the reeds upon its banks. Certainly the

glittering water scenes are a dominant part of moving picture Esperanto.

On the white reverse of the symbol, the spiritual meaning of water will

range from the metaphor of the purity of the dew to the sea as a sign of

infinity.

Here is a window with closed shutters: [Illustration] Latin equivalent,

the letter P. It is a reminder of the technical outline of this book. The

Intimate Photoplay, as I have said, is but a window where we open the

shutters and peep into some one's cottage. As to the soul meaning in the

opening or closing of the shutters, it ranges from Noah's opening the

hatches to send forth the dove, to the promises of blessing when the

Windows of Heaven should be opened.

Here is the picture of an angle: [Illustration] Latin equivalent, Q.

This is another reminder of the technical outline. The photoplay

interior, as has been reiterated, is small and three-cornered. Here the

heroine does her plotting, flirting, and primping, etc. I will leave the

spiritual interpretation of the angle to Emerson, Swedenborg, or

Maeterlinck.

Here is the picture of a mouth: [Illustration] Latin equivalent, the

letter R. If we turn from the dictionary to the monuments, we will see

that the Egyptians used all the human features in their pictures. We do

not separate the features as frequently as did that ancient people, but

we conventionalize them as often. Nine-tenths of the actors have faces as

fixed as the masks of the Greek chorus: they have the hero-mask with the

protruding chin, the villain-frown, the comedian-grin, the fixed

innocent-girl simper. These formulas have their place in the broad

effects of Crowd Pictures and in comedies. Then there are sudden

abandonments of the mask. Griffith's pupils, Henry Walthall and Blanche

Sweet, seem to me to be the greatest people in the photoplays: for one

reason their faces are as sensitive to changing emotion as the surfaces

of fair lakes in the wind. There is a passage in Enoch Arden where Annie,

impersonated by Lillian Gish, another pupil of Griffith, is waiting in

suspense for the return of her husband. She changes from lips of waiting,

with a touch of apprehension, to a delighted laugh of welcome, her head

making a half-turn toward the door. The audience is so moved by the

beauty of the slow change they do not know whether her face is the size

of the screen or the size of a postage-stamp. As a matter of fact it

fills the whole end of the theatre.

Thus much as to faces that are not hieroglyphics. Yet fixed facial

hieroglyphics have many legitimate uses. For instance in The Avenging

Conscience, as the play works toward the climax and the guilty man is

breaking down, the eye of the detective is thrown on the screen with all

else hid in shadow, a watching, relentless eye. And this suggests a

special talisman of the old Egyptians, a sign called the Eyes of Horus,

meaning the all-beholding sun.

Here is the picture of an inundated garden: [Illustration] Latin

equivalent, the letter S. In our photoplays the garden is an ever-present

resource, and at an instant's necessity suggests the glory of nature, or

sweet privacy, and kindred things. The Egyptian lotus garden had to be

inundated to be a success. Ours needs but the hired man with the hose,

who sometimes supplies broad comedy. But we turn over the cardboard, for

the deeper meaning of this hieroglyphic. Our gardens can, as of old, run

the solemn range from those of Babylon to those of the Resurrection.

If there is one sceptic left as to the hieroglyphic significance of the

photoplay, let him now be discomfited by page fifty-nine, Standard

Dictionary. The last letter in this list is a lasso: [Illustration]. The

equivalent of the lasso in the Roman alphabet is the letter T. The crude

and facetious would be apt to suggest that the equivalent of the lasso in

the photoplay is the word trouble, possibly for the hero, but probably

for the villain. We turn to the other side of the symbol. The noose may

stand for solemn judgment and the hangman, it may also symbolize the

snare of the fowler, temptation. Then there is the spider web, close kin,

representing the cruelty of evolution, in The Avenging Conscience.

This list is based on the rows of hieroglyphics most readily at hand. Any

volume on Egypt, such as one of those by Maspero, has a multitude of

suggestions for the man inclined to the idea.

If this system of pasteboard scenarios is taken literally, I would like

to suggest as a beginning rule that in a play based on twenty

hieroglyphics, nineteen should be the black realistic signs with obvious

meanings, and only one of them white and inexplicably strange. It has

been proclaimed further back in this treatise that there is only one

witch in every wood. And to illustrate further, there is but one scarlet

letter in Hawthorne's story of that name, but one wine-cup in all of

Omar, one Bluebird in Maeterlinck's play.

I do not insist that the prospective author-producer adopt the

hieroglyphic method as a routine, if he but consents in his meditative

hours to the point of view that it implies.

The more fastidious photoplay audience that uses the hieroglyphic

hypothesis in analyzing the film before it, will acquire a new tolerance

and understanding of the avalanche of photoplay conceptions, and find a

promise of beauty in what have been properly classed as mediocre and

stereotyped productions.

The nineteenth chapter has a discourse on the Book of the Dead. As a

connecting link with that chapter the reader will note that one of the

marked things about the Egyptian wall-paintings, pictures on the

mummy-case wrappings, papyrus inscriptions, and architectural

conceptions, is that they are but enlarged hieroglyphics, while the

hieroglyphics are but reduced fac-similes of these. So when a few

characters are once understood, the highly colored Egyptian

wall-paintings of the same things are understood. The hieroglyphic of

Osiris is enlarged when they desire to represent him in state. The

hieroglyphic of the soul as a human-headed hawk may be in a line of

writing no taller than the capitals of this book. Immediately above may

be a big painting of the soul, the same hawk placed with the proper care

with reference to its composition on the wall, a pure decoration.

The transition from reduction to enlargement and back again is as rapid

in Egypt as in the photoplay. It follows, among other things, that in

Egypt, as in China and Japan, literary style and mere penmanship and

brushwork are to be conceived as inseparable. No doubt the Egyptian

scholar was the man who could not only compose a poem, but write it down

with a brush. Talent for poetry, deftness in inscribing, and skill in

mural painting were probably gifts of the same person. The photoplay goes

back to this primitive union in styles.

The stages from hieroglyphics through Phoenician and Greek letters to

ours, are of no particular interest here. But the fact that

hieroglyphics can evolve is important. Let us hope that our new

picture-alphabets can take on richness and significance, as time goes on,

without losing their literal values. They may develop into something more

all-pervading, yet more highly wrought, than any written speech.

Languages when they evolve produce stylists, and we will some day

distinguish the different photoplay masters as we now delight in the

separate tang of O. Henry and Mark Twain and Howells. When these are

ancient times, we will have scholars and critics learned in the flavors

of early moving picture traditions with their histories of movements and

schools, their grammars, and anthologies.

Now some words as to the Anglo-Saxon language and its relation to

pictures. In England and America our plastic arts are but beginning.

Yesterday we were preeminently a word-civilization. England built her

mediæval cathedrals, but they left no legacy among craftsmen. Art had to

lean on imported favorites like Van Dyck till the days of Sir Joshua

Reynolds and the founding of the Royal Society. Consider that the friends

of Reynolds were of the circle of Doctor Johnson. Literary tradition had

grown old. Then England had her beginning of landscape gardening. Later

she saw the rise of Constable, Ruskin, and Turner, and their iridescent

successors. Still to-day in England the average leading citizen matches

word against word,--using them as algebraic formulas,--rather than

picture against picture, when he arranges his thoughts under the eaves of

his mind. To step into the Art world is to step out of the beaten path of

British dreams. Shakespeare is still king, not Rossetti, nor yet

Christopher Wren. Moreover, it was the book-reading colonial who led our

rebellion against the very royalty that founded the Academy. The

public-speaking American wrote the Declaration of Independence. It was

not the work of the painting or cathedral-building Englishman. We were

led by Patrick Henry, the orator, Benjamin Franklin, the printer.

The more characteristic America became, the less she had to do with the

plastic arts. The emigrant-train carried many a Bible and Dictionary

packed in beside the guns and axes. It carried the Elizabethan writers,

Æsop's Fables, Blackstone's Commentaries, the revised statutes of

Indiana, Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Parson Weems' Life of Washington.

But, obviously, there was no place for the Elgin marbles. Giotto's tower

could not be loaded in with the dried apples and the seedcorn.

Yesterday morning, though our arts were growing every day, we were still

more of a word-civilization than the English. Our architectural,

painting, and sculptural history is concerned with men now living, or

their immediate predecessors. And even such work as we have is pretty

largely a cult by the wealthy. This is the more a cause for misgiving

because, in a democracy, the arts, like the political parties, are not

founded till they have touched the county chairman, the ward leader, the

individual voter. The museums in a democracy should go as far as the

public libraries. Every town has its library. There are not twenty Art

museums in the land.

Here then comes the romance of the photoplay. A tribe that has thought in

words since the days that it worshipped Thor and told legends of the

cunning of the tongue of Loki, suddenly begins to think in pictures. The

leaders of the people, and of culture, scarcely know the photoplay

exists. But in the remote villages the players mentioned in this work are

as well known and as fairly understood in their general psychology as any

candidates for president bearing political messages. There is many a

babe in the proletariat not over four years old who has received more

pictures into its eye than it has had words enter its ear. The young

couple go with their first-born and it sits gaping on its mother's knee.

Often the images are violent and unseemly, a chaos of rawness and squirm,

but scattered through the experience is a delineation of the world. Pekin

and China, Harvard and Massachusetts, Portland and Oregon, Benares and

India, become imaginary playgrounds. By the time the hopeful has reached

its geography lesson in the public school it has travelled indeed. Almost

any word that means a picture in the text of the geography or history or

third reader is apt to be translated unconsciously into moving picture

terms. In the next decade, simply from the development of the average

eye, cities akin to the beginnings of Florence will be born among us as

surely as Chaucer came, upon the first ripening of the English tongue,

after Cædmon and Beowulf. Sculptors, painters, architects, and park

gardeners who now have their followers by the hundreds will have admirers

by the hundred thousand. The voters will respond to the aspirations of

these artists as the back-woodsmen followed Poor Richard's Almanac, or

the trappers in their coon-skin caps were fired to patriotism by Patrick

Henry.

\* \* \* \* \*

This ends the second section of the book. Were it not for the passage on

The Battle Hymn of the Republic, the chapters thus far might be entitled:

"an open letter to Griffith and the producers and actors he has trained."

Contrary to my prudent inclinations, he is the star of the piece, except

on one page where he is the villain. This stardom came about slowly. In

making the final revision, looking up the producers of the important

reels, especially those from the beginning of the photoplay business,

numbers of times the photoplays have turned out to be the work of this

former leading man of Nance O'Neil.

No one can pretend to a full knowledge of the films. They come faster

than rain in April. It would take a man every day of the year, working

day and night, to see all that come to Springfield. But in the photoplay

world, as I understand it, D.W. Griffith is the king-figure.

So far, in this work I have endeavored to keep to the established dogmas

of Art. I hope that the main lines of the argument will appeal to the

people who have classified and related the beautiful works of man that

have preceded the moving pictures. Let the reader make his own essay on

the subject for the local papers and send the clipping to me. The next

photoplay book that may appear from this hand may be construed to meet

his point of view. It will try to agree or disagree in clear language.

Many a controversy must come before a method of criticism is fully

established.

\* \* \* \* \*

BOOK III

MORE PERSONAL SPECULATIONS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS NOT BROUGHT

FORWARD SO DOGMATICALLY

At this point I climb from the oracular platform and go down through my

own chosen underbrush for haphazard adventure. I renounce the platform.

Whatever it may be that I find, pawpaw or may-apple or spray of willow,

if you do not want it, throw it over the edge of the hill, without ado,

to the birds or squirrels or kine, and do not include it in your

controversial discourse. It is not a part of the dogmatic system of

photoplay criticism.

CHAPTER XIV

THE ORCHESTRA, CONVERSATION, AND THE CENSORSHIP

Whenever the photoplay is mixed in the same programme with vaudeville,

the moving picture part of the show suffers. The film is rushed through,

it is battered, it flickers more than commonly, it is a little out of

focus. The house is not built for it. The owner of the place cannot

manage an art gallery with a circus on his hands. It takes more brains

than one man possesses to pick good vaudeville talent and bring good

films to the town at the same time. The best motion picture theatres are

built for photoplays alone. But they make one mistake.

Almost every motion picture theatre has its orchestra, pianist, or

mechanical piano. The perfect photoplay gathering-place would have no

sound but the hum of the conversing audience. If this is too ruthless a

theory, let the music be played at the intervals between programmes,

while the advertisements are being flung upon the screen, the lights are

on, and the people coming in.

If there is something more to be done on the part of the producer to make

the film a telling one, let it be a deeper study of the pictorial

arrangement, with the tones more carefully balanced, the sculpture

vitalized. This is certainly better than to have a raw thing bullied

through with a music-programme, furnished to bridge the weak places in

the construction. A picture should not be released till it is completely

thought out. A producer with this goal before him will not have the time

or brains to spare to write music that is as closely and delicately

related to the action as the action is to the background. And unless the

tunes are at one with the scheme they are an intrusion. Perhaps the

moving picture maker has a twin brother almost as able in music, who

possesses the faculty of subordinating his creations to the work of his

more brilliant coadjutor. How are they going to make a practical national

distribution of the accompaniment? In the metropolitan theatres Cabiria

carried its own musicians and programme with a rich if feverish result.

In The Birth of a Nation, music was used that approached imitative sound

devices. Also the orchestra produced a substitute for old-fashioned stage

suspense by long drawn-out syncopations. The finer photoplay values were

thrown askew. Perhaps these two performances could be successfully

vindicated in musical policy. But such a defence proves nothing in regard

to the typical film. Imagine either of these put on in Rochester,

Illinois, population one hundred souls. The reels run through as well as

on Broadway or Michigan Avenue, but the local orchestra cannot play the

music furnished in annotated sheets as skilfully as the local operator

can turn the reel (or watch the motor turn it!).

The big social fact about the moving picture is that it is scattered like

the newspaper. Any normal accompaniment thereof must likewise be adapted

to being distributed everywhere. The present writer has seen, here in his

home place, population sixty thousand, all the films discussed in this

book but Cabiria and The Birth of a Nation. It is a photoplay paradise,

the spoken theatre is practically banished. Unfortunately the local

moving picture managers think it necessary to have orchestras. The

musicians they can secure make tunes that are most squalid and horrible.

With fathomless imbecility, hoochey koochey strains are on the air while

heroes are dying. The Miserere is in our ears when the lovers are

reconciled. Ragtime is imposed upon us while the old mother prays for her

lost boy. Sometimes the musician with this variety of sympathy abandons

himself to thrilling improvisation.

My thoughts on this subject began to take form several years ago, when

the film this book has much praised, The Battle Hymn of the Republic,

came to town. The proprietor of one theatre put in front of his shop a

twenty-foot sign "The Battle Hymn of the Republic, by Harriet Beecher

Stowe, brought back by special request." He had probably read Julia Ward

Howe's name on the film forty times before the sign went up. His

assistant, I presume his daughter, played "In the Shade of the Old Apple

Tree" hour after hour, while the great film was rolling by. Many old

soldiers were coming to see it. I asked the assistant why she did not

play and sing the Battle Hymn. She said they "just couldn't find it." Are

the distributors willing to send out a musician with each film?

Many of the Springfield producers are quite able and enterprising, but

to ask for music with photoplays is like asking the man at the news stand

to write an editorial while he sells you the paper. The picture with a

great orchestra in a far-off metropolitan Opera House, may be classed by

fanatic partisanship with Grand Opera. But few can get at it. It has

nothing to do with Democracy.

Of course people with a mechanical imagination, and no other kind, begin

to suggest the talking moving picture at this point, or the phonograph or

the mechanical piano. Let us discuss the talking moving picture only.

That disposes of the others.

If the talking moving picture becomes a reliable mirror of the human

voice and frame, it will be the basis of such a separate art that none of

the photoplay precedents will apply. It will be the \_phonoplay\_, not the

photoplay. It will be unpleasant for a long time. This book is a struggle

against the non-humanness of the undisciplined photograph. Any film is

correct, realistic, forceful, many times before it is charming. The

actual physical storage-battery of the actor is many hundred miles away.

As a substitute, the human quality must come in the marks of the presence

of the producer. The entire painting must have his brushwork. If we

compare it to a love-letter it must be in his handwriting rather than

worked on a typewriter. If he puts his autograph into the film, it is

after a fierce struggle with the uncanny scientific quality of the

camera's work. His genius and that of the whole company of actors is

exhausted in the task.

The raw phonograph is likewise unmagnetic. Would you set upon the

shoulders of the troupe of actors the additional responsibility of

putting an adequate substitute for human magnetism in the phonographic

disk? The voice that does not actually bleed, that contains no

heart-beats, fails to meet the emergency. Few people have wept over a

phonographic selection from Tristan and Isolde. They are moved at the

actual performance. Why? Look at the opera singer after the last act. His

eyes are burning. His face is flushed. His pulse is high. Reaching his

hotel room, he is far more weary than if he had sung the opera alone

there. He has given out of his brain-fire and blood-beat the same

magnetism that leads men in battle. To speak of it in the crassest terms,

this resource brings him a hundred times more salary than another man

with just as good a voice can command. The output that leaves him

drained at the end of the show cannot be stored in the phonograph

machine. That device is as good in the morning as at noon. It ticks like

a clock.

To perfect the talking moving picture, human magnetism must be put into

the mirror-screen and into the clock. Not only is this imperative, but

clock and mirror must be harmonized, one gently subordinated to the

other. Both cannot rule. In the present talking moving picture the more

highly developed photoplay is dragged by the hair in a dead faint, in the

wake of the screaming savage phonograph. No talking machine on the market

reproduces conversation clearly unless it be elaborately articulated in

unnatural tones with a stiff interval between each question and answer.

Real dialogue goes to ruin.

The talking moving picture came to our town. We were given for one show a

line of minstrels facing the audience, with the interlocutor repeating

his immemorial question, and the end-man giving the immemorial answer.

Then came a scene in a blacksmith shop where certain well-differentiated

rackets were carried over the footlights. No one heard the blacksmith,

unless he stopped to shout straight at us.

The \_phonoplay\_ can quite possibly reach some divine goal, but it will be

after the speaking powers of the phonograph excel the photographing

powers of the reel, and then the pictures will be brought in as comment

and ornament to the speech. The pictures will be held back by the

phonograph as long as it is more limited in its range. The pictures are

at present freer and more versatile without it. If the \_phonoplay\_ is

ever established, since it will double the machinery, it must needs

double its prices. It will be the illustrated phonograph, in a more

expensive theatre.

The orchestra is in part a blundering effort by the local manager to

supply the human-magnetic element which he feels lacking in the pictures

on which the producer has not left his autograph. But there is a much

more economic and magnetic accompaniment, the before-mentioned buzzing

commentary of the audience. There will be some people who disturb the

neighbors in front, but the average crowd has developed its manners in

this particular, and when the orchestra is silent, murmurs like a

pleasant brook.

Local manager, why not an advertising campaign in your town that says:

"Beginning Monday and henceforth, ours shall be known as the

Conversational Theatre"? At the door let each person be handed the

following card:--

"You are encouraged to discuss the picture with the friend who

accompanies you to this place. Conversation, of course, must be

sufficiently subdued not to disturb the stranger who did not come with

you to the theatre. If you are so disposed, consider your answers to

these questions: What play or part of a play given in this theatre did

you like most to-day? What the least? What is the best picture you have

ever seen anywhere? What pictures, seen here this month, shall we bring

back?" Here give a list of the recent productions, with squares to mark

by the Australian ballot system: approved or disapproved. The cards with

their answers could be slipped into the ballot-box at the door as the

crowd goes out.

It may be these questions are for the exceptional audiences in residence

districts. Perhaps with most crowds the last interrogation is the only

one worth while. But by gathering habitually the answers to that alone

the place would get the drift of its public, realize its genius, and

become an art-gallery, the people bestowing the blue ribbons. The

photoplay theatres have coupon contests and balloting already: the most

popular young lady, money prizes to the best vote-getter in the audience,

etc. Why not ballot on the matter in hand?

If the cards are sent out by the big producers, a referendum could be

secured that would be invaluable in arguing down to rigid censorship, and

enable them to make their own private censorship more intelligent.

Various styles of experimental cards could be tried till the vital one is

found.

There is growing up in this country a clan of half-formed moving picture

critics. The present stage of their work is indicated by the eloquent

notice describing Your Girl and Mine, in the chapter on "Progress and

Endowment." The metropolitan papers give their photoplay reporters as

much space as the theatrical critics. Here in my home town the twelve

moving picture places take one half a page of chaotic notices daily. The

country is being badly led by professional photoplay news-writers who do

not know where they are going, but are on the way.

But they aptly describe the habitual attendants as moving picture fans.

The fan at the photoplay, as at the baseball grounds, is neither a

low-brow nor a high-brow. He is an enthusiast who is as stirred by the

charge of the photographic cavalry as by the home runs that he watches

from the bleachers. In both places he has the privilege of comment while

the game goes on. In the photoplay theatre it is not so vociferous, but

as keenly felt. Each person roots by himself. He has his own judgment,

and roasts the umpire: who is the keeper of the local theatre: or the

producer, as the case may be. If these opinions of the fan can be

collected and classified, an informal censorship is at once established.

The photoplay reporters can then take the enthusiasts in hand and lead

them to a realization of the finer points in awarding praise and blame.

Even the sporting pages have their expert opinions with due influence on

the betting odds. Out of the work of the photoplay reporters let a

superstructure of art criticism be reared in periodicals like The

Century, Harper's, Scribner's, The Atlantic, The Craftsman, and the

architectural magazines. These are our natural custodians of art. They

should reproduce the most exquisite tableaus, and be as fastidious in

their selection of them as they are in the current examples of the other

arts. Let them spread the news when photoplays keyed to the Rembrandt

mood arrive. The reporters for the newspapers should get their ideas and

refreshment in such places as the Ryerson Art Library of the Chicago Art

Institute. They should begin with such books as Richard Muther's History

of Modern Painting, John C. Van Dyke's Art for Art's Sake, Marquand and

Frothingham's History of Sculpture, A.D.F. Hamlin's History of

Architecture. They should take the business of guidance in this new world

as a sacred trust, knowing they have the power to influence an enormous

democracy.

The moving picture journals and the literati are in straits over the

censorship question. The literati side with the managers, on the

principles of free speech and a free press. But few of the æsthetically

super-wise are persistent fans. They rave for freedom, but are not, as a

general thing, living back in the home town. They do not face the

exigency of having their summer and winter amusement spoiled day after

day.

Extremists among the pious are railing against the moving pictures as

once they railed against novels. They have no notion that this

institution is penetrating to the last backwoods of our civilization,

where its presence is as hard to prevent as the rain. But some of us are

destined to a reaction, almost as strong as the obsession. The

religionists will think they lead it. They will be self-deceived. Moving

picture nausea is already taking hold of numberless people, even when

they are in the purely pagan mood. Forced by their limited purses, their

inability to buy a Ford car, and the like, they go in their loneliness to

film after film till the whole world seems to turn on a reel. When they

are again at home, they see in the dark an imaginary screen with

tremendous pictures, whirling by at a horribly accelerated pace, a

photoplay delirium tremens. Faster and faster the reel turns in the back

of their heads. When the moving picture sea-sickness is upon one, nothing

satisfies but the quietest out of doors, the companionship of the

gentlest of real people. The non-movie-life has charms such as one never

before conceived. The worn citizen feels that the cranks and legislators

can do what they please to the producers. He is through with them.

The moving picture business men do not realize that they have to face

these nervous conditions in their erstwhile friends. They flatter

themselves they are being pursued by some reincarnations of Anthony

Comstock. There are several reasons why photoplay corporations are

callous, along with the sufficient one that they are corporations.

First, they are engaged in a financial orgy. Fortunes are being found by

actors and managers faster than they were dug up in 1849 and 1850 in

California. Forty-niner lawlessness of soul prevails. They talk each

other into a lordly state of mind. All is dash and experiment. Look at

the advertisements in the leading moving picture magazines. They are like

the praise of oil stock or Peruna. They bawl about films founded upon

little classics. They howl about plots that are ostensibly from the

soberest of novels, whose authors they blasphemously invoke. They boo and

blow about twisted, callous scenarios that are bad imitations of the

world's most beloved lyrics.

The producers do not realize the mass effect of the output of the

business. It appears to many as a sea of unharnessed photography: sloppy

conceptions set forth with sharp edges and irrelevant realism. The

jumping, twitching, cold-blooded devices, day after day, create the

aforesaid sea-sickness, that has nothing to do with the questionable

subject. When on top of this we come to the picture that is actually

insulting, we are up in arms indeed. It is supplied by a corporation

magnate removed from his audience in location, fortune, interest, and

mood: an absentee landlord. I was trying to convert a talented and noble

friend to the films. The first time we went there was a prize-fight

between a black and a white man, not advertised, used for a filler. I

said it was queer, and would not happen again. The next time my noble

friend was persuaded to go, there was a cock-fight, incidental to a Cuban

romance. The third visit we beheld a lady who was dying for five minutes,

rolling her eyes about in a way that was fearful to see. The convert was

not made.

It is too easy to produce an unprovoked murder, an inexplicable arson,

neither led up to nor followed by the ordinary human history of such

acts, and therefore as arbitrary as the deeds of idiots or the insane. A

villainous hate, an alleged love, a violent death, are flashed at us,

without being in any sort of tableau logic. The public is ceaselessly

played upon by tactless devices. Therefore it howls, just as children in

the nursery do when the awkward governess tries the very thing the

diplomatic governess, in reasonable time, may bring about.

The producer has the man in the audience who cares for the art peculiarly

at his mercy. Compare him with the person who wants to read a magazine

for an evening. He can look over all the periodicals in the local

book-store in fifteen minutes. He can select the one he wants, take this

bit of printed matter home, go through the contents, find the three

articles he prefers, get an evening of reading out of them, and be happy.

Every day as many photoplays come to our town as magazines come to the

book-store in a week or a month. There are good ones and bad ones buried

in the list. There is no way to sample the films. One has to wait through

the first third of a reel before he has an idea of the merits of a

production, his ten cents is spent, and much of his time is gone. It

would take five hours at least to find the best film in our town for one

day. Meanwhile, nibbling and sampling, the seeker would run such a

gantlet of plot and dash and chase that his eyes and patience would be

exhausted. Recently there returned to the city for a day one of

Griffith's best Biographs, The Last Drop of Water. It was good to see

again. In order to watch this one reel twice I had to wait through five

others of unutterable miscellany.

Since the producers and theatre-managers have us at their mercy,

they are under every obligation to consider our delicate

susceptibilities--granting the proposition that in an ideal world we will

have no legal censorship. As to what to do in this actual nation, let the

reader follow what John Collier has recently written in The Survey.

Collier was the leading force in founding the National Board of

Censorship. As a member of that volunteer extra-legal board which is

independent and high minded, yet accepted by the leading picture

companies, he is able to discuss legislation in a manner which the

present writer cannot hope to match. Read John Collier. But I wish to

suggest that the ideal censorship is that to which the daily press is

subject, the elastic hand of public opinion, if the photoplay can be

brought as near to newspaper conditions in this matter as it is in some

others.

How does public opinion grip the journalist? The editor has a constant

report from his constituency. A popular scoop sells an extra at once. An

attack on the wrong idol cancels fifty subscriptions. People come to the

office to do it, and say why. If there is a piece of real news on the

second page, and fifty letters come in about it that night, next month

when that character of news reappears it gets the front page. Some human

peculiarities are not mentioned, some phrases not used. The total

attribute of the blue-pencil man is diplomacy. But while the motion

pictures come out every day, they get their discipline months afterwards

in the legislation that insists on everything but tact. A tentative

substitute for the letters that come to the editor, the personal call and

cancelled subscription, and the rest, is the system of balloting on the

picture, especially the answer to the question, "What picture seen here

this month, or this week, shall we bring back?" Experience will teach how

to put the queries. By the same system the public might dictate its own

cut-outs. Let us have a democracy and a photoplay business working in

daily rhythm.

CHAPTER XV

THE SUBSTITUTE FOR THE SALOON

This is a special commentary on chapter five, The Picture of Crowd

Splendor. It refers as well to every other type of moving picture that

gets into the slum. But the masses have an extraordinary affinity for the

Crowd Photoplay. As has been said before, the mob comes nightly to behold

its natural face in the glass. Politicians on the platform have swayed

the mass below them. But now, to speak in an Irish way, the crowd takes

the platform, and looking down, sees itself swaying. The slums are an

astonishing assembly of cave-men crawling out of their shelters to

exhibit for the first time in history a common interest on a tremendous

scale in an art form. Below the cliff caves were bar rooms in endless

lines. There are almost as many bar rooms to-day, yet this new thing

breaks the lines as nothing else ever did. Often when a moving picture

house is set up, the saloon on the right hand or the left declares

bankruptcy.

Why do men prefer the photoplay to the drinking place? For no pious

reason, surely. Now they have fire pouring into their eyes instead of

into their bellies. Blood is drawn from the guts to the brain. Though the

picture be the veriest mess, the light and movement cause the beholder to

do a little reptilian thinking. After a day's work a street-sweeper

enters the place, heavy as King Log. A ditch-digger goes in, sick and

surly. It is the state of the body when many men drink themselves into

insensibility. But here the light is as strong in the eye as whiskey in

the throat. Along with the flare, shadow, and mystery, they face the

existence of people, places, costumes, utterly novel. Immigrants are

prodded by these swords of darkness and light to guess at the meaning of

the catch-phrases and headlines that punctuate the play. They strain to

hear their neighbors whisper or spell them out.

The photoplays have done something to reunite the lower-class families.

No longer is the fire-escape the only summer resort for big and little

folks. Here is more fancy and whim than ever before blessed a hot night.

Here, under the wind of an electric fan, they witness everything, from a

burial in Westminster to the birthday parade of the ruler of the land of

Swat.

The usual saloon equipment to delight the eye is one so-called "leg"

picture of a woman, a photograph of a prize-fighter, and some colored

portraits of goats to advertise various brands of beer. Many times, no

doubt, these boys and young men have found visions of a sordid kind while

gazing on the actress, the fighter, or the goats. But what poor material

they had in the wardrobes of memory for the trimmings and habiliments of

vision, to make this lady into Freya, this prize-fighter into Thor, these

goats into the harnessed steeds that drew his chariot! Man's dreams are

rearranged and glorified memories. How could these people reconstruct the

torn carpets and tin cans and waste-paper of their lives into mythology?

How could memories of Ladies' Entrance squalor be made into Castles in

Granada or Carcassonne? The things they drank to see, and saw but

grotesquely, and paid for terribly, now roll before them with no after

pain or punishment. The mumbled conversation, the sociability for which

they leaned over the tables, they have here in the same manner with far

more to talk about. They come, they go home, men and women together, as

casually and impulsively as the men alone ever entered a drinking-place,

but discoursing now of far-off mountains and star-crossed lovers. As

Padraic Colum says in his poem on the herdsman:--

"With thoughts on white ships

And the King of Spain's Daughter."

This is why the saloon on the right hand and on the left in the slum is

apt to move out when the photoplay moves in.

But let us go to the other end of the temperance argument. I beg to be

allowed to relate a personal matter. For some time I was a field-worker

for the Anti-Saloon League of Illinois, being sent every Sunday to a new

region to make the yearly visit on behalf of the league. Such a visitor

is apt to speak to one church in a village, and two in the country, on

each excursion, being met at the station by some leading farmer-citizen

of the section, and driven to these points by him. The talk with this man

was worth it all to me.

The agricultural territory of the United States is naturally dry. This is

because the cross-roads church is the only communal institution, and the

voice of the cross-roads pastor is for teetotalism. The routine of the

farm-hand, while by no means ideal in other respects, keeps him from

craving drink as intensely as other toilers do. A day's work in the open

air fills his veins at nightfall with an opiate of weariness instead of a

high-strung nervousness. The strong men of the community are church

elders, not through fanaticism, but by right of leadership. Through their

office they are committed to prohibition. So opposition to the temperance

movement is scattering. The Anti-Saloon League has organized these

leaders into a nation-wide machine. It sees that they get their weekly

paper, instructing them in the tactics whereby local fights have been

won. A subscription financing the State League is taken once a year. It

counts on the regular list of church benevolences. The state officers

come in to help on the critical local fights. Any country politician

fears their non-partisan denunciation as he does political death. The

local machines thus backed are incurable mugwumps, hold the balance of

power, work in both parties, and have voted dry the agricultural

territory of the United States everywhere, by the township, county, or

state unit.

The only institutions that touch the same territory in a similar way are

the Chautauquas in the prosperous agricultural centres. These, too, by

the same sign are emphatically anti-saloon in their propaganda, serving

to intellectualize and secularize the dry sentiment without taking it out

of the agricultural caste.

There is a definite line between our farm-civilization and the rest. When

a county goes dry, it is generally in spite of the county-seat. Such

temperance people as are in the court-house town represent the

church-vote, which is even then in goodly proportion a retired-farmer

vote. The larger the county-seat, the larger the non-church-going

population and the more stubborn the fight. The majority of miners and

factory workers are on the wet side everywhere. The irritation caused by

the gases in the mines, by the dirty work in the blackness, by the

squalor in which the company houses are built, turns men to drink for

reaction and lamplight and comradeship. The similar fevers and

exasperations of factory life lead the workers to unstring their tense

nerves with liquor. The habit of snuggling up close in factories,

conversing often, bench by bench, machine by machine, inclines them to

get together for their pleasures at the bar. In industrial America there

is an anti-saloon minority in moral sympathy with the temperance wave

brought in by the farmers. But they are outstanding groups. Their

leadership seldom dries up a factory town or a mining region, with all

the help the Anti-Saloon League can give.

In the big cities the temperance movement is scarcely understood. The

choice residential districts are voted dry for real estate reasons. The

men who do this, drink freely at their own clubs or parties. The

temperance question would be fruitlessly argued to the end of time were

it not for the massive agricultural vote rolling and roaring round each

metropolis, reawakening the town churches whose vote is a pitiful

minority but whose spokesmen are occasionally strident.

There is a prophecy abroad that prohibition will be the issue of a

national election. If the question is squarely put, there are enough

farmers and church-people to drive the saloon out of legal existence. The

women's vote, a little more puritanical than the men's vote, will make

the result sure. As one anxious for this victory, I have often speculated

on the situation when all America is nominally dry, at the behest of the

American farmer, the American preacher, and the American woman. When the

use of alcohol is treason, what will become of those all but unbroken

lines of slum saloons? No lesser force than regular troops could dislodge

them, with yesterday's intrenchment.

The entrance of the motion picture house into the arena is indeed

striking, the first enemy of King Alcohol with real power where that king

has deepest hold. If every one of those saloon doors is nailed up by the

Chautauqua orators, the photoplay archway will remain open. The people

will have a shelter where they can readjust themselves, that offers a

substitute for many of the lines of pleasure in the groggery. And a whole

evening costs but a dime apiece. Several rounds of drinks are expensive,

but the people can sit through as many repetitions of this programme as

they desire, for one entrance fee. The dominant genius of the moving

picture place is not a gentleman with a red nose and an eye like a dead

fish, but some producer who, with all his faults, has given every person

in the audience a seven-leagued angel-and-demon telescope.

Since I have announced myself a farmer and a puritan, let me here list

the saloon evils not yet recorded in this chapter. They are separate from

the catalogue of the individualistic woes of the drunkard that are given

in the Scripture. The shame of the American drinking place is the

bar-tender who dominates its thinking. His cynical and hardened soul

wipes out a portion of the influence of the public school, the library,

the self-respecting newspaper. A stream rises no higher than its source,

and through his dead-fish eye and dead-fish brain the group of tired men

look upon all the statesmen and wise ones of the land. Though he says

worse than nothing, his furry tongue, by endless reiteration, is the

American slum oracle. At the present the bar-tender handles the

neighborhood group, the ultimate unit in city politics.

So, good citizen, welcome the coming of the moving picture man as a local

social force. Whatever his private character, the mere formula of his

activities makes him a better type. He may not at first sway his group in

a directly political way, but he will make himself the centre of more

social ideals than the bar-tender ever entertained. And he is beginning

to have as intimate a relation to his public as the bar-tender. In many

cases he stands under his arch in the sheltered lobby and is on

conversing terms with his habitual customers, the length of the afternoon

and evening.

Voting the saloon out of the slums by voting America dry, does not, as of

old, promise to be a successful operation that kills the patient. In the

past some of the photoplay magazines have contained denunciations of the

temperance people for refusing to say anything in behalf of the greatest

practical enemy of the saloon. But it is not too late for the dry forces

to repent. The Anti-Saloon League officers and the photoplay men should

ask each other to dinner. More moving picture theatres in doubtful

territory will help make dry voters. And wet territory voted dry will

bring about a greatly accelerated patronage of the photoplay houses.

There is every strategic reason why these two forces should patch up a

truce.

Meanwhile, the cave-man, reader of picture-writing, is given a chance to

admit light into his mind, whatever he puts to his lips. Let us look for

the day, be it a puritan triumph or not, when the sons and the daughters

of the slums shall prophesy, the young men shall see visions, the old men

dream dreams.

CHAPTER XVI

CALIFORNIA AND AMERICA

The moving picture captains of industry, like the California gold finders

of 1849, making colossal fortunes in two or three years, have the same

glorious irresponsibility and occasional need of the sheriff. They are

Californians more literally than this. Around Los Angeles the greatest

and most characteristic moving picture colonies are being built. Each

photoplay magazine has its California letter, telling of the

putting-up of new studios, and the transfer of actors, with much

slap-you-on-the-back personal gossip. This is the outgrowth of the fact

that every type of the photoplay but the intimate is founded on some

phase of the out-of-doors. Being thus dependent, the plant can best be

set up where there is no winter. Besides this, the Los Angeles region has

the sea, the mountains, the desert, and many kinds of grove and field.

Landscape and architecture are sub-tropical. But for a description of

California, ask any traveller or study the background of almost any

photoplay.

If the photoplay is the consistent utterance of its scenes, if the actors

are incarnations of the land they walk upon, as they should be,

California indeed stands a chance to achieve through the films an

utterance of her own. Will this land furthest west be the first to

capture the inner spirit of this newest and most curious of the arts? It

certainly has the opportunity that comes with the actors, producers, and

equipment. Let us hope that every region will develop the silent

photographic pageant in a local form as outlined in the chapter on

Progress and Endowment. Already the California sort, in the commercial

channels, has become the broadly accepted if mediocre national form.

People who revere the Pilgrim Fathers of 1620 have often wished those

gentlemen had moored their bark in the region of Los Angeles rather than

Plymouth Rock, that Boston had been founded there. At last that landing

is achieved.

Patriotic art students have discussed with mingled irony and admiration

the Boston domination of the only American culture of the nineteenth

century, namely, literature. Indianapolis has had her day since then,

Chicago is lifting her head. Nevertheless Boston still controls the

text-book in English and dominates our high schools. Ironic feelings in

this matter on the part of western men are based somewhat on envy and

illegitimate cussedness, but are also grounded in the honest hope of a

healthful rivalry. They want new romanticists and artists as indigenous

to their soil as was Hawthorne to witch-haunted Salem or Longfellow to

the chestnuts of his native heath. Whatever may be said of the

patriarchs, from Oliver Wendell Holmes to Amos Bronson Alcott, they were

true sons of the New England stone fences and meeting houses. They could

not have been born or nurtured anywhere else on the face of the earth.

Some of us view with a peculiar thrill the prospect that Los Angeles may

become the Boston of the photoplay. Perhaps it would be better to say the

Florence, because California reminds one of colorful Italy more than of

any part of the United States. Yet there is a difference.

The present-day man-in-the-street, man-about-town Californian has an

obvious magnificence about him that is allied to the eucalyptus tree,

the pomegranate. California is a gilded state. It has not the sordidness

of gold, as has Wall Street, but it is the embodiment of the natural ore

that the ragged prospector finds. The gold of California is the color of

the orange, the glitter of dawn in the Yosemite, the hue of the golden

gate that opens the sunset way to mystic and terrible Cathay and

Hindustan.

The enemy of California says the state is magnificent but thin. He

declares it is as though it were painted on a Brobdingnagian piece of

gilt paper, and he who dampens his finger and thrusts it through finds an

alkali valley on the other side, the lonely prickly pear, and a heap of

ashes from a deserted camp-fire. He says the citizens of this state lack

the richness of an æsthetic and religious tradition. He says there is no

substitute for time. But even these things make for coincidence. This

apparent thinness California has in common with the routine photoplay,

which is at times as shallow in its thought as the shadow it throws upon

the screen. This newness California has in common with all photoplays. It

is thrillingly possible for the state and the art to acquire spiritual

tradition and depth together.

Part of the thinness of California is not only its youth, but the result

of the physical fact that the human race is there spread over so many

acres of land. They try not only to count their mines and enumerate their

palm trees, but they count the miles of their sea-coast, and the acres

under cultivation and the height of the peaks, and revel in large

statistics and the bigness generally, and forget how a few men rattle

around in a great deal of scenery. They shout their statistics across the

Rockies and the deserts to New York. The Mississippi Valley is

non-existent to the Californian. His fellow-feeling is for the opposite

coast-line. Through the geographical accident of separation by mountain

and desert from the rest of the country, he becomes a mere shouter,

hurrahing so assiduously that all variety in the voice is lost. Then he

tries gestures, and becomes flamboyant, rococo.

These are the defects of the motion picture qualities also. Its panoramic

tendency runs wild. As an institution it advertises itself with the

sweeping gesture. It has the same passion for coast-line. These are not

the sins of New England. When, in the hands of masters, they become

sources of strength, they will be a different set of virtues from those

of New England.

There is no more natural place for the scattering of confetti than this

state, except the moving picture scene itself. Both have a genius for

gardens and dancing and carnival.

When the Californian relegates the dramatic to secondary scenes, both in

his life and his photoplay, and turns to the genuinely epic and lyric, he

and this instrument may find their immortality together as New England

found its soul in the essays of Emerson. Tide upon tide of Spring comes

into California through all four seasons. Fairy beauty overwhelms the

lumbering grand-stand players. The tiniest garden is a jewelled pathway

of wonder. But the Californian cannot shout "orange blossoms, orange

blossoms; heliotrope, heliotrope!" He cannot boom forth "roseleaves,

roseleaves" so that he does their beauties justice. Here is where the

photoplay can begin to give him a more delicate utterance. And he can go

on into stranger things and evolve all the Splendor Films into higher

types, for the very name of California is splendor. The California

photo-playwright can base his Crowd Picture upon the city-worshipping

mobs of San Francisco. He can derive his Patriotic and Religious

Splendors from something older and more magnificent than the aisles of

the Romanesque, namely: the groves of the giant redwoods.

The campaign for a beautiful nation could very well emanate from the west

coast, where with the slightest care grow up models for all the world of

plant arrangement and tree-luxury. Our mechanical East is reproved, our

tension is relaxed, our ugliness is challenged every time we look upon

those garden paths and forests.

It is possible for Los Angeles to lay hold of the motion picture as our

national text-book in Art as Boston appropriated to herself the

guardianship of the national text-books of Literature. If California has

a shining soul, and not merely a golden body, let her forget her

seventeen-year-old melodramatics, and turn to her poets who understand

the heart underneath the glory. Edwin Markham, the dean of American

singers, Clark Ashton Smith, the young star treader, George Sterling,

that son of Ancient Merlin, have in their songs the seeds of better

scenarios than California has sent us. There are two poems by George

Sterling that I have had in mind for many a day as conceptions that

should inspire mystic films akin to them. These poems are The Night

Sentries and Tidal King of Nations.

But California can tell us stories that are grim children of the tales of

the wild Ambrose Bierce. Then there is the lovely unforgotten Nora May

French and the austere Edward Rowland Sill.

Edison is the new Gutenberg. He has invented the new printing. The state

that realizes this may lead the soul of America, day after to-morrow.

CHAPTER XVII

PROGRESS AND ENDOWMENT

The moving picture goes almost as far as journalism into the social

fabric in some ways, further in others. Soon, no doubt, many a little

town will have its photographic news-press. We have already the weekly

world-news films from the big centres.

With local journalism will come devices for advertising home enterprises.

Some staple products will be made attractive by having film-actors show

their uses. The motion pictures will be in the public schools to stay.

Text-books in geography, history, zoõlogy, botany, physiology, and other

sciences will be illustrated by standardized films. Along with these

changes, there will be available at certain centres collections of films

equivalent to the Standard Dictionary and the Encyclopædia Britannica.

And sooner or later we will have a straight-out capture of a complete

film expression by the serious forces of civilization. The merely

impudent motion picture will be relegated to the leisure hours with

yellow journalism. Photoplay libraries are inevitable, as active if not

as multitudinous as the book-circulating libraries. The oncoming

machinery and expense of the motion picture is immense. Where will the

money come from? No one knows. What the people want they will get. The

race of man cannot afford automobiles, but has them nevertheless. We

cannot run away into non-automobile existence or non-steam-engine or

non-movie life long at a time. We must conquer this thing. While the more

stately scientific and educational aspects just enumerated are slowly on

their way, the artists must be up and about their ameliorative work.

Every considerable effort to develop a noble idiom will count in the

final result, as the writers of early English made possible the language

of the Bible, Shakespeare, and Milton. We are perfecting a medium to be

used as long as Chinese ideographs have been. It will no doubt, like the

Chinese language, record in the end massive and classical treatises,

imperial chronicles, law-codes, traditions, and religious admonitions.

All this by the \_motion picture\_ as a recording instrument, not

necessarily the \_photoplay\_, a much more limited thing, a form of art.

What shall be done in especial by this generation of idealists, whose

flags rise and go down, whose battle line wavers and breaks a thousand

times? What is the high quixotic splendid call? We know of a group of

public-spirited people who advocate, in endowed films, "safety first,"

another that champions total abstinence. Often their work seems lost in

the mass of commercial production, but it is a good beginning. Such

citizens take an established studio for a specified time and at the end

put on the market a production that backs up their particular idea. There

are certain terms between the owners of the film and the proprietors of

the studio for the division of the income, the profits of the cult being

spent on further propaganda. The product need not necessarily be the type

outlined in chapter two, The Photoplay of Action. Often some other sort

might establish the cause more deeply. But most of the propaganda films

are of the action variety, because of the dynamic character of the people

who produce them. Fired by fanatic zeal, the auto speeds faster, the

rescuing hero runs harder, the stern policeman and sheriff become more

jumpy, all that the audience may be converted. Here if anywhere

meditation on the actual resources of charm and force in the art is a

fitting thing. The crusader should realize that it is not a good Action

Play nor even a good argument unless it is indeed the Winged Victory

sort. The gods are not always on the side of those who throw fits.

There is here appended a newspaper description of a crusading film, that,

despite the implications of the notice, has many passages of charm. It is

two-thirds Action Photoplay, one-third Intimate-and-friendly. The notice

does not imply that at times the story takes pains to be gentle. This bit

of writing is all too typical of film journalism.

"Not only as an argument for suffrage but as a play with a story, a

punch, and a mission, 'Your Girl and Mine' is produced under the

direction of the National Woman's Suffrage Association at the Capitol

to-day.

"Olive Wyndham forsook the legitimate stage for the time to pose as the

heroine of the play. Katherine Kaelred, leading lady of 'Joseph and his

Brethren,' took the part of a woman lawyer battling for the right.

Sydney Booth, of the 'Yellow Ticket' company posed as the hero of the

experiment. John Charles and Katharine Henry played the villain and the

honest working girl. About three hundred secondaries were engaged along

with the principals.

"It is melodrama of the most thrilling sort, in spite of the fact that

there is a moral concealed in the very title of the play. But who is

worried by a moral in a play which has an exciting hand-to-hand fight

between a man and a woman in one of the earliest acts, when the quick

march of events ranges from a wedding to a murder and an automobile

abduction scene that breaks all former speed-records. 'The Cause' comes

in most symbolically and poetically, a symbolic figure that 'fades out'

at critical periods in the plot. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, the famous

suffrage leader, appears personally in the film.

"'Your Girl and Mine' is a big play with a big mission built on a big

scale. It is a whole evening's entertainment, and a very interesting

evening at that." Here endeth the newspaper notice. Compare it with the

Biograph advertisement of Judith in chapter six.

There is nothing in the film that rasps like this account of it. The

clipping serves to give the street-atmosphere through which our Woman's

Suffrage Joan of Arcs move to conquest and glory with unstained banners.

The obvious amendments to the production as an instrument of persuasion

are two. Firstly there should be five reels instead of six, every scene

shortened a bit to bring this result. Secondly, the lieutenant governor

of the state, who is the Rudolf Rassendyll of the production, does not

enter the story soon enough, and is too James K. Hacketty all at once. We

are jerked into admiration of him, rather than ensnared. But after that

the gentleman behaves more handsomely than any of the distinguished

lieutenant governors in real life the present writer happens to remember.

The figure of Aunt Jane, the queenly serious woman of affairs, is one to

admire and love. Her effectiveness without excess or strain is in itself

an argument for giving woman the vote. The newspaper notice does not

state the facts in saying the symbolical figure "fades out" at critical

periods in the plot. On the contrary, she appears at critical periods,

clothed in white, solemn and royal. She comes into the groups with an

adequate allurement, pointing the moral of each situation while she

shines brightest. The two children for whom the contest is fought are

winsome little girls. By the side of their mother in the garden or in the

nursery they are a potent argument for the natural rights of femininity.

The film is by no means ultra-æsthetic. The implications of the clipping

are correct to that degree. But the resources of beauty within the ready

command of the advising professional producer are used by the women for

all they are worth. It could not be asked of them that they evolve

technical novelties.

Yet the figures of Aunt Jane and the Goddess of Suffrage are something

new in their fashion. Aunt Jane is a spiritual sister to that

unprecedented woman, Jane Addams, who went to the Hague conference for

Peace in the midst of war, which heroic action the future will not

forget. Aunt Jane does justice to that breed of women amid the sweetness

and flowers and mere scenario perils of the photoplay story. The presence

of the "Votes for Women" figure is the beginning of a line of photoplay

goddesses that serious propaganda in the new medium will make part of the

American Spiritual Hierarchy. In the imaginary film of Our Lady

Springfield, described in the chapter on Architecture-in-Motion, a

kindred divinity is presumed to stand by the side of the statue when it

first reaches the earth.

High-minded graduates of university courses in sociology and schools of

philanthropy, devout readers of The Survey, The Chicago Public, The

Masses, The New Republic, La Follette's, are going to advocate

increasingly, their varied and sometimes contradictory causes, in films.

These will generally be produced by heroic exertions in the studio, and

much passing of the subscription paper outside.

Then there are endowments already in existence that will no doubt be

diverted to the photoplay channel. In every state house, and in

Washington, D.C., increasing quantities of dead printed matter have been

turned out year after year. They have served to kindle various furnaces

and feed the paper-mills a second time. Many of these routine reports

will remain in innocuous desuetude. But one-fourth of them, perhaps, are

capable of being embodied in films. If they are scientific

demonstrations, they can be made into realistic motion picture records.

If they are exhortations, they can be transformed into plays with a

moral, brothers of the film Your Girl and Mine. The appropriations for

public printing should include such work hereafter.

The scientific museums distribute routine pamphlets that would set the

whole world right on certain points if they were but read by said world.

Let them be filmed and started. Whatever the congressman is permitted to

frank to his constituency, let him send in the motion picture form when

it is the expedient and expressive way.

When men work for the high degrees in the universities, they labor on a

piece of literary conspiracy called a thesis which no one outside the

university hears of again. The gist of this research work that is dead to

the democracy, through the university merits of thoroughness, moderation

of statement, and final touch of discovery, would have a chance to live

and grip the people in a motion picture transcript, if not a photoplay.

It would be University Extension. The relentless fire of criticism which

the heads of the departments would pour on the production before they

allowed it to pass would result in a standardization of the sense of

scientific fact over the land. Suppose the film has the coat of arms of

the University of Chicago along with the name of the young graduate whose

thesis it is. He would have a chance to reflect credit on the university

even as much as a foot-ball player.

Large undertakings might be under way, like those described in the

chapter on Architecture-in-Motion. But these would require much more than

the ordinary outlay for thesis work, less, perhaps, than is taken for

Athletics. Lyman Howe and several other world-explorers have already set

the pace in the more human side of the educative film. The list of Mr.

Howe's offerings from the first would reveal many a one that would have

run the gantlet of a university department. He points out a new direction

for old energies, whereby professors may become citizens.

Let the cave-man, reader of picture-writing, be allowed to ponder over

scientific truth. He is at present the victim of the alleged truth of the

specious and sentimental variety of photograph. It gives the precise

edges of the coat or collar of the smirking masher and the exact fibre in

the dress of the jumping-jack. The eye grows weary of sharp points and

hard edges that mean nothing. All this idiotic precision is going to

waste. It should be enlisted in the cause of science and abated

everywhere else. The edges in art are as mysterious as in science they

are exact.

Some of the higher forms of the Intimate Moving Picture play should be

endowed by local coteries representing their particular region. Every

community of fifty thousand has its group of the cultured who have

heretofore studied and imitated things done in the big cities. Some of

these coteries will in exceptional cases become creative and begin to

express their habitation and name. The Intimate Photoplay is capable of

that delicacy and that informality which should characterize neighborhood

enterprises.

The plays could be acted by the group who, season after season, have

secured the opera house for the annual amateur show. Other dramatic

ability could be found in the high-schools. There is enough talent in any

place to make an artistic revolution, if once that region is aflame with

a common vision. The spirit that made the Irish Players, all so racy of

the soil, can also move the company of local photoplayers in Topeka, or

Indianapolis, or Denver. Then let them speak for their town, not only in

great occasional enterprises, but steadily, in little fancies, genre

pictures, developing a technique that will finally make magnificence

possible.

There was given not long ago, at the Illinois Country Club here, a

performance of The Yellow Jacket by the Coburn Players. It at once seemed

an integral part of this chapter.

The two flags used for a chariot, the bamboo poles for oars, the red sack

for a decapitated head, etc., were all convincing, through a direct

resemblance as well as the passionate acting. They suggest a possible

type of hieroglyphics to be developed by the leader of the local group.

Let the enthusiast study this westernized Chinese play for primitive

representative methods. It can be found in book form, a most readable

work. It is by G.C. Hazelton, Jr., and J.H. Benrimo. The resemblance

between the stage property and the thing represented is fairly close. The

moving flags on each side of the actor suggest the actual color and

progress of the chariot, and abstractly suggest its magnificence. The red

sack used for a bloody head has at least the color and size of one. The

dressed-up block of wood used for a child is the length of an infant of

the age described and wears the general costume thereof. The farmer's

hoe, though exaggerated, is still an agricultural implement.

The evening's list of properties is economical, filling one wagon, rather

than three. Photographic realism is splendidly put to rout by powerful

representation. When the villager desires to embody some episode that if

realistically given would require a setting beyond the means of the

available endowment, and does not like the near-Egyptian method, let him

evolve his near-Chinese set of symbols.

The Yellow Jacket was written after long familiarity with the Chinese

Theatre in San Francisco. The play is a glory to that city as well as to

Hazelton and Benrimo. But every town in the United States has something

as striking as the Chinese Theatre, to the man who keeps the eye of his

soul open. It has its Ministerial Association, its boys' secret society,

its red-eyed political gang, its grubby Justice of the Peace court, its

free school for the teaching of Hebrew, its snobbish chapel, its

fire-engine house, its milliner's shop. All these could be made visible

in photoplays as flies are preserved in amber.

Edgar Lee Masters looked about him and discovered the village graveyard,

and made it as wonderful as Noah's Ark, or Adam naming the animals, by

supplying honest inscriptions to the headstones. Such stories can be told

by the Chinese theatrical system as well. As many different films could

be included under the general title: "Seven Old Families, and Why they

Went to Smash." Or a less ominous series would be "Seven Victorious

Souls." For there are triumphs every day under the drab monotony of an

apparently defeated town: conquests worthy of the waving of sun-banners.

Above all, The Yellow Jacket points a moral for this chapter because

there was conscience behind it. First: the rectitude of the Chinese

actors of San Francisco who kept the dramatic tradition alive, a

tradition that was bequeathed from the ancient generations. Then the

artistic integrity of the men who readapted the tradition for western

consumption, and their religious attitude that kept the high teaching and

devout feeling for human life intact in the play. Then the zeal of the

Drama League that indorsed it for the country. Then the earnest work of

the Coburn Players who embodied it devoutly, so that the whole company

became dear friends forever.

By some such ladder of conscience as this can the local scenario be

endowed, written, acted, filmed, and made a real part of the community

life. The Yellow Jacket was a drama, not a photoplay. This chapter does

not urge that it be readapted for a photoplay in San Francisco or

anywhere else. But a kindred painting-in-motion, something as beautiful

and worthy and intimate, in strictly photoplay terms, might well be the

flower of the work of the local groups of film actors.

Harriet Monroe's magazine, "Poetry" (Chicago), has given us a new sect,

the Imagists:--Ezra Pound, Richard Aldington, John Gould Fletcher, Amy

Lowell, F.S. Flint, D.H. Lawrence, and others. They are gathering

followers and imitators. To these followers I would say: the Imagist

impulse need not be confined to verse. Why would you be imitators of

these leaders when you might be creators in a new medium? There is a

clear parallelism between their point of view in verse and the

Intimate-and-friendly Photoplay, especially when it is developed from the

standpoint of the last part of chapter nine, \_space measured without

sound plus time measured without sound\_.

There is no clan to-day more purely devoted to art for art's sake than

the Imagist clan. An Imagist film would offer a noble challenge to the

overstrained emotion, the over-loaded splendor, the mere repetition of

what are at present the finest photoplays. Now even the masterpieces are

incontinent. Except for some of the old one-reel Biographs of Griffith's

beginning, there is nothing of Doric restraint from the best to the

worst. Read some of the poems of the people listed above, then imagine

the same moods in the films. Imagist photoplays would be Japanese prints

taking on life, animated Japanese paintings, Pompeian mosaics in

kaleidoscopic but logical succession, Beardsley drawings made into actors

and scenery, Greek vase-paintings in motion.

Scarcely a photoplay but hints at the Imagists in one scene. Then the

illusion is lost in the next turn of the reel. Perhaps it would be a

sound observance to confine this form of motion picture to a half reel or

quarter reel, just as the Imagist poem is generally a half or quarter

page. A series of them could fill a special evening.

The Imagists are colorists. Some people do not consider that photographic

black, white, and gray are color. But here for instance are seven colors

which the Imagists might use: (1) The whiteness of swans in the light.

(2) The whiteness of swans in a gentle shadow. (3) The color of a

sunburned man in the light. (4) His color in a gentle shadow. (5) His

color in a deeper shadow. (6) The blackness of black velvet in the light.

(7) The blackness of black velvet in a deep shadow. And to use these

colors with definite steps from one to the other does not militate

against an artistic mystery of edge and softness in the flow of line.

There is a list of possible Imagist textures which is only limited by the

number of things to be seen in the world. Probably only seven or ten

would be used in one scheme and the same list kept through one

production.

The Imagist photoplay will put discipline into the inner ranks of the

enlightened and remind the sculptors, painters, and architects of the

movies that there is a continence even beyond sculpture and that seas of

realism may not have the power of a little well-considered elimination.

The use of the scientific film by established institutions like schools

and state governments has been discussed. Let the Church also, in her own

way, avail herself of the motion picture, whole-heartedly, as in

mediæval time she took over the marvel of Italian painting. There was a

stage in her history when religious representation was by Byzantine

mosaics, noble in color, having an architectural use, but curious indeed

to behold from the standpoint of those who crave a sensitive emotional

record. The first paintings of Cimabue and Giotto, giving these formulas

a touch of life, were hailed with joy by all Italy. Now the Church

Universal has an opportunity to establish her new painters if she will.

She has taken over in the course of history, for her glory, miracle

plays, Romanesque and Gothic architecture, stained glass windows, and the

music of St. Cecilia's organ. Why not this new splendor? The Cathedral of

St. John the Divine, on Morningside Heights, should establish in its

crypt motion pictures as thoroughly considered as the lines of that

building, if possible designed by the architects thereof, with the same

sense of permanency.

This chapter does not advocate that the Church lay hold of the photoplays

as one more medium for reillustrating the stories of the Bible as they

are given in the Sunday-school papers. It is not pietistic simpering that

will feed the spirit of Christendom, but a steady church-patronage of

the most skilful and original motion picture artists. Let the Church

follow the precedent which finally gave us Fra Angelico, Botticelli,

Andrea del Sarto, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, Correggio,

Titian, Paul Veronese, Tintoretto, and the rest.

Who will endow the successors of the present woman's suffrage film, and

other great crusading films? Who will see that the public documents and

university researches take on the form of motion pictures? Who will endow

the local photoplay and the Imagist photoplay? Who will take the first

great measures to insure motion picture splendors in the church?

Things such as these come on the winds of to-morrow. But let the crusader

look about him, and where it is possible, put in the diplomatic word, and

coöperate with the Gray Norns.

CHAPTER XVIII

ARCHITECTS AS CRUSADERS

Many a worker sees his future America as a Utopia, in which his own

profession, achieving dictatorship, alleviates the ills of men. The

militarist grows dithyrambic in showing how war makes for the blessings

of peace. The economic teacher argues that if we follow his political

economy, none of us will have to economize. The church-fanatic says if

all churches will merge with his organization, none of them will have to

try to behave again. They will just naturally be good. The physician

hopes to abolish the devil by sanitation. We have our Utopias. Despite

levity, the present writer thinks that such hopes are among the most

useful things the earth possesses.

A normal man in the full tide of his activities finds that a

world-machinery could logically be built up by his profession. At least

in the heyday of his working hours his vocation satisfies his heart. So

he wants the entire human race to taste that satisfaction. Approximate

Utopias have been built from the beginning. Many civilizations have had

some dominant craft to carry them the major part of the way. The priests

have made India. The classical student has preserved Old China to its

present hour of new life. The samurai knights have made Japan. Sailors

have evolved the British Empire. One of the enticing future Americas is

that of the architect. Let the architect appropriate the photoplay as his

means of propaganda and begin. From its intrinsic genius it can give his

profession a start beyond all others in dominating this land. Or such is

one of many speculations of the present writer.

The photoplay can speak the language of the man who has a mind World's

Fair size. That we are going to have successive generations of such

builders may be reasonably implied from past expositions. Beginning with

Philadelphia in 1876, and going on to San Francisco and San Diego in

1915, nothing seems to stop us from the habit. Let us enlarge this

proclivity into a national mission in as definite a movement, as

thoroughly thought out as the evolution of the public school system, the

formation of the Steel Trust, and the like. After duly weighing all the

world's fairs, let our architects set about making the whole of the

United States into a permanent one. Supposing the date to begin the

erection be 1930. Till that time there should be tireless if indirect

propaganda that will further the architectural state of mind, and later

bring about the elucidation of the plans while they are being perfected.

For many years this America, founded on the psychology of the Splendor

Photoplay, will be evolving. It might be conceived as a going concern at

a certain date within the lives of men now living, but it should never

cease to develop.

To make films of a more beautiful United States is as practical and worth

while a custom as to make military spy maps of every inch of a neighbor's

territory, putting in each fence and cross-roads. Those who would satisfy

the national pride with something besides battle flags must give our

people an objective as shining and splendid as war when it is most

glittering, something Napoleonic, and with no outward pretence of

excessive virtue. We want a substitute as dramatic internationally, yet

world-winning, friend making. If America is to become the financial

centre through no fault of her own, that fact must have a symbol other

than guns on the sea-coast.

If it is inexpedient for the architectural patriarchs and their young

hopefuls to take over the films bodily, let a board of strategy be formed

who make it their business to eat dinner with the scenario writers,

producers, and owners, conspiring with them in some practical way.

Why should we not consider ourselves a deathless Panama-Pacific

Exposition on a coast-to-coast scale? Let Chicago be the transportation

building, Denver the mining building. Let Kansas City be the agricultural

building and Jacksonville, Florida, the horticultural building, and so

around the states.

Even as in mediæval times men rode for hundreds of miles through perils

to the permanent fairs of the free cities, the world-travellers will

attend this exhibit, and many of them will in the end become citizens.

Our immigration will be something more than tide upon tide of raw labor.

The Architects would send forth publicity films which are not only

delineations of a future Cincinnati, Cleveland, or St. Louis, but whole

counties and states and groups of states could be planned at one time,

with the development of their natural fauna, flora, and forestry.

Wherever nature has been rendered desolate by industry or mere haste,

there let the architect and park-architect proclaim the plan. Wherever

she is still splendid and untamed, let her not be violated.

America is in the state of mind where she must visualize herself again.

If it is not possible to bring in the New Jerusalem to-day, by public

act, with every citizen eating bread and honey under his vine and

fig-tree, owning forty acres and a mule, singing hymns and saying prayers

all his leisure hours, it is still reasonable to think out tremendous

things the American people can do, in the light of what they have done,

without sacrificing any of their native cussedness or kick. It was

sprawling Chicago that in 1893 achieved the White City. The automobile

routes bind the states together closer than muddy counties were held in

1893. A "Permanent World's Fair" may be a phrase distressing to the

literal mind. Perhaps it would be better to say "An Architect's America."

Let each city take expert counsel from the architectural demigods how to

tear out the dirty core of its principal business square and erect a

combination of civic centre and permanent and glorious bazaar. Let the

public debate the types of state flower, tree, and shrub that are

expedient, the varieties of villages and middle-sized towns, farm-homes,

and connecting parkways.

Sometimes it seems to me the American expositions are as characteristic

things as our land has achieved. They went through without hesitation.

The difficulties of one did not deter the erection of the next. The

United States may be in many things slack. Often the democracy looks

hopelessly shoddy. But it cannot be denied that our people have always

risen to the dignity of these great architectural projects.

Once the population understand they are dealing with the same type of

idea on a grander scale, they will follow to the end. We are not

proposing an economic revolution, or that human nature be suddenly

altered. If California can remain in the World's Fair state of mind for

four or five years, and finally achieve such a splendid result, all the

states can undertake a similar project conjointly, and because of the

momentum of a nation moving together, remain in that mind for the length

of the life of a man.

Here we have this great instrument, the motion picture, the fourth

largest industry in the United States, attended daily by ten million

people, and in ten days by a hundred million, capable of interpreting the

largest conceivable ideas that come within the range of the plastic arts,

and those ideas have not been supplied. It is still the plaything of

newly rich vaudeville managers. The nation goes daily, through intrinsic

interest in the device, and is dosed with such continued stories as the

Adventures of Kathlyn, What Happened to Mary, and the Million Dollar

Mystery, stretched on through reel after reel, week after week. Kathlyn

had no especial adventures. Nothing in particular happened to Mary. The

million dollar mystery was: why did the millionaires who owned such a

magnificent instrument descend to such silliness and impose it on the

people? Why cannot our weekly story be henceforth some great plan that is

being worked out, whose history will delight us? For instance, every

stage of the building of the Panama Canal was followed with the greatest

interest in the films. But there was not enough of it to keep the films

busy.

The great material projects are often easier to realize than the little

moral reforms. Beautiful architectural undertakings, while appearing to

be material, and succeeding by the laws of American enterprise, bring

with them the healing hand of beauty. Beauty is not directly pious, but

does more civilizing in its proper hour than many sermons or laws.

The world seems to be in the hands of adventurers. Why not this for the

adventure of the American architects? If something akin to this plan does

not come to pass through photoplay propaganda, it means there is no

American builder with the blood of Julius Cæsar in his veins. If there is

the old brute lust for empire left in any builder, let him awake. The

world is before him.

As for the other Utopians, the economist, the physician, the puritan, as

soon as the architects have won over the photoplay people, let these

others take sage counsel and ensnare the architects. Is there a reform

worth while that cannot be embodied and enforced by a builder's

invention? A mere city plan, carried out, or the name or intent of a

quasi-public building and the list of offices within it may bring about

more salutary economic change than all the debating and voting

imaginable. So without too much theorizing, why not erect our new America

and move into it?

CHAPTER XIX

ON COMING FORTH BY DAY

If he will be so indulgent with his author, let the reader approach the

photoplay theatre as though for the first time, having again a new point

of view. Here the poorest can pay and enter from the glaring afternoon

into the twilight of an Ali Baba's cave. The dime is the single

open-sesame required. The half-light wherein the audience is seated, by

which they can read in an emergency, is as bright and dark as that of

some candle-lit churches. It reveals much in the faces and figures of the

audience that cannot be seen by common day. Hard edges are the main

things that we lose. The gain is in all the delicacies of modelling,

tone-relations, form, and color. A hundred evanescent impressions come

and go. There is often a tenderness of appeal about the most rugged face

in the assembly. Humanity takes on its sacred aspect. It is a crude mind

that would insist that these appearances are not real, that the eye does

not see them when all eyes behold them. To say dogmatically that any new

thing seen by half-light is an illusion, is like arguing that a discovery

by the telescope or microscope is unreal. If the appearances are

beautiful besides, they are not only facts, but assets in our lives.

Book-reading is not done in the direct noon-sunlight. We retire to the

shaded porch. It takes two more steps toward quietness of light to read

the human face and figure. Many great paintings and poems are records of

things discovered in this quietness of light.

It is indeed ironical in our Ali Baba's cave to see sheer everydayness

and hardness upon the screen, the audience dragged back to the street

they have escaped. One of the inventions to bring the twilight of the

gathering into brotherhood with the shadows on the screen is a simple

thing known to the trade as the fadeaway, that had its rise in a

commonplace fashion as a method of keeping the story from ending with the

white glare of the empty screen. As a result of the device the figures in

the first episode emerge from the dimness and in the last one go back

into the shadow whence they came, as foam returns to the darkness of an

evening sea. In the imaginative pictures the principle begins to be

applied more largely, till throughout the fairy story the figures float

in and out from the unknown, as fancies should. This method in its

simplicity counts more to keep the place an Ali Baba's cave than many a

more complicated procedure. In luxurious scenes it brings the soft edges

of Correggio, and in solemn ones a light and shadow akin to the effects

of Rembrandt.

Now we have a darkness on which we can paint, an unspoiled twilight. We

need not call it the Arabian's cave. There is a tomb we might have

definitely in mind, an Egyptian burying-place where with a torch we might

enter, read the inscriptions, and see the illustrations from the Book of

the Dead on the wall, or finding that ancient papyrus in the mummy-case,

unroll it and show it to the eager assembly, and have the feeling of

return. Man is an Egyptian first, before he is any other type of

civilized being. The Nile flows through his heart. So let this cave be

Egypt, let us incline ourselves to revere the unconscious memories that

echo within us when we see the hieroglyphics of Osiris, and Isis. Egypt

was our long brooding youth. We built the mysteriousness of the Universe

into the Pyramids, carved it into every line of the Sphinx. We thought

always of the immemorial.

The reel now before us is the mighty judgment roll dealing with the

question of our departure in such a way that any man who beholds it will

bear the impress of the admonition upon his heart forever. Those Egyptian

priests did no little thing, when amid their superstitions they still

proclaimed the Judgment. Let no one consider himself ready for death,

till like the men by the Nile he can call up every scene, face with

courage every exigency of the ordeal.

There is one copy of the Book of the Dead of especial interest, made for

the Scribe Ani, with exquisite marginal drawings. Copies may be found in

our large libraries. The particular fac-simile I had the honor to see was

in the Lenox Library, New York, several years ago. Ani, according to the

formula of the priesthood, goes through the adventures required of a

shade before he reaches the court of Osiris. All the Egyptian pictures on

tomb-wall and temple are but enlarged picture-writing made into tableaus.

Through such tableaus Ani moves. The Ani manuscript has so fascinated

some of the Egyptologists that it is copied in figures fifteen feet high

on the walls of two of the rooms of the British Museum. And you can read

the story eloquently told in Maspero.

Ani knocks at many doors in the underworld. Monstrous gatekeepers are

squatting on their haunches with huge knives to slice him if he cannot

remember their names or give the right password, or by spells the priests

have taught him, convince the sentinels that he is Osiris himself. To

further the illusion the name of Osiris is inscribed on his breast. While

he is passing these perils his little wife is looking on by a sort of

clairvoyant sympathy, though she is still alive. She is depicted mourning

him and embracing his mummy on earth at the same time she accompanies him

through the shadows.

Ani ploughs and sows and reaps in the fields of the underworld. He is

carried past a dreadful place on the back of the cow Hathor. After as

many adventures as Browning's Childe Roland he steps into the

judgment-hall of the gods. They sit in majestic rows. He makes the proper

sacrifices, and advances to the scales of justice. There he sees his own

heart weighed against the ostrich-feather of Truth, by the jackal-god

Anubis, who has already presided at his embalming. His own soul, in the

form of a human-headed hawk, watches the ceremony. His ghost, which is

another entity, looks through the door with his little wife. Both of them

watch with tense anxiety. The fate of every phase of his personality

depends upon the purity of his heart.

Lying in wait behind Anubis is a monster, part crocodile, part lion, part

hippopotamus. This terror will eat the heart of Ani if it is found

corrupt. At last he is declared justified. Thoth, the ibis-headed God of

Writing, records the verdict on his tablet. The justified Ani moves on

past the baffled devourer, with the mystic presence of his little wife

rejoicing at his side. They go to the awful court of Osiris. She makes

sacrifice with him there. The God of the Dead is indeed a strange deity,

a seated semi-animated mummy, with all the appurtenances of royalty, and

with the four sons of Horus on a lotus before him, and his two wives,

Isis and Nephthys, standing behind his throne with their hands on his

shoulders.

The justified soul now boards the boat in which the sun rides as it

journeys through the night. He rises a glorious boatman in the morning,

working an oar to speed the craft through the high ocean of the noon sky.

Henceforth he makes the eternal round with the sun. Therefore in Ancient

Egypt the roll was called, not the Book of the Dead, but \_The Chapters on

Coming Forth by Day\_.

This book on motion pictures does not profess to be an expert treatise on

Egyptology as well. The learned folk are welcome to amend the modernisms

that have crept into it. But the fact remains that something like this

story in one form or another held Egypt spell-bound for many hundred

years. It was the force behind every mummification. It was the reason for

the whole Egyptian system of life, death, and entombment, for the man not

embalmed could not make the journey. So the explorer finds the Egyptian

with a roll of this papyrus as a guide-book on his mummy breast. The soul

needed to return for refreshment periodically to the stone chamber, and

the mummy mutilated or destroyed could not entertain the guest. Egypt

cried out through thousands of years for the ultimate resurrection of the

whole man, his \_coming forth by day\_.

We need not fear that a story that so dominated a race will be lost on

modern souls when vividly set forth. Is it too much to expect that some

American prophet-wizard of the future will give us this film in the

spirit of an Egyptian priest?

The Greeks, the wisest people in our limited system of classics, bowed

down before the Egyptian hierarchy. That cult must have had a fine

personal authority and glamour to master such men. The unseen mysteries

were always on the Egyptian heart as a burden and a consolation, and

though there may have been jugglers in the outer courts of these temples,

as there have been in the courts of all temples, no mere actor could make

an Egyptian priest of himself. Their very alphabet has a regal

enchantment in its lines, and the same æsthetic-mystical power remains in

their pylons and images under the blaze of the all-revealing noonday sun.

Here is a nation, America, going for dreams into caves as shadowy as the

tomb of Queen Thi. There they find too often, not that ancient priestess

and ruler, nor any of her kin, nor yet Ani the scribe, nor yet any of the

kings, but shabby rags of fancy, or circuses that were better in the

street.

Because ten million people daily enter into the cave, something akin to

Egyptian wizardry, certain national rituals, will be born. By studying

the matter of being an Egyptian priest for a little while, the

author-producer may learn in the end how best to express and satisfy the

spirit-hungers that are peculiarly American. It is sometimes out of the

oldest dream that the youngest vision is born.

CHAPTER XX

THE PROPHET-WIZARD

The whirlwind of cowboys and Indians with which the photoplay began, came

about because this instrument, in asserting its genius, was feeling its

way toward the most primitive forms of life it could find.

Now there is a tendency for even wilder things. We behold the half-draped

figures living in tropical islands or our hairy fore-fathers acting out

narratives of the stone age. The moving picture conventionality permits

an abbreviation of drapery. If the primitive setting is convincing, the

figure in the grass-robe or buffalo hide at once has its rights over the

healthful imagination.

There is in this nation of moving-picture-goers a hunger for tales of

fundamental life that are not yet told. The cave-man longs with an

incurable homesickness for his ancient day. One of the fine photoplays of

primeval life is the story called Man's Genesis, described in chapter

two.

We face the exigency the world over of vast instruments like national

armies being played against each other as idly and aimlessly as the

checker-men on the cracker-barrels of corner groceries. And this

invention, the kinetoscope, which affects or will affect as many people

as the guns of Europe, is not yet understood in its powers, particularly

those of bringing back the primitive in a big rich way. The primitive is

always a new and higher beginning to the man who understands it. Not yet

has the producer learned that the feeling of the crowd is patriarchal,

splendid. He imagines the people want nothing but a silly lark.

All this apparatus and opportunity, and no immortal soul! Yet by faith

and a study of the signs we proclaim that this lantern of wizard-drama is

going to give us in time the visible things in the fulness of their

primeval force, and some that have been for a long time invisible. To

speak in a metaphor, we are going to have the primitive life of Genesis,

then all that evolution after: Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy,

Joshua, Judges, and on to a new revelation of St. John. In this

adolescence of Democracy the history of man is to be retraced, the same

round on a higher spiral of life.

Our democratic dream has been a middle-class aspiration built on a bog of

toil-soddened minds. The piles beneath the castle of our near-democratic

arts were rotting for lack of folk-imagination. The Man with the Hoe had

no spark in his brain. But now a light is blazing. We can build the

American soul broad-based from the foundations. We can begin with dreams

the veriest stone-club warrior can understand, and as far as an appeal to

the eye can do it, lead him in fancy through every phase of life to the

apocalyptic splendors.

This progress, according to the metaphor of this chapter, will be led by

prophet-wizards. These were the people that dominated the cave-men of

old. But what, more specifically, are prophet-wizards?

Let us consider two kinds of present-day people: scientific inventors, on

the one hand, and makers of art and poetry and the like, on the other.

The especial producers of art and poetry that we are concerned with in

this chapter we will call prophet-wizards: men like Albert Dürer,

Rembrandt, Blake, Elihu Vedder, Watts, Rossetti, Tennyson, Coleridge,

Poe, Maeterlinck, Yeats, Francis Thompson.

They have a certain unearthly fascination in some one or many of their

works. A few other men might be added to the list. Most great names are

better described under other categories, though as much beloved in their

own way. But these are especially adapted to being set in opposition to a

list of mechanical inventors that might be called realists by contrast:

the Wright brothers, and H. Pierpont Langley, Thomas A. Edison, Charles

Steinmetz, John Hays Hammond, Hudson Maxim, Graham Bell.

The prophet-wizards are of various schools. But they have a common

tendency and character in bringing forth a type of art peculiarly at war

with the realistic civilization science has evolved. It is one object of

this chapter to show that, when it comes to a clash between the two

forces, the wizards should rule, and the realists should serve them.

The two functions go back through history, sometimes at war, other days

in alliance. The poet and the scientist were brethren in the centuries of

alchemy. Tennyson, bearing in mind such a period, took the title of

Merlin in his veiled autobiography, Merlin and the Gleam.

Wizards and astronomers were one when the angels sang in Bethlehem,

"Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men." There came magicians, saying, "Where

is he that is born king of the Jews, for we have seen his star in the

east and have come to worship him?" The modern world in its gentler

moments seems to take a peculiar thrill of delight from these travellers,

perhaps realizing what has been lost from parting with such gentle seers

and secular diviners. Every Christmas half the magazines set them forth

in richest colors, riding across the desert, following the star to the

same manger where the shepherds are depicted.

Those wizard kings, whatever useless charms and talismans they wore,

stood for the unknown quantity in spiritual life. A magician is a man who

lays hold on the unseen for the mere joy of it, who steals, if necessary,

the holy bread and the sacred fire. He is often of the remnant of an

ostracized and disestablished priesthood. He is a free-lance in the

soul-world, owing final allegiance to no established sect. The fires of

prophecy are as apt to descend upon him as upon members of the

established faith. He loves the mysterious for the beauty of it, the

wildness and the glory of it, and not always to compel stiff-necked

people to do right.

It seems to me that the scientific and poetic functions of society should

make common cause again, if they are not, as in Merlin's time, combined

in one personality. They must recognize that they serve the same society,

but with the understanding that the prophetic function is the most

important, the wizard vocation the next, and the inventors' and realists'

genius important indeed, but the third consideration. The war between the

scientists and the prophet-wizards has come about because of the

half-defined ambition of the scientists to rule or ruin. They give us the

steam-engine, the skyscraper, the steam-heat, the flying machine, the

elevated railroad, the apartment house, the newspaper, the breakfast

food, the weapons of the army, the weapons of the navy, and think that

they have beautified our existence.

Moreover some one rises at this point to make a plea for the scientific

imagination. He says the inventor-scientists have brought us the mystery

of electricity, which is no hocus-pocus, but a special manifestation of

the Immanent God within us and about us. He says the student in the

laboratory brought us the X-ray, the wireless telegraph, the mystery of

radium, the mystery of all the formerly unharnessed power of God which

man is beginning to gather into the hollow of his hand.

The one who pleads for the scientific imagination points out that Edison

has been called the American Wizard. All honor to Edison and his kind.

And I admit specifically that Edison took the first great mechanical step

to give us the practical kinetoscope and make it possible that the

photographs, even of inanimate objects thrown upon the mirror-screen, may

become celestial actors. But the final phase of the transfiguration is

not the work of this inventor or any other. As long as the photoplays are

in the hands of men like Edison they are mere voodooism. We have nothing

but Moving Day, as heretofore described. It is only in the hands of the

prophetic photo-playwright and allied artists that the kinetoscope reels

become as mysterious and dazzling to the thinking spirit as the wheels of

Ezekiel in the first chapter of his prophecy. One can climb into the

operator's box and watch the sword-like stream of light till he is as

dazzled in flesh and spirit as the moth that burns its wings in the

lamp. But this is while a glittering vision and not a mere invention is

being thrown upon the screen.

The scientific man can explain away the vision as a matter of the

technique of double exposure, double printing, trick-turning, or stopping

down. And having reduced it to terms and shown the process, he expects us

to become secular and casual again. But of course the sun itself is a

mere trick of heat and light, a dynamo, an incandescent globe, to the man

in the laboratory. To us it must be a fire upon the altar.

Transubstantiation must begin. Our young magicians must derive strange

new pulse-beats from the veins of the earth, from the sap of the trees,

from the lightning of the sky, as well as the alchemical acids, metals,

and flames. Then they will kindle the beginning mysteries for our cause.

They will build up a priesthood that is free, yet authorized to freedom.

It will be established and disestablished according to the intrinsic

authority of the light revealed.

Now for a closer view of this vocation.

The picture of Religious Splendor has its obvious form in the

delineation of Biblical scenes, which, in the hands of the best

commercial producers, can be made as worth while as the work of men like

Tissot. Such films are by no means to be thought of lightly. This sort of

work will remain in the minds of many of the severely orthodox as the

only kind of a religious picture worthy of classification. But there are

many further fields.

Just as the wireless receiving station or the telephone switchboard

become heroes in the photoplay, so Aaron's rod that confounded the

Egyptians, the brazen serpent that Moses up-lifted in the wilderness, the

ram's horn that caused the fall of Jericho, the mantle of Elijah

descending upon the shoulders of Elisha from the chariot of fire, can

take on a physical electrical power and a hundred times spiritual meaning

that they could not have in the dead stage properties of the old miracle

play or the realism of the Tissot school. The waterfall and the tossing

sea are dramatis personæ in the ordinary film romance. So the Red Sea

overwhelming Pharaoh, the fires of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace sparing and

sheltering the three holy children, can become celestial actors. And

winged couriers can appear, in the pictures, with missions of import,

just as an angel descended to Joshua, saying, "As captain of the host of

the Lord am I now come."

The pure mechanic does not accept the doctrine. "Your alleged

supernatural appearance," he says, "is based on such a simple fact as

this: two pictures can be taken on one film."

But the analogy holds. Many primitive peoples are endowed with memories

that are double photographs. The world faiths, based upon centuries of

these appearances, are none the less to be revered because machine-ridden

men have temporarily lost the power of seeing their thoughts as pictures

in the air, and for the time abandoned the task of adding to tradition.

Man will not only see visions again, but machines themselves, in the

hands of prophets, will see visions. In the hands of commercial men they

are seeing alleged visions, and the term "\_vision\_" is a part of

moving-picture studio slang, unutterably cheapening religion and

tradition. When Confucius came, he said one of his tasks was the

rectification of names. The leaders of this age should see that this word

"\_vision\_" comes to mean something more than a piece of studio slang. If

it is the conviction of serious minds that the mass of men shall never

again see pictures out of Heaven except through such mediums as the

kinetoscope lens, let all the higher forces of our land courageously lay

hold upon this thing that saves us from perpetual spiritual blindness.

When the thought of primitive man, embodied in misty forms on the

landscape, reached epic proportions in the Greek, he saw the Olympians

more plainly than he beheld the Acropolis. Myron, Polykleitos, Phidias,

Scopas, Lysippus, Praxiteles, discerned the gods and demigods so clearly

they afterward cut them from the hard marble without wavering. Our

guardian angels of to-day must be as clearly seen and nobly hewn.

A double mental vision is as fundamental in human nature as the double

necessity for air and light. It is as obvious as that a thing can be both

written and spoken. We have maintained that the kinetoscope in the hands

of artists is a higher form of picture writing. In the hands of

prophet-wizards it will be a higher form of vision-seeing.

I have said that the commercial men are seeing alleged visions. Take, for

instance, the large Italian film that attempts to popularize Dante.

Though it has a scattering of noble passages, and in some brief episodes

it is an enhancement of Gustave Doré, taking it as a whole, it is a false

thing. It is full of apparitions worked out with mechanical skill, yet

Dante's soul is not back of the fires and swords of light. It gives to

the uninitiated an outline of the stage paraphernalia of the Inferno. It

has an encyclopædic value. If Dante himself had been the high director in

the plenitude of his resources, it might still have had that hollowness.

A list of words making a poem and a set of apparently equivalent pictures

forming a photoplay may have an entirely different outcome. It may be

like trying to see a perfume or listen to a taste. Religion that comes in

wholly through the eye has a new world in the films, whose relation to

the old is only discovered by experiment and intuition, patience and

devotion.

But let us imagine the grandson of an Italian immigrant to America, a

young seer, trained in the photoplay technique by the high American

masters, knowing all the moving picture resources as Dante knew Italian

song and mediæval learning. Assume that he has a genius akin to that of

the Florentine. Let him be a Modernist Catholic if you will. Let him

begin his message in the timber lands of Minnesota or the forests of

Alaska. "In midway of this our mortal life I found me in a gloomy wood

astray." Then let him paint new pictures of just punishment beyond the

grave, and merciful rehabilitation and great reward. Let his Hell,

Purgatory, and Paradise be built of those things which are deepest and

highest in the modern mind, yet capable of emerging in picture-writing

form.

Men are needed, therefore they will come. And lest they come weeping,

accursed, and alone, let us ask, how shall we recognize them? There is no

standard by which to discern the true from the false prophet, except the

mood that is engendered by contemplating the messengers of the past.

Every man has his own roll call of noble magicians selected from the

larger group. But here are the names with which this chapter began, with

some words on their work.

Albert Dürer is classed as a Renaissance painter. Yet his art has its

dwelling-place in the early Romanesque savageness and strangeness. And

the reader remembers Dürer's brooding muse called Melancholia that so

obsessed Kipling in The Light that Failed. But the wonder-quality went

into nearly all the Dürer wood-cuts and etchings. Rembrandt is a

prophet-wizard, not only in his shadowy portraits, but in his etchings of

holy scenes even his simplest cobweb lines become incantations. Other

artists in the high tides of history have had kindred qualities, but

coming close to our day, Elihu Vedder, the American, the illustrator of

the Rubáiyát, found it a poem questioning all things, and his very

illustrations answer in a certain fashion with winds of infinity, and

bring the songs of Omar near to the Book of Job. Vedder's portraits of

Lazarus and Samson are conceptions that touch the hem of the unknown.

George Frederick Watts was a painter of portraits of the soul itself, as

in his delineations of Burne-Jones and Morris and Tennyson.

It is a curious thing that two prophet-wizards have combined pictures and

song. Blake and Rossetti, whatever the failure of their technique, never

lacked in enchantment. Students of the motion picture side of poetry

would naturally turn to such men for spiritual precedents. Blake, that

strange Londoner, in his book of Job, is the paramount example of the

enchanter doing his work with the engraving tool in his hand.

Rossetti's Dante's Dream is a painting on the edge of every poet's

paradise. As for the poetry of these two men, there are Blake's Songs of

Innocence, and Rossetti's Blessed Damozel and his Burden of Nineveh.

As for the other poets, we have Coleridge, the author of Christabel, that

piece of winter witchcraft, Kubla Khan, that oriental dazzlement, and the

Ancient Mariner, that most English of all this list of enchantments. Of

Tennyson's work, besides Merlin and the Gleam, there are the poems when

the mantle was surely on his shoulders: The Lady of Shalott, The Lotus

Eaters, Sir Galahad, and St. Agnes' Eve.

Edgar Poe, always a magician, blends this power with the prophetical note

in the poem, The Haunted Palace, and in the stories of William Wilson,

The Black Cat and The Tell-tale Heart. This prophet-wizard side of a man

otherwise a wizard only, has been well illustrated in The Avenging

Conscience photoplay.

From Maeterlinck we have The Bluebird and many another dream. I devoutly

hope I will never see in the films an attempt to paraphrase this master.

But some disciple of his should conquer the photoplay medium, giving us

great original works.

Yeats has bestowed upon us The Land of Heart's Desire, The Secret Rose,

and many another piece of imaginative glory. Let us hope that we may be

spared any attempts to hastily paraphrase his wonders for the motion

pictures. But the man that reads Yeats will be better prepared to do his

own work in the films, or to greet the young new masters when they come.

Finally, Francis Thompson, in The Hound of Heaven, has written a song

that the young wizard may lean upon forevermore for private guidance. It

is composed of equal parts of wonder and conscience. With this poem in

his heart, the roar of the elevated railroad will be no more in his ears,

and he will dream of palaces of righteousness, and lead other men to

dream of them till the houses of mammon fade away.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD

Without airing my private theology I earnestly request the most sceptical

reader of this book to assume that miracles in a Biblical sense have

occurred. Let him take it for granted in the fashion of the strictly

æsthetic commentator who writes in sympathy with a Fra Angelico painting,

or as that great modernist, Paul Sabatier, does as he approaches the

problems of faith in the life of St. Francis. Let him also assume, for

the length of time that he is reading this chapter if no longer, that

miracles, in a Biblical sense, as vivid and as real to the body of the

Church, will again occur two thousand years in the future: events as

wonderful as those others, twenty centuries back. Let us anticipate that

many of these will be upon American soil. Particularly as sons and

daughters of a new country it is a spiritual necessity for us to look

forward to traditions, because we have so few from the past identified

with the six feet of black earth beneath us.

The functions of the prophet whereby he definitely painted future

sublimities have been too soon abolished in the minds of the wise. Mere

forecasting is left to the weather bureau so far as a great section of

the purely literary and cultured are concerned. The term prophet has

survived in literature to be applied to men like Carlyle: fiery spiritual

leaders who speak with little pretence of revealing to-morrow.

But in the street, definite forecasting of future events is still the

vulgar use of the term. Dozens of sober historians predicted the present

war with a clean-cut story that was carried out with much faithfulness of

detail, considering the thousand interests involved. They have been

called prophets in a congratulatory secular tone by the man in the

street. These felicitations come because well-authorized merchants in

futures have been put out of countenance from the days of Jonah and

Balaam till now. It is indeed a risky vocation. Yet there is an

undeniable line of successful forecasting by the hardy, to be found in

the Scripture and in history. In direct proportion as these men of fiery

speech were free from sheer silliness, their outlook has been considered

and debated by the gravest people round them. The heart of man craves the

seer. Take, for instance, the promise of the restoration of Jerusalem in

glory that fills the latter part of the Old Testament. It moves the

Jewish Zionist, the true race-Jew, to this hour. He is even now

endeavoring to fulfil the prophecy.

Consider the words of John the Baptist, "One mightier than I cometh, the

latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you

with the Holy Ghost and with fire." A magnificent foreshadowing, being

both a spiritual insight and the statement of a great definite event.

The heeded seers of the civilization of this our day have been secular in

their outlook. Perhaps the most striking was Karl Marx, in the middle of

the capitalistic system tracing its development from feudalism and

pointing out as inevitable, long before they came, such modern

institutions as the Steel Trust and the Standard Oil Company. It remains

to be seen whether the Marxian prophecy of the international alliance of

workingmen that is obscured by the present conflict in Europe, and other

of his forecastings, will be ultimately verified.

There have been secular teachers like Darwin, who, by a scientific

reconstruction of the past, have implied an evolutionary future based on

the biological outlook. Deductions from the teachings of Darwin are said

to control those who mould the international doings of Germany and Japan.

There have been inventor-seers like Jules Verne. In Twenty Thousand

Leagues under the Sea he dimly discerned the submarine. There is a type

of social prophet allied to Verne. Edward Bellamy, in Looking Backward,

reduced the world to a matter of pressing the button, turning on the

phonograph. It was a combination of glorified department-store and Coney

Island, on a cooperative basis. A seventeen-year-old boy from the

country, making his first visit to the Woolworth building in New York,

and riding in the subway when it is not too crowded, might be persuaded

by an eloquent city relative that this is Bellamy's New Jerusalem.

A soul with a greater insight is H.G. Wells. But he too, in spite of his

humanitarian heart, has, in a great mass of his work, the laboratory

imagination. Serious Americans pronounce themselves beneficiaries of

Wells' works, and I confess myself edified and thoroughly grateful.

Nevertheless, one smells chemicals in the next room when he reads most of

Wells' prophecies. The X-ray has moved that Englishman's mind more

dangerously than moonlight touches the brain of the chanting witch. One

striking and typical story is The Food of the Gods. It is not only a fine

speculation, but a great parable. The reader may prefer other tales. Many

times Wells has gone into his laboratory to invent our future, in the

same state of mind in which an automobile manufacturer works out an

improvement in his car. His disposition has greatly mellowed of late, in

this respect, but underneath he is the same Wells.

Citizens of America, wise or foolish, when they look into the coming

days, have the submarine mood of Verne, the press-the-button complacency

of Bellamy, the wireless telegraph enthusiasm of Wells. If they express

hopes that can be put into pictures with definite edges, they order

machinery piled to the skies. They see the redeemed United States running

deftly in its jewelled sockets, ticking like a watch.

This, their own chosen outlook, wearies the imaginations of our people,

they do not know why. It gives no full-orbed apocalyptic joy. Only to the

young mechanical engineer does such a hope express real Utopia. He can

always keep ahead of the devices that herald its approach. No matter what

day we attain and how busy we are adjusting ourselves, he can be moving

on, inventing more to-morrows; ruling the age, not being ruled by it.

Because this Utopia is in the air, a goodly portion of the precocious

boys turn to mechanical engineering. Youths with this bent are the most

healthful and inspiring young citizens we have. They and their like will

fulfil a multitude of the hopes of men like Verne, Bellamy, and Wells.

But if every mechanical inventor on earth voiced his dearest wish and

lived to see it worked out, the real drama of prophecy and fulfilment, as

written in the imagination of the human race, would remain uncompleted.

As Mrs. Browning says in Lady Geraldine's Courtship:--

If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,

If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath,

'Twere but power within our tether, no new spirit-power comprising,

And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death.

St. John beheld the New Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven prepared as a

bride adorned for her husband, not equipped as a touring car varnished

for its owner.

It is my hope that the moving picture prophet-wizards will set before the

world a new group of pictures of the future. The chapter on The Architect

as a Crusader endeavors to show how, by proclaiming that America will

become a permanent World's Fair, she can be made so within the lives of

men now living, if courageous architects have the campaign in hand. There

are other hopes that look a long way further. They peer as far into the

coming day as the Chinese historian looks into the past. And then they

are but halfway to the millennium.

Any standard illustrator could give us Verne or Bellamy or Wells if he

did his best. \_But we want pictures beyond the skill of any delineator in

the old mediums, yet within the power of the wizard photoplay producer\_.

Oh you who are coming to-morrow, show us everyday America as it will be

when we are only halfway to the millennium yet thousands of years in the

future! Tell what type of honors men will covet, what property they will

still be apt to steal, what murders they will commit, what the law court

and the jail will be or what will be the substitutes, how the newspaper

will appear, the office, the busy street.

Picture to America the lovers in her half-millennium, when usage shall

have become iron-handed once again, when noble sweethearts must break

beautiful customs for the sake of their dreams. Show us the gantlet of

strange courtliness they must pass through before they reach one another,

obstacles brought about by the immemorial distinctions of scholarship

gowns or service badges.

Make a picture of a world where machinery is so highly developed it

utterly disappeared long ago. Show us the antique United States, with ivy

vines upon the popular socialist churches, and weather-beaten images of

socialist saints in the niches of the doors. Show us the battered

fountains, the brooding universities, the dusty libraries. Show us houses

of administration with statues of heroes in front of them and gentle

banners flowing from their pinnacles. Then paint pictures of the oldest

trees of the time, and tree-revering ceremonies, with unique costumes and

a special priesthood.

Show us the marriage procession, the christening, the consecration of the

boy and girl to the state. Show us the political processions and election

riots. Show us the people with their graceful games, their religious

pantomimes. Show us impartially the memorial scenes to celebrate the

great men and women, and the funerals of the poor. And then moving on

toward the millennium itself, show America after her victories have been

won, and she has grown old, as old as the Sphinx. Then give us the Dragon

and Armageddon and the Lake of Fire.

Author-producer-photographer, who would prophesy, read the last book in

the Bible, not to copy it in form and color, but that its power and grace

and terror may enter into you. Delineate in your own way, as you are led

on your own Patmos, the picture of our land redeemed. After fasting and

prayer, let the Spirit conduct you till you see in definite line and form

the throngs of the brotherhood of man, the colonnades where the arts are

expounded, the gardens where the children dance.

That which man desires, that will man become. He largely fulfils his own

prediction and vision. Let him therefore have a care how he prophesies

and prays. We shall have a tin heaven and a tin earth, if the scientists

are allowed exclusive command of our highest hours.

Let us turn to Luke iv. 17.

"And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And

when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written:--

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach

the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to

preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind,

to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of

the Lord.

"And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat

down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened

on him. And he began to say unto them: 'This day is this Scripture

fulfilled in your ears.'

"And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which

proceeded out of his mouth. And they said: 'Is not this Joseph's son?'"

I am moved to think Christ fulfilled that prophecy because he had read it

from childhood. It is my entirely personal speculation, not brought forth

dogmatically, that Scripture is not so much inspired as it is curiously

and miraculously inspiring.

If the New Isaiahs of this time will write their forecastings in

photoplay hieroglyphics, the children in times to come, having seen those

films from infancy, or their later paraphrases in more perfect form, can

rise and say, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." But

without prophecy there is no fulfilment, without Isaiah there is no

Christ.

America is often shallow in her dreams because she has no past in the

European and Asiatic sense. Our soil has no Roman coin or buried altar or

Buddhist tope. For this reason multitudes of American artists have moved

to Europe, and only the most universal of wars has driven them home. Year

after year Europe drained us of our beauty-lovers, our highest painters

and sculptors and the like. They have come pouring home, confused

expatriates, trying to adjust themselves. It is time for the American

craftsman and artist to grasp the fact that we must be men enough to

construct a to-morrow that grows rich in forecastings in the same way

that the past of Europe grows rich in sweet or terrible legends as men go

back into it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Scenario writers, producers, photoplay actors, endowers of exquisite

films, sects using special motion pictures for a predetermined end, all

you who are taking the work as a sacred trust, I bid you God-speed. Let

us resolve that whatever America's to-morrow may be, she shall have a day

that is beautiful and not crass, spiritual, not material. Let us resolve

that she shall dream dreams deeper than the sea and higher than the

clouds of heaven, that she shall come forth crowned and transfigured with

her statesmen and wizards and saints and sages about her, with magic

behind her and miracle before her.

Pray that you be delivered from the temptation to cynicism and the

timidities of orthodoxy. Pray that the workers in this your glorious new

art be delivered from the mere lust of the flesh and pride of life. Let

your spirits outflame your burning bodies.

Consider what it will do to your souls, if you are true to your trust.

Every year, despite earthly sorrow and the punishment of your mortal

sins, despite all weakness and all of Time's revenges upon you, despite

Nature's reproofs and the whips of the angels, new visions will come, new

prophecies will come. You will be seasoned spirits in the eyes of the

wise. The record of your ripeness will be found in your craftsmanship.

You will be God's thoroughbreds.

\* \* \* \* \*

It has come then, this new weapon of men, and the face of the whole earth

changes. In after centuries its beginning will be indeed remembered.

It has come, this new weapon of men, and by faith and a study of the

signs we proclaim that it will go on and on in immemorial wonder.

VACHEL LINDSAY.

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS,

Nov. 1, 1915.

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