

BIRSKY AND ZAPP TALK OF THE MOVIES

"Every Body Has Got Two Businesses Now," Says Birsky—"His Regular Business and the Moving Picture Business."—What Is Art When They Must Cut Down Expenses — Candy Trade Suffers, Says Philosopher Who Studies the Times.

By Montague Glass

Illustrations by Briggs

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"I MET Sam Pajongin in the subway this morning," Barnett Zapp, the waist manufacturer, said, as with the aid of his thumb and a quart of gravy which remained from his portion of *gefuelle Miltz mit Farfel*, he demonstrated the capillarity of a slice of rye bread.

"And how is the herring business?" Louis Birsky, the real estate, asked.

"What do you mean—the herring business?" Zapp demanded. "The herring business is now a side issue for

blows in the nickel to see "Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Wife," a feature fillum in five reels."

"Not alone cheap candy," Birsky said, "but every business is feeling the effects of the moving-picture business—a few businesses favorable, like the delicatessen and lunchroom business, which the nearest some married men has got to a home-cooked dinner since the moving pictures started is half a pound of sliced luncheon bolony mit Kartoffel Salad. Then there is the

barred out by the management for claiming that the Follies should ought to be a stag. The theater managers is kicking something terrible about the way the moving pictures is eating into their business, Zapp."

"Sure I know," Zapp said, "and they are their own worst competitors, Birsky. It's like if all the saloonkeepers would become temperance lecturers because they seen a chance to make a little money on the side and then complained there was no more profit in the liquor business, y'understand. Every

Grand Forks or Sandusky or wherever it happens to be, they put on the stage a real restaurant, with coffee machines and gas griddles, and they broil right there in front of the audience every day steaks for ten or fifteen dollars, because Mr. Belasco is very artistic that way.

"If he puts on a restaurant, it's put on right; it don't make no difference what it costs; aber you take a moving picture feller, and if he has got a fillum with a restaurant in it, all he does is to go to a restaurant and ask the feller that runs it he should allow for a five-dollar note the movie actors to carry on there, and pictures is taken of it with a camera und fertig. Then when you go to see the fillum, understand me, they flash on the screen:

to pay," Zapp said, "and furthermore all the moving picture actors gets contracts for a year already."

"But what is such contracts worth?" Birsky asked. "If a moving picture feller wants to get rid of such a contract, all he has got to do is to get the party of the second part to play Ned in a fillum where Ned escapes from the Sheriff by leaping on horseback from a cliff five hundred feet high, y'understand, and the widow can frame the contract and hang it in the front parlor as a sownveener of the two weeks when her husband *olav hasholom* used to make five hundred dollars a week."

Zapp sighed heavily.

"I got a designer which has me under a three years' contract since last Tuesday already," he said, "and if I could hire Maxine Elliott for a model and C. M. Schwab for a salesman, I couldn't get rid of that murderer's designs for the cost of the linings alone. There's big money in it for somebody who could persuade that *Rosher* to play in a fillum where Ned gets locked in a burning ranch by the Mexican for a thousand dollars a week. I would pay two weeks' salary out of my own pocket, and if they ain't got a ranch to burn I would even *schenck* the moving picture concern a house out in Borough Park which I got vacant on my hands since 1913."

"Maybe you think such a thing ain't possible that a waist designer should get a job as a moving picture actor?" Birsky said. "Believe me, Zapp, the last thing in the world which is necessary in the moving picture business is experience—in particular the actors and the people which writes the scenarios. You remember in the old days, Zapp, that everybody thought he could sell clothing. Well, nowadays every *Schlemiel* thinks he could be a moving picture actor, and most of them are. It's the same way with writing the scenarios. Take any retail drygoods concern today, and everybody from the cash girls to the store superintendent is writing scenarios on the side. Also, Zapp, if you go into a streetcar and the feller opposite to you is talking to himself, y'understand, you might think he's a lunatic, Zapp, but as a matter of fact he ain't crazy by from three to ten dollars, on account he is doping out a scenario which he would sell for somewhere around that price to a moving picture concern. Furthermore, if you see a man stand still on the sidewalk

and make marks on an old envelope naturally don't take him to see 'Hamlet with a pencil, that ain't no sign that he's trying to figure how it could be he is overdrawn at the bank two dollars and forty-five cents. No, Zapp. A feller could make a good living nowadays collecting old envelopes and selling 'em to people to make memorandums of scenarios on."

"Aber how do they do it?" Zapp exclaimed. "I could no more write a scenario and get away with it as a check for a million dollars."

"That's because you ain't never tried

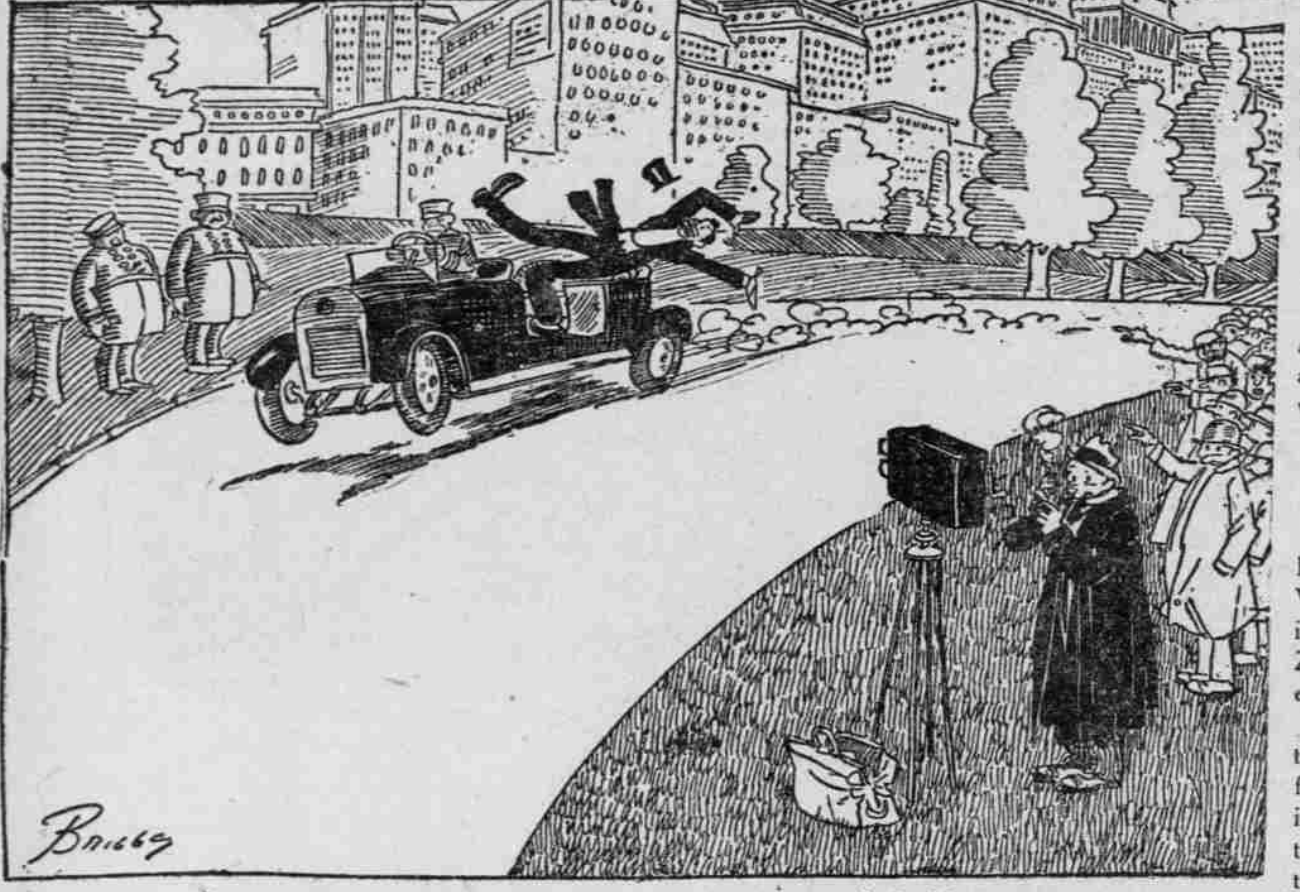
let. Am I right or wrong?"

"You don't take him to a moving picture, neither," Zapp said.

"I know you don't," Birsky replied.

"Asking a customer to go to a theater and then taking him to a moving picture, Zapp, is the equivalence of inviting him to lunch and then blowing him at a drug store to an egg chocolate with malted milk."

"At that, there's lots of people makes a luncheon off of chocolate malted milk," Zapp said.



NED DISCOVERS HIS SISTER IN A FASHIONABLE BROADWAY RESTAURANT.

and afterwards they show the fashionable Broadway restaurant, and on the wall is a sign:

CHILI CON CARNE, 15c.

"That's the difference between Mr. Belasco and moving picture fellers. What do they care about being artistic if it's going to cost an extra ten dollars, Zapp? All they want is to keep the expenses down."

"That's where you make a big mistake," Zapp replied. "Moving picture fellers is eaten up with expenses. For instance, the wages which moving picture fellers pays to their actors is something terrible. Five hundred a week is small already."

"Well, why not?" Birsky retorted. "Look what a moving picture actor is got to do to earn his money. We will say, for example, that he goes to work at nine o'clock. At half past nine he goes up to Central Park and falls out of an oiternobile running thirty miles an hour. The first time he falls out, maybe the feller that works the camera wasn't looking, so he's got to fall out again. This time somebody moves the camera, so he falls out a third time, and one way or another they keep that actor falling out of an oiternobile going thirty miles an hour from half past nine to lunch time. Supposing he does get five hundred dollars a week. Is that a life? I ask you."

"Just the same, it's a lot of money



If you see a man stand still on the sidewalk and make marks.

to write a scenario," Birsky said. "All you've got to do is to take a play like 'Hamlet,' for instance, and you call Hamlet Ned and the King Mexican Louis. Then you dictate the main points to a stenographer and send it to a moving picture concern which was formerly in the plumbing supply business or children's knee pants, and you're bound to get away with it, Zapp, because the only plays them fellers knows anything about is shows they used to take their customers to see, and if you are trying to sell a customer goods, you

"They're welcome, for all of me," Birsky said, "but so long as I've got the price I would stick to soup, meat, dessert and coffee, and I'm the same way about going to a show. When I go broke, I'll be a moving picture fan, too, Zapp, but as it stands, when I feel like taking in a theater I want to see a show which was written by an author, not a truck-driver. Also I like to hear an actor as well as see him, Zapp."

"Me, too," Zapp agreed, "and if he's got other talents besides falling out of an oiternobile going thirty miles an hour, Birsky, so much the better."

Sam. Him and J. Schlapp, of Katzberg & Schlapp, in the pants business, has formed the Charoses Fillum Company, and next week they are going to release their first fillum by the name 'The Fatal Murder.'

"The way it looks nowadays," Birsky said, "everybody has got two businesses—his regular business and the moving-picture business."

"All except the feller in the cheap candy business," Zapp said. "There ain't nothing in the cheap candy business no more. Birsky, on account if a lady gives her six-year-old boy five cents he should buy himself a taffy on a stick, y'understand, he goes right away to a moving pictures instead and

spectable business, which while in former times ladies whose husbands made from thirty dollars a week down used to get housemaid's knee from keeping the flat looking as neat as a pin, y'understand, they have now got to be fitted with glasses for eye strain from watching moving pictures every afternoon up to five minutes to six or five minutes before whatever time the husband comes home."

"Well, there's one business moving pictures ain't improved none," Birsky said, "and that's the regular theater business. Even on first nights nowadays the fifty-cent gallery and balcony is empty excepting the ushers and a couple of dozen reporters with false mustaches and smoked glasses which was

theater manager has got also a chain of moving picture houses. They are killing the hen that laid the golden eggs."

"That's all right, too," Birsky retorted, "but compared with the golden eggs which moving pictures is laying the old-time theater was a rooster, Zapp. And not only is the moving picture fellers making big money, but they ain't got to invest not near as much capital as a regular theater manager. Take this here Belasco, for instance, which he specializes on re-elastic shows with telephone switchboards, restaurants and doctors' offices, and supposing, for instance, he's got a restaurant in it, y'understand, then every night that show plays in New York or

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