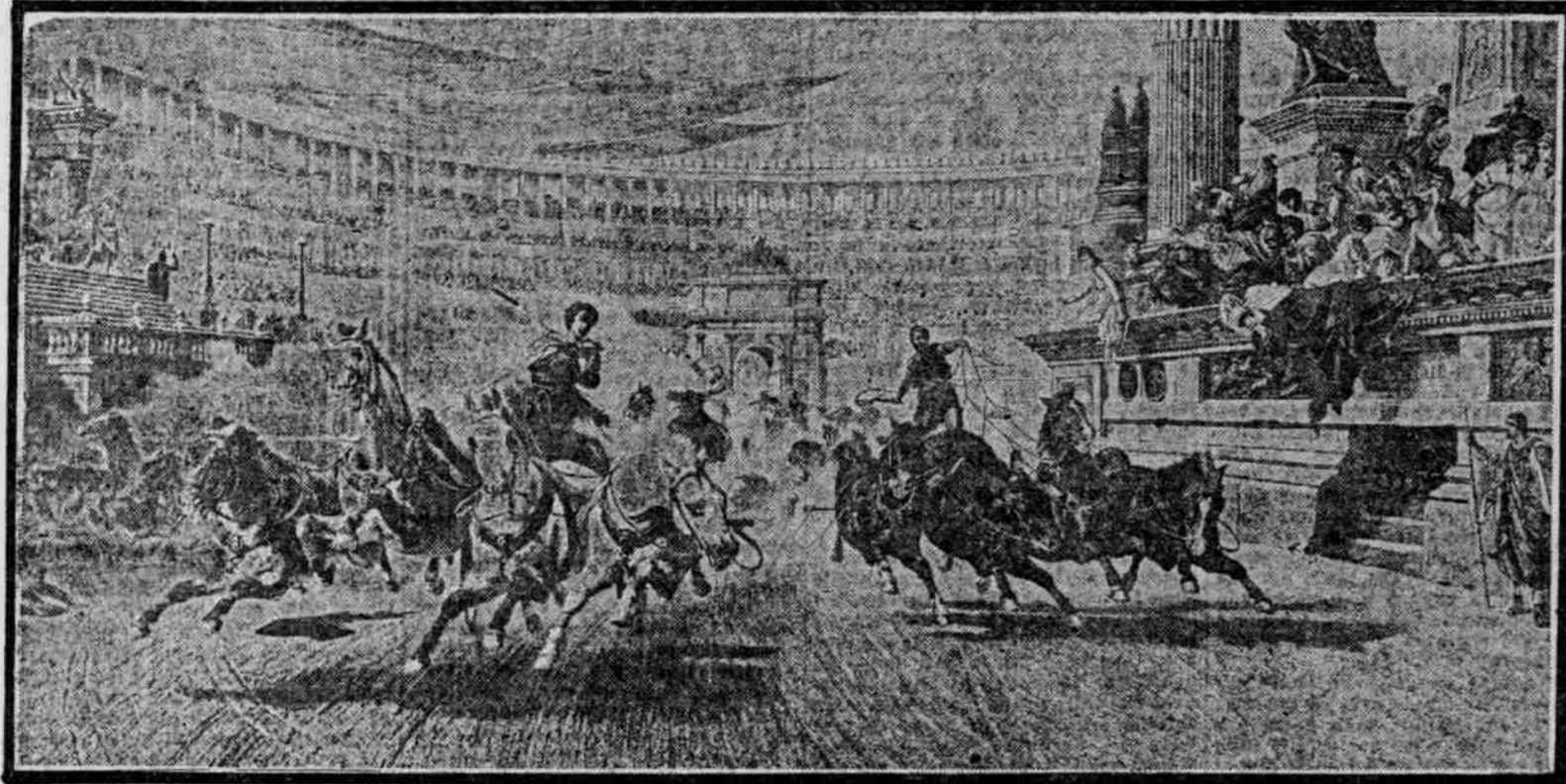


\$1,000,000.00 More for "Ben-Hur"

FIRST—Gen. Lew Wallace Wrote the Book and Everybody Read It.
THEN—"Ben Hur" Was Dramatized and 20,000,000 Saw the Play.
AND NOW—"Ben Hur" Is Being Made Over for the Screen, With Scenes Actually Filmed in the Coliseum at Rome.



Edward J. Morgan, Mabel Burt and Adeline Adler as they appeared in the original stage cast of "Ben Hur."



"THE CHARIOT RACE," FROM THE FAMOUS PAINTING BY ALEXANDER WAGNER.

Reaching further into the field of literary masterpieces, the movies have grasped "Ben Hur." Paying \$1,000,000 for the rights to it—the biggest price yet paid for such privileges—the new owners are going ahead as rapidly as possible to place on the screen the thrilling scenes of the great book by General Lew Wallace that never were excelled and only in a few instances equalled.

The drama written by William Young from the book was played 7000 times before 20,000,000 persons and earned \$10,000,000. It was first produced April 17, 1899, in the Broadway theater, New York City.

But the success of the stage play will probably be eclipsed by the screen play. Such scenes as the chariot race, spectacular enough on the stage treadmill, when shown in the movies with their limitless reality, should prove the greatest cinema spectacle ever shown. It will rank with the fall of Babylon in "Intolerance" and other master scenes the camera has recorded.

The great motion picture audience is waiting in all parts of the world to see it. They are wondering how the Christ will be depicted. Will He be shown by a shaft of light, as in the stage drama? Or will He walk through the screen in transparent form by use of the double negative?

But even this question is of small moment compared to the interest aroused among the clergy of all denominations. For they seem to hold the belief that the motion picture can do only good and that it will be in the nature of reviving Christian fervor to show as only the movies can depict the character and acts of Christ as they were portrayed in the great book that General Wallace wrote.

ever, it lay around for months—read or unread, history sayeth not. Finally some reader induced the house to issue a limited number of copies. And the book did not sell.

For two years it lagged behind the six best sellers of those days. Then, without rhyme or reason—or, perhaps because of its inherently great literary value—or, because it was the best novel of the century—the public began to buy. Orders piled up until one edition followed another so rapidly that the publishers lost count.

At that time there was no international copyright and foreign publishing houses issued pirated editions in all known tongues, including English. The fame of the book spread to the furthest corners of the world. Literary critics were unanimous in singing its praises—after the public had taken it to its collective bosom!

The Piety of a Great Novelist.

And, of course, the astute theatrical manager sought the state rights—but in vain. For General Wallace, as was stated, was a deeply religious man and was of the opinion that it would be something akin to sacrilege to portray the figure of the Savior on the stage—and how else could the manager convey the spoken word to an audience?

At that time Marc Klaw and A. L. Erlanger were most powerful in the theatrical world. Associated with

them was Joseph Brooks, persuasive and magnetic. They sent him to see the general. Conference after conference came to wreck upon the one question—how to portray the Christ. Finally Brooks "hit upon the plan" to substitute a shaft of piercing light.

The general capitulated and William Young, a noted dramatist, was commissioned to write the play. The contract was signed on April 17, 1899, and early in September Young delivered the completed text.

The Original Cast of "Ben Hur."

Then the casting began. For the title role there was needed an imposing figure, a fine actor, with a strong, masterful voice. The choice finally fell upon Walker Whiteside, noted as a splendid mummer, William S. Hart, since then a film star, was selected for Messala, the villain of the play. Henry Lee, a Shakespearean actor of fine presence, was chosen for Simonides; Frank Mordaunt, the elder, for Balthazar; Emmett Corrigan, still a big figure on the American stage, was assigned to Ilderim, the Arab sheik and owner of the four Arab horses which won the famous chariot race; Frederick Truesdell, a Bolsoak actor since then, for Molluch; Mabel Burt, for the mother of Ben Hur; Adeline Adler, a comparatively unknown actress, for Tirzah, Ben Hur's sweetheart; Mary Shaw, known to stage lovers of the present era, for

Amrah, and Grace George, present-day star, for Esther. Within two days Whiteside had realized that physically he was unsuited for the role of Ben Hur and had resigned. He was followed by Grace George, who was replaced by Gretchen Lyons.

Brooks, who staged the play, replaced Whiteside with Edward J. Morgan, the creator of John Storm, hero in Hall Caine's "The Christian." Morgan was eminently suited for the part, physically and historically. (He killed himself some years ago in a fit of despondency.)

The opening night was November 23, 1899; the house the Broadway theater at Broadway and Forty-first street. A strange coincidence is that the Broadway was formerly a Christian church where the word of God was preached—not acted.

The initial audience little realized the tremendous amount of work entailed in the production. Four trainees worked six months to train the horses for the chariot race, run on a treadmill—the first time such a contrivance had been used on a stage. The mill cost \$13,400 to construct.

But that was not the only outlay, for the costuming and scenery brought the entire cost of the production up to \$71,000—a tremendous sum for those days. To duplicate the original production would cost close to \$200,000 today!

1921 YEAR OF FLOWERS IN YOSEMITE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

Magnificent Display of Blooms Held Never Before Equalled—Showing Attributed to Abundant Snow.

THE YEAR 1921 has been written into the history of Yosemite valley by Nature herself as the year of flowers. Perhaps never before has there been such a magnificent display of blooms of so diversified a nature displayed on an equal space of the earth's surface. The abundance of blooms is the result of abundant snows on the higher levels of the park.

Yosemite's topography, with thousands of feet difference in altitude in places within halting distance of each other, makes it possible for the visitor to enjoy flowers of several seasons in a single visit.

Leaving the rich San Joaquin valley at Merced for the beautiful trip by train through the Canyon of the Merced river, scarred by the gold diggings of '49, the traveler turns his floral calendar backward with each mile of climbing into the Sierra Nevada, passing rapidly from full summer to late spring at El Portal, where the official gateway to Yosemite national park is located. A few miles further, at the gates of the valley—that famous spot where El Captain stands on the left, Three Graces and Bridal Veil falls on the

right, with a vista of Yosemite valley between—he finds spring in full glory.

Seasons Strangely Merged.

And on the same day visitors to Glacier point, "just upstairs" from Yosemite valley, on the rim of the granite wall inclosing the valley and 3254 feet higher, may be seen skiing and tobogganing on four feet of snow.

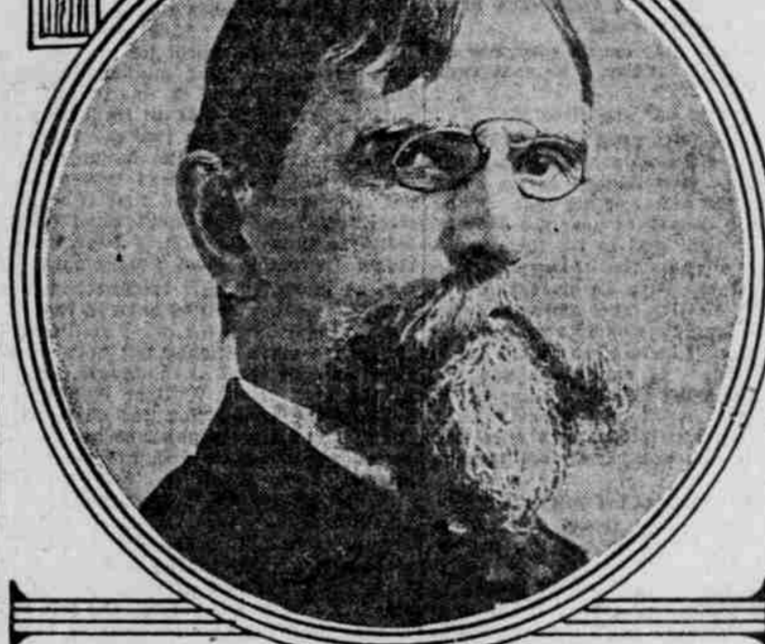
Most interesting of all plants to the visitor is the snow plant—and no other is so jealously guarded by the park authorities. When word of a new stalk is received a sign is dispatched hastily and erected near it—"hands off!" In its early stages the snowplant is more like a scarlet paragon up than anything else. As it matures the leaves near the upper end unfold and reveal bells much like those of a hyscynth. The name snow

plant is misleading, according to such a high authority as Jepson, who says the plant has nothing to do with snow and that the name probably originated because it appears early in spring and is likely to be caught in a late flurry, which makes the richness of its coloring all the more conspicuous, causing the uninformed to think that the plant has pushed its way through the new snow.

Plant Remarkable One.

Contrary to the common assumption, the snow plant is not a parasite, but lives on decaying vegetable matter absorbed through intricately placed white fibers which serve the plant in the place of roots. It is unique in that the food absorbed is at once transmuted into the scarlet stalk and leaves, differing from other plants, which are veritable chemical laboratories, demanding chlorophyll to assist them in digesting their daily meals.

There probably are more than 1000 different species of flowering plants, shrubs and trees in Yosemite. Some of them, like the marsh buttercup, seem to bud beneath the snow and then burst into bloom as soon as the icy covering melts. On the high levels of the park a thin patch of snow will disappear under the influence of a hot sun and the patient botanist in a few hours can see the buttercup unfolding into full blossom. This undoubtedly is due to environmental nature having taught the flowers of the high altitudes to adapt themselves to the brief season of warmth.



General Lew Wallace, author of "Ben Hur," whose great book goes into the movies.

From the very first night the play was an overwhelming success. Wilbur Bates a Chicago newspaper man had been appointed publicity man and he worked the newspapers of New York and surrounding territory to the queen's taste. The very first week he had a special morning performance for clergymen of all denominations. Among them he distributed cards to fill out—how they liked it—or did not—would they talk of the intense campaign was that the play ran for 134 nights—until stopped by the heat—and despite the low scale of prices took in \$432,000!

What has happened to "Ben Hur" since then? It has traveled the country from end to end every season since then, except the last. And it is going out again the next. Twenty million persons have seen the play and have paid some \$10,000,000 to see it. England acclaimed it; so did Australia. The book on which the play was based has been read in every conceivable nook of the world—and it has been seen only in English-speaking countries.

In the course of time the cast changed completely. William Farnum, film star, became Ben Hur, to be succeeded by Emmett Corrigan and Rich-

The temptation scene in the grove of Daphne—Richard Buehler as Ben Hur and Virginia Howell as Iras.

ard Buehler. Old Bill Hart, bad man—good man—of the movies, relinquished his role of Messala, the villain. Actors came and went, but "Ben Hur," the perennial, continued on its way.

Why the Play Was Sold.

About a year ago there came a hitch—one of the reasons for not sending the play out last year—Klaw and Erlanger disagreed and their years-long partnership was dissolved. The play became the center of a legal dispute which ended only a short time ago. Under the new agreement Klaw withdrew entirely and the ownership was vested in Erlanger, Ziegfeld and Dillingham. The motion picture rights were contracted for at \$1,000,000, the highest price ever paid for the movie rights to play or book.

David W. Griffith held the record up to the purchase of "Ben Hur" by paying \$175,000 for "Way Down East."

And this brings us to the motion picture some day to be made of the book. Filming the chariot race in the Coliseum at Rome—depicting the wreck of the galley during the sea battle with pirates—the rescue of Ben Hur—the temptation scene in the grove of Daphne!

And then again the "dearly religious nature of the story will lend itself to translation to the screen by some master mind—like—shall it be Griffith?

At any rate "Ben Hur" stands alone and unrivaled as a money-maker, either in the literary or dramatic field. It is in a class by itself and, as the ad says, "there's a reason—it is a masterpiece by a master of descriptive writing—tense, human, yet deeply religious and reverent."

PEOPLE OF MANDALAY REGARD DOGFISH AS SACRED ANIMAL

Elevation of Species to Distinction Goes Far Back Into History and Involves Shan Princess Whose Marriage Proved Unhappy.

THE PEOPLE of Mandalay have chosen the dogfish which inhabits the Irrawaddy river as one of their sacred animals, for a very picturesque and romantic reason which goes back a long time in their history. In our own country fish have attracted to our rivers myriads of devotees, from the immortal Isak Walton downwards, but in their case the devotion has been not to the fish, but to the sport of catching and killing it, a fate which obviously does not befall animals which are invested with sanctity.

The legend of the Burmese sacred dogfish tells that once upon a time a king of Pagan was married to a Shan princess, who had an earring in which was set a relic of Buddha. All went well during the earlier portion of the married life of the royal couple, but at last there came a rift in the lute, so to speak, for one day the king noticed that this relic was shining unaturally, and, being a very superstitious potentate, he forthwith jumped to the conclusion that his wife must be a witch, and in consequence turned her out.

Sorrowfully, the unfortunate queen began her journey to her home in

the Shan states, and on her arrival at Shwehsayan she made up her mind, not without much apparent good reason that there was no use in retaining any longer this relic of Buddha, which had brought her to such a sorrowful pass. Accordingly, much distraught, as may well be imagined she buried it in the ground and caused the erection of a little pagoda over it, thus converting the place into a shrine.

Some years later it began to be rumored that, owing to the presence of the relic, large fish congregated at this spot in the Myittha river at certain seasons of the year. The queen's husband heard of this, and sent his minister to investigate the story. The fish, it was discovered would come up to be fed by hand, and the minister, in view of this fact, put gold leaf on the fishes' heads.

It happened once that the minister had to go to Bhamo on business soon after his visit to Shwehsayan, and to his surprise, at a pagoda festival at Bhamo, he discovered in the Irrawaddy river some of the same fish with the gold leaf on their heads. On his return he mentioned this to

the king, with the result that Shwehsayan became a sacred place. The veneration in which it is held by the inhabitants of Burmah is apparent from the pilgrimages made to it from all parts of the country. Especially noticeable, as has been said, are the crowds which visit the place in March.

Payson Still Walks at 82.

Outlook.

Edward Payson Weston, the pedestrian who was famous a generation ago for his wonderful walking feats, is still hale and hearty at the age of 82 years, so a newspaper paragraph states. Even now he walks three miles daily for his mail and several times a week takes a 12-mile walk in the neighborhood of his home, Plutarch, Ulster county, New York. Just to keep himself in condition. Weston once walked 550 miles in six days, and 5000 miles in 100 days.

England's Dinner Is on Wane.

London Mail.

It used to be said that half the energy of the British was expended in giving unnecessary dinners to one another, but the reproach is no longer justified. People entertain freely enough in other ways, but the formal dinner party is becoming more and more a thing of the past. It is at once too expensive and too dull for an age which is compelled to regard economy but eagerly demands to be amused.