

Cashing In On Celluloid

By HERBERT COREY



Noted War Correspondent Switches From French Front to Movie Front—How Filmland Taught him to Pet A Million Dollars—Corey Reveals How Much Real Money in the Movies

This is to be an article about the motion-picture industry in the United States.

There! The text has been read. The target, so to speak, has been pinned on the wall. A park has been provided in which I can mobilize my ideas, because I know that only by an effort can I keep my mind on the real subject of this writing. The moment the pressure is relaxed I shall begin to talk about money. And I shall deal in enormous figures. Ten hours after I began the work of inquiry I had a stub of soft pencil and was writing huge sums on the tablecloth. There is an intoxication, a glamour, a sort of necromancy about the business. A million becomes domesticated, and you can pet it. Smaller sums are kept in the barn.

The money is real, too. Or most of the money is real. Only the conditions seem absurd and romantic. If you can imagine a gigantic Monte Carlo in which all the players are constantly winning, and in which, by some upheaval of natural law, the house is winning too, you can get an idea of the motion-picture business as it seems to one who looks on from the outside. Perhaps the gambling simile is not a good one. Think, then, of a farmer whose crops grow passionately through sun and frost and rain and dry weather, and are always sold for increasing prices. Think of a perpetual bull market. Think of mines from which you take the raw gold with a spoon. Think of buckets full of diamonds.

Before I get down to the real telling of this story, it may be well to offer presumptive evidence that I am sane. When the reader reads that four persons in the moving-picture business are each being paid salaries approximating one and one-quarter million dollars; that actresses unknown to the

stage spend \$50,000 for dresses in a season; that an attractive title has been thought worth \$5,000; that one of the great stars thinks \$10,000 a fair price for an idea around which he can build a comedy; that a chain of theatres was recently capitalized at \$15,000,000—Well, the reader is apt to suspect that there is something wrong somewhere. But these things, and more, are true. The explanation is that there are 14,000 moving-picture theatres in the United States. Really, there are about 17,000 according to fairly reliable estimates, but many of these are "store shows" which can hardly be classed as theatres. It is a conservative estimate to say that the film theatre will average 700 seats each, and one of the most unexcitable distributors told me that each theatre will be filled twice a day for 325 days in the year.

Very well, then. Fourteen thousand theatres of 700 seats filled twice daily for 325 days gives a total of 6,370,000,000 paid admissions annually. Every ticket of admission was sold for ten cents. If only ten cents were paid for each seat, the total would be the impressive sum of \$637,000,000.

Such figures explain film prosperity. More people go to see motion-pictures than are interested in any other form of sport or amusement. Think of it! Baseball, tennis, golf, canoeing, all dwindle into insignificance when compared to 6,000,000,000 paid admissions.

No wonder that ten film theatres are being built for one of the other sort, and that they are usually handsomer and more commodious. Five hundred thousand persons are employed directly or indirectly in the motion-picture industry. Fifty thousand work on the Western Coast in the production end alone. One million dollars is spent weekly in productions. But the totals of today are infantile compared to what the motion-picture men believe will be the sum tomorrow.

A few years ago the film sought chiefly to register motion. Then it responded to the urge for magnificence. A gaping public became acquainted with huge temples and prehistoric cities of plaster.

So great was the return from a genuinely successful production when the foreign rentals were included, that the directors lost all caution. Money was expended in the most reckless fashion. One producer had canals dug near New York for filming a Venetian scene. This idea was an excellent one, and

the canals would have fooled the grandfather of all the gondoliers—except that it happened to be winter-time, and the night before the picture was to have been taken, the canals were frozen over. Companies were carried all over the country. Expensive properties were purchased. One man bought the entire contents of a bankrupt restaurant, from fish studies to tapestries.

If the original idea proved worthless, the directors were given *carte blanche* to keep mulling away before the camera until some marketable thing was produced. Sometimes the result bore not the slightest resemblance to the raw material furnished the master of ceremonies.

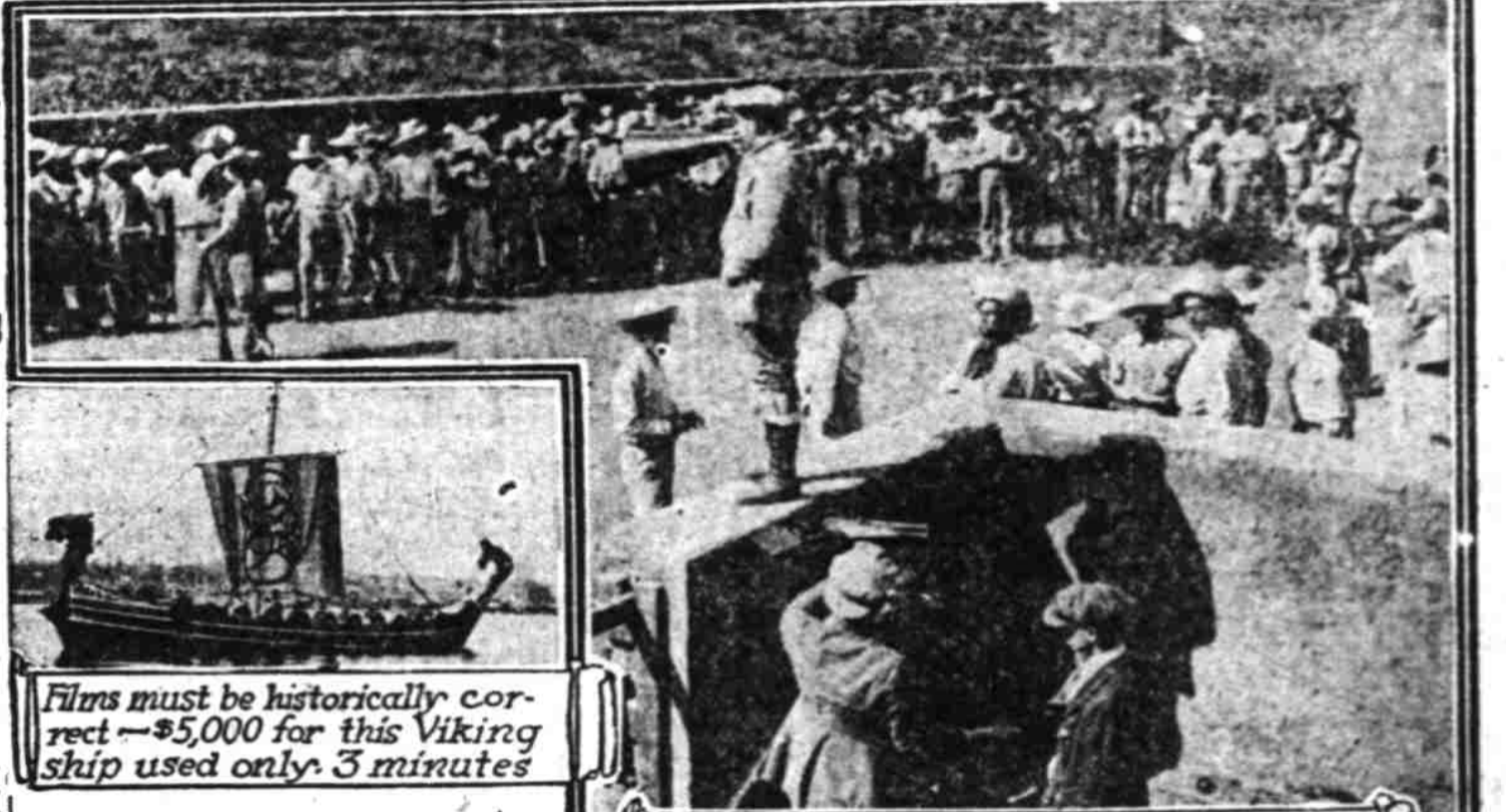
One hears the most astounding things and discovers that they are true. A pretty girl worked on a Los Angeles "lot" for ten dollars a day as an extra woman. A studio needed a woman to do a particular bit, and found that she filmed well. So it was decided to make her a star. Her contract called for \$150 weekly for the first six months, rising to \$500 at the end of the second year. After the second picture she demanded \$500 at once and \$1,000 weekly at the year's end.

A "type" hired a taxicab to hurry him to the lot on which a picture was being

"shot." Ordinarily types ride on street cars, for the best of them are rarely paid more than fifteen dollars a day. The United States senatorial type can be had in quantities at ten dollars for the day's work. But this type was late and feared to lose his job. A bawling manager met him at the door. "You—you—" began the manager. Then his eye fell upon the chauffeur. "You're just the type I want!" he shouted. "Come with me!"

Eventually the chauffeur consented to run his cab back to the garage and walk on in a scene as a type of something or other. He was not a bit flustered about it. It had been carefully explained to him that he need neither think nor act. The director does all that for the movie people. He tells each when to enter, what to do, how to do it and where. In order that the characters should not forget his instructions he repeats them through a megaphone during the progress of a scene.

The chauffeur filmed well. Therefore he is now being paid \$400 weekly, though his heart is said to be with his taxicab. A bartender made a few dollars one day shaking up cocktails before the camera. His features came out with cameo clearness, and he fol-



Films must be historically correct—\$5,000 for this Viking ship used only 3 minutes

lowed the director's orders with the careful obedience of a good child. That made him a film actor. Now he can depend on an income of \$15,000 a year.

A freckle-faced kid appeared in one picture recently in a type part. He was supposed to be just a kid—just hanging around. But he was self-possessed, engaging, impudent, and had a really extraordinary equipment of freckles. His weekly salary is now about equivalent to the monthly sum paid his father as cashier of a small town bank.

These salaries are paid because they are subject to the operation of the

inexorable law of supply and demand. One would think that the woods would be full of actors who can act perfectly well before a camera. But the effort of the performer is far from being purely mechanical, a mere reaction to megaphoned demands. If he is called upon to register grief or love or happiness, he must register exactly, or the screen knows him no more.

Up to this time, not a great deal of attention has been paid to the rights of the author. It is true that large sums have been paid for the picture rights to well-known plays and stories, but the money was really paid for the advertising the properties had received. The picture people for the most part had a singular indifference to the feelings of an author. Time after time an author parted with the picture rights in all good humor, only to learn that an autocratic director differed with him as to the manner in which the story should be treated. All directors believe firmly in the virtues of a happy ending. It is thought to have a most benevolent effect upon the box-office.

As one result of the managerial attitude, some authors preferred to forego the money to be gained by selling screen rights. Others sold the rights and carefully avoided seeing the picture-tured results. They knew their ugly

heroine—in a story in which the whole point was that the heroine was ugly—would swish through in a Paquin gown, and languidly lift a perfect arm against a background of velvet to call attention to a classic profile. Also, authors were not always treated with loving care by the producers. There is an historic instance of one author who wound up \$40,000 out of pocket. He does not know precisely how.

But the combination of big stars was followed by a combination of little stars, and so producers were set a-thinking. It was obvious that authors could not combine of themselves, first because authors could never agree, and secondly because there is no form of organization capacious enough to take in all who write for the pictures. But producers might combine groups of authors. That has been done.

The important fact underlying this grouping of authors is that the producers have come to the conclusion that the story is as important, almost, as the star. In this, they are following the example of the legitimate stage. Not many years ago emphasis was placed upon the name of the star in theatrical advertising. Today far more is placed upon the excellence of the story. One of the most successful of the picture magnates holds that the star is becoming increasingly unimportant.

Herbert Corey after a long and popular career as a newspaper feature writer became one of the most brilliant correspondents of the war. Upon his return to America he looked around for a big story to write and found motion pictures, which overnight had changed from a show business into a great manufacturing industry. As a result of a long and careful investigation of the movies Mr. Corey discovered that the men of whom the public rarely hears—the directors—were the men who make or mar the pictures; that the stars whose names are on everybody's lips were most of them but puppets and that the directors pulled the strings.

And there being not more than ten high class directors in America, it throws a light upon why so many movies are mediocre. Among the best are Allan Dwan and D. W. Griffith. Dwan is of the new school; Griffith of the old. Dwan went to the studios with a University degree and a specialized training in literature. Griffith knocked about as a second rate actor drifted into the movies in his pioneer days and mastered the art; as did Dwan. Both have produced stupendous successes. Today there is a race between them for mastery. Who will win?—the university man or the ex-actor?

In studio-land Dwan is known as the king of "action" directors. Before he had his own producing company when the movie magnates wanted galling stories produced, they sent for Dwan. He is the Richard Harding Davis, the Harold MacGrath, the George Barr McCutcheon, the Jack London, of the screen. "Action" bawled Dwan one day last spring when he was filming "Soldiers of Fortune," and six hundred charging horsemen thundered down a hill at him—six hundred riders at \$12 a day, \$7,200 for one scene. In his investigation Herbert Corey found a score of such incidents where the "sky was the limit" to get just one scene right.

"No more the genial popping of the champagne cork."
"Just so. But we can still have the melodious detonation of the exploding automobile tire.—Cleveland Leader."

Coraldine FARRAR
The STRONGER VOW

SMILING BILL PARSONS
In
THEY'RE OFF
A Fun Trip Through Coney Island
NOW SHOWING

YE LIBERTY

"MY HONOLULU GIRL"



Some of the Genuine Native Hawaiians with the Musical Comedy, "My Honolulu Girl," Grand Opera House, Monday, January 12.

When Norman Friedenwald conceived the idea of the great musical comedy success, "My Honolulu Girl," which comes to the Grand Opera House, Monday, January 12, he vowed he would have the prettiest, most nimble and graceful of the "peppiest" chorus in the United States, and stage experts concede that he has won.

The chorus with "My Honolulu Girl" is known from coast to coast and from Canada to Mexico and some of them are drawing salaries equal to those paid stars several

ALWAYS GOOD MOST TIMES GREAT

W.P.

Vaudeville

TODAY—TOMORROW
BLIGN THEATRE
BIG NEW SHOW SUNDAY

Clyde Gibbs Elected Head of Dallas Fire Department

DALLAS, Or., Jan. 8.—(Special to The Statesman)—The Dallas fire department at its annual meeting Tuesday night elected the following officers to serve for the ensuing year: President, Clyde Gibbs; secretary, Oscar Ellis; treasurer, Fred B. West. Many important matters relative to the work of the department were taken up and discussed and plans for

the betterment of the organization during the coming year adopted.

Following the business meeting a banquet was held at the Gail hotel at which the city council and several business men were invited. After the dinner the assembly was favored with addresses by members of the council and the department.

Later in the evening the department and the guests enjoyed the hospitality of J. C. Uglow, manager of the Majestic theatre, at a show given in their honor.

You May Find It In Stocking

Cincinnati authority says your troublesome corns just loosen and fall off

Sore corns, hard corns, soft corns or corns between the toes just loosen in their sockets and fall off the next day if you will apply directly upon the corn a few drops of a drug called freezone, says a Cincinnati authority.

You merely put a drop or two of this freezone on the tender, touchy corn today and instantly the corn stops hurting, then tomorrow sometime you may find the old tortuous, having fallen off entirely without a particle of soreness, pain or irritation. The skin surrounding will be as healthy, pink and smooth as the palm of your hand.

A quarter ounce of freezone is sufficient to rid one's feet of every corn and callus, and any druggist will furnish but a few cents for it. It is a compound made of ether.

Mrs. Nancy Amanda Norton, 86, Passes Away at Turner

Mrs. Nancy Amanda Norton died yesterday afternoon at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Anna M. Busbey at Turner. The body is at the Rigdon company and will be sent Sunday to Woodlands, Calif., for burial. She was 86 years old and is survived by two daughters, Mrs. Busbey and Mrs. F. A. Campbell of Berkeley, Calif.

PURLOINING OF PANTS PROVES CHILLY ERROR OWNER MAKES WEARER REMOVE STOLEN GARMENT

WASHINGTON SCHOOL STUDENTS ARE INVOLVED

A certain Washington junior high school student—it's a boy of course—wished most ardently Thursday that he was like the fortunate Brian O'Lynn of the old song who when "he had no pants for to wear, he got a sheep skin and he made him a pair."

A week ago a fellow student was in the Y.M.C.A. gymnasium clad in his athletic clothing and had left his outer clothes, a part of which was a pair of army breeches, in the dressing room. He came out of the gym and the breeches were gone. He "laid for the guy who got them." Thursday he found him in the yard of the Washington junior high school.

Without further ado the real owner of the breeches compelled the wearer of them to hand them over. After proper-persuasion the wearer did so and was left by the owner to find heaven, or at least another pair of pants, as best he might.

And it was a cold day, too.

THRIFT PROGRAM IS WORKED OUT

Committees Plan Details of Various Days of Week of Jan. 17 to 24

Details for four of the featured days of thrift week which is to be held in Salem January 17 to 24, were worked out at meetings of four committees in the Commercial club rooms yesterday. The plans are practically complete for Bank day, January 17; Own Your Own Home day, January 20; Home Industry day, January 22; and Pay Your Bills day, January 24.

The directors of the Business Mens League who compose the Pay Your Bills day committee are headed by William Gahlsdorf as chairman, Jack Walker is chairman of the home industries day committee, S. B. Elliott of the bank day committee and John H. Scott of the committee on Own Your Own Home day.

The general committee is composed of the chairmen of the several committees and James Elvin, T. E. McCroskey and J. F. Hutchason. The thrift program is being fostered by the Y.M.C.A. throughout the United States.

MICE WILL DIE BY ELECTRICITY

Salem Man Has Ingenious Device to Eliminate Household Pests

Salem is to become a ratless, mouseless and flyless city.

Sentence of death has been passed on all the sleek, prowling rodents. The house fly, that contaminator of human food, must also suffer the same penalty. From this unwritten order there is no appeal.

The grim work will be done by electrocution. In fact, even now in

the silent hours of the night, the penalty of death is being carried into effect in several dark nooks in this city.

The manner in which Mr. Rat and others of his ilk will be sent into the great beyond is strictly humane. In truth, the deed is done by self-electrocution.

The fatal device is the cunning invention of a Salem man. His name is W. A. Colgar. The machine is simple yet efficient.

A wire attached to the electric light wire, carries the current to a metal plate, located beside a garbage barrel or hidden at any other point frequented by rodents.

When Mr. Rat or Mr. Mouse steps onto this mysterious metallic machine he receives an electric shock that finishes him instantly. One of these patent devices sent nine rats to their death in one night in a local business room.

Mr. Colgar says that his machine will electrocute more flies in a minute than can be disposed of in any other way. When the unsanitary fly's beseeched feet touch the electrically charged plate he receives the full force of the current. Death follows with out the twitch of a muscle.

Mr. Colgar is preparing to open a factory in this city to supply the active demand for his ingenious rodent electrocutor. Orders from other cities have already been received.

SUNDAY SCHOOL WORK TO START

Enrollment Cards Are Distributed for Training Classes in Salem

Enrollment of students who are to take the course of 10 weeks in Sunday school training at the Salem public library beginning January 19, has begun. Cards carrying lists of the studies that will be taken up are being distributed in the schools and at other places all over the county. Persons who wish to take the course or to learn more about it may do so by conferring with Mrs. F. A. Elliott, 470 North Church street, or by telephoning her. Her number is 1595.

One change that has been made is that Mrs. M. C. Findley will take the work that formerly was taken by W. D. Walters. Studies will take place every Monday night over a period of 10 weeks. The programs will be different each time, and at the first assembly T. E. McCroskey, manager of the Salem Commercial club, will demonstrate "chalk talk."

The schedule as arranged follows: In the first period, from 7:30 to 8:15 p. m., "Teaching the Value of the Old Testament," by Harold Humbert will be taught by Mr. Humbert. "The Life of Christ," by Barclay, will be taught by Mrs. C. A. Parks, and "The Principles of Teaching," will be taught from "Learning and Teaching," Snyder and White, by Professor J. T. Matthews.

The second period, 8:15 to 9 p. m., will be devoted to study of "The Religious Nurture of Children," from

"The Pupil," by Weigle, under the direction of Mrs. M. C. Findley, Harold Humbert will teach "Youth and the Church School" from his manuscript, now being published. "Administration of the Sunday School," from "Organization and Administration of the Church School," by Walter S. Athern, will be taught by John W. Todd.

STARTS SUNDAY IN "THE MAN BENEATH"

YE LIBERTY

GRAND OPERA HOUSE
MONDAY JANUARY 12
Supremely—Satisfying

NORMAN FRIEDENWALD
Submits
MY HONOLULU GIRL
AMERICA'S GREATEST MUSICAL COMEDY SUCCESS
NATIVE HAWAIIAN
PRICES \$1.50 to 50c
Plus tax—Seats on Sale Saturday at Opera House Drug Store