



Hollywood's Fencing Masters Work Overtime Teaching Actors Ancient Art



They're shouting "En garde" all over Hollywood these days, what with the sudden swing to costume films and the demand for swordsmen who can handle a rapier without sticking themselves. Frank Cavens is shown in the upper left photo giving a lesson to Basil Rathbone, who, as Tybalt in Romeo and Juliet, has plenty of fencing to do. Center photo shows Claude Rains as Don Luis in Anthony Adverse, going into his stance. Right, Rathbone in Captain Blood, the film that started all the stabbing.

Clang of Rapiers Resounds In Filmdom As Movies Hark Back To Days of Duels

Errol Flynn's Sword Waving in "Captain Blood" Started Renaissance of Villain-Puncturing Stories That Have Hollywood Fencing Masters in a Flurry

By Donna Risher

THE gangsters are leaving Hollywood, and the rat-tat-tat of their machine guns is being replaced by the swish of swords.

On every studio lot, prop men are filling their boxes with rapiers and on every stage fencing masters in leather jerkins are teaching actors, who find it difficult to identify one end of the sword from the other, how to thrust and parry and how to whack away at each other with abandon.

Dueling has come back to the films and the Hays Purity Squad is tickled to death. Somehow it seems more noble, or at least more romantic (in the films), to be killed by the sword than the machine gun.

No doubt, it was "Captain Blood" that brought about the renaissance of the duel.

The sight of Errol Flynn, in his skin-tight pants, and Basil Rathbone thrusting at each other with

rapiers revived great interest in the ancient sport. Immediately, along came "Anthony Adverse," with Claude Rains cutting holes in Louis Hayward's pants, and that, it seems, is but the beginning of what Frank McHugh calls "these doodles."

For "Romeo and Juliet" is chock full of the sword-wishing battles. So is "Under Two Flags." In the former, the boys run their swords through each other with abandon.

John Barrymore, the noblest duelist of them all, succumbs from a deadly thrust in the streets of Verona.

Then Leslie Howard, as Romeo, steps out and with his shining rapier avenges the death of his friend, John, by killing Basil Rathbone. And just to make it stick—no pun—Romeo, for the third time, rolls back his lace cuffs and goes after Ralph Forbes, pinning him flat against a wall.

You and Shakespeare need not be surprised to see a whole sound stage turned into a battlefield, for when Hollywood takes up dueling, it does so in a big way.

To Fred Cavens, graduate of a famous Belgian

fencing school, goes the job of teaching these actors how to handle their swords intelligently.

THIS new crop of players is not like the bunch back in the old days when Douglas Fairbanks was carving his initials on the shirt fronts of his opponents with his trusty sword. Today, the modern boys must be taught to know the hilt from the blade, and Cavens is a busy as well as a patient man.

He is encouraged in his job, however, by the knowledge that Shakespeare himself would have welcomed the movies as a medium for his sword fights.

"The Old Fellow often mourned," said Cavens, "the limitations of his own stage to show his battles. I only wish he could come back and visit Hollywood today to see these young, brave men battle."



Donna Risher



Robert Taylor

HOLLYWOOD GOSSIP

FROM THE STUDIOS and ALONG THE BOULEVARD
by Jane

TWO years ago, two aspiring actors were living together on little or nothing a week. Fame came to one—Robert Taylor—but the other, Don Milo, remained in the small, bare room the two had shared together.

Taylor, with his new found fame, could not forget.

As soon as he became important with his company, he got Milo a job as his stand-in. Then he proceeded to teach his friend privately, all the things about acting he himself was being taught.

NOT long ago Taylor's influence got Milo a job in an important picture.

Not content with his Boy Scout deed, young Taylor then declared a holiday and took his friend with him on a vacation to Soboba Hot Springs, because he felt his pal of coffee-and-doughnut days had earned a place in the sun.

GRACE BRADLEY has asked for the famous dressing room on the Paramount lot which used to be occupied by Pola Negri, Clara Bow and Sylvia Sydney. It is the only dressing room complete with kitchen facilities.

Grace says she is going to keep asking until she gets it, as she longs to make her own soup for lunch.

THE question, "What ever became of Vilma Banky?" was answered recently by the former Viennese star herself. She visited a set on which her husband, Rod La Roque, was appearing in a scene.

La Roque then revealed he and Vilma would soon celebrate their 10th wedding anniversary.

"We had a great big church wedding and there was a lot written and said about it," said La Roque. "We were also aware of what the Hollywood pessimists said about such a marriage not lasting."

"These last ten years," cut in Vilma, "have been the happiest of my life. That ought to answer."

Whereupon, Herbert Marshall ordered a cake on the set and the cast took part in another celebration.

MISCELLANY: Astrid Allwyn lurching at the Cafe de son, the dancer, as good as new after his operation, appearing on the boulevard in new Easter togs. Shirley Temple running to capture her sheepdog, which scampered out of the studio grounds. Patsy Kelly, daughter of a New York cop, walking on air because she has been signed by Hal Roach to do feature productions as a comedienne instead of her usual screen shorts.

GROVER JONES, rotund, bald-pated "Puck" of the film writers, has Hollywood biting its nails. He has threatened to publish the movie capital's oddest newspaper—the impish tabloid Jones has been circulating among film folks for the last four years.

He calls it the "Wheeze," and prints it himself in his garage. It is circulated only among Jones' friends.

On The Set ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ With ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Gail Gardner

Hollywood.

DEAR FOLKS:

I don't know whether you are a Spencer Tracy fan or not, but I do know he is one of the most interesting actors to watch while working.

Spence is always in a good humor, and he doesn't care a hang how many visitors are on his set while he goes through his scenes.

The other day he and Sylvia Sidney were making a sequence in their latest picture, tentatively called "Mob Rule." The scene opened with Edward Ellis playing the sheriff.

"Have some peanuts?" the sheriff asked, shoving a bowl of salted nuts across his desk. Tracy leaned forward and took a handful, popping them into his mouth with quick flips of his hand.

"Now you're talking my language, sheriff. I've—"

The sentence ended in an explosive cough. Tracy's face reddened as he spat out the chewed remains.

"Cut," ordered Director Fritz Lang. "Bring this peanut addict a glass of water, somebody." Tracy, coughing violently, pushed the bowl of nuts back across the table with a gesture of disgust.

He looked over at the sidelines and said, "This guy"—indicating Director Lang—"is trying to kill

me with salted peanuts—a new variety of murder. So far, I've had to eat 14 bags in succession."

"Ah, no, Spence," spoke up a prop man with an injured look. "Only 13."

The glass of water arrived. Spence drank eagerly. "Once more," Lang called. Tracy again went



Spencer Tracy and Sylvia Sidney

through the business of eating peanuts with a relish.

This time it was a "take" and Director Lang so notified his cameramen, but to Tracy he said: "Sorry, Spence, you didn't put enough gusto in that. Do it over." Tracy gave a long, agonizing look.

Again he gobbled up the peanuts. "Sorry," called Lang. "You'll have to do that over. I just don't like the way you flip 'em."

Whereupon, Sylvia came to Spence's rescue. She signaled him that the scene had already been "printed," and that Director Lang was kidding him.

Tracy walked out of camera range. "I'll get even," he grinned at Lang. "This picture isn't finished yet by a long shot."

He then walked over and offered Rainbow, his dog, a helping of the nuts. And while Rainbow was feasting, the cast had a good laugh over the dog, who the day before had contributed the biggest laugh since the shooting began.

IT HAPPENED on location.

Tracy and his dog were supposed to be traveling in an old roadster across country. When Tracy

made camp for the night, Rainbow was supposed to wander off into a grove to find a small rabbit in a trap. As the dog freed it, he was supposed to give chase.

THE scene was rehearsed three times, up to the point where the rabbit was released. Rainbow gave every evidence of being eager for the chase. Shooting began.

Everything went fine up to the release of the rabbit, which unexpectedly bounced high into the air and landed almost on top of Rainbow.

That worthy was so startled, so panic-stricken, that she fled—instead of the rabbit.

Everybody watching the scene doubled up with laughter.

Cordially yours,
GAIL.

"Too Many Parents"



Oh-oo-oo-oo, it's stopped! And is Billie Lee surprised? His new watch must have some connection with his big shoe, but we haven't yet figured it out. Billie is one of the stars in "Too Many Parents."



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