

KENNETH ANGER'S HOLLYWOOD BABYLON

The legendary
underground
classic of
Hollywood's
darkest and best
kept secrets



4-5



HOLLYWOOD



• HOLLYWOOD BABYLON •











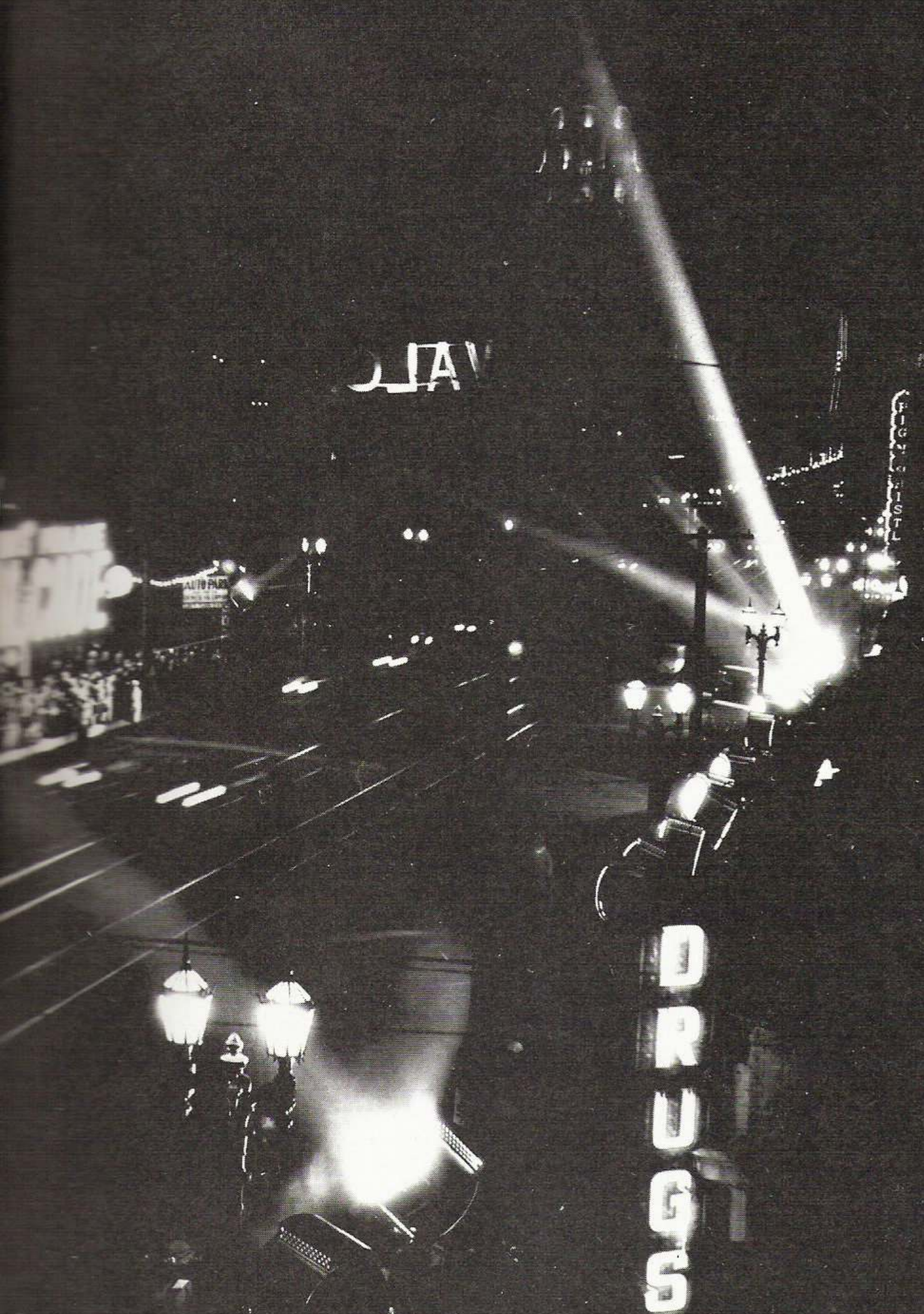
Every Man and every Woman is a Star. ·
— Aleister Crowley

HOLLYWOOD



BABYLON

by
Kenneth
Anger



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HOLLYWOOD

Hollywood, Hollywood . . .
Fabulous Hollywood . . .
Celluloid Babylon,
Glorious, glamorous . . .
City delirious,
Frivolous, serious . . .
Bold and ambitious,
And vicious and glamorous.
Drama — a city-full,
Tragic and pitiful . . .
Bunk, junk, and genius
Amazingly blended . . .
Tawdry, tremendous,
Absurd, stupendous;
Shoddy and cheap,
And astonishingly splendid . . .
HOLLYWOOD!!

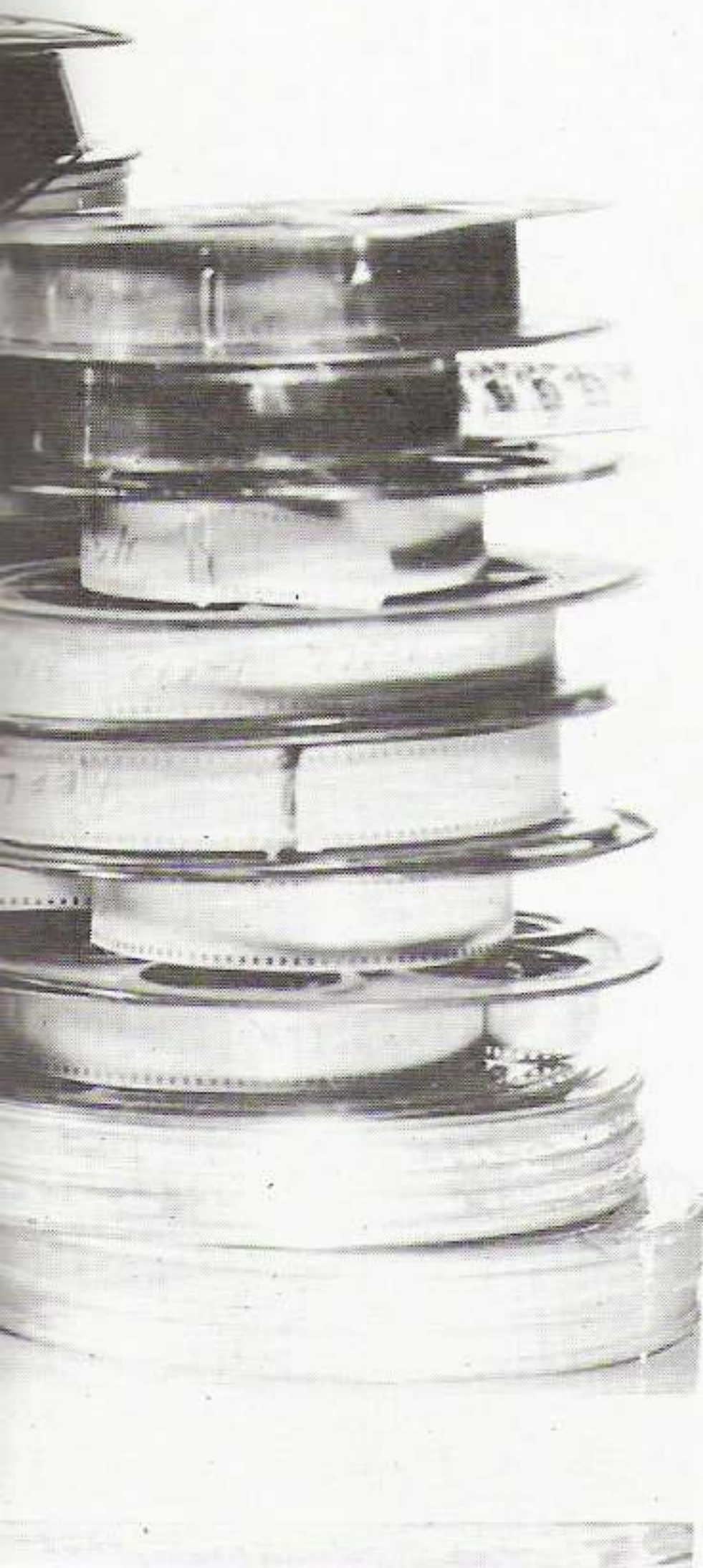
— Don Blanding

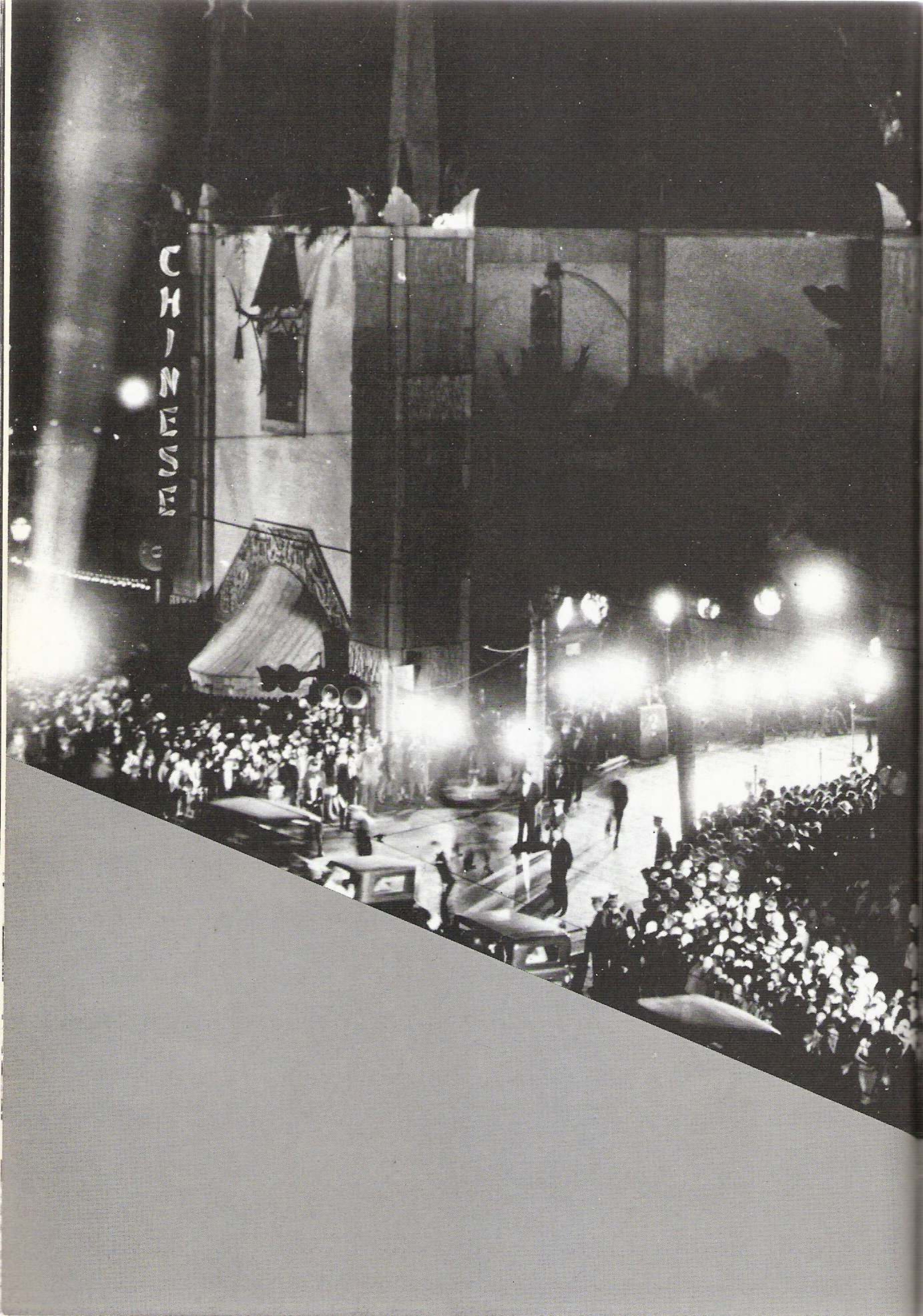
(As recited by Leo Carillo in the 1935 MGM
Colortone Musical, Star Night at the
Cocoanut Grove.)



• CONTENTS •

3	The Purple Dawn
15	The Clutching Hand
21	Fat Man Out
33	Panic at Paramount
43	Hays Fever
49	Good Time Wally
57	Champagne Baths
63	Heroin Heroines
71	The New Gods
79	Charlie's Nymphs
87	Lo: Lita
97	William Randolph's Hearse
107	Rudy's Rep
117	The Dirty Hun
127	Hollywood Headlines
137	Clara's Beaux
145	Saturn Over Sunset
155	Drastic Doubts
161	Enditalls
171	Babylon Babblers
183	Monster Mae
193	Diary in Blue
201	Death Garage
209	In Like Flynn
217	Who's Daddy? Sugar Daddy
223	Daughter of Fury: Frances, Saint
231	Chop-Suicide
241	Mr. Bugs Comes to Town
249	Red Tide
253	Peep Show Peccadillos
259	Con Game
269	Blood and Soap
279	Hollywoodämmerung





To
the Scarlet
Woman

G
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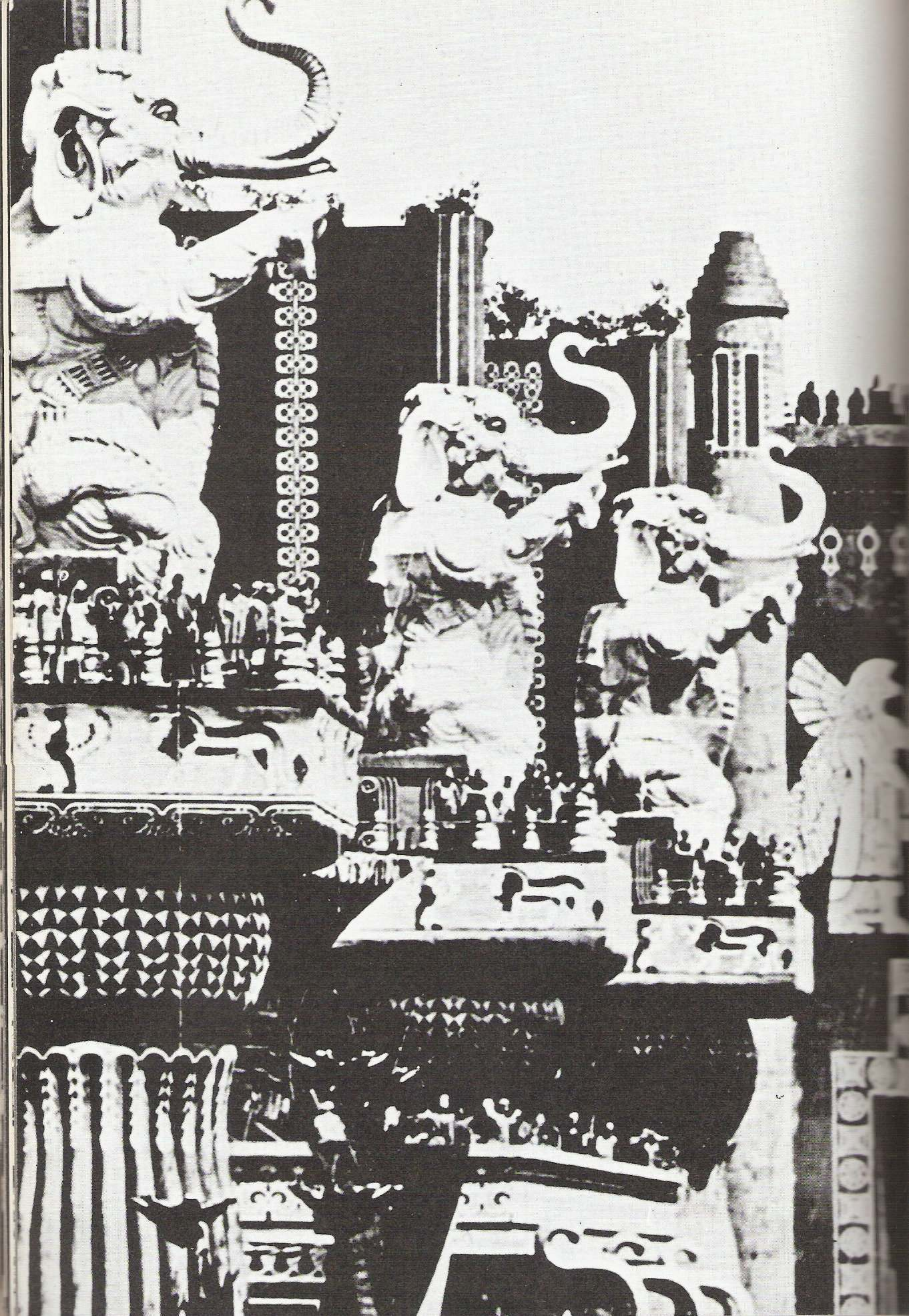
HOLLYWOOD
REVUE

30 M. G. M. STARS

A Pull from Hollywood

HOLLYWOOD





• THE PURPLE DAWN •

WHITE ELEPHANTS — the God of Hollywood wanted white elephants, and white elephants he got — eight of 'em, plaster mammoths perched on mega-mushroom pedestals, lording it over the colossal court of Belshazzar, the pasteboard Babylon built beside the dusty tin-lizzie trail called Sunset Boulevard.

Griffith — the Mōvie Director as God — was riding high, high as he'd ever go, over Illusion City, whooshing up a hundred-foot high elevator camera tower, giant megaphone poised to shout the command to the thousands below, the CAMERA-AH ACTION-N-N! to bring it all alive. . . .

Belshazzar's Feast beneath Egyptian blue skies, spread out under the blazing Southern California morning sun: more than four thousand extras recruited from L.A. paid an unheard-of two dollars a day plus box lunch plus carfare to impersonate Assyrian and Median militiamen, Babylonian dancers, Ethiopians, East Indians, Numidians, eunuchs, ladies-in-waiting to the Princess Beloved, handmaidens of the Babylonian temples, priests of Bel, Nergel, Marduk and Ishtar, slaves, nobles and subjects of Babylonia.

Griffith's Vision of Babylon!

A mare's nest mountain of

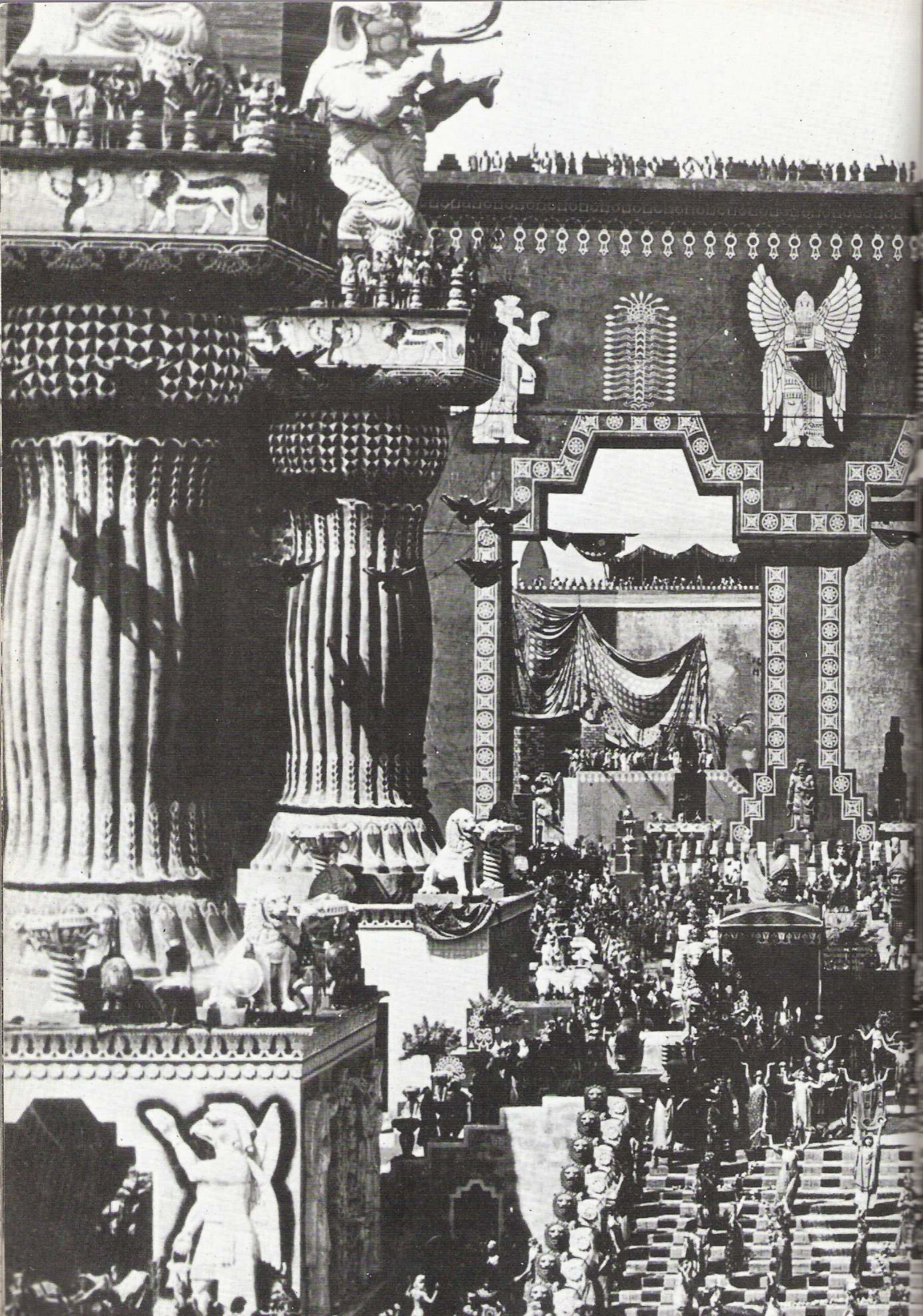
scaffolding, hanging gardens, chariot-race ramparts and sky-high elephants, a make-believe mirage of Mesopotamia dropped down on the sleepy huddle of mission-style bungalows amid the orange groves that made up 1915 Hollywood, portent of things to come.

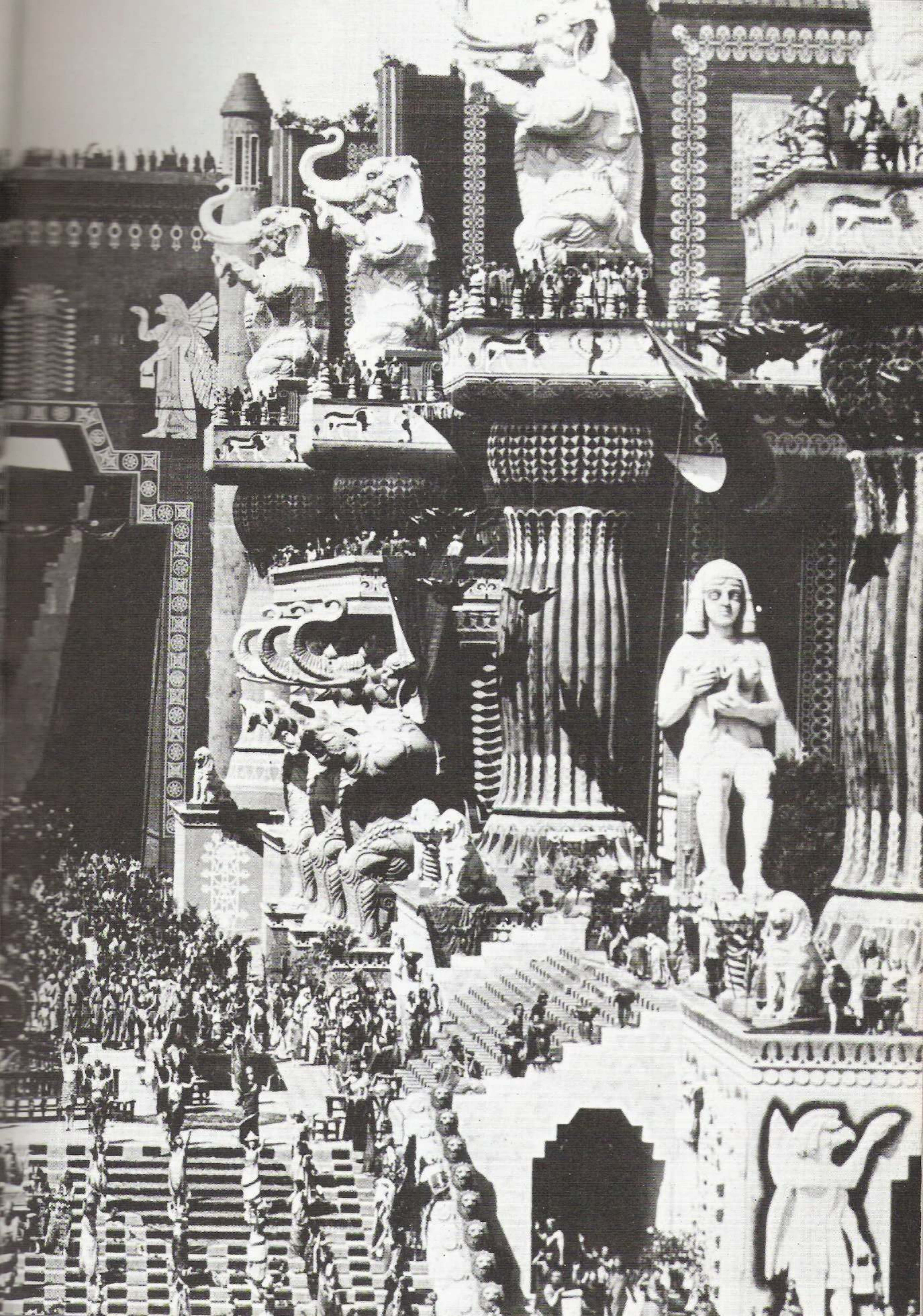
The Purple Epoch had begun.

And there it stood for years, stranded like some gargantuan dream beside Sunset Boulevard. Long after Griffith's great leap into the unknown, his Sun Play of the Ages, Intolerance, had failed; long after Belshazzar's court had sprouted weeds and its walls had begun to peel and warp in abandoned movie-set disarray; after the Los Angeles Fire Department had condemned it as a fire hazard, still it stood: Griffith's Babylon, something of a reproach and something of a challenge to the burgeoning movie town — something to surpass, something to live down.

The shadow of Babylon had fallen over Hollywood, a serpent spell in code cuneiform; scandal was waiting, just out of Billy Bitzer's camera range.

Hollywood, the movie colony, had been forged into existence by a small group of East Coast Jewish tradesmen who thought they saw a good thing in the nickelodeon, lured West by that fabled





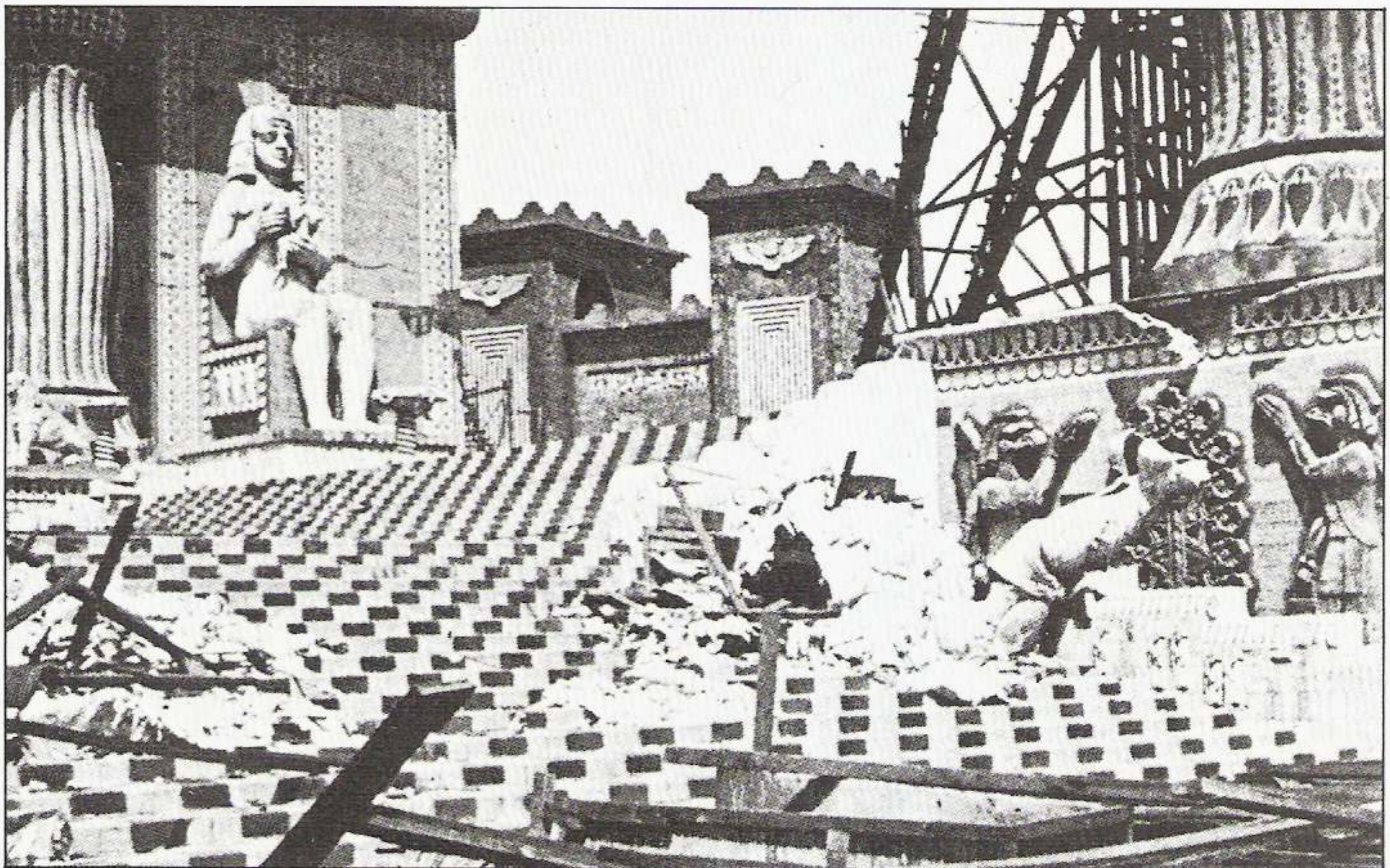
Southern California promise of 355 days of sunshine a year, and low-priced land. The somnolent L.A. outpost in the orange groves they settled on soon sprouted ramshackle open-air stages, sun traps for their slow ortho film. In a few years of churning out primitive and profitable two-reelers with their pirated cameras — always on the lookout for Edison's vengeful process servers — the former junk dealers and glove salesmen juggled a chancy operation into a celluloid bonanza.

When word reached them that nickelodeon crowds all over the country seemed to be flocking to see favorite movie performers known only as "Little Mary," "The Biograph Boy" or "The Vitagraph Girl," the disdained actors, until then thought of as little more than hired help, suddenly acquired ticket-selling importance. The already-famous faces took on names and rapidly-rising salaries: the Star System — a decidedly mixed blessing — was born. For better or for worse, Hollywood would henceforth have to contend with that

fatal chimera — the STAR.

Overnight the obscure and somewhat disreputable movie performers found themselves propelled to adulation, fame and fortune. They were the new royalty, the Golden People. Some managed to cope and took it in their stride; some did not.

The Teens were Hollywood's halcyon days. A new art form was being forged from day to day; the Seventh Muse made herself up as she went along, making money and having fun. And if the nouveau riche film folk got tired from the furious pace, there was always "joy powder," as cocaine was called in those free-and-easy days, for a sure-thing pick-you-up. In fact, a "joy powder" manic movie comedy style rapidly evolved — the prime example being the Triangle-Keystone "cokey comedy," The Mystery of the Leaping Fish, with Doug Fairbanks as a bombed-out-of-his-skull detective, "Coke Ennyday." In 1916 "dope" could be the subject of comedy. The year of that film, The Mystery of the Leaping Fish, English drug expert Aleister



"Ruins" of Babylon in 1919 ↑

Theda Bara: First Sex Queen →





Crowley passed through Hollywood, taking note of the natives as "the cinema crowd of cocaine-crazed, sexual lunatics." Those were the days.

Gossip there was, as among any group of show folk, but as yet unenshrined in the newspaper column: Louella O. Parsons had yet to set up shop. Behind the scenes, among themselves, the miniature movie colony even dared to gossip about the God of Hollywood — Griffith's obsession, on screen and off, with young, female children. And were those Griffith discoveries, those devoted, hard-working child-women, really all that virginal? Was it possible? And, thinking the unthinkable, was Lillian Gish Dorothy's lover?

But it was harmless, really, even the speculations about Richard

Barthelmess posing for "French postcards" when he was trying to make his way or the more solid speculations about Mack Sennett's famous "Bathing Beauty" casting couch . . . the original model of a long line. If some liked to think of Sennett's Sunshine Girls, including such buds as teenage Gloria Swanson and Carole Lombard, as a hand-picked harem, why, that didn't bother Big Mack. Theda Bara was always good for a laugh.

The colony knew that the fatal vamp, being sold to the rubes as a French-Arab demon of depravity born beneath the Sphinx, was in truth Theodosia Goodman, a Jewish tailor's daughter from Chillicothe, Ohio, a meek little goody-two-shoes.

In a few more years America's









self-righteous preachers would be maligning the movie colony and all its works; Hollywood, California became a synonym of Sin. Professional do-gooders would brand Hollywood a New Babylon whose evil influence rivaled the legendary depravity of the old; banner headlines and holier-than-thou editorials would equate Sex, Dope and Movie Stars. Yet while the country's organized cranks screamed for blood and boycott, the public, unfazed, flocked to the movies in ever-increasing multitudes.

The Twenties is sometimes referred to as "Hollywood's Golden Age," and golden it was, in sheer exuberant movie-making creativity as well as in financial returns. Film folk of the period are depicted as engaging in madcap, nonstop off-screen capers. The legend overlooks one fact — fear. That ever present thrilling-erotic fear that the bottom

could drop out of their gilded dreams at any time.

Scandals exploded like time bombs throughout the delirious decade of "Wonderful Nonsense," as screen career after career was destroyed. Each star wondered if it was his turn to be the next scapegoat. For Hollywood the fabled "Golden Age" was more like a lavish picnic on a shaky precipice; the road to glory was beset with booby traps.

Yet for the vast public out there H-O-L-L-Y-W-O-O-D was a magic three syllables invoking the Wonder World of Make Believe. To the faithful it was more than a dream factory where one young hopeful out of a million got a break. It was Dreamland, Somewhere Else; it was the Home of the Heavenly Bodies, the Glamor Galaxy of Hollywood!

The fans worshipped, but the fans also could be fickle, and if their deities proved to have feet of clay, they could be cut down without compassion. Off screen a new Star was always waiting to make an entrance.





GALA PREMIER TONIGHT

GRAUMAN'S EGYPTIAN



• THE CLUTCHING HAND •

A cloud, no larger than a girl's hand, was taking shape on the horizon.

The shocking news that first revealed Hollywood in a scandalous light arrived on September 10, 1920 in the form of a Marconi Radiogram that waked Myron Selznick in the middle of the night. The message made front page headlines:

OLIVE THOMAS DEAD FROM POISON

Olive Thomas, sprightly Ziegfeld
Follies' queen,
Selznick Pictures star and
Mrs. Jack Pickford . . .

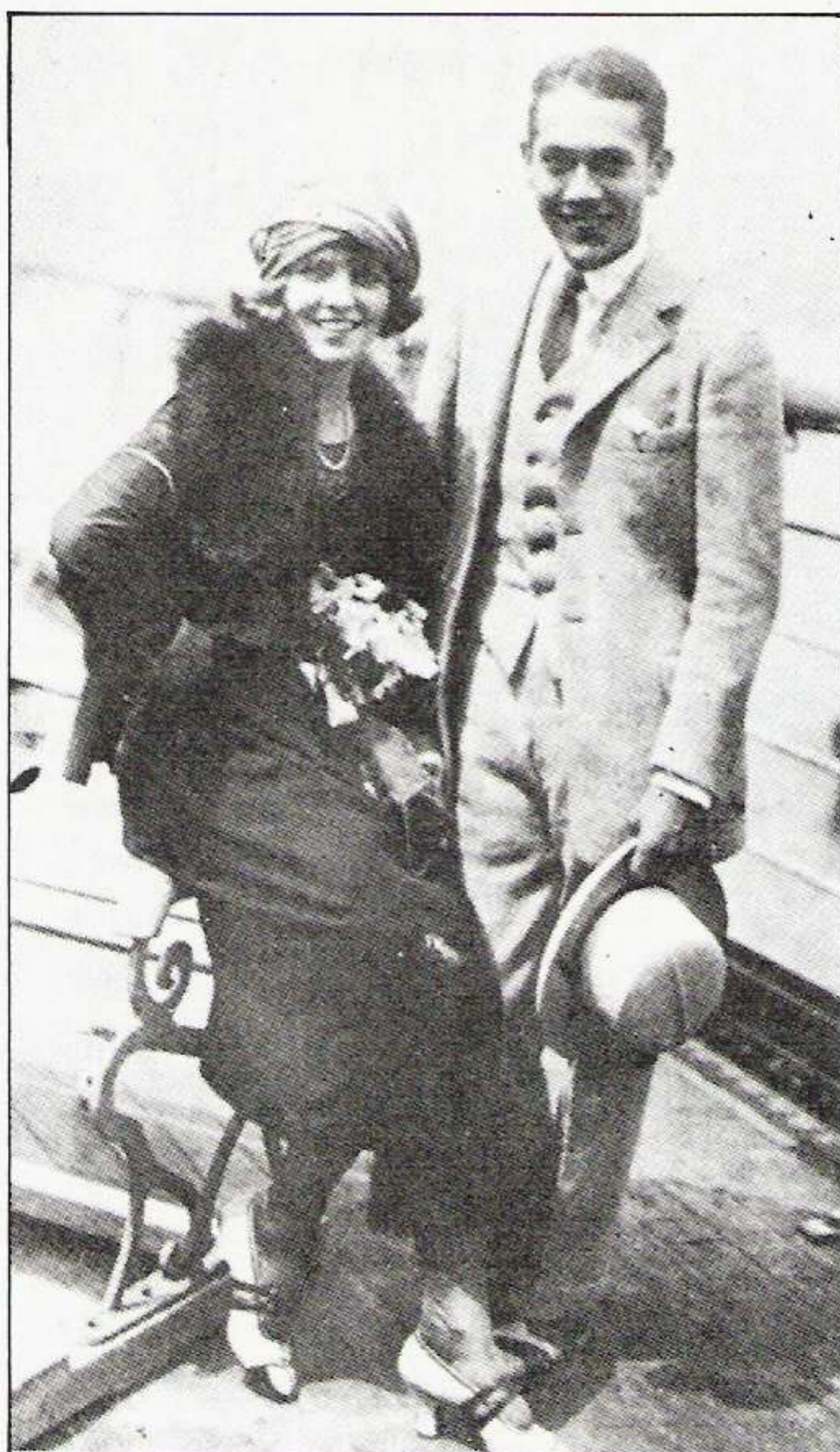
The cablegram informed the head of Selznick Pictures that his top star had just been found dead in Paris.

The sedate, renowned Hotel Crillon, on the Place de la Concorde, was a most unlikely setting for Hollywood's first scandal. On that September morning the valet used his passkey to enter the hotel's Royal Suite with a breakfast trolley. What he saw froze him in his tracks. A sable opera cape was spread out on the floor, and on it lay a nude young woman. One hand still clutched a bottle of toxic bichloride of mercury granules. The suite was registered in the name of Mrs. Jack Pickford, known to millions of

adoring fans as the bright young star of the silver screen, Olive Thomas.

Olive Thomas! New York remembered her as one of the most beautiful brunettes Ziegfeld had ever glorified. Ziegfeld's showgirls were invariably young, and at sixteen Olive was a poised, vivacious young lady much sought after by café society, darling of the Vogue and Vanity Fair crowd, ornament of the penthouse parties given by the publisher of those modish magazines, Condé Nast. Through the ministrations of Mr. Nast, Olive had appeared frequently as a fashion model in the pages of Vogue, and Mr. Ziegfeld singled her out to pose, unclothed, for the young Peruvian artist, Alberto Vargas. The artist Harrison Fisher called Olive "the most beautiful woman in the world." Her subsequent departure for Hollywood seemed only natural.

The bubbly beauty from Broadway "caught on" at once in the film colony, and her pert portrayals of young girlhood in light comedies like Betty Takes a Hand, Prudence on Broadway and — inevitably — The Follies Girl, swiftly won her a wide following. In 1919 Myron Selznick launched his newly formed company by signing Elaine Hammerstein and Olive Thomas to lucrative contracts. In 1920, with Olive's success



in The Flapper and her much publicized marriage to Jack Pickford, Mary Pickford's brother and himself an idol of the screen, her place in the charmed circle of Golden People seemed assured.

The suicide of Olive Thomas made headlines around the world and touched off furious controversy. Olive was just twenty when she died; she had youth, beauty, wealth, fame and love, and not only the adulation of her fans but the adoration of Jack Pickford. Young Jack had been characterized as the "Ideal American Boy" in such films as Seventeen, Olive as the "Ideal American Girl" in The Tomboy. They were portrayed in the new fan magazines as "The Ideal Couple." What could have made Olive Thomas kill herself?

Olive's studio, whose slogan was

"Selznick Pictures Create Happy Homes," was deluged with letters; the American Embassy in Paris and the French police promised complete investigations.

What the investigations of Olive's death disclosed, and the papers headlined, was a lurid private life that did not tally at all with her Hollywood image as a sweet young thing. Jack Pickford had been due to join Olive in Paris as soon as he completed work on The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come. They had planned on a Paris idyll to make up for the honeymoon which picture-making had prevented right after their marriage. Olive had gone on ahead to shop for antiques and clothes, but it was disclosed that her perambulations had not all been directed to the chic salons. She had been seen night clubbing at the Jockey and the Maldoror with some notorious figures of the French underworld; she had sought out some of the roughest, meanest dives of Montmartre.

A story began to circulate about the motivation for Olive's plunge into the Parisian bas-fonds: she was desperately trying to score a large quantity of heroin to supply her husband, Jack, who was a hopeless addict. Failing this, she had committed suicide.

When this story appeared in the American press, Jack was under treatment for nervous collapse following the news of his wife's death and could not refute the charges. His loyal sister Mary, just emerging from the controversy of double divorce and marriage to Doug Fairbanks, took it upon herself to issue a statement from her new domain, Pickfair, denying such "sickening aspersions" on her brother's character. Shortly thereafter, an investigation conducted by the United States Government into the activities of a certain Captain



Spaulding of the United States Army who had been arrested for dealing in cocaine and heroin on a large scale, revealed in his little black book of steady clients the name of the erstwhile "Ideal American Girl."

OLIVE THOMAS, DOPE FIEND!

Thus the headlines described lovable "kid sister" Olive — and it was a shock. In 1920 most of America still paid lip service to Victorian morality. Watch and Ward societies began to speak out about the new menace to American maidenhood, and Chicago's Cardinal Mundelein felt called upon to issue a tract entitled The Danger of Hollywood: A Warning to Young Girls.

With the Twenties the upstart film capital was luring trainloads of young hopefuls from all over the land. Some were local beauty contest winners; most were merely pretty,

plucky and poor. All wanted to be movie stars, but few of them even found work as extras, or "atmosphere." For thousands it was a trip to Heartbreak City.

The sensational death of Olive Thomas caused another star's suicide that September of 1920 to pass almost unnoticed. Bobby Harron, the sensitive "Boy" of Intolerance, shot himself in a New York hotel room on the eve of the premiere of Way Down East. Griffith had bypassed Bobby for that film, preferring his new favorite, Richard Barthelmess. It broke Bobby's heart.

It was Olive's death that was "made to order" for the sob sisters of the day, who loaded the tabloids with morbid speculation. Olive Thomas was good copy for a year following her death, until one of those "young Hollywood hopefuls" crowded her out of the headlines: a rather minor actress, a pal of roly-poly comic Fatty Arbuckle.



Olive's death: Good copy ↑

Olive: The Tomboy →





• FAT MAN OUT •

Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle was a hefty plumber's helper discovered by Mack Sennett in 1913 when he came to unclog the comedy producer's drain. Sennett sized up the affable, 266-pound Roscoe and offered him a job on the spot. Arbuckle's butterball appearance and bouncing agility were perfect foils for Sennett's brand of film farce — mud and mayhem, pratfalls and custard pies.

Working his way up from the Keystone Cops, Fatty went on to team with Mabel Normand in Fatty's Flirtations, Charlie Chaplin in The Rounders, Buster Keaton in The Butcher Boy and other popular two-reel comedies. Fatty's natural talent as a jovial jackanapes assured his success as a screen buffoon and made his fortune.

Fatty's value as a laugh-maker rocketed his Sennett three-dollar-a-day salary of 1913 to \$5000 a week in 1917, when he signed with Paramount. A "gag" banner over the famous gate proclaimed: PARAMOUNT WELCOMES THE PRINCE OF WHALES.

The boozy all-night revel held on March 6 at Mishawn Manor, Boston, to celebrate that signing almost became a public scandal. It took place at Brownie Kennedy's Roadhouse, where the lavish entertainment laid on

in Fatty's honor included twelve "party girls" who were paid \$1050 for their contribution to the evening's fun. A bluenose busybody peeked through an open transom just as Fatty and the girls were stripping on the table, decided "decency" had been outraged and called the cops. Attending the festivities were movie magnates Adolph Zukor, Jesse Lasky and Joseph Schenck. They ended up paying \$100,000 in hush money to the Boston District Attorney and Mayor James Curley to bury the incident.

It was at another of Fatty's frolics, four years later, that an obscure starlet achieved instant renown. Unfortunately the young lady was in no position to profit from her fame.

Virginia Rappe, a lovely brunette model from Chicago, had attracted some attention when her smiling face appeared under a sunbonnet on the sheet music cover of "Let Me Call You Sweetheart." An offer came from Sennett, and she went to work on his lot, taking minor parts. She also did her share of sleeping around, and gave half the company crabs. This epidemic so shocked Sennett, that he closed down his studio and had it fumigated. Virginia was forgiven, however, and soon started "going steady" with veteran Sennett director

Henry "Pathé" Lehrman. He gave her a small part in his film Fantasy and later introduced her to Arbuckle when he directed him in Joey Loses a Sweetheart. Virginia's raven-haired beauty was noticed by William Fox when she won a "Best Dressed Girl in Pictures" award; he took her under contract. There was talk of starring Virginia in a Fox feature, Twilight Baby. Virginia Rappe seemed to be on her way.

Arbuckle had his roving eye on Virginia for some time. He had asked her to be leading lady in one of his comedies and had insisted that his friend, Bambina Maude Delmont, bring her to a party celebrating his new three-year \$3,000,000 contract with Paramount. Fatty loved liquor and ladies; the more the merrier.

On a whim, Fatty chose San Francisco as the scene of his revel. It would give him the chance to try out his new \$25,000 custom-made Pierce-Arrow. On Labor Day weekend two carloads of holidaying film folk roared off in great hilarity on a 450-mile dash up the Coast Highway to the City of



Fatty: A roving eye ↑

Hills. Fatty and his movie colony cronies, Lowell Sherman and Freddy Fishback, were piled in his flashy Pierce-Arrow, with Virginia Rappe, Bambina Maude Delmont and assorted showgirls in another.

Arriving in the Bay City late Saturday night, Arbuckle checked in at the luxurious Hotel St. Francis, sending the girls on to the Palace. Fatty took three adjoining suites on the 12th floor—enough room for any developments. Fatty rang up his bootleg connection, Tom-Tom the bellboy, found some jazz on the radio, and the party was on.

On Labor Day afternoon, Monday, September 5, 1921, the party was still going strong. It was Fatty's "open house" with people coming and going, the crowd swollen to about fifty and the host a happy drunk. Virginia and the other girls were downing gin-laced Orange Blossoms; some shed their tops to do the shimmy; guests were trading pajama bottoms and the empty bottles were piling up. At about a quarter after three, Arbuckle, flapping around in pajamas and a bathrobe, grabbed Virginia and steered the tipsy model to the bedroom of suite 1221. He gave the revelers his famous leering wink, saying, "This is the chance I've waited for for a long time" and locked the door.

Bambina Maude Delmont later testified that the festivities were stilled when sharp screams rang out in the adjoining bedroom. Weird moans were heard through the door. After much pounding and kicking, a giggling Arbuckle sallied forth in ripped pajamas, Virginia's hat squashed on his head at a crazy angle, and quipped to the girls, "Go in and get her dressed and take her to the Palace. She makes too much noise." When Virginia kept screaming, he yelled, "Shut up or I'll throw you out of the window!"

Bambina and a showgirl friend, Alice Blake, found Virginia nearly nude

Virginia Rappe: Sunbonnet Girl →





on the disordered bed, writhing in pain and moaning, "I'm dying, I'm dying ... He hurt me." As Alice later testified, "We tried to dress her, but found her clothing torn to shreds. Her shirtwaist, underclothes and even her stockings were ripped and torn so that one could hardly recognize what garments they were."

Virginia was only able to whisper to a nurse in the exclusive Pine Street hospital where she was taken, "Fatty Arbuckle did this to me. Please see that he doesn't get away with it!" before sinking into a coma.

On September 10, one year to the day after the death of Olive Thomas, Virginia Rappe died, age twenty-five, losing forever her chance to star in Twilight Baby.

The cause of her death almost went undiscovered. The San Francisco Deputy Coroner, Michael Brown, suspicious after a "fishy" phone call from the hospital inquiring about a post-mortem, went around personally to see what was going on. What was going on was the beginning of a frantic cover-up. He was just in time to see

an orderly emerge from an elevator and head for the hospital's incinerator with a glass jar containing Virginia's injured female organs. He requisitioned the organs from the reluctant doctor so that he could conduct his own examination. Thus it was revealed that Virginia's bladder had been ruptured by some form of violence, which led to her death from peritonitis. Brown reported the matter to his superior, Coroner T.B. Leland, and it was agreed that a police investigation was in order.

Detectives Tom Reagan and Griffith Kennedy were soon grilling the uneasy hospital staff to find out who was covering up what; they found out. So did the newspapers. When Fatty Arbuckle was charged with Virginia Rappe's rape and murder, all the world knew the name of Virginia Rappe. The State of California blamed her death on "external pressure" applied by Arbuckle during sexual dalliance. A forlorn fame for Virginia. A heavy rap for Fatty: "Murder 1."

The shock waves coming from San Francisco that September nearly



Fatty and his Pierce Arrow: The morning after ↑

Suite 1221 at the St. Francis: A heavy rap →





shook Hollywood to its newly laid foundations. It was all too unbelievable: Fatty, kiddies' favorite, Riot o' Laffs Balloonatic, champion of good clean slapstick fun suddenly featured in Movie Star Death Orgy.

ARBUCKLE ORGY
RAPER DANCES WHILE
VICTIM DIES

As headlines screamed, the rumors flew of a hideously unnatural rape: Arbuckle, enraged at his drunken impotence, had ravaged Virginia with a Coca-Cola bottle, or a champagne bottle, then had repeated the act with a jagged piece of ice . . . or, wasn't it common knowledge that Arbuckle was exceptionally well-endowed? . . . or, was it just a question of 266-pounds-too-much of Fatty flattening Virginia in a flying leap?

What was certain was a leap in



Witness Maude Delmont ↑



circulation; the tabloids had a field day printing insinuations about Arbuckle's "bottle party." The San Francisco Examiner editorialized: "Hollywood Must Stop Using San Francisco for a Garbage Can." The Coroner was quoted as demanding "steps to prevent a further occurrence of such events, so that San Francisco will not be made the rendezvous of the debauchee and gangster." San Francisco churches demanded retribution for the "sex mad maniac from Hollywood" who chose law-abiding San Francisco for his "shameful revels."

In Hartford, Connecticut, women vigilantes ripped down the screen in a theater showing an Arbuckle comedy, while in Thermopolis, Wyoming, cowhands shot up the screen of a movie house showing an Arbuckle short. Barrages of bottles and eggs were reported. As a "Lynch Fatty" mood swept the land, vigilante groups demanded a clean-up of the whole Hollywood colony; Arbuckle's films were withdrawn.

While Arbuckle sweated it out in a San

The tabloid touch: Arbuckle Art ↑

San Francisco jail, being held in custody in the grim old Kearny Street Hall of Justice, his lawyers fought to have his first-degree murder charge changed to manslaughter. Adolph Zukor, who had millions at stake on Arbuckle, phoned San Francisco District Attorney Matt Brady in an effort to quash the case. It merely outraged Brady, who later charged he had been offered a bribe. Other prominent movie colony figures called Brady to suggest that Arbuckle shouldn't be crucified just because Virginia Rappe drank too much and died. The D.A. was enraged at these further interventions.

The trial began in mid-November 1921, in San Francisco's Superior Court, with Arbuckle taking the stand to deny any wrongdoing. His attitude seemed to be one of complete indifference to Virginia Rappe; at no point did he express remorse or even sorrow for her death. His lawyers were more out front: a concerted attempt was made to besmirch Virginia's character, suggesting she was "loose" and had slept around in New York, South America and Paris as well as Hollywood. After much conflicting testimony the jury favored acquitting

Arbuckle by 10-2 after forty-three hours deliberation. A mistrial was declared.

A second trial jury went 10-2 for conviction and was dismissed. Fatty, who was out on bail, was forced to sell his sedate English home on West Adams Street in L.A. and his fleet of fancy cars to pay lawyers' fees.

Despite the indignant Brady, who wanted to nail Fatty in the worst way, Arbuckle was acquitted in a third trial ending April 12, 1922, largely due to incredibly confused testimony by forty witnesses (mostly drunk at the time of the incident) and the lack of specific evidence (such as a bloody bottle).

The jury that freed Fatty made this comment: "Acquittal is not enough for Roscoe Arbuckle. We feel a grave injustice has been done him and there was not the slightest proof to connect him in any way with the commission of any crime."

On the courtroom steps Arbuckle told the press, "This is the most solemn moment of my life. My innocence of the hideous charge preferred against me has been proved . . . I am truly grateful to my fellow men and women. My life has been devoted to the production of clean pictures



Arbuckle on trial in San Francisco ↑



for the happiness of children. I shall try to enlarge my field of usefulness so that my art shall have a wider service."

His solemn moment of hope was short-lived, however. Fatty was free but not forgiven. Henry Lehrman, Virginia's erstwhile boy friend, had this bitter comment: "Virginia had the most remarkable determination. She would rise from the dead to defend her person from indignity. As for Arbuckle, this is what comes of taking vulgarities from the gutter and giving them enormous salaries and making idols of them. Some people don't know how to get a kick out of life, except in a beastly way. They are the ones who participate in orgies that surpass the orgies of degenerate Rome."

Or, he might have added, Babylon.

Madame Elinor Glyn, the movie colony's tone-setter, took the occasion to comment on Hollywood's rotten apples: "If they are flagrantly immoral, hang them; do not show their pictures; suppress them; but do not make them all suffer for a few. This Arbuckle party was a beastly, disgusting thing and things like it should be stamped out. But I didn't see any such things in Hollywood, and if there are dope parties there, they must be very small."

Paramount cancelled Arbuckle's \$3,000,000 contract. His unreleased films were junked, causing the studio a cool million-dollar write-off. Fatty the Funnyman was finished. The Prince of Whales had been harpooned.

Arbuckle was banned from acting. Only a few friends like Buster Keaton remained faithful. It was Keaton who suggested Arbuckle should change his name to "Will B. Good." He did adopt the name of William Goodrich in later years and gained employment as a gag man and comedy director. But Arbuckle wanted to act. He pleaded in the March 1931 *Photoplay*: "Just let me work. I want to go back to the screen. I think I can entertain and gladden the people that see me. All I want is that. If I do get back, it will be grand. If I don't — well, okay."

Well okay was the way it worked out: Fatty was never allowed to forget his fall from grace. People whistled "I'm Coming, Virginia" when they recognized him in the street. That sticky headline ink wouldn't wash off. The part he was forced to play was Pagliacci.

In his forced retirement Arbuckle took to drinking heavily. Bottles seemed to haunt him. In 1931 Fatty was arrested in Hollywood for drunk driving. As the traffic cop approached, Fatty flung a bottle from the car, laughing, "There goes the evidence!"

Was he thinking of another bottle that went sailing out of the 12th-floor window of the Hotel St. Francis on Labor Day 1921?

Broke and broken, he died at forty-six in New York, June 28, 1933. Poor Fatty! *L'affaire* Arbuckle scared Hollywood out of ten years growth. Hollywood now meant more than Dreamland. It was forever linked with Scandal in the minds of millions.





To Miss Hunter -
Many God bless her
William Maylor
6/1/20.

Wit

• PANIC AT PARAMOUNT •

While Arbuckle sweltered through his second trial in San Francisco and Hollywood simmered in the glare of inflamed public opinion, a scandal broke right in the center of the film colony.

On the night of February 1, 1922, someone killed William Desmond Taylor in the study of his bungalow court apartment on Alvarado Street in L.A.'s placid Westlake district. Taylor was Chief Director of Famous Players-Lasky, a Paramount subsidiary. Paramount, which had its hands full with Arbuckle, could now thank its unlucky stars for another scandal.

The body was discovered the following morning by Taylor's Negro manservant, Henry Peavey. Taylor lay on his back on the floor of the study as if in a trance, his arms straight out, a chair fallen over his legs. Robbery was not the motive; his large "lucky" diamond ring (he had worn it since the success of his first film, The Diamond from the Sky) still shone on his finger.

Peavey ran, emitting a soprano scream, "Dey've kilt Massa! Dey've kilt Massa!" (as reported in the Los Angeles Examiner) waking up the other residents of the court, including Edna Purviance, who immediately placed a phone call to Mabel Normand. Mabel called

Charles Eyton, general manager of Famous Players-Lasky who, in turn, called the Paramount super-chief, Adolph Zukor. Edna placed another call to Paramount star Mary Miles Minter. She could not be reached. The message was left with her mother, Mrs. Charlotte Shelby. None of these saw fit to notify the police. They all had urgent business to attend to first.

Mabel rushed to Taylor's to retrieve a bundle of her correspondence. Charles Eyton rushed to Taylor's to get rid of all the illegal liquor. (Dead or alive, a Paramount director must not be found violating the Eighteenth Amendment!) Adolph Zukor rushed to Taylor's to clean up any signs of sexual hanky-panky. Charlotte Shelby rushed to her daughter Mary with the news, which precipitated an unseemly match of shouted hysterics. Henry Peavey, the soprano manservant, traipsed up and down sedate Alvarado Street like a demented thing, incessantly screaming, "Dey've kilt Massa! Dey've kilt Massa!" until, much later, some neighbor phoned the cops to "come collect the crazy coon." Representatives of the law did eventually arrive.

When the police arrived at Taylor's bungalow later that morning



a busy scene was underway. Merry flames blazed in the fireplace, fed compromising papers by Paramount's top brass, while Edna Purviance looked on. Mabel Normand, the Sennett heroine, was poking into nooks and crannies for the misplaced correspondence. The still eye of the hurricane was Taylor's corpse on the study floor, two .38 bullets in his heart.

There might have been some hope of solving the enigma if the Paramount bigwigs had not swooped down on the dead man's house to cosmeticize the scene. It is more than likely that significant clues were incinerated by Zukor and Eytan in Taylor's fireplace.

Zukor, Eytan & Co. did not, however, have time to complete their housecleaning. When the homicide squad descended on the Taylor bungalow, all kinds of things came to light. The cops uncovered a cache of pornographic photographs hidden behind some scenarios at the bottom of a drawer. These whimsical

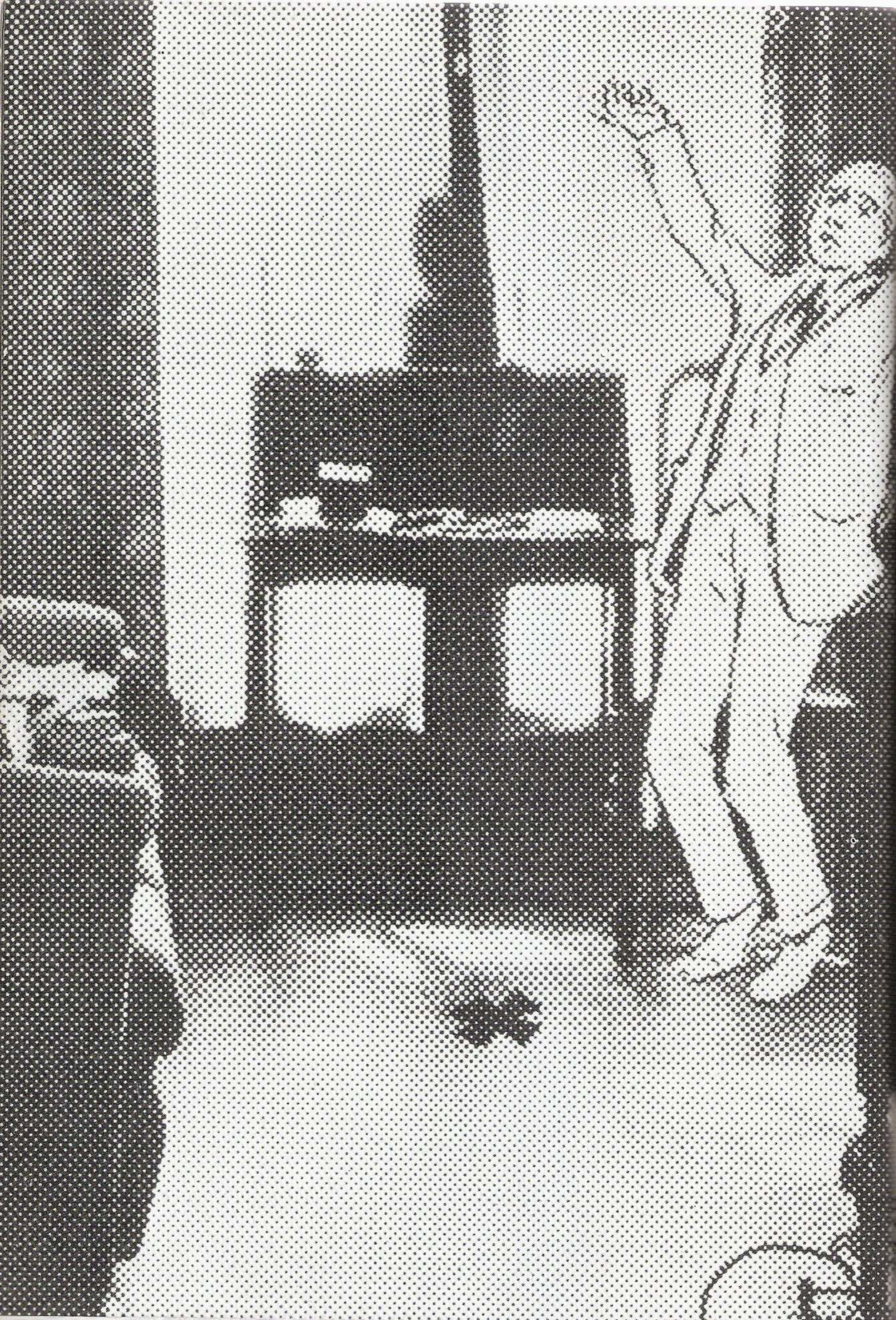


portraits of the dead man in the identifiable company of several female stars confirmed his reputation as a Lothario, if not his tact. Several prominent actresses were questioned, including Mary Pickford, whose large framed photograph inscribed to Taylor was found. The photographic curiosities contributed nothing to solve the case; Mary Pickford said she would "pray."

When Mabel Normand was questioned about her early-morning browse, she candidly admitted that she had been looking for letters she had written to Taylor, to prevent them being examined by outsiders. She commented, "I admit this, but it was only for one purpose, to prevent terms of affection from being misconstrued." (The letters were later found tucked into one of Taylor's riding boots.)

Further sleuthing in the Taylor study shook loose a letter hidden between the pages of White Stains, a book of erotica by Aleister Crowley. When the scented page fluttered to the floor it was seen not to have been penned by Mabel







Normand. The pale pink stationery was monogrammed M.M.M. and eyebrows were immediately raised. Mary Miles Minter was Paramount's answer to Mary Pickford, curls and all, an embodiment of demure innocence. Yet here in her handwriting was a mash note which ran:

Dearest—
I love you — I love you — I love you —
X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X X
Yours always!
Mary

When questioned, Mary confirmed her ardor: "I did love William Desmond Taylor. I loved him deeply and tenderly, with all the admiration a young girl gives to a man with the poise and position of Mr. Taylor." (M.M.M. was twenty-two; Taylor fifty.)

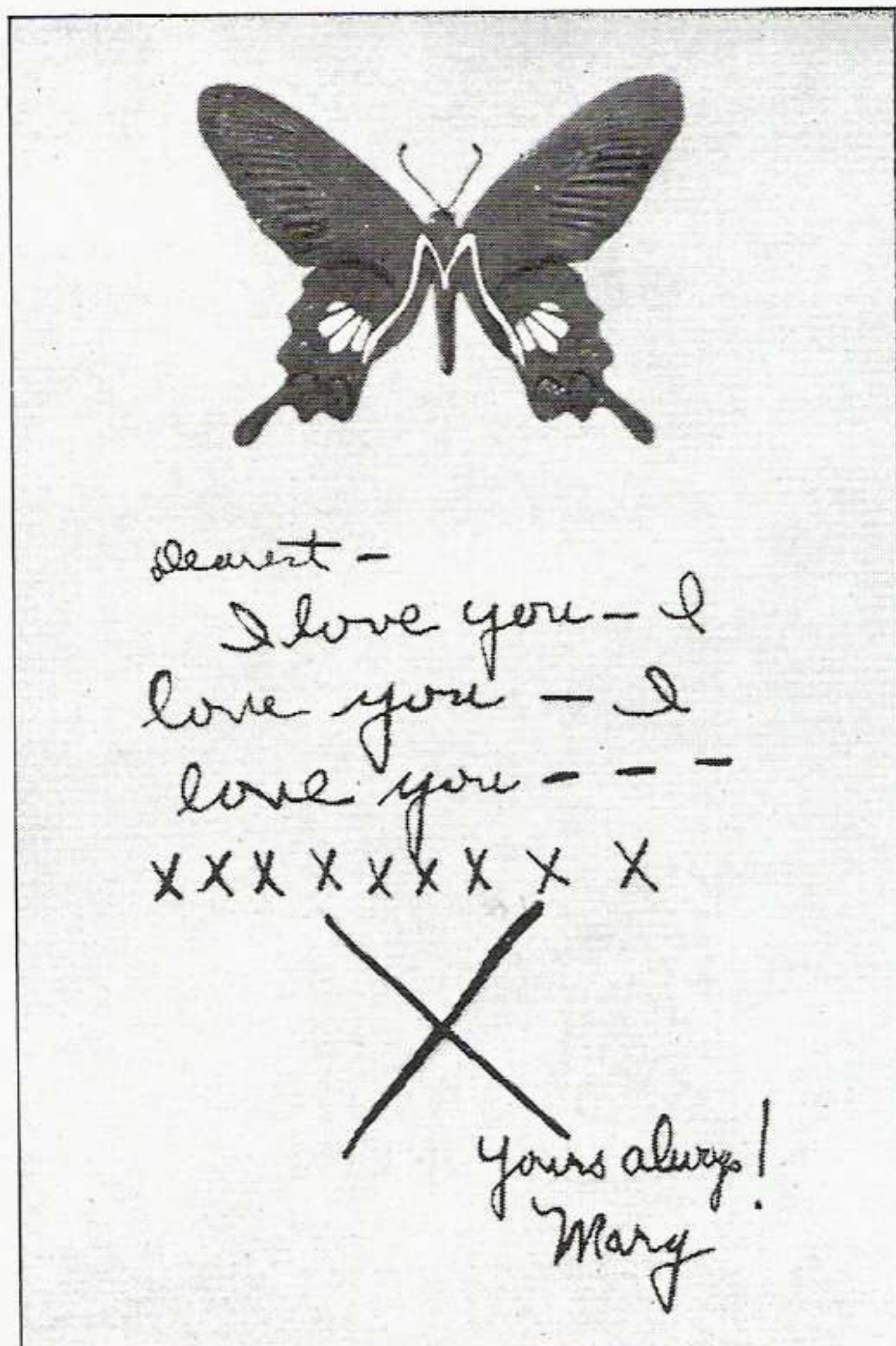
At the garish, crowded funeral a distraught Mary Miles Minter approached the bier and kissed Taylor's

corpse full on the lips. She then caused a considerable stir by rising to announce that the corpse had spoken! "He whispered something to me; it sounded like 'I shall love you always, Mary!'"

The circumstances of the Taylor murder were so bizarre that they have been incorporated into several mystery novels and movie scenarios. And all the real-life cast were "characters" — even Taylor's soprano manservant, Peavey, who liked to crochet doilies and scarves. Then there was Taylor's butler, Sands. He was missing. It turned out he was the director's younger brother — a dubious figure with a larcenous past, on the lam from the law. Taylor had coached him to acquire an impeccably servile demeanor, his disguise further enhanced by bleached hair. Sands, suspected for passing forged checks and possible involvement in his brother's death, had vanished, never to be seen again.

It turned out that both Mary Miles Minter and Mabel Normand had paid Taylor a visit the night of the crime. Mabel was the last person to see him alive. As a parting gift, the ever-thoughtful Taylor had given Mabel the latest volume of Freud.

Ten minutes after the departure of Mabel's limousine, a neighbor, Mrs. Faith Cole MacLean, heard a loud noise and went to the window overlooking Taylor's bungalow. Later she told police: "I wasn't sure, then, that it was a shot at all, but I distinctly heard an explosion. Then I glanced out of my window and I saw a man leaving the house and going down the walk. I suppose it was a man. It was dressed like a man, but you know, funny-looking. It was dressed in a heavy coat with a muffler around the chin and a cap pulled down over the eyes. But it walked like a woman —



← X marks the spot ↑



quick little steps and broad hips and short legs." (Could this have been Mary Miles Minter's jealous mother, Mrs. Shelby, in drag? She owned a .38 caliber pearl-handled revolver, and had been seen practicing shooting it shortly before the murder. Afterwards, she was allowed to slip away to Europe without questioning.) It was an enigma that would even have baffled S. S. Van Dine.

The murder threw Hollywood into an uproar. The incident was particularly shattering to the film colony since Taylor, a social figure of prominence, had been president of the Screen Directors' Guild. A handsome, worldly fellow, bibliophile and supposed bachelor with a reputation as a ladies' man, he was in reality William Deane-Tanner, who had vanished from his New York home in 1908, leaving a wife and daughter.

It soon came out that in his Hollywood incarnation he had been carrying on simultaneous affairs with Mabel Normand, Mary Miles Minter and Charlotte Shelby, Mary's mother. This "quadrangle" held all that the tabloids could desire in the way of sensation. The papers also insinuated

that Taylor had been the cause of the suicide of Zelda Crosby, a Famous Players screenwriter with whom he had been intimate.

While ransacking Taylor's bungalow the inspectors came upon a more esoteric aspect of the director's dalliances. In a locked closet of his bedroom was found a unique collection of Hollywood lingerie—lacy, deluxe ladies' undies, each tagged with initials and a date. (It seems that "lucky dog" Desmond made a point of retaining a souvenir of each sentimental encounter.) When a pale pink nightgown of filmy silk, delicately embroidered M.M.M., was found, Mary Miles Minter's sweet virginal image was ruined and her career smashed. (In forced retirement, M.M.M. turned to the consolation of comfort-eating and rapidly put on weight.) The Drums of Fate was her last picture.

As if all this did not suffice, there was a "dope angle" to the case. Reporters stated that Taylor had recently been visiting the "queer meeting places" in L.A. and Hollywood, dens where strange effeminate men and peculiarly masculine women dressed in kimonos



sat in circles, where guests were served marijuana, opium and morphine, the drugs wheeled in on tea carts. It was soon revealed that Taylor's good friend Mabel Normand, whose antic clowning for Sennett gained her fans by the millions, owed her effervescence at least in part to Cocaine & Co. Mabel's monthly expenditure for "cokey" was in the neighborhood of \$2000, blackmail included.

On one occasion Taylor had confronted a blackmailer who was hounding Miss Normand, and in the ensuing sidewalk fisticuffs knocked him flat.

When she became involved in the "dope angle" of the Taylor case, it was Normand's turn to retire from the screen. Suzanna, the Sennett feature she had just completed, was withdrawn after it had been boycotted. The epitaph to her career was an editorial in Good Housekeeping,

suggesting Mabel was too "adulterated" for family consumption. The delightful comedienne of so many Keystone Comedies was no longer an apple in the eye of her former fans.

Though Mabel Normand and Mary Miles Minter stood out as the principal scapegoats in the Taylor case, all of Hollywood felt the heat. Howls went up around the country at this new proof of filmland depravity. 1922 was a rough year for the movie industry.

Stacks of uncomplimentary press notices continued to pour in; denunciations rang out from the pulpits. It was not divine wrath the magnates feared, but retaliation at the box office. The specter of collective boycott by women's clubs, church organizations and anti-vice committees seemed formidable. With the professional puritans clamoring for a clean-up, something had to be done to improve the movies' image — fast.

Mrs. Shelby and daughter Mary going to fat ↑

Mary Miles Minter: Guilt by association →





• HAYS FEVER •

The “improvement” of the movies’ image entailed a bit of window dressing borrowed from the world of baseball. The multimillion-dollar sports business had nearly been scuttled in 1919 when a World Series “fix” came to light. The baseball bosses found a \$50,000 solution to their predicament by making Judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis their keep-the-game-clean-boys czar. The Hollywood bosses decided a similar figurehead of moral rectitude was badly needed to umpire movie morals. They doubled the ante.

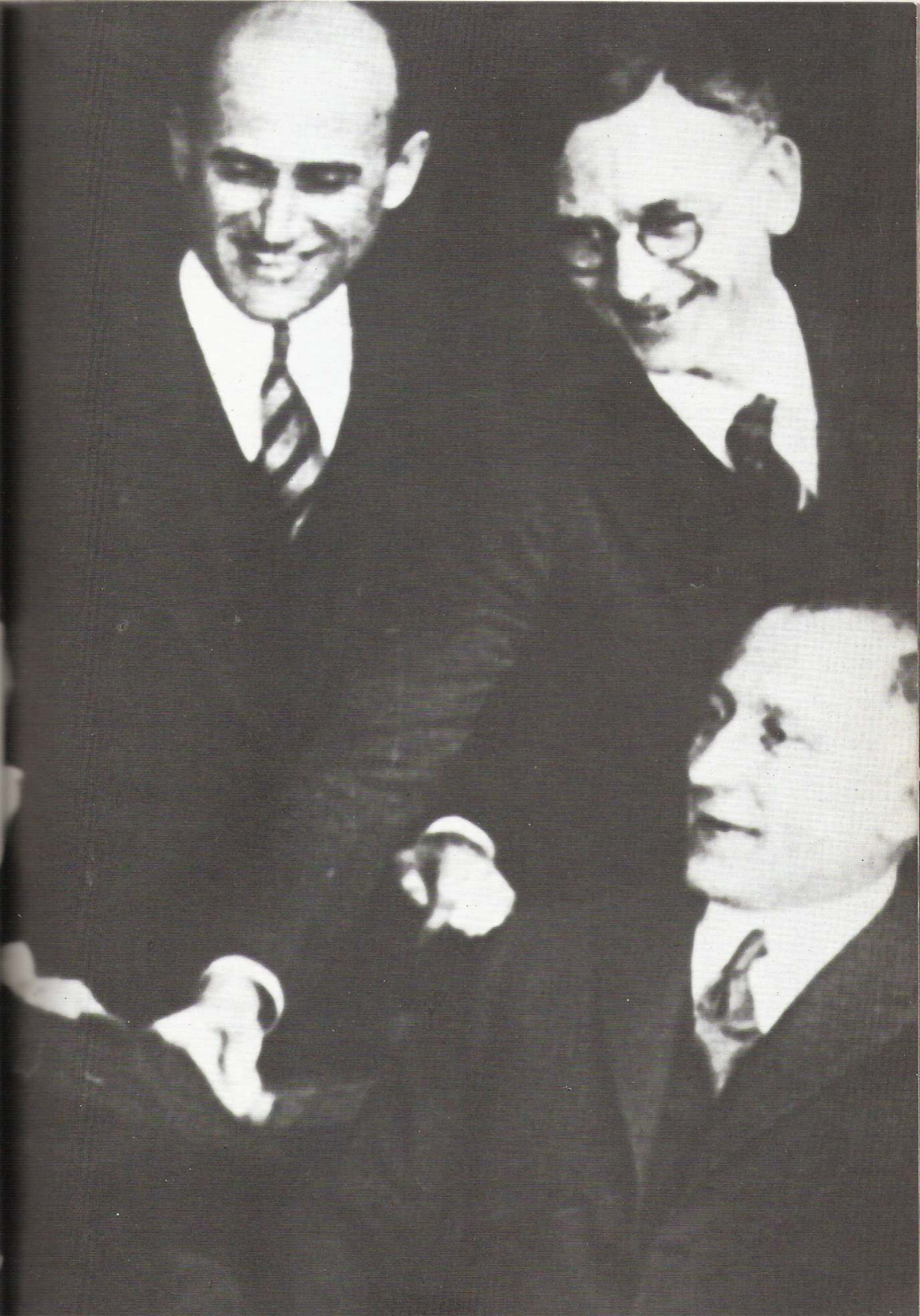
The plush \$100,000-a-year job of Movie Czar was offered to a prim-faced, bat-eared, mealy-mouthed political chiseler: Will H. Hays, a member of President Harding’s unfortunate Cabinet, who as chairman of the Republican National Committee had tilted the nomination to Harding. (In 1928 it came out that supposed simon-pure Hays had accepted a \$75,000 “gift” and a \$185,000 “loan” from oilman Harry “Teapot Dome” Sinclair, in gratitude for pushing easygoing Harding into the White House. The devious Hays told a Senate committee three different stories about these bribes; Senator Borah alleged that “Hays caused the Republican Party to sell itself to the willful despoilers of the nation.” Hays barely wriggled out of that one;

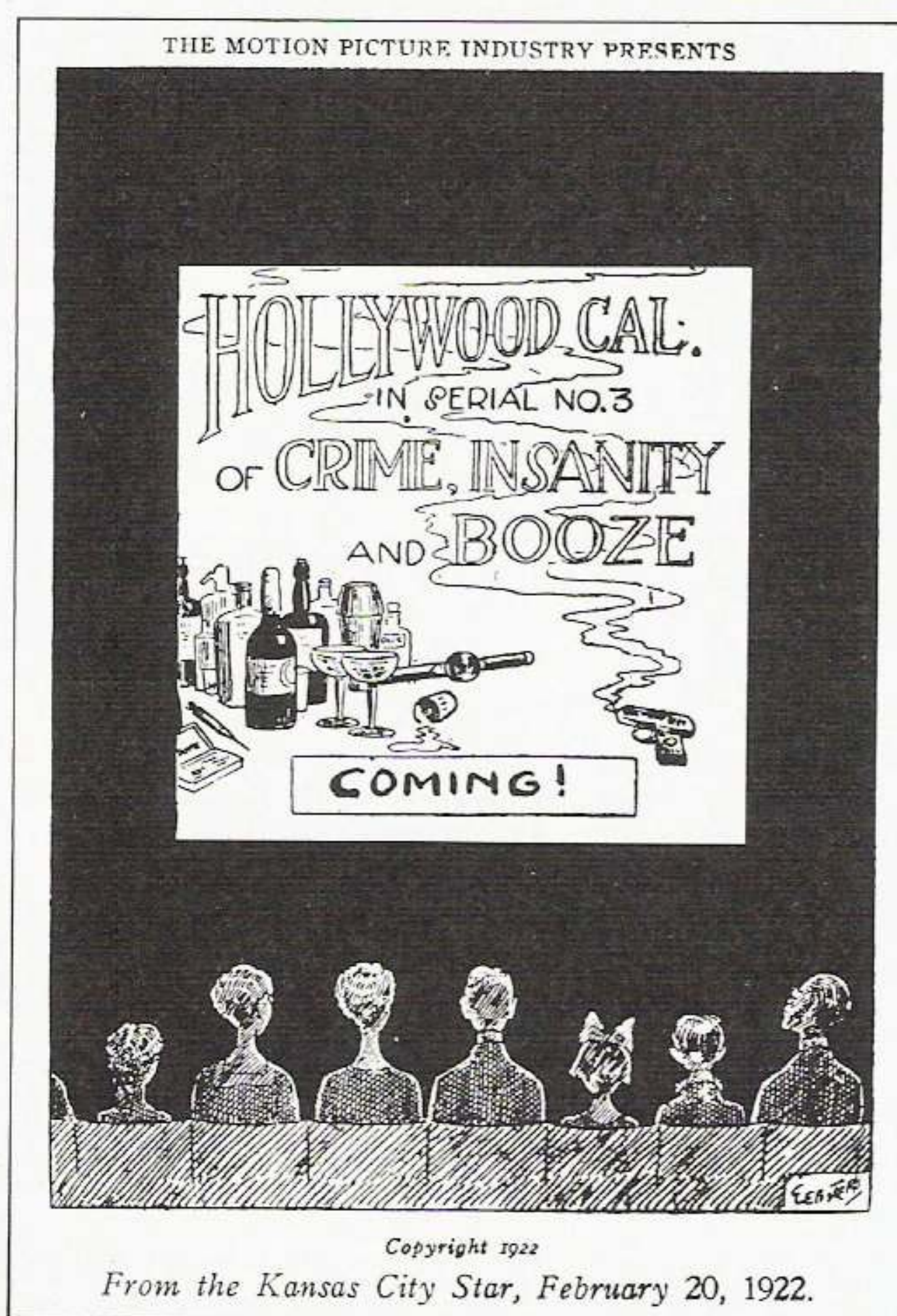
in 1930 he was caught red-handed paying expense money, honoraria and salaries to “moral” leaders who were supposed to render impartial opinions on the purity of films for various religious and civic organizations. Shifty Hays got away with it.)

As Harding’s Postmaster General, Hays opposed smut in the mails. Thus this Hoosier Presbyterian elder, who was also a member of the Masons, Knights of Pythias, Kiwanians, Rotarians, Moose and Elks, seemed just right to give the purity leagues satisfaction. Harding accepted the resignation of his sly postal watchdog and Hays left for his office in New York — a city considered “neutral” territory, far from the fleshpots of Hollywood but close to the powerful film financiers.

In March 1922, Hays became Czar of the Movies: president of the hastily-formed Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, Inc. In the company of a rather uptight gathering of founding fathers — Adolph Zukor, Marcus Loew, Carl Laemmle, William Fox, Samuel Goldwyn, Lewis and Myron Selznick — a press conference was called to let the world know what Hollywood’s new look would be. (Elinor Glyn cynically predicted, “Whatever will bring in the most money will happen.”)





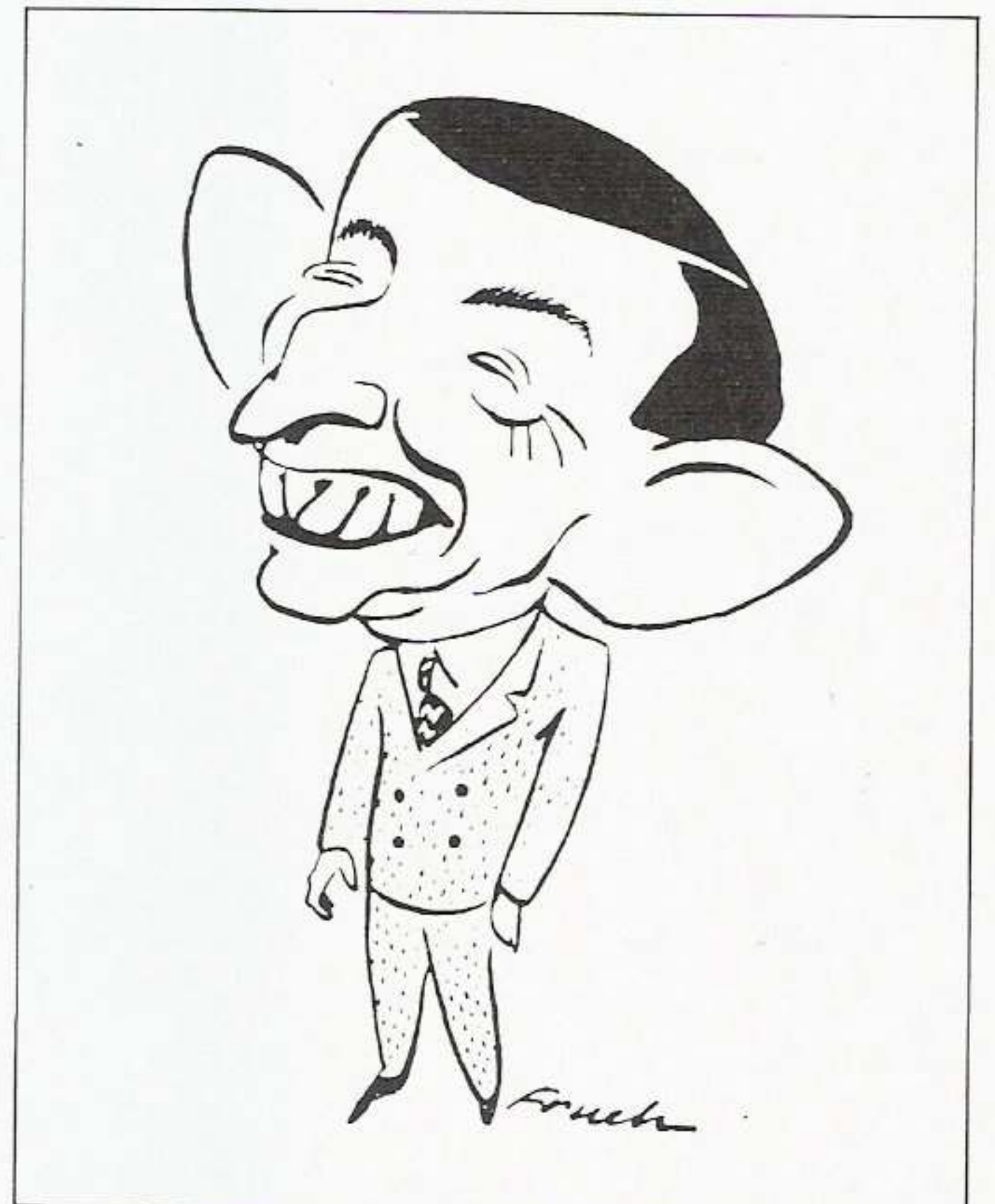


The rookie policeman of movie morals waded right in with a barrage of hogwash: "The potentialities of motion pictures for moral influence and education are limitless. Therefore its integrity should be protected as we protect the integrity of our children and our schools, and its quality developed as we develop the quality of our schools . . . Above all is our duty to youth. We must have toward that sacred thing, the mind of a child, toward that clean and virgin thing, that unmarked slate — we must have toward that the same responsibility, the same care about the impression made upon it, that the best teacher or the best clergyman, the most inspired teacher of youth, would have." As Hays intoned, the founding fathers of filmland broke out in shit-eating grins and heads bobbed agreement for the cameras. Politics had taught Hays all he needed to know about hypocrisy.

The Hays Office issued its first diktat: films were to be purified. Screen

immorality would be scissored: no more improprieties; no more lingering, lusty kisses; no more carnality; the axe for off-screen cut-ups. The picture people were about to observe a perpetual Lent. Morals clauses would be inserted into all contracts to persuade the Golden People to shape up: male stars would henceforth be monks and women stars nuns. Capers would be punished by the boot.

Hays fever swept the front offices. The moguls had no illusions that the morals clause would get the colony to mend its ways. They launched an undercover investigation of everybody in sight and turned loose a frantic, competing horde of private eyes on Hollywood. Detectives used the whole bag of dirty tricks from bribing servants to peering in windows, even primitive "listening devices." When the reports came in, the front offices died a little. It was much, much worse than they had suspected. With the approval of Czar Hays, a Doom Book was compiled with a total of 117 Hollywood names deemed "unsafe" because of their no longer private lives.







• GOOD TIME WALLY •

When the Doom Book was shown to Adolph Zukor, the head of Paramount Pictures had cause for alarm. Leading the blacklist was the name of his top box-office draw, Wallace Reid. Zukor, whose studio had already sustained a staggering loss when public outcry forced withdrawal of all Arbuckle and Mary Miles Minter pictures, bitterly protested the proposed banning of his popular star: "You should know that you are asking the impossible. Why, it would mean a two-million-dollar loss to us to do a thing like this in the case of this one man — a thing like this would simply be suicide." The other studio chiefs behind the blacklist knew there were ways to force the hand even of powerful Zukor, and leaked the inside dope on Reid to the ever-avid tabloids. The GraphiC led off with the banner headline:

HOLLYWOOD HOP-HEADS

insinuating that among prominent film colony drug addicts was a certain very popular male star at Paramount. These rumors were suddenly confirmed in a startling manner when Wally Reid, the "King of Paramount," was spirited away to a secluded private sanitarium in March 1922.

The commitment papers had been

signed by Florence, Reid's unhappy wife, a featured player at Universal under the name of Dorothy Davenport. Papa Laemmle, among others, had counseled Florence that Wally's "cure" was a pressing matter. She heartily agreed, and even Zukor reluctantly concurred it was better that Wally be kept out of sight.

Paramount issued some euphemisms about Reid's "overwork" but soon Mrs. Wallace Reid herself informed the press that her husband was undergoing a cure for morphine addiction.

The sensational news that Wally Reid was a drug addict stunned the American public. Wally was not just a popular movie star, he was the vital exponent of Young American Manhood. Blue-eyed, chestnut-haired Wally was a cheerful, strapping six-foot-three giant, possessed of great charm and acting ability as well as youth and good looks. Now, his nickname, "Good Time Wally," took on another meaning.

In his new role as Hollywood image doctor, Will Hays tried to cushion the shock by announcing that "the unfortunate Mr. Reid should be dealt with as a diseased person — not be censured, shunned."

Wally Reid was indeed dealt with as a diseased person, and one best

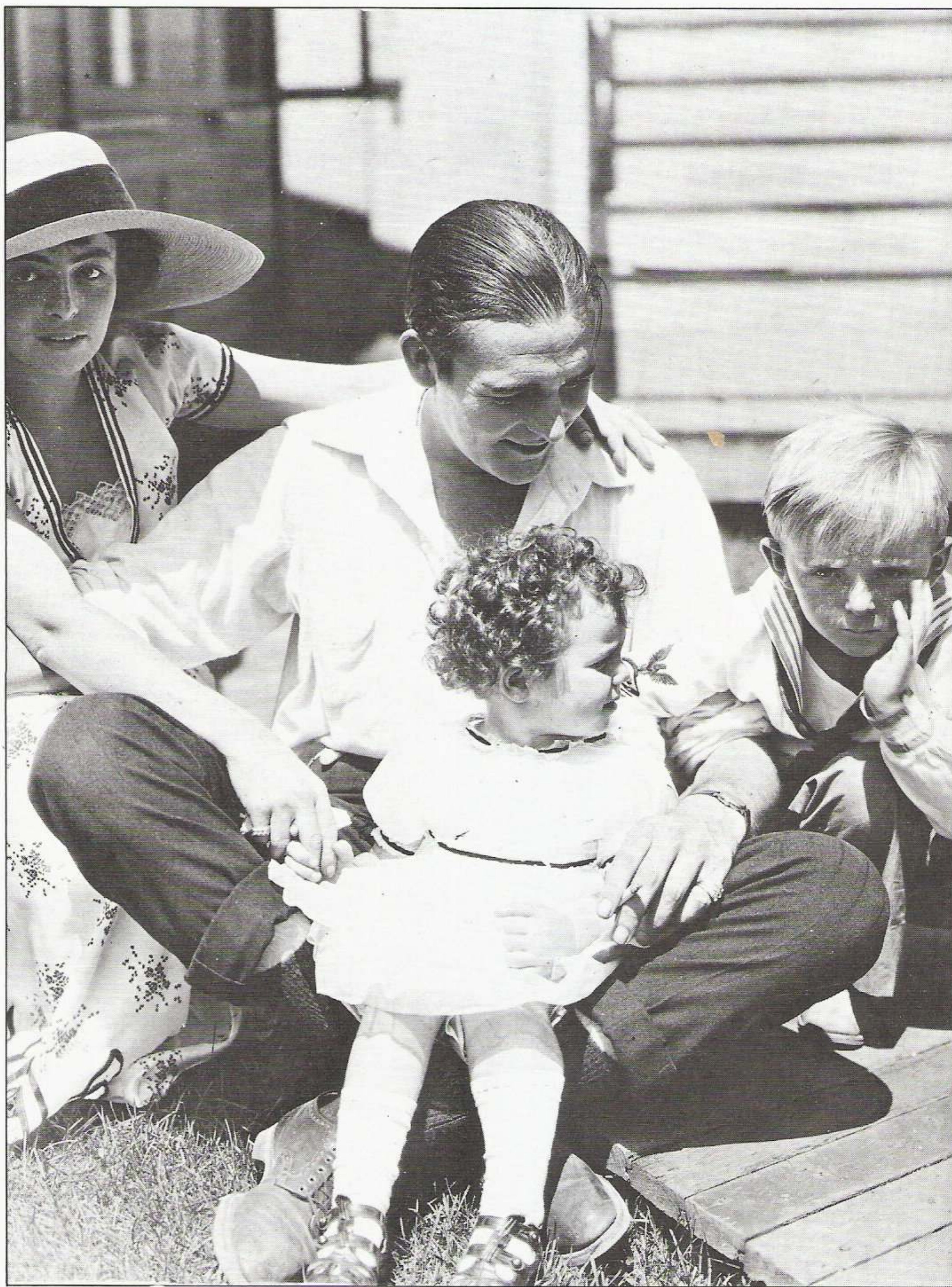




kept out of sight. He spent the remainder of 1922 within a padded cell of that private sanitarium. The abrupt withdrawal of his daily morphine fix and the shock of abrupt confinement unhinged his mind. Wally

became obsessed with the idea that he had been railroaded — he was right.

Paramount had pushed him through a nonstop production schedule of "Wallace Reid Racing Features" —



All in the Family: Dorothy, Wally and kids ↑

Mary Miles Minter moons for her hero: Wally Reid →



JESSE L. LASKY
PRESENTS

LACE REED IN DOUBLE SPEED

STORY BY ART WOODHOUSE

Directed by SAM WOOD

Scenario by CLARA GENEVIEVE KENNEDY

GRAMMOUNT-ART CRAFT PICTURE

The Whole World is Behind Mrs. Wallace Reid

and

HUMAN WRECKAGE

IT Is the Greatest Production in the History of Motion Pictures—It Surpasses Anything Ever Attempted or Achieved in the History of Entertainment—It Is Endorsed by the Biggest List of the Biggest and Best Organizations and Individuals in the Country—It Is Being Backed by a Colossal Campaign that Soon Will Reach Unprecedented Proportions—It Will Be the Center of Tremendously Important and Vital National Events—It Will Be the Most Talked of Picture and the Biggest Attraction That the Theatre Ever Knew.

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EXCHANGES EVERYWHERE

The Roaring Road, What's Your Hurry?, Double Speed — that had little to recommend them but the personality of the star behind the wheel. The gruelling pace began to tell, and in 1920, while he was working on Forever, at the prompting from a quiet, gentlemanly actor from the Sennett lot, Wally took his first morphine fix to mask his exhaustion and bolster his energy. By the time the film was in the can, Wally was hooked. Toward the end, working on Clarence, they actually propped Wally before the camera in order to finish the picture.

Wally died in his padded cell on January 18, 1923, age thirty. A rumor swept the movie colony that he had been "put to sleep."

At the time of Wally's death, his wife, Florence, hastened to call a press conference. She announced her intention to avenge her husband's death. She had turned over to the police the names of Wally's friends who had (according to her) drawn him into a life of drink, dope and debauchery. They called themselves the "Hollywood Hell-Raisers," but she preferred to qualify them as "Bohemians." "Gradually, he got to

drinking with his Bohemian friends, and soon this wasn't a home. It was a roadhouse. Wally's friends would come in here by the scores, at any odd hour of the day or night. They came, they stayed, they drank. It was one wild party after another, each one worse than the last. Nobody could do anything with Wally. And then — morphine."

Florence also took the opportunity to announce that her next picture would be Human Wreckage, an exposé of dope traffic. She was doing this film to "warn the nation's youth" as well as "in memory of Wally." She did not mention she had covert assistance from Will Hays for this antiseptic film. She concluded her interview with a final comment on her dead husband: "Wally was cured, but terribly debilitated physically. Only a return to the drug under control could have saved him. He refused."

On her subsequent cross-country lecture tour to warn of the dangers of drug addiction and launch Human Wreckage, her opportunistic billing was always "Mrs. Wallace Reid."

Mary Pickford provided Wally with a professional epitaph: "His death is a very great tragedy. I know he would have lived down every mistake he made."



Professional widow, Mrs. Wallace Reid, leaves on tour →





• CHAMPAGNE BATHS •

Will Hays issued a front-line communiqué promising better days for 1923: "We are traveling the highway to better things in filmdom . . . soon there will be a model Hollywood . . . I have faith that unfortunate incidents will be things safely of the past . . ."

These pious pronouncements did not tone down the exhibitors' blurbs: Such films as Woman to Woman, Men and The Bedroom Window promised a peek at "beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn" as well as "neckers . . . white kisses . . . red kisses . . . pleasure mad daughters, sensation-craving mothers . . . the Truth — Bold, Naked, Sensational!" Forty million Americans paid tribute every week at the box office, urged by ads that "All the adventure, all the romance, all the excitement you lack in your daily life are in — Pictures! They take you completely out of yourself into a wonderful new world — Out of the cage of everyday existence! If only for an afternoon or an evening — Escape!" The masses of the Twenties thought it was a "swell" idea, even when Hays tacked a moral message on the end.

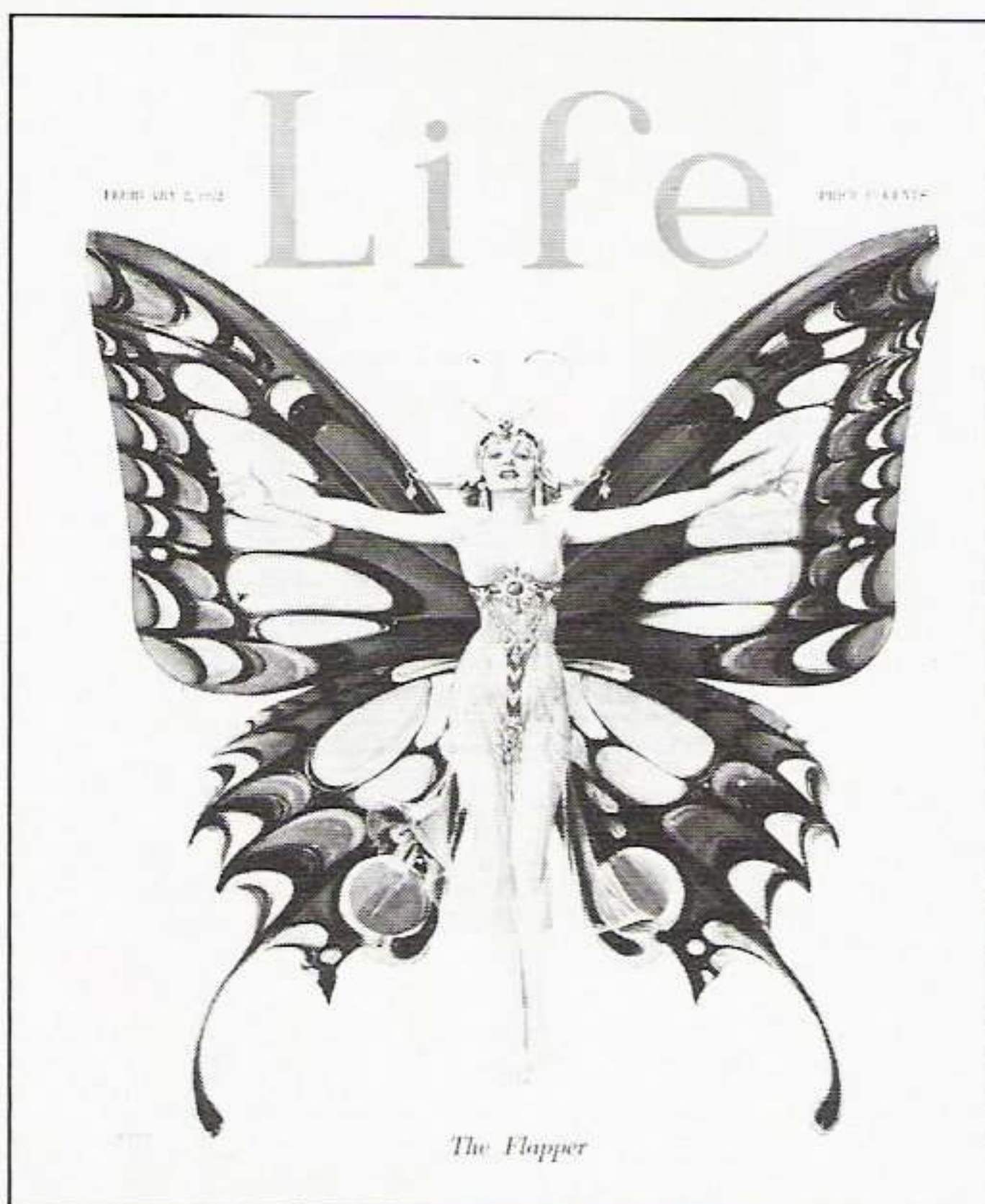
The rule of Czar Hays was looked at with dismay by Hollywood's

sincere believers in film artistry, who saw the advent of the big scissors man from the Bible Belt as an unmitigated catastrophe for the Seventh Muse. "Photoplays which deal honestly with life are now banned from the screen," they pointed out, "while claptrap receives a benediction provided it has a blantly moral ending and serves up its sex appeal with hypocritical disapproval." (They were aiming at that bathroom turncoat, Cecil B. De Mille.) Hays' concern for "the mind of a child . . . that unmarked slate" meant in practice that screen content was often reduced to the level of a ten-year-old. A disgruntled Hollywood wag made up a photo-montage showing Hays as a happy baby in a sand pile; it was much circulated at parties he did not attend.

Although public behavior was somewhat toned down, the movie colony's parties were as rowdy as before. Hotel suites were carefully avoided as unsuitable locations for high jinks. The Golden People had their incredible brand-new Hispano-Mauresque villas for private playpens — and they were careful to draw the brocaded drapes and to post guards at the wrought-iron gates to bar studio snoops and reporters. Then the darlings of the







gods could cut loose.

Rumors of riotous Hollywood high life behind Hays' back seeped out to the press through bribed butlers and upstairs maids, and the New York Journal commented: "When people spring from poverty to affluence within a few weeks, their mental

equipment is not always equal to the strain. They have money, an unaccustomed toy, and they spend it in bizarre ways. They may indulge in 'wild parties' or they may indulge in other forms of relaxation and excitement. Many of them spend all they make . . . Since Prohibition came in many of them who had no liquor stocks turned to other stimulants. The dealers in illicit drugs find a growing market in Hollywood."

While the Journal was correct in its comments on the drug traffic, it was wrong in assuming the film folk had any difficulty finding intoxicating beverages. Each star had his or her own 'legger, and rumrunning to the Hollywood haciendas was a lucrative business.

The movie colony slaked its thirst with a vengeance during Prohibition but much of the illicit alcohol was of questionable quality. Art Accord, the horse-opera star, was driven to suicide by bad-booze insanity; western star Leo Maloney was killed by it.



Flapper Joan Crawford Charlestons in Our Dancing Daughters →





Let you forget
Barbara
Ma

• HEROIN HEROINES •

After the death of Wally Reid, Hollywood “users” did not break their habits, they learned discretion. One of the town’s leading dealers was a quiet, gentlemanly actor on the Sennett lot known as “The Count.” It was he who offered to fix up Wally Reid’s hangover during the filming of Forever, who first put Mabel Normand, Juanita Hansen, Barbara La Marr and Alma Rubens on the junk.

“The Girl Who Is Too Beautiful,” Barbara La Marr, was Hollywood’s most glamorous, if jaded, junkie. She dabbled in every known variety of dope until her fatal OD at twenty-six, in 1926. Barbara kept her cocaine in a golden casket on the grand piano; her opium was the finest grade Benares blend. Barbara, the Southern belle brought into films by Douglas Fairbanks in The Three Musketeers, seemed to know she was not long for this life. Determined to make the most of it, she boasted of never wasting any more than two hours on sleep a night — she had “better things to do.” She did, indeed, have lovers by the dozens — “like roses” she said — as well as six husbands during her brief career as a star.

The film titles of “Too Beautiful” Barbara read like a litany: Souls

for Sale, Strangers of the Night, The White Moth. Her last incarnation as a femme fatale was in The Heart of a Siren. Her own heart was stopped soon after by a suicidal OD. The studio blamed her death on “too rigorous dieting.”

After Barbara La Marr, the sensitive dramatic actress Alma Rubens lost her “secure foothold on the ladder of fame” to plunge into the night-land of narcotics. The raven-haired star of The Half Breed, The Firefly, of Tough Luck, The Price She Paid and Show Boat became a real-life heroin heroine with most of her energies and a great part of her fortune devoted to securing drugs.

Alma’s addiction did not become public knowledge until a bizarre incident occurred the afternoon of January 26, 1929 on Hollywood Boulevard. She was to be seen running down the street pursued by two men. “I’m being kidnapped! I’m being kidnapped!” she screamed, tearing off her hat and gloves as she sprinted and throwing them into the gutter with her purse.

She ran up to a gas station and sought refuge among the pumps. The two men caught up with her. Alma then struck savagely with a knife she had concealed in her dress, stabbing the younger of the two men in the



shoulder. The gas station attendant managed to grab the knife while the older man locked her arms behind her. Alma, sobbing, was led off to an ambulance parked in front of her house on Wilton Place.

When the story appeared in the papers it became known that Alma Rubens had stabbed the ambulance attendant and that the older man was her physician, Dr. E.W. Meyer. Alma had panicked when they arrived at her house to put her in a private sanitarium. After a few weeks of treatment at the Alhambra Clinic she was allowed to return home with a nurse to look after her. In April 1929 she lashed out at the nurse with a knife and was subdued after a tussle. Alma was taken to the psycho ward of L.A. General Hospital, then transferred to the California State Hospital for the Insane at Patton for a six month "cure." When she left the hospital Alma declared, "I am feeling wonderful again after my rest. I am going to New York and try to pick up my career again, first on stage. Then I hope to return to Hollywood."

Alma's hopes for a Broadway



comeback did not work out, and while in New York she filed divorce proceedings against her third husband, leading man Ricardo Cortez. Alma kept her word and did return to Hollywood in 1931, but soon after her arrival felt a prompting to visit Agua Caliente, across the Mexican border, driving down in the company of Ruth Palmer, a young actress she had brought from New York.

On her return trip to Hollywood they stopped off at the U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego, where Alma was arrested on January 6, 1931, charged with possession of forty cubes of morphine. The tip-off had come from Ruth Palmer, alarmed at Alma's outbursts of violence. The police found the drug cubes sewn into the seams of one of Alma's dresses when they searched the hotel room. When the cops entered, Alma screamed: "I've been robbed of \$9,000 in jewels and this is a frame-up! I came back to California to make a comeback . . . then this has to happen to me!"

After being charged, Alma was diagnosed as seriously ill. She was





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Juanita Hansen
Modern Crusader

My Creed . . .

All great beauty in books, in music, in paint or marble or clay . . . all great service of whatever kind . . . have been inspired by men and women with definite goals . . . I, too, have a definite goal: to help the thousands of narcotic addicts now living in darkness—alone, ashamed, bewildered. And to do all I can, to enlist the help of as many others as I can, in a crusade against the spread of this most dreadful of spiritual and physical diseases—narcotic addiction.

—Juanita Hansen.

allowed to return home with her mother, under constant medical care. Realizing she was dying, Alma called the Los Angeles Examiner for a last interview: "I have been miserable for so long. I only went to professional men to seek relief from my pain. Each time they said, 'Take this for the pain and you will be able to go on.' When they first started giving me this horrible poison I did not know what it was. I went from one to the other. One even laughed when I told him I craved the drug and said, 'Don't be afraid, you will not need any more after you are well!' But they went on and on giving me this thing. As long as my money held out I could get drugs. I was afraid to tell my mother, my best friends. My only desire has been to get drugs and take them in secrecy. If only I could go on my knees before the police or before a judge and beg them to make stiffer laws so that men will refuse to take dirty dollars from murderers who sell this poison and who escape punishment when caught by buying

their way out." On January 22, 1931, Alma died, age thirty-three.

Another heroin heroine was the delicate blonde Juanita Hansen, "The Original Mack Sennett Girl," who was introduced to drugs on the Keystone lot. "The Count" had approached Juanita early one Monday morning when she was suffering the effects of a boozed-up weekend. He used his usual opener: "Hangover, honey? I'll fix it for you." The first "taste" was free. The die was cast.

Soon, Juanita was buying at \$75 an ounce. Years later, she recalled meeting her connection in downtown L.A. at Fourth and Spring Street: "... a peddler, the same man who had met me that fateful day at the same spot and had sold me my first 'bundle' of heroin. I had been his best customer since. The man was really a fairly well-known actor, though not a star. I took a dose right there. Doctors, the hospital and the dangers I was running from, meant nothing to me. All I craved was heroin. I bought a good supply." And so "The Count" led another star down Smack Alley.

While Barbara La Marr and Alma Rubens somehow escaped the Doom Book blacklist following the death of Wally Reid, Juanita Hansen was not so fortunate. Her name was found in a letter of an Oakland doctor with whom she had sought treatment, and soon after Reid's death she was arrested and held in jail for seventy-two hours to determine if she was on the stuff. At that time she was not, but the headlines finished her career. Juanita, the daredevil serial queen and star of The Lost City, hit the oblivion trail. Her comeback was not in the movies, but as founder of the Juanita Hansen Foundation, whose avowed aim was to urge doctors to wage war against addiction "as they now crusade against syphilis."

BARBARA LA MARR
WITH GOD IN THE JOY AND BEAUTY OF YOUTH

1896

1926

