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Miss Gauntier as heroine of one of her own scripts, on the sands of Saint John's River



Kalem's invasion of Florida inaugurated the custom of traveling far for effective backgrounds

Blazing the Trail

A fascinating and authentic history of the early motion pictures

By GENE GAUNTIER

WITH the opening of the theatrical season of 1907-8 Sid Olcott's actors, who had been engaged from picture to picture only, began to desert him. Joe Santley was to star in Lucky Jim with Vignola playing the villainous Mexican. Olcott was offered a part and was about to accept. He had no deep, real interest in moving pictures, just enough to do the daily task. He loved acting and the effortless life of the theater. Moreover he was very tired and he did not sense the future of the industry and his opportunities in it.

But my woman's intuition was keener. I had seen him advance from a carefree actor in third-rate plays to a position of authority and respect revealing unguessed possibilities. I believed he had found his calling and used every argument to induce him to remain with Kalem through the season. In the end such insistence prevailed and we all trooped off, leaving him to a horrible nerve-racking winter alone.

THE first picture he made after we left was Way Down East, made in a tiny Sixth Avenue studio rented from the Edison Company. This was another case of pirating, for Harper and Brothers had not yet brought their famous suit over Ben Hur. However, I never heard that William Brady made any trouble over the production, possibly because it was such a fiasco that he never heard of it!

There were plenty of excuses for this failure. The studio was small and cold, the lights utterly inadequate, and Kalem experienced here its first encounter with static.

For the benefit of the uninformed, I will explain



DRAWING BY HERMAN FEYER

We made up in our rooms and came to breakfast in character

that static is a species of electricity generated by the rapid passing of the cold celluloid film through the camera. There were many forms of it, and all of them were disheartening. One kind resembled forked lightning running from top to bottom of the picture; and again it took the form of sheet lightning, white flashes moving from side to side. Cold weather and dry atmosphere were conducive to it, even in a warm studio. For years war was waged against it, the Eastman Company joining the struggle and putting out a non-static film, which at first was not satisfactory.

BECAUSE of the failure of the studio picture, Mr. Marion cast about for one that could be taken in open air in winter, and Washington at Valley Forge was the result. It was made in blizzards and the coldest weather of the year. A military school up the Hudson cooperated and a passable picture was produced, but at the cost of desperately hard work, frosts bites and sickness. In early spring came The Scarlet Letter, which was a little better, and then in April a real success—The Japanese Invasion.

Everyone connected with Colonel Verbeck's Military Academy at Manlius, New York, cooperated with fine enthusiasm. The Colonel had been born in Japan. On the grounds of the school was a lovely Japanese garden, with tiny stream, arching bridges, tea house and rockeries. The boys were fine young chaps, keen about exhibiting their military training on the screen. The picture depicted the invasion of California by the Japanese, and its battle scenes created almost as great a furore at that time as did those in The Birth of a Nation some six years later.

of these times, as Grayson wrote of the period during which the struggle for the Constitution was in progress, that "pelf was a better goal than liberty and at no period in my recollection was the worship of Mammon more widely spread, more sordid and disgusting."

We are more tolerant than our fathers. Loyal members of the Ku Klux Klan do not compare in intolerance with those who made vicious attacks on Thomas Jefferson. Old women in New England hearing of his election hid their Bibles because the word had gone forth that he would burn them all.

We are freer from humcombe than our fathers were. To me it is one of the most encouraging proofs of the soundness of our democracy that a man like Calvin Coolidge could be sent back to the White House by the largest majority ever given any presidential candidate, and that the Republican party should nominate Herbert Hoover. For these two men contradict every one of the old-fashioned requirements for political success. They have no pleasing personality. They are frugal in the use of language. They have never told the voter that his life will be happier and easier if they are elected. They have never denounced their opponents nor "viewed with alarm" what may happen to the country if their party should fail to carry an election. They have dealt in no large and glittering generalities, kissed no babies, promised no miracles. Simply and quietly they have performed their jobs and the American people, looking on the work and pronouncing it good, have continued to honor them.

IT IS almost unthinkable that either man could have come up to the doors of the White House in an earlier generation, just as it would have been almost impossible for Andrew Mellon or Dwight Morrow to be admitted

to the public service. It is hard to overestimate the importance of what Morrow is doing in Mexico. Not only does he promise to bring together two neighbor nations that for generations have eyed each other with irritation and distrust, but his example is likely to introduce a new and splendid fashion into the musty conduct of diplomacy.

When the world comprehends that a humorist like Will Rogers and a flying youth like Lindbergh can do more for international relations than a regiment of stuffed-shirt diplomats, we may perhaps hope for an ultimate overhauling of the whole diplomatic machinery. Perhaps no war would ever be started if all the chancelleries were manned with common-sense business men; and no nations are going to misunderstand each other permanently if they can be led to cheer for the same athletes and laugh at the same jokes.

THERE are many other reasons—including the banishment of the saloon which will never come back however many the faults of prohibition may be—why the present seems to me a time for political optimism. I can understand how my pretty dinner companion might have been disgusted with politics had she lived in the days of Washington or Lincoln, but not now. This is a day to give thanks and take courage.

"All right," says the pretty lady, "I'll agree for the sake of argument that things are better than they were. But I still don't see any reason why I should vote."

Let us admit in all frankness that there is some reason for that feeling. When I cast my first vote the two national parties still had something that resembled real issues. The Democratic party stood for a low tariff and states' rights. Being somewhat favorably disposed toward both these doctrines I was tempted to enroll under the Democratic banner but I was dissuaded by Mr. William Jennings Bryan who was still preaching Free Silver, a doctrine which I believed then and still believe would have led to economic chaos.

Along came our period of industrial development followed by the war and the old-time issues vanished. If you want to express yourself in favor of a lower tariff today, how are you going to do it? The steel mills of Birmingham, the cotton mills of Georgia and the sugar plantations of Louisiana are no more friendly to free trade than the shoe factories of Brockton or the chemical plants of Wilmington.

If you believe in states' rights will you support the Republican party which is traditionally committed to a strong national government, or the Democrats who during the war centralized government at Washington to a degree which Republicans had never even dreamed of?

If you desire to express yourself on the subject of prohibition, will you vote with the Republicans who are dry in Kansas and wet in New Jersey, or with the Democrats who are dry in Alabama and wet in New York? The politicians seek earnestly and perspicuously to convince us that great issues are at stake in every national election but we are not deceived. Politics at the moment is a choice between individual leaders, and between parties in their capacity for administration. Until some new issue arises this will continue to be true.

It is true also, and always has been, that the individual feels himself more or less of a pawn in the political game. The stage is set, the actors chosen and the play produced by professionals. If you take the membership of any national convention and compare it with the membership of the convention of the same party four years before, you are surprised at the percentage of duplication. The same machinery elects the same delegates. The old-time bosses have passed away, but the machinery persists; and a new crop of lesser bosses pull the strings. There is no use trying to disguise the fact that the average voter has little party influence.

IT MIGHT almost be said that in some respects the nation has outgrown its institutions. Our whole governmental machinery was founded on the New England town meeting.

That system of conducting public affairs works admirably in Foxboro, Massachusetts, where I have my summer home. Every voter knows the qualifications of every candidate for office. Every family is aware of whether the streets have or have not been properly looked after; whether the schools are or are not efficiently administered, and exactly where the responsibility lies. If my street has been neglected I can go to the town meeting and make a fuss and help to bring about the election of a different street commissioner.

But how can I function intelligently in New York City where the ballot which is handed to me carries a hundred names, hardly one of which means anything to me at all? How can I choose judges, when I know nothing of their qualifications? How can I feel that my vote has any importance when the names on the ticket have been selected by a machine over which I have no control? Is it any wonder that I am tempted to sneak off early on

election morning and put in the day playing golf?

These I take it are the reasons which make men and women feel that it is useless to vote: the lack of clear-cut issues, the dominance of the machines; the impossibility of passing an intelligent judgment on so many candidates.

In spite of all this I continue to vote. And I believe that every man and woman, including the pretty lady, ought to do likewise. My reasons can be explained in three statements:

1. As a citizen of the greatest democracy on earth I conceive it my duty to have an intelligent opinion on public matters and to express it whenever a proper occasion presents, whether such an expression will be immediately effective or not.

Most of our misgivings about the importance of voting, and about democracy in general, arise out of a misconception of the way in which democracies are really governed. We assume that we elect a President and a Congress and that these proceed to create issues and settle them. Parties do not govern us in any such concrete fashion. Administrations do not create progress; they merely register it. The real facts were never better stated than by John Delane, great editor of the London Times. Commenting on the change of government in 1846, he said:

"If there is one lesson more than another which the late Administration has bequeathed to its successors, it is that it is not in the power of any one party to dictate the policy of the country. In fact the country will govern itself. It naturally, and almost unconsciously, makes a certain progress, which successive ministries can only a little simplify or perplex, quicken or retard. In spite of governments a great necessity grows up and compels a hearing. Measures spring forth, no one knows how, in

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 102)



She would take her children into the country on election day



She could see no profit in adding her ballot to the millions

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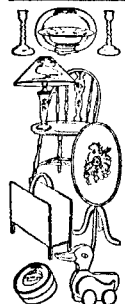
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The Father

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 164]

take what I will say. You must be aware that I think of you with the highest regard. I have considered you as my affianced wife, and you will agree that I have thus acted in bestowing upon you my attentions; viz., letters, gifts, valentine, ring. But I have this to say. As you will recall, my father bought from your father's property the pastures and the woodlot. These border right on the land bought by Mr. Jedediah N. Perkins, the Pa. of your friend Lucinda Perkins. After thinking it over I find that I prefer to remain here in Green River rather than to go West, as was first intended. Now I write to ask, Do you still think favorably of my suit; if so, I wish to tell everybody and to do so at once. They all pick on me because they say I was too slow and choosy, and you gave me the Slip.

"If you wish to keep things as they stand, then all right. But if you should feel that your affections are growing cold, then notify me at once.

"I have seen a good deal of Lucinda since your departure. I consider her a perfect woman, nobly planned. To warn, to comfort, and command. She already has a right smart of property, and since her pa has bought your pa's woods and pasture it almost seems like a leading.

"I remain as always

"Yours with deepest respect and with Heart-whole Devotion,

"Lemuel G. Crowther.

"P. S. If you do not care for my ring any longer, do not feel that you have got to keep it. It cost \$1.50 at the Post-office Store. You can send it back in a letter. It may cost as much as 12c to return it to me, so I am inclosing 12c for postage."

Mercy flashed down the loft ladder, seized her bonnet and cape.

"My letter to Lemuel! Oh, oh, the stage is due at the Corners this minute! Oh, if I can just get there in time to snatch it back!"

It was two miles to the post office. Long rutted miles, at that. Mercy raced down that road like a mad thing. Behind her shrieked a trail of astonished little brothers. Gasping, crimson, she tore into the little crossroads store.

"My letter, my letter! Give it to me. Quick!"

"Why, I put her into the mailbag not ten minutes ago. And here's the stage right now. Didn't you want her to go?"

"Open that mailbag! Hurry!"

"Hey, listen, Miss Mercy. Ain't I just lugged her and stuck some red gov'ment sealing wax on her? She's federal property now. I dissent—"

MERCY'S eye caught the store carving knife, adapted generally to every purpose from slicing bacon to whittling plug tobacco. She caught it up, cut the mailbag cords, groped frantically in. The postmaster stood by, uncertain whether to interfere. But she had jerked out her own letter and was re-tying the cords before he could put his protest into her own words.

The stage halted with a flourish, a yell of command. "Hostile with that mail! We're late now."

Mercy hurried. She seized on the sealing wax, still warm, dabbed on a splash and tossed the bag to the driver. The coach pelted away.

Late that night she awoke. She felt as if the burden of Atlas had rolled from her shoulders. Heaven be thanked, she had not played fast and loose with Lemuel's young affections. As a matter of fact it was Lemuel who had played fast and loose with her own. She reached over to Thomas' cot to make sure he was safely trussed in.

"Awake, Thomas?"

Thomas emitted an unsociable grunt. "Because if you are, I've got a secret to tell you. I've been tilted. And I'll wager there never was a tilted woman in all the world who enjoyed it as much as I do."

[TO BE CONCLUDED IN THE DECEMBER ISSUE.]

Blazing the Trail

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26]

rude almost, but he was absolutely and innocently unaware of it, and never dreamed that he had shocked me. Though his intellect fairly blazed, I was uncomfortable in his presence, never knowing what he would say next. But he saw my interest had been aroused and every time I came through the studio he wailed me with the same query: "Why don't they give an actor a chance to direct? I wish I had the opportunity."

THE repeated suggestion began to work, and very soon there came a moment when it came out in the open. Mr. Marvin needed a new director and cast envious eyes at Olcott who was doing fine work for Kalem but he did not dare make Sid a direct offer until he had severed his connection with Kalem, which Olcott was not inclined to do. So one afternoon Mr. Marvin called me to his office and announced:

"I am going to give Tony Sullivan a chance to direct."

I was surprised.

"Why Sullivan?" I asked.

"He has been with us longer than anyone else and therefore I think he should have the first opportunity. What's your objection?"

"Well, in the first place he is a low-comedy character actor and does not understand dramatic work or know dramatic values. Why don't you try Griffith?"

"Who is he, and why do you think he would make good?"

"He plays our heavies, the dark man who did the man about town in At the Crossroads of Life. He has unusual intelligence, dramatic sense, is very anxious for an opportunity, and has recently written a play which though it failed must have had something in it to cause so much discussion."

"All right, send him up and I will talk to him."

A little while later Griffith came to my desk, his face beaming.

"I'm to direct a picture," he said, "and Mr. Marvin has given me free rein. He told me to ask you for a script."

I selected one which told a simple quiet story, a play easy to take because it required exteriors only. It was called The Adventures of Dolly. I recalled the place at Sound Beach where I had been thrown into the mill dam on my first picture. The upper stretches of the river and the surrounding country were just the locations needed for the scenes in this script. So I assigned him Billy Bitzer, our cleverest cameraman, told Griffith where to go, helped him select his cast, all except the leading lady whom he wished to pick for himself. What was my surprise when I found it was my little acquaintance with the big gray eyes, for whom I had been unable to find a part and who then proved to be Griffith's wife.

GRIFFITH did not rush into his first picture unprepared, in fact he took several days to mull over the script; then disappeared for three more, keeping his people at Sound Beach until the picture was finished. An air of mystery enveloped the whole proceedings, no inkling of their progress reached us. Waiting there in the office I grew anxious. Three days for a simple picture that Olcott would have taken in less than a day! Even after his return I did not see Griffith for several days. Then I received a message to come to Mr. Marvin's office and I found them together.

"Mr. Griffith and I have just run off his picture. We would like to know what you think of it."

Not a hint as to whether it was good or bad! We stepped across the hall to the projection room and I saw the first thousand

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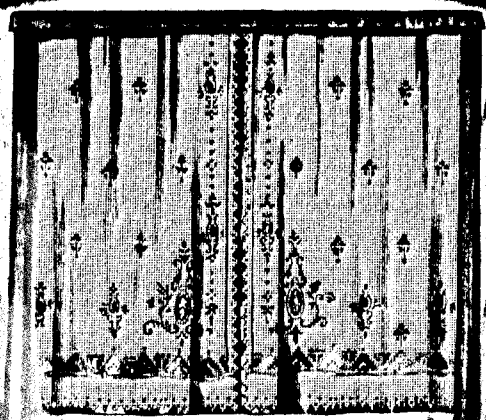
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Blazing the Trail

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 166]

feet of film which started the master of directors on his triumphant way.

It was a lovely little thing. Somehow he had managed to infuse into the plain unvarnished tale a feeling of poetry. It moved along as smoothly and gently as the river which played such a large part in it. Bitzer had given it the finest photography I had yet seen, and the short six or eight scenes of the original had been elaborated into some thirty or more by means of a new technique, unknown, undreamed of up to that hour--the use of the flashback.

You will understand of course that this first picture of his was charming judged by the standards of 1908. My reaction might be very different if I could see it now. Just then it was worth all the thrills I felt.

GRIFFITH'S entry as director was most opportune for in a few weeks Biograph gave up its fight against the Motion Picture Patents Company and entered the fold. This had been a losing fight and had reduced the company to desperate financial straits. I doubt very much whether Griffith would have had such a swift success had they remained independent in spite of the fact that his pictures began immediately to create a furore. As an Independent, Biograph had been selling but ten or twelve copies of each picture. Now with a sure market and a director acclaimed as great, their sales quickly surpassed all others. Before long it was not uncommon for them to sell a hundred copies of each production.

Griffith soon became the rage in the profession. Actors, directors and producers eagerly awaited each release and conscientiously studied his methods and the new effects he was always achieving. He introduced large figures cut off at the knees, and a discussion followed. It raged hotly in the Kalem office where Mr. Marion denounced it.

More controversy followed when he brought a man, James Kirkwood it happened to be, right up to the camera until the gigantic figure filled the screen. Then came the close-up and the back-lighted Rembrandt effects and the slightly out-of-focus photographs; the rage for blondes with the back lighting on the fluffy hair giving the effect of a halo. The flashback had also been elaborated until some scenes consisted of only a few feet, and a thousand-foot picture was cut into fifty or sixty scenes. The element of suspense was greatly augmented by the flashes, as was also the effect of contrasts.

It was all very revolutionary, and, however much the other companies criticized, the sale of Biograph pictures immediately outstripped them all, the public endorsed the new type of direction, and the other directors began to imitate it.

No amount of technical and mechanical imitation could produce a rival for those early Griffith pictures, for they contained a spirituality and a force and sometimes a stark crude realism that no other director could achieve. It is difficult to say just what it was; but the same thing held in later Griffith pictures. It was what made Broken Blossoms a masterpiece. Naturally those early efforts contained crudities and were often uneven, but they radiated a sincerity and a poetic illumination that placed them far above those produced by other directors even with as good material.

GRIFFITH soon gathered about him a stock company of distinction. With the tremendous sales he was able to pay enormous salaries, one hundred, one hundred and fifty dollars a week! And actors who had been successful on the stage left it for the new business.

Blondes appealed to him. He retained Marion Leonard; and among others were the little sixteen-year-old ingénue Mary Pickford, Florence Lawrence, and later Blanche Sweet and Lillian Gish, all blondes.

Tony Sullivan remained and was soon allowed to direct comedies under Griffith's supervision. For by popular demand, Biograph began to release three subjects a week. He chose good assistants, but Billy Bitzer remained his personal, tried and true

cameraman, and Biograph photography, with its rich soft tones, soon became the criterion for all cameramen. Bitzer told me on the one occasion I saw him after leaving Biograph (which was Mary Pickford's ball of farewell to the screen when she returned to the stage with Belasco) that he and Griffith oftentimes sat up all night working out together some photographic effect.

Meantime I was back with Kalem. There was no patching up of my break with Mr. Marion. Mr. Olcott put me into a picture the day after I left Biograph and when Mr. Marion saw it on the screen he said, "I see you have Miss Gauntier back." And that was all.

Through August, September and October I alternately worked in Kalem pictures and haunted managers' offices. For the stage bee still buzzed in my head. Nor did I dare speak of my screen work. Pictures had captured some of their dependable actors and theatrical managers were beginning to fear this new rival. An edict went forth that no one who worked in pictures would be employed so I kept my dark secret.

With the winter of 1908 came the invasion of Florida by the Kalem players. For the moving-picture industry this venture was almost epoch-making, establishing as it did new artistic standards, particularly in atmosphere, and inaugurating the custom of traveling far and wide in search of effective and authentic backgrounds.

In November Mr. Marion, having decided not to risk another winter fighting northern weather conditions, went to Florida to determine the practicability of sending a stock company there to work the entire season. Before he left, he offered me the position of leading woman at a salary of thirty dollars a week and expenses, adding the commission to write scenarios at twenty dollars each. This would bring my income up to fifty or seventy dollars a week. But somehow I could not bring myself to accept this glittering offer. My love of legitimate drama died hard.

ON THE day before Mr. Marion's return from the South, I had an offer to join Paul Gilmore's company in Boston, leaving New York the same evening. I was asked to give my answer in two hours. Refusal meant committing myself to the screen for at least another year. I wandered down Fifth Avenue debating the question. Suddenly I found myself standing before a shop window filled with Billikins, the plaster figures which were the quaint and popular mascots of the hour. I marched into the shop, bought my Billikin, took him home, placed him on my desk and talked the grave question over with him.

"The god of things as they ought to be!"

At four o'clock I went to the New York Theater and refused the stage engagement.

The next day I accepted Mr. Marion's offer.

This same little Billikin looks down at me as I write. His throne has long since disappeared, and so have his roes, but he grins the same old grin and is the same efficient little mascot. He has crossed the Atlantic with me twenty-one times. He helped me in those dreadful hours of 1914, when I was caught in war-crazed Europe without negotiable checks, for he brought me safely to New York on fifteen dollars. He has reposed in my trunk during innumerable transcontinental trips, into Mexico and Canada and far down the coast of Chile. But he holds a warm place in my heart mainly because under his influence I threw my lot in with the motion pictures for all time.

Within a few days after Mr. Marion's return Mr. Olcott had selected his stock company and we were Florida-bound, the first company to be sent out of New York for such a lengthy stay. Our departure created a sensation in the industry. Partly because of the significant influence exerted by this venture on the making of motion pictures and partly because the story of our life in Florida presents such a contrast to life as it is now led in Hollywood, I am describing our southern adventures in detail.

The company included, besides Mr. Olcott [CONTINUED ON PAGE 169]

and Mr. Miner Owen; his wife playing tense; a stock friends Florida; vaudev Ostrich. We 1908 w metrop more li artery thousa

FOR Mr. suburr Jackson Roselair hotel s banks a mile. by Ma was me drop d front v plentiful style, a and qui as "Mi compan and the staying of the r differen Farm, a of these Harry : with o day" di knee fr a parac Sunday another less dan actor.

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Blazing the Trail

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and myself, James Vincent, Kenean Buel, Minerva Florance, Tommy Santley, Ben Owens the cameraman, Max Schneider and his wife who was sometimes pressed into playing bits although she made no pretense to being an actress. To this nucleus of a stock company we added our personal friends and acquaintances who drifted into Florida during the winter season, and the vaudeville performers appearing at the Ostrich Farm, a local amusement resort.

We detrained at Jacksonville, which in 1908 was vastly different from the bustling metropolis it is today. The main street was more like that of a country village than the artery of a town containing some sixty thousand people.

FOR our headquarters, Mr. Marion and Mr. Olcott had selected Fairfield, a small suburb about fifteen minutes by trolley from Jacksonville. We were housed in The Roseland, a big rambling ramshackle old hotel set in three acres of ground, on the banks of the St. John's River, at this point a mile and a half wide. The house was run by Ma Perkins, a stout jolly widow, who was motherly, smiling, and always ready to drop down in a rocking chair on the big front veranda for a chat. The meals were plentiful and well cooked in real southern style, and the maids were also big and jolly and quite of the family. We addressed them as "Miss Fannie" and "Miss Ida." Our company occupied at least half of the house, and there were several charming couples staying there as permanent guests. The rest of the rooms were rented transiently to the different variety acts playing at the Ostrich Farm, a block up Talleyrand Avenue. Two of these acts were engaged for the winter, Harry Six, the high diver, who worked with our company between his "two-a-day" dives, and Tiny, a balloonist who, in knee frocks and looking about ten, made a parachute drop every weekday and on Sunday a triple drop. Thomas Quincey was another high diver who was happy in the less dangerous work of the motion picture actor.

DIRECTLY across the St. John's River from Fairfield was a territory rich in locations easily reached by boat. The scattered homes were on the riverbank a mile or so apart and beyond them lay real wilderness. Strawberry Creek, several hundred yards broad and spanned by a primitive old plank bridge, played many parts in the old Kalem pictures. Fierce battles were fought on it; it was burned (with smoke-pots); many a chase was staged over its uneven boards, and horses jumped from it twenty feet to the water.

Strawberry Creek and its tributaries presented a true picture of tropical Florida, with its swamps, bayous made impenetrable by water hyacinths, banks lined with live oaks whose beads of Spanish moss hung in silver festoons to delight the heart of the photographer, and with tangled masses of palmetto whose only drawback was that they were the abode of diamond-back rattlers, some of them six feet in length, and poisonous copperheads. The waters were also infested with water moccasins and the swamps with vipers. We always carried a medicine kit and whisky for snake bites, but although we saw many snakes we never had occasion to use the cure.

From the edge of the Roseland grounds a long pier ran out at least a thousand feet into the river. It was so ramshackle that it looked like a crawling snake. The supports were rotting and in some places had given way dropping the planks to an angle of fifteen degrees. Across these treacherous spots the girls must be carefully handed. This pier was not repaired the entire season. The Southerners were too tired and we were too busy and careless to do it.

We rented a motor boat, the *Bonnie Bess*, capable of carrying some twenty people. It was semi-enclosed and its engine was not always reliable but sometimes left us stranded across the river with night coming on. Worse still it would go dead in the middle of the channel when we were on the way to location. There we would fume and fret with the sun mounting higher while the

more mechanical-minded of the boys would "prime it" and tinker with it until it started again. But it was a famous little boat, its flat bottom enabling it to navigate shallow streams, and it was as much a part of the "Kalem bunch" as any of the actors.

Within a few hours of our home were quaint negro villages, their unpainted huts set on stilts above the shifting sands. There were wonderful stretches of sand at Pablo and Manhattan Beach, facing the open sea, uninhabited and desolate, with their scrubby palmettos, which served as setting for many desert island scenes. There were fishing villages, primitive as even a picture company could wish, quaint old-time Florida houses with their "galleries" of white Colonial columns, orange and grapefruit groves, pear and peach orchards which gave forth lovely scents when in full bloom; formal gardens and Spanish patios; the gorgeous Ponce de Leon hotel and gardens, and the picturesque old fort at St. Augustine.

Plenty of good riding horses were available and even old-fashioned carts drawn by eight yoke of oxen; two wood-burning engines of 1860, and a Mississippi River steamboat. Add to all this the glorious sun and warmth, the soft breezes in the palm trees, the rich luxuriance of vegetation, the courtesy and coöperation of these gentle southern folks, the crowds of manageable, friendly darkies, the villages of Spanish and Mexicans, and you will see that we had discovered a moving-picture paradise.

ROSELAND, during the height of the season was the liveliest place imaginable. If the Webers, a family of acrobats, were not practicing their act on the lawn before the veranda, the man with the trained goats was putting his animals through their tricks, a juggler was practicing his stunts, or the trained dogs were perfecting themselves. Weaving in and out everywhere moving-picture actors in all sorts of make-up lent color to the bizarre scene. We all made up in our rooms and came to breakfast in our characters for the day. Six-thirty was our morning call when the weather was fine. On the evening before starting a new production we would all gather in Mr. Olcott's room, the scenario would be read aloud and the characters allotted. There would ensue a discussion of how each one was to make up.

At breakfast next day the make-ups would be commended or criticized, as called for, and changes would be made willingly and without hurt. Indeed I may say that in all the subsequent Kalem stock companies, for of course the personnel changed from year to year, this charming spirit of helpfulness, of give-and-take, this freedom from jealousy and envy, the quick word of praise for especially good work, always held. We acknowledged no real star or leading people. First one and then another player would be given the outstanding rôle, and I, as scenario writer, saw to it that the turns of each came regularly. The leading people in one play were often given small rôles in the next while a strong star part would then fall to the character man or woman.

WHEN completed the film would be shipped express to New York to be developed and printed, and then sent back to us to be cut. It was always a great night when we saw a picture. A long inclosed gallery at the back of the house had been converted into a projection room, and here we would all gather after supper, pencil and notebooks in hands, our number augmented by any outsiders who had worked in the film, as well as by friends. And as the film flashed by on the screen, a running comment of criticism and praise could be heard.

"That's a great make-up, Jim." "You were rotten there, Ben. I told you that business didn't get over." "Too many whiskers, Tommie. You look like an ape." "Your side lines were off there, Max. You'd better see if your finger is right." "Good lord! The factory has murdered that scene. It'll have to be done over." And afterward came a discussion in Mr. Olcott's room covering every little detail,

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 170]

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Blazing the Trail

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praise and blame given where due, and last final judgment was passed on the entire picture.

From the office came letters of commendation or criticism which would be duly read to the "bunch." They were astute, were Messrs. Marion and Long. We would work our heads off and take any risks for the honor of being singled out in one of Mr. Marion's buoyant letters.

We needed praise and appreciation to carry us through those strenuous days. We had none of the conveniences and the luxuries of the modern studio.

WE HAD no property men, no carpenters, no wardrobe facilities. Each of the actors took upon himself certain tasks, and lent a hand in an emergency. But the director's duties were hardest and most nerve-racking, as upon him fell the entire management and responsibility, the book-keeping as well as the directing, planning, selecting casts, enforcing discipline, and, when possible, making social contacts with the hospitable Floridians. For it was not money, but pleasing personality and friendship that procured for us the various locations. Every night Olcott's light would burn till all hours as he sat at his desk working over plans and directions for the morning, or getting up his weekly accounts and writing long daily letters to the firm in New York. In time I took over the letter-writing.

My own work was not light, and only youth and a strong constitution could have stood up under it. I was playing in two pictures a week, working in almost every scene, and writing two or three scenarios a week, in the effort to keep ahead of our production. And my screen work was all strenuous, horseback riding for hours each day, water scenes in which I committed suicide or floated on spars in shark-infested waters, climbing trees, coming down on ropes from second-story windows, jumping from roofs or rolling down to be caught in blankets, overturning skiffs, paddling canoes, a hundred and one "stunts" thought out to give the action which Kalem films demanded. I was terrified at each daring thing I had to do, and in a panic until it was over, but for some inexplicable reason I continued to write them. They never seemed difficult when I was seated before the typewriter in the throes of creating them, but as the moment for performance drew near they assumed unwarranted aspects of terror. A "double" was never even thought of in those days.

I WROTE a picture called *The Adventures of the Girl Spy* which embodied all the difficult and sometimes dangerous stunts I could conjure up. In this I played a southern girl disguised as a boy of '61. It made a tremendous hit and exhibitors wrote in for more. Thus began the first series made in films and I kept them up for two years until, tired of sprains and bruises and with brains sucked dry of any more adventures for the intrepid young woman, I married her off and ended the war. And I thought this would be the finish. Not so! The demand for them still came in and I was compelled to come back with one called *A Hitherto Unrelated Incident of the Girl Spy*. There is always a way, in pictures.

I was careful to write in very few modern "dressy" parts for there was no source of supply. It was before the days when one could step into a shop at least in Jacksonville and buy a perfectly fitting dress. I wonder if women realize how recent is the convenience of readymade clothes? But wigs—ah, there was our four of characterization! We all had them, many kinds, and it was our delight to change ourselves as much as possible for each character; if we could make ourselves almost unrecognizable we felt we had touched art. Being the leading woman I had to look as pretty as nature permitted but with the aid of curls or straight hair, braids and pompadours, blonde, black and brown, I managed many transformations even in the hoopskirted Civil War pictures. And now looking over the old photograph albums of "stills" it

surprises me to see what we accomplished with so little. For each character was distinctive.

But when March came, hot and sulky, I had to turn to the village dressmakers and get an adequate wardrobe together, for I was going to Europe to place my young sister under operatic training. She had developed a wonderful voice, had been studying the preceding two years in Kansas City, and was already prepared with fifteen operatic rôles in German. Our hopes for her ran high and we had taken passage on the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*, sailing April 21. I too had my ambitions. I would remain abroad several years, learn German, perhaps play over there, and forget pictures and scenario writing for all time.

Everyone was helpful and enthusiastic. I was to go home for two weeks before sailing, for I had not visited my parents in three years. I wished to write as many scenarios as possible before leaving, both because Mr. Olcott urged it and because I needed all the money I could earn for my long idleness. So what with dressmakers and acting and writing, those last hot March days in Florida were full indeed and it was a very weary young actress who bade farewell to the good old "bunch."

KNOWING Europe as I do now, for it has been my home for years, I am amazed when I recall our ignorance and assurance, and the hope and trust placed in us by our loving parents and confident friends. But our very innocence and unworldliness were our safeguard, and we settled ourselves with admirable wisdom at The American Women's Club in Berlin and my sister began perfecting the art which was to carry her to the heights of Court Singer. The directress of the club was Mrs. Lucille B. Graves, charming, intelligent and cultured; she speedily adopted us and became our "Berlin mother," beginning a friendship which has held through the years.

This is not the place to tell of those Berlin days, so full of color and work and pleasure. Briefly, my sister started her studies with Putnam Griswold, the great basso of the Royal Opera, who has since died, and I with Fraulein Griesbach of the Hof-Dramatische Theater. But I had had years of stimulating work and I missed it. In that great foreign city I was lonely and homesick and viewed from a distance picture work took on hitherto undiscovered delights. I idealized the life of the past few years. My sister had become engaged and until her marriage could be chaperoned by Mrs. Graves. So when a letter came from Kalem urging me to return I was glad.

Mr. Marvin had been unable to secure either a satisfactory leading woman or the sort of scripts he needed. Those scenarios I had left behind had been filmed and they cried for more. Everything would be made easier for me. There would be another girl to alternate leads, and they would purchase outside any scenarios that were usable. Just as I had been so anxious to leave them, so now after only three months I was craving to get back to work. On July first accompanied by my sister I left Berlin for Mainz, steamed down the Rhine to Cologne, went on to Paris and London, and on August first sailed for home.

THERE at the pier was the good old bunch to meet me; and back in the Kalem office I was greeted with smiles and eulogies and good wishes from Mr. Long and Mr. Marion.

The next day I was in make-up out in Coytesville a little nervous and timid after my absence from the camera. Berlin and the American Women's Club, Brandenburg Tor, the smart soldiers and *Unter den Linden*, the Kaiser Friedrich Gallery and Potsdam and Charlottenburg all seemed years away, a pleasant dream. Nothing was real but old New Jersey, Jimmie, Bob, the camera focusing on a new character and Sid's voice, "Ready—camera! Shoot!"

The third installment of Miss Gauntier's memoirs will appear in the December issue.

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