



Wilson: "You'll be able to see further with this glass."

Lo, the Movies Have Achieved "Revivals"!

WHO called the movie "the roughneck of the arts"? Let him stand and answer: Does a roughneck art have revivals? Does a roughneck art have "old masters"? Does a roughneck art have "vintage" pictures? Does a roughneck theatre have repertory?

On behalf of one hundred million movie fans, more or less, an answer to these questions may be set down here, in the absence of the man who thinks the movies lowbrow. Early productions of motion pictures already are being displayed on the screen. "Old masters" are being shown. In their very lifetime Charles Chaplin, comic pantomimist, and D. W. Griffith, producer, have become "old masters," so rapidly has this husky younger sister overtaken the mossbacked arts. Movies are being "revived."

Hugo Riesenfeld, managing director of the Rivoli and Rialto Theatres, has started to show a series of the first Chaplin comedies, and Mr. Griffith will soon open a theatre in New York with a repertory of the films which made him famous.

There have been reissues of photoplays since the year after the first photoplays were issued, but these cannot properly be called revivals. Frequently they have been put out in competition with a star's current productions by his or her former manager seeking to turn the player's popularity to his own account. The other fellow's advertisement of the star's name has often had more to do with bringing them out than any intrinsic merit of their own.

Further, many of the reissues have been intended for second-class trade. The big New York houses have not taken

them. Sometimes they have been simply pirated editions. Whatever they have been, they have not been revivals, brought back by some one's faith in their enduring artistic and commercial value. The Chaplin pictures and the Griffith productions, in this sense, are revivals, and practically the first since the photoplay established itself. When "A Night in the Show," the first of the old newcomers, was put on at the Rialto two weeks ago, the box office began to have one of the busiest periods of its existence. The first Monday night was reported to be "a little off" at the "legitimate" theatres in the Broadway district, but the people were standing at the Rialto all evening.

"A Night in the Show" is an Essanay picture, made in 1915. Other Essanay productions to come are "The Bank," "Charlie's new Job," "Shanghaied," and "The Champion." Motion-picture men still speak of "The Keystone Age," 1913-14, when Keystone comedies led all the rest. Chaplin was with this company then, and appeared in "His Prehistoric Past" and "Dough and Dynamite." Both of these will be seen in the near future on the Rialto screen. Perhaps some of these pictures will go to the Rivoli, too.

Most of Chaplin's early comedies were made before his name was widely known. In the days of their production the star system had not grown to its present domination of the field, and Chaplin was simply "that funny little fellow" to thousands of those who laughed at his pantomime. It was his pantomimic ability that made his comedies so popular, for in construction and wit they were no better than hundreds of others of the horseplay, custard pic

type. The others, having nothing but horseplay and custard pie, have not been and will not be revived. The Chaplin comedies are coming back because Chaplin, beginning anonymously, entered the star system because he was a star.

The Griffith pictures, too, are a testimony to that director's ability. When the now widely known "D. W." was a director at the old biograph studio, people began to talk about "the fellow who has gone movie mad." This fellow made "The Mother and the Law," "The Fall of Babylon," "The Sands of Dee," "The Avenging Conscience," "The Single Standard," and "The Escape"; and, by these productions, became the foremost producer in America. He did not follow in the paths of others, but blazed his own way. He invented or discovered the "close-up," the "fade out," the "long shot," the "cut back," and other tricks which have become elements of photoplay technique today. From his shorter works he progressed to the first real "super features." "The Birth of a Nation," "Intolerance," and "Hearts of the World" were products of his industry.

Griffith not only made enduring photoplays, but he made stars. Many an actor and actress now well known from one end of the country to the other, and even around the world, began with Griffith in obscurity and received invaluable training. Some of them are Mary Pickford, Mae Marsh, Lillian Gish, Constance Talmadge, Blanche Sweet, Dorothy Gish, Seena Owen, Robert Harron, Miriam Cooper, and Henry Walthall.

It is Griffith productions with these stars and others which will be revived here in repertory.

But the revivals do not mean that the principal figures in them are turning

backward. On the contrary, Griffith, Chaplin, and the others seem to be more active than ever before. Griffith is making a series of six Arctcraft pictures, three of which have been released, and his next undertaking will be the production of three photoplays for the First National Exhibitors' Circuit. Then he expects to begin work in the "Big Four" combination, consisting of Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and himself. Chaplin will remain with the First National until his present contract expires, when he will join the combination.

There is one difference between screen and stage revivals that may be worth noting. When plays come back to the stage they are frequently rewritten in places and have the advantage of the latest developments in stage setting. Also, the actors may be better than those originally in the cast. But photoplays remain substantially the same. New prints are made from the old negatives, and by chemical processes some of the modern effects may be produced. Furthermore, improved methods of projection and exhibition may add something to the production. Fundamentally, however, the photoplay remains unchanged. It is the old work that is revived, practically in its entirety. There may be crudities in it, and it may have been done in a style for which the public has lost its taste. If such a film comes back, therefore, it will be solely because of the genius of an actor or director. Speaking generally, it may be said that, to a greater degree than on the stage, the productions which survive revival on the screen testify eloquently to the ability of the individuals originally identified with them.