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ACTRESS TAKES EXCEPTION TO CRITICISM OF MOVIES



Madge Kennedy, young comedienne, is taking a week's vacation at French Lick, Ind., preparatory to resuming work upon her second Goldwyn picture, which is a farce comedy adapted from a well-known stage success by Edgar Selwyn. While she is upon this vacation the young Goldwyn star will design a national defense poster which, when completed, is to be presented to the American Red Cross.

Answering Aleister Crowley's plaint in the current issue of a well-known periodical that it is "bad taste—and not the world war—which is killing movies," Madge Kennedy, America's best known young comedienne and star of Goldwyn pictures felicitously observes:

"Mr. Crowley begins with error by the assumption that motion pictures are being "killed" when as a matter of fact, they never were more prosperous. Even in England at grips with the central powers the industry attained a hitherto unexampled vogue.

"The trouble with Mr. Crowley and other critics who persist in seeking the worst there is in motion pictures, is that they

judge a new art, the silent drama, by the standards of an old one, the spoken drama. They employ the sum of all dramatic tradition to criticize that which has not yet reached its Elizabethan period. If critics had had as little patience with the crudities of the stage in Shakespeare's day as they seem to enjoy displaying towards a profession that is newer by several hundreds of years than the drama was in the fifteenth century, there would have been no Greens, Moliere's or Sheridan's.

"The motion picture has been feeling its way and the best evidence that it is inherently strong is offered by the fact that it has endured and expanded in spite of its early solecisms. Its adolescent life may be likened to the most colorful of our popular fiction. Yet even President Wilson admits a chronic weakness for dime detective stories.

"But the time has come for critics to acquaint themselves with the fact that the old-fashioned methods of picture making are being replaced by the new. The Goldwyn Pictures Corporation is just one of half a dozen organizations which are making every effort for realism. To complain of art direction when one company alone has under contract to 'clothe' its production such as Everett Shinn, Hugo Ballin, Elizabeth Averell, Mrs. Frank W. Alexander, Herbert Messmore and William H. Cotton—as the Goldwyn Company has—is to make the sweeping assertion that all American ornamentation is fundamentally in error. To chide the drawing room etiquette of nationally known American actors and actresses is to say there are no manners in America. To challenge the dramatic structure of the reputable scenarios is to say that trained screen writers do not know their business.

"The spoken drama of today is not gauged by the plays that fail. The silent drama should be accorded the same privilege and be judged by its notable successes, of which there are many. It is unfortunate that many motion picture dramas which do not measure up to the best standards of the art are given national exploitation, but there is no reason why the intelligent critic should seek such examples for his exposition of a new art. The fact remains that the better type of motion picture producer is seeking realism. He is spending fortunes and commanding some of the best brains in America to that end. The bloated bladder and slapstick period of the motion picture industry has been put behind. The critic should not forget to remember that he is reviewing silent drama of 1917, not 1910."