

# SCREEN IN THE FILM FORUM

SINCE the publication week before last of D. W. Griffith's interview on stereoscopic motion pictures, a number of persons have written to express surprise that Mr. Griffith should give his attention to anything so demonstrably beyond the realm of possibility as motion pictures in three dimensions. One writer says that "stereoscopic motion pictures without the use of oculars are impracticable" and that "oculars" cannot be used because they "cut off too much light." Another correspondent assumes that Mr. Griffith had in mind "a stereoscopic picture similar in appearance to the one produced by the old-fashioned stereoscope," but "one that may be obtained without employment by the beholder of an apparatus like the once popular toy," and he says that he can demonstrate the impossibility of obtaining a third dimension on the screen "without the use of the stereoscopic appliance."

From all of which it is evident that these correspondents did not see the article on stereoscopic pictures printed in this column on Oct. 22 last which occasioned Mr. Griffith's interview. That article described what is known as the Televue process by which pictures with a third dimension are obtained. It was made clear therein that what one correspondent calls an "ocular" and the other "the stereoscopic appliance" is used. In other words, attached to each seat in the Televue company's projection room is a metal and glass case which contains a revolving shutter synchronized with two projection machines in the booth. While a frame of the film in, say, the left hand machine is on the screen, the shutter blinds the spectator's right eye, so that he sees the projected picture with his left eye only. While the corresponding frame in the right hand machine is on the screen a fraction of a second later, the shutter blinds the left eye, so that the spectator sees the picture with his right eye only. As a result, due to the persistence of vision upon which every motion picture depends, the spectator sees a single three-dimensional image on the screen.

Now no one can tell what the future of these stereoscopic pictures will be. No one can say whether commercial or mechanical obstacles will prevent their extensive exhibition. No one knows whether the public will become accustomed to viewing them through instruments attached to theatre seats. These are all questions to be decided by actual developments.

But two facts can be stated. First, the pictures are stereoscopic, vividly, startlingly, in three dimensions. Second, the Televue does not "cut off too much light," at least it didn't when the present writer used one. On the contrary, the pictures were clearer when seen through the Televue than when looked at in the ordinary way.

In view of these facts, and in view of the new world of cinematography that will be opened if stereoscopic pictures ever become at all general, Mr. Griffith's statements were entirely justified.

There will be many, of course, who will say that, even with what has been done, stereoscopic pictures are destined to remain a fruitless experiment, and maybe these people are right. But they are rash, and only the prejudiced and precipitant will echo their arbitrary decision. For, although pictures in three dimensions may never be accepted by the public, there is at present no apparent reason why they should not be. Where does the shouted "impossibility" lie? The pictures are made like any other pictures except that a double-lens camera, which exposes two negatives, instead of a single-lens camera exposing one, is used, and when you

consider that it is quite usual at present for directors to employ two cameras for every scene of an ordinary photoplay, it would seem that there would be less, rather than more, expense in exposing the two negatives at once in the same camera.

And the producers of stereoscopic pictures do not have to depend upon specially equipped theatres for their entire income. Suppose that there were specially equipped theatres in the larger towns and cities of the country. Photoplays would be shown stereoscopically in them, presumably at a profit, and in addition prints made from one or the other of each pair of negatives obtained in the production of the photoplays could be shown in every theatre in the country in the customary way.

But will the public accept the instruments through which they must look in order to see pictures stereoscopically? Maybe not—but why not? No skill or trouble is involved in the use of these instruments. You merely sit down, swing the apparatus before your eyes and look at the screen. It seems to be merely a case of getting used to something—and a public that has come to accept barricaded seats in the middle of long, narrow rows and the nuisance of holding an overcoat on one's lap, sweeping the theatre floor with it, or standing in a slow line to get it back from the check room after the performance, surely ought not to balk at looking through a piece of glass at a screen.

However, there's no telling what will and will not happen. Let's wait and see.

But, speaking of nuisances, another correspondent writes as follows:

I wish to protest against the invasion of the tipping evil that has crept into the motion picture theatres, and to publicly appeal to the hundreds and thousands of patrons who support the theatres by their bit toward the elimination of this monstrous imposition.

Why should an usher be tipped for seating a patron who has paid full price for a seat in the theatre? \* \* \* When I have paid admission to a theatre I expect to be accommodated at once with a seat or frankly advised that there is "standing room only for the time being." But this is not the policy adopted by a number of our so-called reputable motion picture theatres, and I will cite a case in point:

I paid for three orchestra seats at the box office of a Broadway motion picture theatre a few evenings ago on the strength of a barker's announcement to the waiting throngs that there was "standing room in the balcony and seats in the orchestra." For one hour we stood in a space roped off in the rear aisle for just such emergencies, witnessing most of the performance from that disadvantage, while later arrivals were constantly being seated by the tip-grabbing ushers, who have what appears to be a well-systematized program of holding in reserve a few seats scattered about the theatre to which they will direct those willing to pay the additional fee.

Is this done with the sanction of the managers? If not, the evil can be readily eliminated. An excellent way to defeat the nefarious practice is for the patrons to protest as I did and demand money refunded or a seat free from the usher tax.

The managers of the Broadway theatres have protested that they do not encourage tipping and wish that the public would stop it, but the practice continues, apparently, and complaints like the foregoing are not unusual.

There's just a line or two of the allotted space left in which to mention Edward Durand, who was seen last week at the Rialto as Said Coury, the Syrian coffee-house proprietor, in "Anna Ascends." Mr. Durand is not a newcomer to the stage, but he is to the screen, and if his performance in "Anna Ascends" is a sample of the pantomimic subtlety and range it seems to indicate, he should be adopted by the studios as their own. He certainly made Said Coury a living, understandable human being amid a collection of puppets in a mechanical plot.