

# The Real Inside Dope on the Movie Stars

## Nita Naldi Leads in Rise of Nonna Dooley—Looks Before Brains, Says Film Vamp.

By MAX LIEF



Nita Naldi, premiere screen seductress.

The truth about the moving picture stars will be revealed by the Sunday Express in an illuminating series of stories about the men and women who are known to millions of fans throughout the country. For years these stars have hidden the truth about themselves. Through a misconceived idea of what the public wanted, they engaged press agents, at large salaries, to invent absurd tales of their origin and mode of living. They overlooked the fact that their real history, describing the struggles which they had to overcome in order to gain fame and fortune, is far more interesting to their public than the buncombe which they paid to circulate. The Sunday Express publishes today the second of this series compiled from a thorough research into facts and records.

Hamelin, her favorite recitation, with appropriate gestures. Poise was hers. At fourteen, the coming movie vamp was the most popular girl in the convent. Tall and thin, her spindle legs kicking out from beneath the regulation uniform of the convent, Nita then knew no such handicap as embonpoint. In those tender days she had poise. Now she has avoirdupois. At fourteen she was the same daredevil and ringleader of the girls.

Nita was unusually vain for her age and immensely proud of her long, thick, blue-black hair, which she washed every night, which was quite against the convent rules. She devoured romantic novels and was in the habit of drawing pictures of Spanish cavaliers or knights with plumed headdresses, not dreaming, of course, that she was ever to star with Rudolph Valentino in Blood and Sand.

Irish fighting blood. And Nita Naldi-Nonna Dooley, far from being the Italian vampire her press agents have made her, was doggone proud of her Irish blood. She got into more than one hairpulling match over the home rule question, and at one time she hung up a string of Saint Patrick's day post-cards over her bed and dared any girl, at the risk of having her face disfigured, to knock the cards down.

Then came the famous Baboon club that Naughty Nita organized, much to the good sisters' discomfiture. In it Nita gathered about her the best pillow fighters and mischief makers of the convent. Nita wrote a little club song about the girls and here it is:

**US BABOONS.**  
Dorothy's eyebrows were the best,  
Flo's skin was just divine,  
She never used a bit of paint;  
Her color was genu-uine.  
Frances dear had pearly teeth;  
Leah, she had dainty feet,  
Baboons, Baboons, my fair Baboons,  
We are the fairest beneath the moons.  
Talk about beauties, we take first prize;  
Oh, we're much sweeter than apple pies.

It is no small wonder that the romantic Nita was bitten by the movie bug at an early date. The Fox and Peerless studios were located right opposite the convent and Nita would often hang around the gates waiting to catch a glimpse of the movie stars.

Cloaking to chorus. It was then that Nita decided to give up convent life and to seek to express herself in more glamorous fields. Being liberty loving and strong willed, the pigtailed, spindle-legged convent girl, much against the will of her family, expressed herself to New York to study for the stage.

The lure of the footlights proved more powerful than the prayer book; the matines more tempting than the mass. "I was pretty much of a sap in those days," Nita herself has said in an interview. "I didn't know ham from eggs! I had just brains enough to be a cloak model and after cloaking for a while and, on the side, learning the different dance steps, I finally landed a job as a chorus girl. The convent girls' debut on Broadway was made with the Passing Show of 1918 at the Winter Garden, and here again the inventive genius, so frequently displayed at the Holy Angels came into play. For lo and behold! she was no longer plain

Nonna Dooley, who fought furiously to protect the good name of Ireland, but Nita Naldi, imported straight from Naples.

Evolution of a name. In school one of Nita's warmest friends was little Florence Rinaldi. She simply appropriated the last two syllables of her friend's name, swapped Nonna for Nita and became Nita Naldi. And it was not hard to believe that Nita was of Italian ancestry. Olive skinned and oval faced, she could be taken for a Neapolitan prima donna and she still can be taken that way if you want to.

From the Winter Garden, where she was a showgirl, along with Jessie Reed and Lilyan Tashman, prancing up and down the runway and looking coyly down baldhead row with artificial smiles, Nita proceeded to the Century roof midnight show. Here she came into prominence by a clever imitation of Theda Bara, then the reigning screen vamp.

Jealousy and Johnny. Theater managers began to sit up and take notice of the darkhaired beauty. In 1920 she played with Edwin Nizer in Frederick Arnold Kummer's play, The Bonehead, and her first legitimate attempt was well

her picture in a magazine and engaged her immediately for the role. This picture was Nita Naldi's real introduction to the movie public, and Nita, in terms of the Broadwayites, was one big wow. She proved to be a first class vamp lady, whose passions were hot enough to burn up an asbestos curtain.

Picture engagements followed one upon the other. She obtained what few screen actresses have obtained—the screen love of the sheik of sheiks, Valentino. As Donna Sol in the



Above, Rod Larocque and Nita Naldi in "The Ten Commandments." Lower, Jack Holt makes love to the leading vamp in "Don't Call It Love."

kindly care and tutelage that the screen siren obtained her spiritual and intellectual enlightenment.

Born mischiefmaker. Growing up to pigtailed and middy-boused girlhood, Nita was at the same time the pride and the despair of the good sisters. Bright and diligent in her studies, she was also a regular mischief-maker among the girls, playing all sorts of pranks, from dumping epsom salts into the nun's pitchers to telling spooky stories and frightening the younger students.

It was Nita who gave all the nuns



Gertrude Vanderbilt, of whom Nita was jealous.

their nicknames (Sister Antiseptic she labeled Sister Magnesia) and who wrote many amusing parodies about them. She originated the colloquial slang, chief of which lexicon was the epithet, "Oh, my gadi!" which was rapidly taken up by the other girls. For this she was almost expelled. She was a goddaughter bully, all the smaller girls performing her slightest bidding. Once Nita sent one of her little playmates to wreck the violin of a girl whom she disliked, and at another time to bang on the pianos in the nun's rooms. She talked in her sleep purposefully to amuse the girls and in the middle of the night would arise from her sleep-cloque to jump out of bed, switch on the light and recite the Pied Piper of

received, so well, in fact, that William A. Brady engaged her for a part in Opportunity.

Johnny Dooley, the comedian, gave Nita her first chance at pictures and Nita, being very chummy with Johnny at the time, volunteered her services gratis. Several enthusiastic capitalists and clothing merchants had organized the Johnny Dooley comedies, to run a series of pictures featuring the comedian. One of them was called Hearts and Arts. In this Nita was a Spanish dancing girl.

Vamps the sheik. But it was doomed to failure. Nita quit in a huff before it was half finished and all over a spat with Johnny about Gertrude Vanderbilt, the musical comedy star. While at the studio one day Nita noticed Johnny and Gertrude on much too admirable terms of friendship. Her vanity plucked and her pride wounded, Nita never returned to the studio. The picture was ruined and so were the investors, but Nita had her own way.

Nita played in A Divorce of Convenience in 1921. Then John Barrymore, scouting around for an actress to play the role of a Spanish dancer in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, spied

ness girl models her gowns and manners more and more upon those of the women whom the stage and screen picture in vampire roles."

Nita's maxims. But, as Nita says, try as she may,

**How To Keep Well**  
DR. DE W. A. EVANS

**AVOIDING MALARIA.**  
NOT all of the malaria belt of the United States is malarial. In fact, one can come and go in much of the so-called malaria region during the malaria season without taking any precautions and be in no danger of contracting malaria. A careful person who kept behind screens at night, who avoided mosquitoes, and who was careful about staying close to heavily infected people could come and go with safety into heavily infected territory. Even in those sections which are thought to be heavily infected it is probable that some really small section is responsible for the bad reputation of the section, the bulk of the section being malaria free except as some isolated case develops in some one infected elsewhere.

The theory long held in the South that malaria is especially widespread and especially virulent "in the Rice creek neighborhood" or "in the Dead river settlement" or "around Albany," whereas "the rest of the county is free," is sustained by Dr. K. F. Maxcy. Dr. Maxcy gives some instances which show how a region which is ordinarily non-malarial may become infected.

As a rule, Montgomery county, Alabama, is not infected. In a hilly region, free from malaria, a farmer dammed a small stream and made a fish pond. Near this pond there were six houses occupied by tenant farmers. The second season after the dam was built an infected sawmill hand moved his family into one of the houses. His family came down with malaria. Before the season was over all the families around about had developed malaria and the region was known as malarial. The tenants

all moved away because the neighborhood was unhealthy. The pond furnished the mosquitoes, the sawmill hand furnished the infection, the tenants furnished the cases and the neighbors tagged the locality.

Another instance: A sawmill in Southern Alabama, worked by convicts, had been free from malaria for years. A prisoner who was a malaria carrier was sent to the camp. Within a month there was an outbreak of malaria in the camp. A large part of the force became sick with malaria within a short time.

A third illustration: Teasley's Mill, Ala., was once a highly malarial village, but in recent years there had been but little of the disease. Nineteen hundred and twenty-three was a rainy year, and many ponds which ordinarily dry up by July remained mosquito breeding places all year. A movable sawmill with its crew moved into this neighborhood. Practically all of the crew were sick with malaria before the season was over. When this sawmill crew moves into some other neighborhood this year if the local authorities are wise they will furnish the outfit with free quinine and see that they use it.

Dr. A. F. writes: With reference to your recent article on Michigan iodine in coast water.

compelling the manufacturers of salt to retain the iodine in their product. First—Do you consider that the water in Los Angeles contains enough iodine to keep the body normal? Second—If not, what foods would you suggest as containing enough, and in what quantity should they be eaten? Third—Do you consider a catarrhal condition of the nose and throat a local infection or a systemic disturbance? Fourth—Do you consider the local antiseptic treatment usually administered for such a condition harmful to the mucous membrane of the nose and throat?

REPLY. First—Yes. Third—Local. Fourth—No. Probably entertains without either helping or harming.

Being buried alive. J. R. D. writes: I understand that formaldehyde is not allowed in embalming any more, and therefore, I would like to know if there is any danger of anyone being buried alive who has been embalmed? REPLY. It is not against the law to embalm with formalin solution. There is no danger that any person who has been embalmed will be buried alive, whether formalin is the agent or not.

she cannot shake herself free of the siren roles, either in reel or real life. People still remember her affair du coeur last year with one J. Searles Darclay, 50-year-old millionaire sportsman. To the screen vamp

"I love tall men," said Nita. "Especially men over 40. A man has no sense until he's reached that age."

And here's the famous "imp's" pithy advice to girls on how to win a man: "Be a dumb-bell, not a high-brow. Looks are worth more than books."

To tall, would-be vamps Naughty Nita hands out this gratuitous bit of philosophy: "Be dignified. You can't be enormous and be cute. Wear long, snaky things to accentuate your type. They slenderize."

More musings from Nita: "I consider John Barrymore and Rudolph Valentino the two handsomest men in the world."

Nita's cleverest little observation is this: "The woman pays and pays—but if she's a smart little girl she gets away with an awful lot of change." (Copyright, 1924, by The News, N. Y.)

### Looks the Thing, Says Nita Naldi

"To charm a man, act dumb; looks are more important than looks," says Nita Naldi, the vamp of vamps, who at 26 has romped her way from cloak and suit model to the premiere seductress of the screen.

Nita has been described as a daughter of a famous old Italian family, but investigation shows she is really Nonna Dooley, a New York girl. She was educated at a convent in Fort Lee, but even the good sisters could not tame the passionate dark-haired beauty. To the studios at Fort Lee was an easy step, but Nita first had to go through a period of training as a model and Passing Show chorus girl. Her real introduction to the movie public was as the Spanish dancer in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.



Nita charms Valentino in "Blood and Sand."

### Marie Koenig Is Jazz Queen of the Screen, But Her Second Husband Slapped Her and Deserted Her on Their Bridal Night. Who Is She?

Read Next Sunday's Express