



George Edward Dewey

"DO you enjoy being a vamp in pictures, Miss Naldi?" . . . or, "Would you rather be an ingénue, and swing on the gate in an organdie frock?" "Dont you get fed up with vamping?" . . .

These are just a few of the questions fired at me from time to time. The answer to the first is, "Yes." To the other two, "No." A picture vamp is often painted in mighty black colors on the screen, but there has to be someone darkly wicked to make the ingénue seem sweet and pure. I dont mind. I never considered before why not, but when the question was asked, various reasons sprung to the rescue.

Consider what goes to make a screen vamp. You never heard of a blonde vamp, did you? No, the screen vamp is a brunette, preferably with Latin blood flowing in her veins. The Latin type is a flaming contrast to any other. It is her inheritance—the warm-eyed woman, with her passionate response to moods, her sophistication, her sparkling, yet subtle, appeal to the opposite sex. That is her inheritance from the climate in which she and her ancestors were reared.

The women of Egypt and Asia Minor are fundamentally vamps. One of the earliest vamps recorded in history is Esther, of Biblical fame. Her burning influence over the king raised the Jews from abject misery into power again. A poor girl, unnoticed among thousands of others, she was espied by the king one day. He ordered her brought to his palace. What happened? Esther's ravishing appeal raised him from the commonplace to such dizzy heights that he said to her: "Ask and ye shall receive, even unto the half of my kingdom."

Look at Sappho, a Greek lyric poetess of Lesbos, whose immortal love poems have come down to us from the seventh century B. C.—poems in which she sings of her amours. There is Cleopatra, whose vamping ways

Georgia  
Vamp

# "This Business of

"I like being a vampire. A vamp is an asset to society and not a liability: she is society's negative lesson. 'Dont do as I do,' she says, 'do as I dont'"

By

NITA NALDI

nearly put a crimp in the Roman Empire when she threw the glamour of her dazzling personality and beauty over Mark Antony.

A vamp is an asset to society and not a liability. She personifies the greatest romantic and moral lesson that can be taught. There has been much written about why some players do not like being vampires on the screen. Well, frankly, I like being one.

ONE of my happiest rôles was that of the vamp in Valentino's picture, *Blood and Sand*. There was a woman for you! Cruel, yes, in her utter love of self and disdain for others. But she was honest in her own way and honesty, even when it isn't to be emulated, can be admired.

As the vamp in Valentino's other picture, *A Sainted Devil*, I was very happy. It was a splendid part, yes, and I played with Rudy again who, in my opinion, is one of the great actors in pictures. The woman I portrayed in this production is as devoid of scruples as a fence is of speech. She deliberately sets out to win the man to whom she has taken a fancy, regardless of the fact that she may ruin his life.

To get him, I vamp the desperado leader of a bandit crew. He is so infatuated that he promises to do anything I ask. I order him to kidnap the girl Valentino is to marry. He does, capturing her after her wedding. Valentino gives chase. In the meantime, I adorn myself in the bride's clothes, and he arrives to see her who he believes his wife in the bandit's arms.

Disillusioned by what he thinks he has seen, he rides away, vowing he is thru with all women. Having got everything I could from the bandit chief, I leave him, and devote myself to infatuating Valentino. In the end, of course, he learns of my perfidy and returns to the girl, leaving me a woman scorned. You know. . . .

Now, if there isn't a lesson in this, I dont know where there could be a lesson, especially as I suffer the consequences of my love-lawless deeds. The law of compensation plods to the certain ruin of the vamp, provided she doesn't reform, which, in a picture, she most assuredly cannot do. So again I say, a vampire is an asset and not a liability to society.

EVERY woman is potentially a vampire. In an impulsive moment, weary of the monotony of her life, she may decide to take a fling at something different, and this fling may ruin her life.

Now suppose such a reckless woman dropped in to see a movie, in which there was a character in just her

(Continued on page 100)

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## "This Business of Being a Vampire"

(Continued from pages 42 and 43)

NITA NALDI

situation. Suppose she saw this character "throw over the traces." For the first few reels everything is lovely and the sweet little heroine is getting the worst of it. Consequences begin to pile up against her and by the time of the final close-up she not only has lost the man she coveted but is shunned by everyone else and is worse off than she was before.

Mind you, I am writing no treatise on the vampire—a moral lesson, nor do I say that I enjoy playing vampire rôles for this reason. I simply want to show that she is, undeniably, a moral lesson. Don't you think the woman who is bored to tears with the sameness of her life might get an idea that she would be precipitated into something worse if she stepped out of her character and yielded to the urge to take a flier at vamping?

A vampire is society's negative lesson. "Don't do as I do," she says. "Do as I do." She holds up the mirror of life and shows you a certain phase of it vividly.

To be a screen vamp requires not only the coloring and the flair for such rôles; it requires, also, a certain amount of hardihood. What you are on the screen, that you are in real life, is the general idea.

You would be surprised to know how many Nita Naldis there are in this country. There comes to mind an example in a story a friend told me.

"I was dining with a chap the other night," he said, "who was anxious to meet you. Suddenly, he nodded across the room and said:

"There's Nita Naldi over there. Introduce me, will you?"

"From a distance, the girl did look like you, so I walked over to see her, only to discover at their table it wasn't you at all. I had to say something, so I apologized and explained my error.

"The girl's escort leaped to his feet, furious. 'This is Nita Naldi!'

"I stared at him. 'But I have known Nita Naldi for eight years and I lunched with her only the other day,' I protested. 'This is not Nita Naldi of the screen!'

"I don't know who you know,' he raged, 'but this is the Nita Naldi!'

"Having no desire to get into a violent argument, I bowed again and walked away with the final shot: 'But she is not Nita Naldi.'"

This is only one of the few examples of bogus Nita Naldis populating the country. Not that it particularly matters, but it isn't the most agreeable thing in the world to have a woman galavanting around, saving her reputation by blackening your own!

Why people should think that because one is a vampire on the screen one continues the rôle in real life, is just another mystery explained only by the fact that at heart every woman is potentially a vamp.

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