

THEY LOVE MOVIES TOO

Movies gave him very queer ideas



4-a-week Gustaf



Gable and Garbo by proxy



Sly digs at "Gold Diggers"



He speaks—the cinema suffers!



They like films—of certain relatives!



No grunts—no applause



Their favorite film fare leaked out



One picture peeved him greatly

Royalty and rulers of the world are movie fans! The cinema tastes of the great are disclosed for the first time in this article

BY CORNELIUS VANDERBILT, JR.

"MOVIES are changing the face of the world," is a common line of conversation today. And, take it from one who has rambled about some, it is actually so. No catchpenny phrase is this well-worn expression. To prove it, make a hasty survey, just for fun, of the many big and little shots from sunup to sunset who are making our world go round, and then acquaint yourself with their taste in movies. You'll soon find out that the famous know their films—even as you and I.

Late in the spring of 1937, I visited Herman Rogers at Château Cande, at Monts, near Tours, France. Mr. Rogers, if you re-

member, was the likable chap who acted as sort of major-domo for the Duke of Windsor and Madame Warfield, in the then absence of the Charles Bedaux, and Aunt Bessie Merryman. Hundreds of newspaper men and photographers representing the eyes and ears of the world were constantly stationed outside the château gates. It was physically impossible for any one of the distinguished occupants to leave without being descended upon by a veritable band of literary vultures. So, during all their long confinement, the principals in the world's greatest love story spent half an hour every single evening in a private showing of 16mm films of each other

which they had taken and developed themselves. Thus were they able to see themselves as others saw them. And to try, if they were sufficiently interested, to rectify their faults.

Again, at Castle Wasserleonburg in the Carinthian Mountains of Austria which I also visited at about this time, I found a full-sized motion-picture projector of American manufacture set up in readiness for the royal honeymooners by their lessor and good friend. This chap—a young German—has an American mother and all his life he has been able to go to the movies whenever he felt like it. Thus it was inconceivable to him that Wally and Davy hadn't seen the latest films, which, incidentally, he gave to them as a wedding present. The first film they saw in their honeymoon home was "Kid Galahad"; next, "Captains Courageous."

From their 16mm films of themselves, extra prints were made and rushed to England, where the Duke and Duchess of Kent and other friends and admirers of the exiled ex-king devoured them from time to time. Even George VI and Queen Elizabeth were given a private showing of these very private films, set to the tune of "Small Hotel," which was the former Edward VIII's and his lady's favorite modern melody.

A few days prior to the Coronation I had been asked by friends to attend a private



He was a flea-bitten fan



A celebration film one night (?)



Rulers of warring nations—they have one common bond

This article reveals the film preferences of these noted people. Reading top row, left to right;

bottom row, left to right, they are:

- Gandhi
- Gustaf of Sweden
- Duke and Duchess of Windsor
- President Roosevelt
- Adolf Hitler
- Josef Stalin
- Emperor Hirohito of Japan
- Chiang Kai-shek
- Mussolini
- Duke and Duchess of Kent
- Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard zu Lippe
- General Franco
- Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose

showing, given for the Duke and Duchess of Kent, of Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire in "Shall We Dance." The distinguished audience of English nobility went wild with excitement over the film—an excitement actually more genuine than most of the thrills of the Coronation. At its termination, one of the Duke's equerries confided to me that little Princess Elizabeth never missed a "Merrie Melody"; but that Margaret Rose preferred "Mickey Mouse"; and that well-censored pictures of both were shown often in the royal nursery in Buckingham Palace. Oh, yes—the English royal family likes their movies, too.

To show you also that even India's great little man has his ideas about motion pictures, here is an amusing incident that happened when I interviewed Gandhi at the outdoor prison at Poona, in southwestern India. To all questions submitted, Gandhi, the Hindu mystic, remained silent. It began to look as if the eighty-five hundred mile trip had been made in vain; then, just as I was about to leave him, the interpreter said that India's great man wanted to ask me a question. I listened attentively to the almost inaudible sing-song of his voice. Finally the interpreter spoke forth: "I know little about America, sire," said he, "except from what I see from the occasional motion pictures I attend. To what class there, sire, do you belong?"

My first impulse was to tell him that, as far as I knew, America had no classes. But instead, I decided to ask him first to clarify his statement.

"Well, sire," came back that even-leveled, age-old voice, "are you a gangster, gentleman, or cowboy?"

Amusing? Yes—and perfectly understandable, too, when you think of the type of film foreign exhibitors choose from our home producers.

And again up at Hsinking, the new and very filthy capital of Manchukuo, which the Japanese were trying to build up, I attended a motion-picture show with the Emperor Pu Yi. The picture was a Warner Oland one and quite amusing; but the audience didn't think it so, and voiced their disapproval audibly. The Emperor became so worried he rose and walked out. Later he confided to me that he hated scenes such as these. He feared that some day they might provoke an international incident.

That American movies influence the customs of nearly all foreign countries cannot be disputed. Any visitor to the Orient—even the out-of-the-way places—will notice almost instantly a difference in the people, in the way they dress and look at life, if American

movies have had a widespread showing. Some travelers tell me that American movie publicity abroad has caused a loosening up of morals. Others believe it's been responsible for a spreading of the doctrine of world friendship and peace. These latter argue that people who live in constant dread of their neighbors a scant hundred miles away forget their fear (a cause of war) when they see how freely we live in America. Of course, many of our pictures give an exaggerated idea of the typical American to the desperately poor and undernourished of the world who see them, the result being that in each American he visualizes a millionaire. He cannot differentiate, because every American picture he has ever seen has illustrated us thus.

It is quite evident in Russia that no one knows anything about America except what Russia's leaders want him to know. Although Russians do have movies, so few people go to them (except to their local newsreels) that the average Russian will actually stop an American on the street, even in some of the large interior cities, and examine him from head to foot like some new animal. If they attended foreign movies more regularly, their opinion of us would no doubt be more accurate, and their attitude a more natural one.

The many times I have interviewed Stalin, I have never found him changed much, insofar as his attitude toward American films is concerned. Twice I have sat alongside him while he watched some American-made films, and never heard him even grunt one way or the other. One of the films I saw with him was "Private Lives." When he was asked for his opinion of it afterwards, he refused it. The picture was, as usual, "rejected."

Charlie Chaplin's "Modern Times," which I saw Charlie make more than a year ago in Hollywood and San Pedro, was the only American picture I ever remember having seen in Moscow. This film packed the theater and was shown twenty-four hours a day. On the other hand, right across the Russian border in Finland, President Svinhufvud told me he permitted almost all American films to be shown in his little country; and that throughout the winter they have a wide picture value. For in winter there are but three or four hours of daylight in the middle of the day, so that picture shows are extremely well patronized. I don't think there is a nation in Europe today that attends American movies as thoroughly as do the Finns, nor one whose towns and ways of life are so wholesomely American.

Much of the guerilla warfare in Spain I blame personally on American movies. A broad statement, and yet one which I feel sure other American correspondents who saw what I did there in 1936-37 will uphold. Class hatreds in Latin nations are more fiery and prone to be aroused than they are elsewhere. For months before the wholesale murder in terrified Spain broke out, the countryside fairly seethed with gangster films.

One night in Burgos, Rebel headquarters, in August, 1936, I sat in a filthy flea-bitten movie house and saw Generals Mola and Franco, two of the Fascist supreme command, watch one of the most bloodcurdling gang-moll American films I ever remember seeing. Outside, I could fairly hear the rat-a-tat of machine guns mowing down the prisoners, none of whom was ever set free. Villa," the film which everyone in America thought great.

(Continued on page 68)

They Love Movies, Too

(Continued from page 17)

FEW people knew that the late King of the Belgians was an inveterate movie-goer whenever American mystery films appeared. He worshipped at the shrine of Bill Powell and is said to have seen "The Thin Man" eleven times.

Hitler often goes into the censorship booth with Goering, presumably to watch the latest antics of non-Aryan American actors. I'm told, though I have no proof for this statement, that the Marx Brothers are his favorites; however, his national policy allows him to pass upon only a very few, very dull American pictures. It might interest you to know that five years ago he expelled me from Germany for making a film which showed interiors of concentration camps.

Ever since his abdication from the German throne the Kaiser has had a regular biweekly ration of American films. As far back as 1927 I well remember chronicling the American-made projection machine in the golden drawing room of Huis Doorne in Holland. Here every Wednesday and Saturday nights for the past nineteen years, the man who broke up the world's equilibrium in 1914 watches patiently and eagerly the most excellent American or

tude on foreign affairs. Istanbul and Ankara are rapidly being rebuilt into up-to-date Americanized cities. I know of no capital city in the whole world today as clean and modern as Ankara, save Nanking, China, and Washington, D. C. Turkey wants the American movie, while Russia does not. Everywhere you go throughout the old Ottoman Empire, you'll see little Turkish girls wearing the same hairdress and clothes as the girls featured in American films.

In 1930, after a perilous flight over the Sahara Desert from a point not far from Cairo, I dropped out of the heavens in a French Army plane upon a marvelous tented city. More than 100,000 Bedouins were said to live here. Their chieftain, I was told, was king of the many roving North African tribes. He granted me a regal interview, and later invited me to a twenty-three course banquet. After it was over he fell asleep in a sheltered little open place between many carpeted tents. As he awoke a squeaky noise that sounded like an old-fashioned phonograph awoke me too, and there, before our eyes, was unfolded one of the earliest Charlie Chaplin films I ever remembered having seen. And, three

NEXT MONTH!

BABIES RAISE HELL ON THE SET

It's a hilarious revelation, magnificent fun—this yarn by Lupton Wilkinson, explaining those "little bundles from heaven" and their not so heavenly antics when frantic directors place them on the set and shout, "Coo . . ."

British films of the week. I was back there again this summer, but the Kaiser was out in the farmyard of his 120 acre estate gathering the royal eggs from atop a haystack, and didn't have anything to say. So there!

But the Princess Juliana and her Consort at the Hague were being photographed on the same day, and she had proudly told the "journalists' present that she expected another heir to the Royal Family very, very soon. That evening she and her popular husband took the Queen Mother to see "Turn Off the Moon!"

And a few days before this up in Copenhagen the beloved King of Denmark had astonished half his court by attending a Laurel and Hardy comedy at a neighborhood beach theater, when his country was celebrating his silver jubilee! But I wasn't surprised, for back in July, 1936, we'd been seatmates in a Copenhagen city theater at a widely advertised comedy, "A Gentleman Goes to the City," which, when I returned to America, I learned was none other than Gary Cooper's simply swell "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town!"

SOME years before, down in Athens, Greece, I had had a near pugilistic encounter with Premier Tsaldaris, the then leader of his nation, who swore that American social themes in movies were "so overdone as to be nauseating to ordinarily decent people." Yet a few years later the reinstated king of Greece, an ardent Walt Disney admirer, told me the reverse. So whom can we believe?

Turkey, of all the nations in Europe today, with the possible exception of Russia, is making the fastest rise to American standards of modernity. This is due primarily to Kemal Pasha's atti-

tude on foreign affairs. Istanbul and Ankara are rapidly being rebuilt into the world's most heathen spots, I ran into the king of Transjordan, laughing himself silly at Charlie's antics.

Even on the wondrous island of Ceylon, where I once interviewed the Grand High Priest and Keeper of Buddha's Tooth, I was nearly knocked over backwards to have him ask me if I'd like to see Shirley Temple in a picture. We were miles from civilization, but no sooner had he announced his plans than natives appeared from everywhere, and we were watching little Shirley act and talk just as if I'd been at my old friend, Rob Wagner's, in Beverly Hills, and Shirley and her sweet parents had just walked into the room.

Travel where I might in the past two or three years, I found Shirley's popularity ever gaining. She is the only film star about whom there is no argument, though, in foreign popularity, Deanna Durbin, little star of 1936, isn't faring so badly either. Last year in China, I went one afternoon to a very American-looking motion-picture theater. After the film, I was invited to the home of T. V. Soong, China's J. P. Morgan. There I recognized my next-seat neighbor of the afternoon as China's most powerful war lord, Chiang Kai-shek. We'd both been watching Deanna Durbin in "Three Smart Girls."

THE Emperor of Japan is more like Stalin in his public ways, but I'm told by members of the diplomatic corps in Tokio that he and his Empress and his official concubines often see the best major American productions. The American pictures that are shown in Japan have a special interpreter for the Japanese audience.

They Love Movies, Too

-the last of four pages-

Having been in France over a long period of years, I have discovered these habits among the movie fans there: Lebrun, president of the Republic, cannot attend frequently, but American movies are shown every Friday evening at the Elysée (White House); France's foreign minister, Delbos, is a Shirley Temple admirer; Herriot, many times past-premier and recently president of the French Senate, swears by Charlie Chaplin, whom, like the rest of the French, he calls "Charlot."

No story would be complete without the mention of Mussolini's name. American films are, he thinks, for the most part, outrageously disturbing; and only a few inoffensive and innocuous ones are permitted to enter Italy.

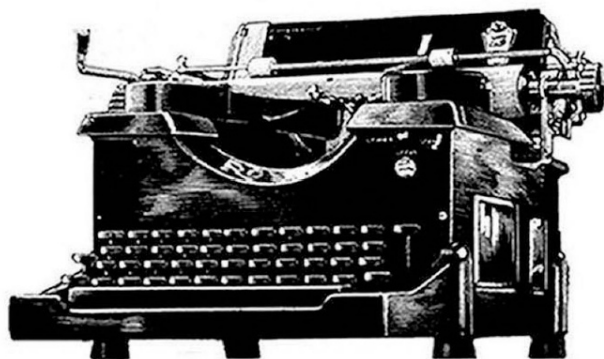
But up in the lands of the midnight sun, Norway and Sweden, two very popular kings pass on practically every single film that bears the American censor's mark. Gustaf of Sweden sees an average of four American-made

movies a week; and Haakon of Norway goes him one better and sometimes squeezes in, what with matinees and things of that sort, eight American pictures a week, during the long cold dark winter days.

While in our own United States, President Roosevelt frequently entertains dinner guests by special showings of popular films. Nor does his sense of humor desert him when it comes to selecting the proper film for the eve-

ning's entertainment, as witness his choice of "Gold Diggers"—with which to entertain the ambassadors of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Germany. Shortly before, these nations had once again defaulted on their debt payment!

But the wily Chief Executive plays no favorites. Mrs. Roosevelt, however, bows like the rest of the world to the charm of Miss Temple and even mentioned her twice in her column, "My Day," for her work in "Wee Willie Winkie."



OldMagazineArticles.com