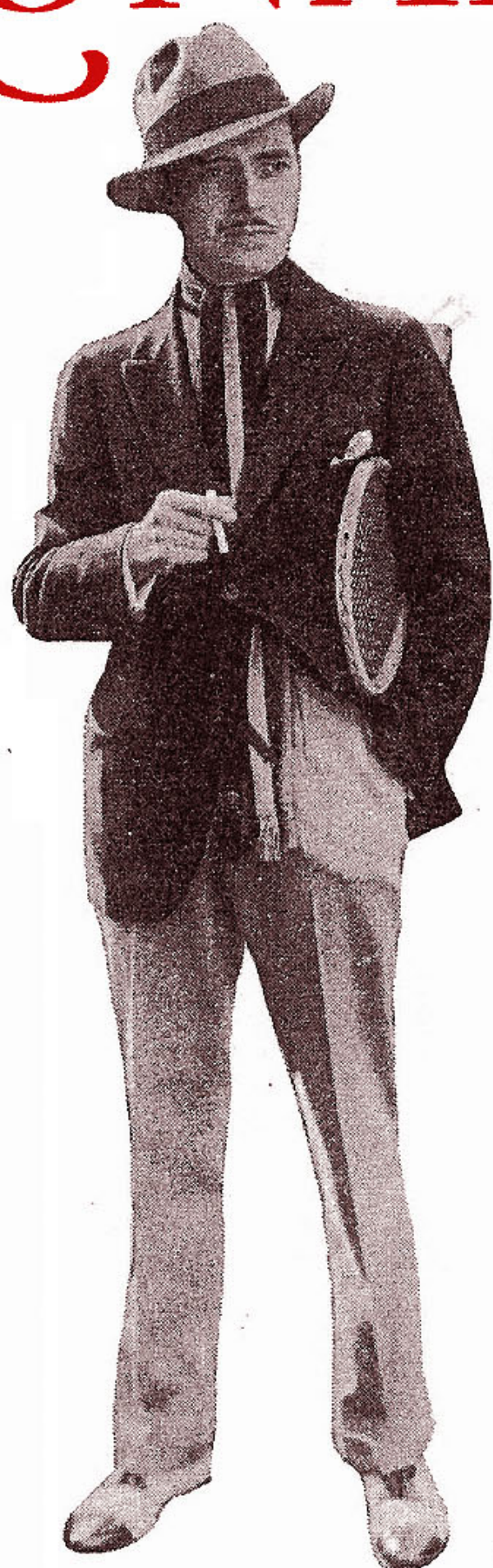


PHOTOPLAY

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Exposing! RONALD!



We rip the veil from the grand old legend that Ronnie Colman is a male *Madame X*, silent and aloof on a mountain top

By

Katherine Albert

THIS is a hot exposé and should all be done in headlines! Ronald Colman has worked his racket long enough! It's time somebody put a stop to it. And it might as well be me. Which is the title of a theme song, and whoever writes the lyrics first can have it.

Who is this male *Madame X*—this Colman person who sits aloof on one of Hollywood's highest hills and allows not even the humblest and most inoffensive seeker to defile the sanctity of his bachelor domain? Who is this guy who thinks he can get away with seclusion in a town that hasn't a secret, not even from itself? Who is this demi-god who makes none of the conventional gestures?

"No, I'm sorry, but Mr. Colman never makes a personal appearance," says his press agent to a perspiring theater manager who isn't wired for sound and has to do something to get the customers in.

"No, I'm sorry, but Mr. Colman can't possibly give an interview, unless, of course, you want to come out and sit all day on the set and catch him between scenes," says his press agent to the most demure little blonde girl you ever saw who just must write a story for the old home town gazette.

"No, I'm sorry, Mr. Colman never goes to big parties. He doesn't discuss his private affairs. He never dines in popular restaurants where autograph collectors have to get their autograph books filled. He doesn't give press teas. He doesn't attend premiere performances."

No, Mr. Colman apparently doesn't do anything that all the other Hollywood stars do. And—here's the joker in the pack—nobody gets mad at him. You never hear stories about his being high-hat or temperamental or any other of the heinous things that stars become and shouldn't.

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Ronnie Colman

WELL, it's gone on long enough! Everybody exposes everything, so Colman might just as well be exposed once and for all.

It started as a gag. Years ago a little press agent asked Colman to make a personal appearance and Colman said he'd rather stay at home and discuss the Einstein theory with Bill Powell. And because the press agent didn't know what the Einstein theory was and because he had to write some sort of a story and give some sort of an excuse for a client who might grow temperamental, he began the silent and aloof racket.

Colman isn't silent and aloof at all. He's an excellent fellow, if anybody should ask you, and has, I'll wager, as many real friends as anybody in the industry. He likes good, lusty talk—that goes on indefinitely until three or four o'clock in the morning, and nobody enjoys a good, rousing party more than he. But, like most excellent fellows, he has no taste for being stared at and for answering personal questions. The whole point is he never started being a typical Hollywood star. If he had made all the proper gestures and then suddenly left off making them—ah, what

fodder that would be for newspaper typewriters. But he came to us, a full blown *Madame X*, a silent and aloof fellow before he was famous—all because of one press agent story.

LOOK here," said Colman, "I'm not hard to manage. I'm really quite docile and I like going to a good party as well as you do. I just don't like to be bored—that's all."

"Of course you don't," I said, "but isn't everybody bored most of the time and doesn't everybody have to be?"

"I don't have to be," said Colman. "I really didn't mean to get silent and aloof. It was sort of forced upon me, but now that it is here—well, isn't it a perfectly excellent idea?"

I said it was. You see, I have a deep fellow feeling for Ronnie. I'm a racketeer along those lines myself. I've a reputation in my own family for being peculiar. One of my peculiarities is that I won't attend family dinners nor go on family picnics. Does this make my great Aunt Susan cut me out of her will with a shilling? It does not! It only makes her murmur, "Well, she always was peculiar, poor thing. Her third cousin on her father's side was peculiar, too."

So there you are. Colman is never considered rude when he refuses an interview. Nobody ever says, "Hey, where does he get off?" And once inside his dressing room to interview him, nobody asks any embarrassing questions nor tries to probe into the inner recesses of his love-life. Not by a bushel of broad "a's."

"Ronnie's just that way," everybody says. And because of being just that way, Ronnie gets away with murder.

IT'S no concerted action on my part," I said Colman (he has such a swell English accent that you decide to go out and lead a better life, grammatically, at once). "I never tried to 'get away with anything.' Perhaps if I had come to Hollywood and said, 'Ah-ha, I shall save myself trouble if I get a reputation for being off-ish,' I would never have had such a reputation.

"It was all quite sincere. It was all just a case of ignorance on my part. I didn't know that a star had to make certain gestures, so I didn't make them. I didn't know that I was supposed to go to dull places and meet dull people just because I happened to be making a living by wearing grease paint and loving beautiful women on the screen."

"But ignorance," I said, in my most judicial voice, [PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 96] which can, on occasion, get very judicial, "is no excuse of the Hollywood law."

"Apparently you're wrong," said Colman. "My ignorance and a press agent's story have built up a tradition around me. Look here," he suddenly burst out, "you're not going to expose me, are you? You're not going to go out and tell everybody that I don't bite little children's heads off when they trespass on my property?"

OH, no," said I, "certainly not." And I reached for my little blue note-book and yellow pencil.

But I'm tired of having Ronnie Colman get away with the racket any longer. I'm just sick and tired of it. He's a grand guy.

Ronnie Colman

He'll tell you all about the latest biographies in one breath, and run on about Bill Powell's iniquities in the next. He has an excellent taste in caviar, and knows which fork to use for which course. He's just affable enough to be nice and not so affable as to be a sap. He really likes people—the kind of people who should be liked—and goes out quite a good deal to the kind of parties to which civilized people should go.

He plays tennis and rides horseback and he doesn't sit up in his lonely hermitage and hibernate through the long winter months. Laughter rings in the halls of the Colman mansion and he entertains at dinner three or four times a week.

In fact, he does all the best things there are to do in this world and avoids making all the unpleasant gestures because he's Ronald Colman and nobody ever told him that he had to be bored to be popular. He's had no malicious digs in the movie columns because most people are afraid of him, and his dignity keeps fans from tearing the buttons off his coat for souvenirs upon the rare occasions when he does go out in public.

All in all, he's a grand person, and you can while away hours of chatter with him if you're in a whiling away mood. The Colman aloofness is all a myth. It got woven into the pattern of Hollywood legend and it's all a lot of bunk.

There's no reason why he shouldn't give a big press tea and let people spill gin on his carpets and burn cigarette holes in his upholstered chairs. "Except," he said, "that I were a newspaper man and if a star was very nice to me I'd think he was only doing it to get a little publicity." He's so sincere about the whole thing. He has it so perfectly reasoned out.

THERE'S no excuse for his not going to opening nights. "Except," he said. "I get writer's cramp signing autograph books and a stiff collar is uncomfortable for a warm evening in a picture house, when I can see the same film in a nice projector room."

Oh, I could go on and on. I could record all of his sins of omission. But you get the idea. Around his head is a halo of mystery. Nobody knows whether he prefers blondes or brunettes. Nobody ever has the faintest notion "who was that lady you saw him with last night."

And it's all a gag. It's the Colman racket and after this story is printed he should be allowed to get away with it any moment but he will, because he's just that kind of person!



EXPOSED—and liking it! Ronald Colman, suave man of mystery and lone wolf of the Hollywoods, has come out of his shell. Ronnie, whose silence regarding his own affairs has been many an interviewer's nightmare, has at last spoken up. Here he is, stripped of his reserve and his necktie. And note that, after breaking down and telling all, Ronnie can still smile

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