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Pop, in booking his films, took all the Biograph pictures, and I would hurry with my costume changes to get down to the dark stage, where I could see them from the reverse side of the screen, with the light of the projector casting a bright splotch in the middle. On a certain night, while entranced by one of those movies, I realized that it had required a script, so I decided to try my hand at writing one. The next morning I worked out a plot, and that afternoon at rehearsal (the company used to rehearse in the afternoon so that I could spend my mornings at high school) I climbed up into the projection booth and searched the film cans for an address where I might send my story. The address I found was: American Biograph Company, 11 East 14th Street, New York City. I sent my manuscript there, having signed it "A. Loos," which I thought would make me appear a more seasoned author.

Not more than two weeks went by before I received a long envelope with "American Biograph Company" impressively engraved on the corner. With hands shaking like an earthquake, I tore the envelope apart and removed this letter:

Mr. A. Loos

Dear Sir: [*Sir!*]

We have accepted your scenario entitled "The New York Hat." We enclose an assignment which kindly sign and have witnessed by two persons, and then return. On receipt of signed assignment we shall send you our check for \$25.00 in payment.

Yours very truly,

BIOGRAPH COMPANY

J. A. Waldon

The New York Hat was directed by the great D. W. Griffith himself and played by a roster of equally nameless stars, who, I found out later, included Mary Pickford, Lionel Barrymore, Lillian and Dorothy Gish, Henry Walthal, and Bobby Harron. That movie was one more of my lucky firsts.

In my choice of a locale for *The New York Hat* there may have been a touch of atavism, for I had placed it in a small Vermont town like the one from which Cleopatra Fairbrother had once fled. The plot concerned a sadistic miser whose wife and daughter were long-suffering victims of his pinchpenny way of life. In the opening scene, the mother was on her deathbed, being visited by a handsome young clergyman (Lionel Barrymore). The dying woman had sent for Lionel in order to hand him a bulky envelope, immediately after which she breathed her last. Lionel found the

envelope to contain a sum of money the woman had saved over many years, most of it in pennies held out from the pittance her husband allowed her for food. A letter requested that Lionel use the fund to provide her child with a few bits of finery such as are due any girl just budding into womanhood.

Along came the Easter season, when the local milliner displayed in her window a hat which she had imported from New York. It created a furor among the ladies of the village and so fascinated little Mary Pickford that she repaired to the millinery shop every day to gape at it in awe and longing. On Easter Sunday, who showed up in church wearing the elaborate concoction? Why, poor little Mary Pickford! And the gossipy milliner, on being quizzed, announced it had been purchased by the handsome young clergyman.

After that disgraceful exposure, suspicions of an illicit affair between Lionel and Mary grew to a point where Mary's reputation was tottering and Lionel was about to be unfrocked. Naturally, justice prevailed when he produced the mother's deathbed letter, which showed up Mary's father as a niggardly tyrant, and Lionel even went so far as to take a swipe at the entire community for its evil-minded New England prejudices. Needless to say, a marriage between Mary and Lionel was indicated. It was through seeing *The New York Hat* that David Belasco decided to put Mary Pickford into the title role of his Broadway production *A Good Little Devil*. The movie is still shown at the Museum of Modern Art in New York as one of the most popular of Griffith's early films and a particularly fine example of his direction. It is also run sometimes on the Late Late Show on television.