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The Personal Side of David W. Griffith

By JEAN DARNELL

I HAVE known of David W. Griffith since my first association with pictures, some five years ago. I have seen his popularity rise to staggering heights and attain the success all others aspire to. I have indirectly watched his work mold itself into perfection and become the talk of the world. But I had never met this great man himself.

I recall three or four years ago when he was one of the many directors of the Biograph Company, how his work stood out from that of the others. At that time Blanche Sweet was his protégée, and one could sit in a picture theater and pick out the Griffith pictures in which Miss Sweet appeared. He seemed to have some peculiar way in which he directed his people that differentiated his direction from the rest—perhaps he was speaking to the photoplay world thru his players.

I had made up my mind to know this man, to study him and his work at close range, so, during my stay in Los Angeles I visited the Griffith studio on Sunset Boulevard. On entering the portals of this vast studio, I at once felt the presence of the master mind, the workings of a genius. On every hand were buildings, then more buildings, and people by the thousands, and when Mr. Griffith passed thru their midst, his name was whispered and passed along. They stepped aside that he might pass, and they all felt that this was the man they wanted to work for.

I decided to apply for a job "incog," as an extra, and I was given a position with the rest of the extra people who were to work in the mammoth ball-room scene in the picture "Intolerance," the filming of which cost about \$27,000 for the one scene. Fortune favored me,

for I was picked by Mr. Griffith to work on the foreground with Mrs. Lewis, one of the members of his stock. I was not known to Mr. Griffith. He had never seen me before, but just the same there I was in his picture and working down front as if I had been his star.

Now in this particular scene there were at least five hundred people engaged, and not once during the entire time that it required to film this scene did Mr. Griffith raise his voice. He directed as tho it were all a secret, spoke in soft musical tones at all times, and gave those working for him assurance. They worked naturally. I have often seen directors get very much excited and yell and rave when a big scene was being taken, like some real estate trying to sell a tract of land to tourists; but not so with Mr. Griffith. He has methods like no one else, and he gets results surpassed by none. Little Mildred Marsh, the younger sister of Mae Marsh, who made such a decided hit in "The Clansman," was playing the lead in this particular scene. She was supposed to be a young debutante and this was her first ball. Well, while we were rehearsing some of the dancers, little Miss Mildred relaxed and began dreaming. Mr. Griffith looked over to her, and with the wonderful smile that has made him the envy of the Motion Picture world, he said, "Why, wake up Miss Mildred—it's nearly one o'clock. Just think you are going to have a nice lunch presently, paid for by the firm." On this bit of a joke, Miss Mildred smiled wonderfully at her director, who in turn said to her, "Save that, now, for the picture. That is exactly the expression I want when you see your lover coming to ask you for a dance." In due time the scene had all been rehearsed and a signal had been given for the camera. Mr. Griffith took his place by Mr. Bitzer, his chief cameraman, and began directing. "Now, Miss Mildred," he said, "you seem a bit impatient. You are looking about you to see why he doesn't come for you. Now you see him." At that moment little Mildred looked across the ballroom and saw her lover coming, and just as she did Mr. Griffith called "Stake!" which, of course, got a tremendous smile from

Miss Mildred and the desired effect was gotten. So you can easily see what simple methods he often resorts to in order to get what he wants.

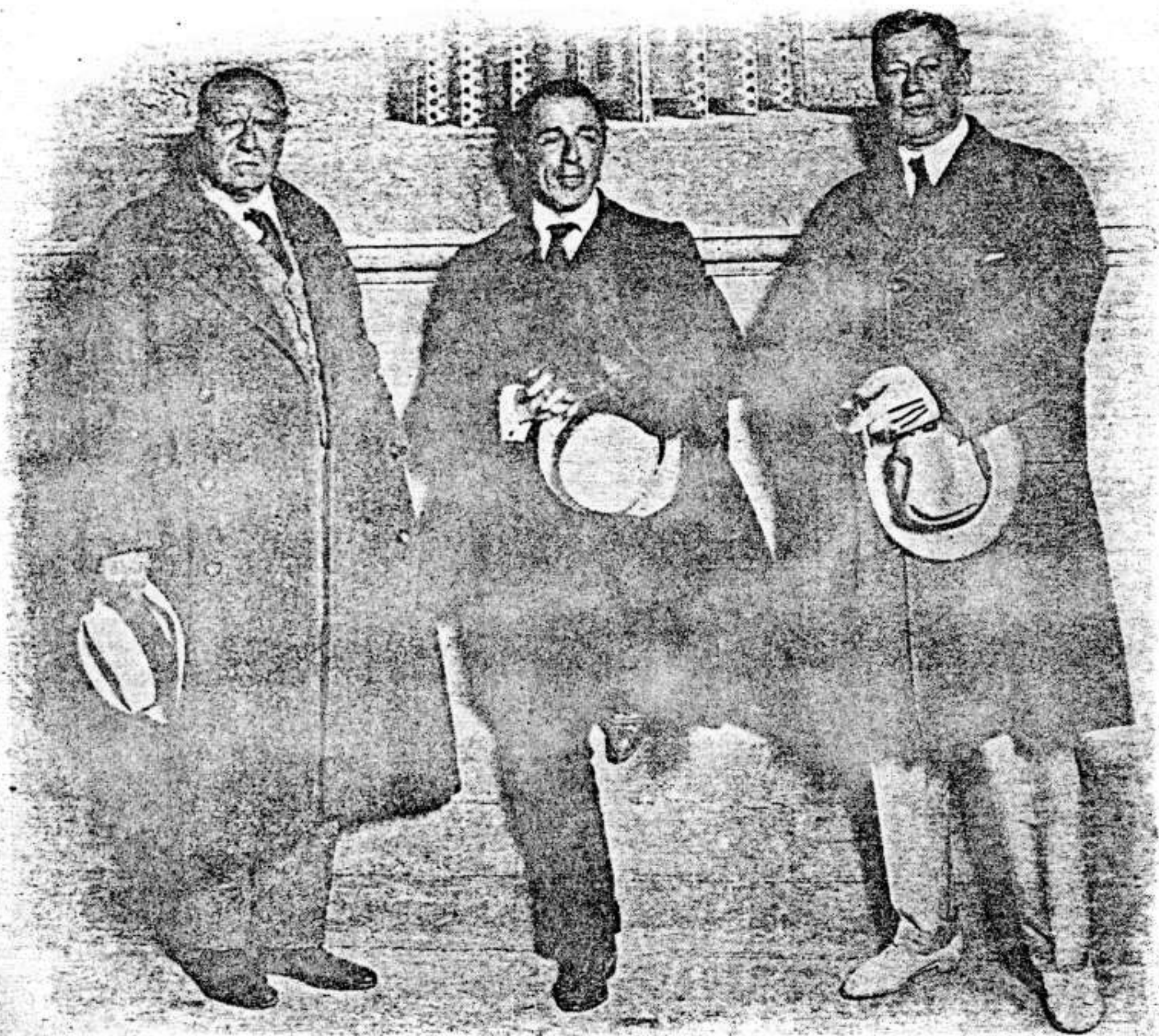
All this day he directed the picture we had a large orchestra playing, and when the camera was not going the folks in the ballroom would dance, and many times I caught Mr. Griffith studying the young folks dancing with a pleased smile, for he, too, is very fond of dancing, and I have no doubt he indulges frequently. And several times during the day he stole a few rounds of a fox-trot or one-step to relax for a few minutes from his work. And our day's work ended all too soon, for in reality it had not been work; it had been a delightful adventure and thoroly enjoyed by all.

Mr. Griffith is a man with a keen sense of humor, whole-souled and with a big heart. And he is one of the easiest men in the world to talk to. He doesn't, by his actions, remind you who he is. He goes easily about his business and says very little to any one, yet when spoken to, he immediately stops, smiles and talks to you like an old friend. Then you say to yourself, "Why in this world was I so nervous about speaking to him?"

Speaking of the many kindnesses he does unawares, one day, when a call was made for a lot of people to work in a mob scene, he noticed one old lady in particular who looked very poor. Her face seemed to appeal to his big heart. He sought her out and, finding that she was in needy circumstances, immediately placed her on a guarantee of two days' work a week. She is used scarcely two days a month, but she gets her ten dollars every week just the same. And she is very happy, and Mr. Griffith doubly so, for he sees every day the happiness that one little instance of his goodness has brought.

Mr. Griffith, after his work is done, likes very much to motor. He has a wonderful Fiat car with his crest on the doors, and he steps into his car and rides away and leaves Motion Pictures far behind him; he is seeking reaction in quiet, and a long ride and lots of air arouse a large appetite for dinner.

For the past year Mr. Griffith has had a large number of the legitimate stars



SIR HERBERT TREE

D. W. GRIFFITH

DE WOLF HOPPER

from Broadway out in his studio, and they all speak of him as the most wonderful man they have ever worked for. Among those he has directed are Miss Roszicka Dolly, Helen Ware, Jane Grey, Douglas Fairbanks, De Wolf Hopper, Thomas Jefferson and quite a few others.

It is with great pleasure that I look back to that day in Mr. Griffith's picture when I became one of his many supers. I found him to be a great student of his art, a splendid general, a wonderful director, and the most artistic gentleman I have ever known.



The Moving Picture

By GERHARD R. LOMER

Silent I sat amid a silent throng;
Dim golden lights scarce flung their drowsy
rays
To gild the doméd darkness overhead;
A thin and far-off stream of music dropped,
To vanish in a mist of shifting sound.
Before my eyes a picture seemed to leap
To magic life upon the distant wall;
From out that miracle of silent change
There flashed the passion-twisted counte-
nance,

The theft, the fight, a sudden wound, the
flight,
Daring pursuit, and lovers' long-linked kiss—
Then darkness on the wall. A moment's hush
Upon us all, and one great corporate sigh,
Like wind among the forest pines, was
drowned
By sudden splash of music, and the spell
Was gone, the living wall a dead white blank,
And I again upon the streets alone,
Silent among a noisy throng of men.