

some when I saw what was printed on it.  
"Herbert K. Smith,  
Director,  
Silverscreen Studios, Los Angeles, Calif."

Oh, boy!  
Well, I skinned round past the main corridor an' the business office an' skirted the gallery, arrivin' at the rear o' the sanctum where there's a sort o' back staircase leadin' to the furnace room. Maybe that staircase was put there a-purpose by the first editor who, they say, many a time had to run for his life. But I just remembered some type I had to clean an' I got close enough to hear a little o' what Herbert K. Smith was spillin' into the chief's ear. Eavesdroppin' isn't in my line but the type was on a shelf an' it took me some little time to get it together. Think of it, a real movie director in town, closeted with the boss, tellin' him maybe, whether Mary Pickford's curls are real an' how many mash notes Walter Kerrigan gets in a day! I listened an' the more I heard the more I wanted to hear. Boiled down this is what it was:

He was a Canadian and a native son of our town. Easyburg, he said, seemed the most appropriate, the most natural starting point for the workin' out of his great scheme. One's home town first by all means! He had gone away while still a boy and had led a very checkered life until the call of the screen became so insistent. Yes, he had acted, written scenarios and directed. Of all these fascinatin' callings he preferred directin'. (He an' Griffith called each other "Dave" an' "Herb.") One day he had had a brain wave or hunch which led him to

but, of course, there had been so many Smiths in an' about Easyburg! They couldn't just place him nor the particular branch o' the Smith family he belonged to, but bless you, they took him to their hearts just the same! He set Easyburg on fire with enthusiasm. They made ample amends. Here was our sole celebrity "returned suddenly like a kindly disposed comet to shed lustre over our commonplaceness," an' you bet he was dined an' tea'd some. The good folks were kinda half afraid lest other places might claim him. Sorta like:

"A thousand cities claimed great Homer dead,  
Thro' which the living Homer begged his bread."

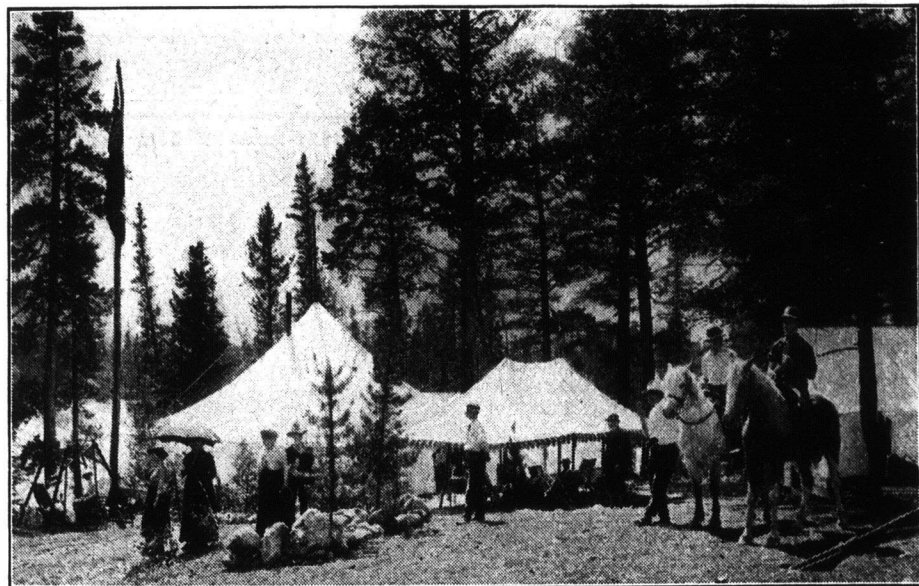
But the Prof. said Easyburg was good enough for him, an' he gathered the young people an' others not so young an' talked to them like a Dutch uncle. I sneaked out an' skinned over to the hall an' heard the very first lecture or rehearsal. After that I never missed none. All the dames fell for him like an angel cake when the oven door is slammed. They fell flat.

"Ain't he a perfectly lovely man!" sighed the widow Carter.  
"Such heavenly eyebrows!" agreed Miss Keen, the elderly librarian. "So Byronic you know."

"I wonder how old he is," murmured another.

The younger skirts were just as bad. Some o' them even skipped their overseas letters that first week.

"A smart clever feller," was the verdict o' the male inhabitants. "Them Smith's



Jasper Park Camp, G.T.P.

abandon his art an' to come back to the cradle o' his youth. Why? The answer was—patriotism. He just had to do somethin' for the Land o' the Maple Leaf an' absent treatment was nix. He had to feel the good old sod beneath his feet first. At this point his voice trembled some. I swallowed my gum.

This was his scheme:  
He wanted to produce some plays for the boys overseas. He wanted them to be essentially home plays, Canadian plays. Just think how the brave lads would eat 'em up. Think o' the joyous hours back in their rest billets, watchin' the dear old dramas a' home unfold before their war-weary eyes, the thrills they would have seen' pretty Mary Browne starrin' in such vehicles as "The Girl o' Sugar Maple Valley" or "Princess o' the Ottawa," laughin' at the stunts o' some as-yet-undiscovered Fairbanks who would be a fine Canadian boy, some simple honest chap who had flat feet or was the sole support o' a widowed mother! Perhaps they might even unearth a mute inglorious Chaplin. At this I very nearly forgot myself an' started to shout: "Here he is!" As for vamping, why there must be any number o' types in Easyburg!

"Good role for Gladys!" I mutters, chucklin'. (Gladys is our blonde stenog. and a sour peach).  
Well, to make a long story short, Herbert K. obtained the chief's whole-hearted support. Big display ads. were run in our paper an' in the pages o' our 'steamed content' as well, an' there was a special write-up about the professor. (Did I say I was qualified to use that handle to his name?) The good folks were tickled to pieces to find that he was a native son. They didn't remember him

never amounted to much, but this one sure is a genius. Durned if he ain't a credit to us!"

Thus they went on, gettin' chestier an' chestier.

"First of all," began the Prof. in his easy platform style. "I want to explain that there is to be no filthy commercialism about this business. Art, like virtue, is to be its own reward. Motives being purely patriotic and efforts voluntary there will be no salaries paid to the actors and actresses. Any expenses incidental to the developing of the films will of course be borne by myself."

A murmur of gratification rippled over the assembly. There was also a little handclapping.

"Our first scenario will require fifty principals and one or two mob scenes," he went on, smilin'. "We will have to go out on location somewhere as there are a number of outdoor scenes giving us a chance to work in plenty of local color—pine trees and so on. We don't want our brave lads (voice tremulous now), "to mistake the locum tenens, do we?"

They didn't get that but they nodded just the same. I didn't get it myself, but I looked it up in a Latin dictionary that afternoon. It means "place of holding."

So he went on in that glad hand manner o' his. It was a lib'ral education just to sit back an' listen to him rollin' out fine phrases. He had the local spellbinder backed right off the map. He was a red-hot enthusiast with the soul of an artist, as the Daily Squeak said. He was more—a human dynamo in the form an' frame o' a Greek god. Only once did I fear for his prestige, an' that was when he come to pick out his first heroine.



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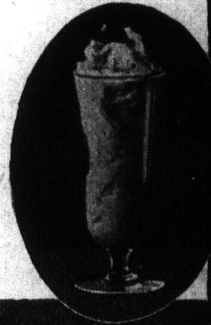
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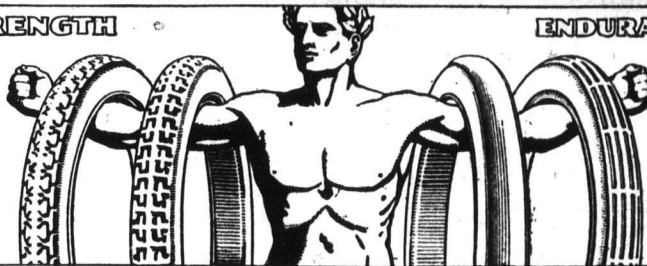
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