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Intolerance, which they had been making when I first set foot on the Griffith lot – and they were still at it when I was doing *The Flying Torpedo* – concerned four stretches of history: the Babylonian period, the Biblical times of Jesus, the persecution of the French Huguenots and the modern period of wealth and poverty in America. They were told simultaneously, cutting from one to another.

I played the Bride of Cana in the Biblical period. George Walsh, brother of the director Raoul Walsh, was the Bridegroom. Between scenes on our bridal dais he taught me a Fordham University song or yell to be sung to the traditional Jewish wedding song:

Oi! Oi! Oi! Oi! Mazeltov! Mazeltov!
Rosh Hashana! Rosh Hashana!
Yom Kippur! Yom Kippur!
Fordham! Fordham!
Team! Team! Team! Team! Team!

For our wedding scene, scores and stoics of Orthodox Jews from Temple Street in town were used as crowd artistes. At noon they were tactlessly served a box lunch with ham in it. This particular day L didn't feel well and was sent home, which was not far, but as I was scantily clad, with bare feet and dancing bells, Mother and I were taken in a car. The Wise Old Men on the wedding set looked wiser than ever and nodded solemnly to each other, their hands tucked into their sleeves: it was the ham!

Rabbi Myers, father of my school friends Carmel and Zion, was technical adviser on the Biblical period. He once told us how it pained him to go into a great library: he acted out how it crushed his head to see the number of precious books, knowing he would never be able to read them all. His name for automobiles: Messengers of Death. Some time later I was with the family party and waiting for him to join us when we heard the news that he had been killed by a car on the Edendale Viaduct.

Many Griffith actors and assistant directors were capable of taking out a second unit for 'chases' (cars, horses or people chasing or being chased), or for directing crowd scenes, battle scenes or the like. In *Intolerance*, half a dozen of them were made up, in costume and mingled in shot with the crowds, including the mob and relaying the directions of Mr. Griffith, who stood on a high platform, calmly shouting through a megaphone. I can still see George Siegmann, who played Cyrus in the Babylonian period, disguised in a loose shirt and girdle, a scarf over his head and shoulders held in place by a circlet over his forehead, and I can still hear his great booming voice. Then there was dear, quiet Tom Wilson bellowing away too, whose actress-dancer wife, Grace, was one of the dancers at Belshazzar's Feast.

Among the other actor-cum-assistants who became directors were Elmer Clifton and Joseph Henabery. Elmer played the Rhapsode in the Babylonian period; one day he was to be my leading man in *Acquitted* and *Nina The Flower Girl*, and later still was to make *Down To The Sea In Ships*, which discovered Clara Bow. Joseph Henabery had played Abraham Lincoln in *The Birth Of A Nation*. He looked just like the pictures of Lincoln, and, so it was said, thought like him. Ten years later he directed me in *Tongues Of Flame* for Lasky's, in New York.

Not all of these stalwarts became stars or directors; but they were the solid foundation of the Griffith spectacle. Without their unlimited energy and devotion to their jobs, the huge crowd scenes could never have had such authority. Nor was their job made easier by extra slackers who would hide behind the set, go to sleep or get out of shot to play cards. They had to be routed out and made to go back to work – that hasn't changed.

One day during the filming of the Biblical period of *Intolerance*. Lillian Gish was watching the frenzied scene of Christ Jesus surrounded by an angry mob as he carries his Cross

along a narrow, winding street. The camera had to move back before the on-surging mob and the Cross in a tracking shot, a new technique. As it moved back, shooting down on the crowd, the heavy squared posts laid across to smooth the way for the camera dolly had to be pulled out of shot on each side. Mr. Griffith, directing the scene through his megaphone, was standing beside his cameraman Billy Bitzer, with Lillian on the other side. When the scene reached its pitch, everyone hysterical, yelling, wild-eyed, spitting, cursing, tearing each others' clothes off, quite out of control and screaming: 'Crucify him! Cru-u-ucify him!', Lillian burst into tears – in spite of all the technical trappings – and, almost hysterical herself, had to leave.

I wish there was more of this in crowd scenes now: more attention paid to detail, more human emotion shown by every actor in the crowds. To-day you never see conviction on their faces, let alone in their movements. Nobody is hilariously glad, murderously angry or desolately sad any more. A lot of people just say 'Ah', as they would for the doctor, when they are supposed to be watching someone being hanged, drawn and quartered.

Howard Gaye had the part of Christ Jesus in the Biblical period. During that shooting, Howard stopped smoking and went teetotal – he felt would be sacrilegious to do otherwise. But you should have heard De Wolf Hopper's colorful story of coming on to the Wedding at Cana and suddenly seeing Howard – with blonde beard, sandals and flowing robes – stepping out of a Ford.

The last time I saw *Intolerance* I was struck by the extraordinary beauty of the Griffith girls. Beauty of even your dearest friends, when you sit next to it every day and discuss what you had for breakfast, gets taken for granted. In the Temple of Ishtar scene alone, the screen was choc-a-bloc with breath-taking beauties: Pauline Starke, Mildred Harris (the future Mrs. Charles Chaplin), Winifred Westover (the future Mrs. William S. Hart), Carmel Myers, Seena Owen and many others.

Top female stars at the studio were the Gishes, Lillian and Dorothy, and Mae Marsh. Two of Mac's three sisters, her brother and her brother-in-law were all working at the Griffith studio. (I cried myself to sleep one night because Mr. Griffith had told me I would never be as good an actress as Mae Marsh. Maybe I'd been getting a little out of hand – or, of course, it just nigh have been true.) Of the men, Bobby Harron was always the young lead: Wilfred Lucas and Henry Walthall were among the older ones.

Other film stars on the lot at the same time were Miriam Cooper, Teddy Sampson and Fay Tincher, Norma Talmadge, famous for years with Vitagraph, joined us, as well as Constance and another sister, Natalie (future Mrs. Buster Keaton). Then there were the New York and London stars: Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree and Constance Collier, John Emerson, Marie Doro, De Wolf Hopper and Douglas Fairbanks. Mrs. Fairbanks, former Beth Sulk, was her husband's business manager and they brought their son, Douglas Junior, and his governess. That lady was furious when Senior let Junior in among his make-up and he came out painted as white as a sheet.

With De Wolf Hopper was his actress wife, Hedda – later *the* Hedda Hopper, gossip writer with the screwy hats. De Wolf Hopper was a great *raconteur* and delighted in relating his first film experiences: 'Dying one afternoon and not even shot until three weeks later! *Fas-cin-a-ting!*' He made one picture, with Fay Tincher, about a lion which breaks loose and roams around the hotel where he is trying to book a room. The big lobby set was on one of the open stages and was fenced off with heavy metal mesh and cages at every entrance. Even the cameras were in cages. Only the keeper ever came on the set with the lion, and everybody watched from a judicious distance. Mr. Griffith was once showing the Governor of California round while shooting was going on. Suddenly he felt the Governor and walked on to the set with the lion. Very quietly Mr. Stillman – that really was the photographer's name – took some stills with his tripod camera. And then, I'm very glad to say, Mr. Griffith walked out again, followed by Mr. Stillman with his cumbersome Kodak.

Everyone on the lot worked together in those days. I once saw the studio street-cleaner make a suggestion to Mr. Griffith as he watched him directing Mae Marsh in a scene for the

Modern period of *Intolerance*. It doesn't necessary follow that the idea was used, but Mr. Griffith listened.

The studio was always teeming with people. Small-part players were probably only on a guarantee, paid more when they worked more, but they all came to the studio every day except the stars. Many of these people were there when I arrived, dating even from Biograph days. So many were as patient and kind to me as the saints.

Dozens of husbands and wives, sometimes whole families, worked there. The Browns, for instance: Mrs Lucille Brown was an actress as well as studio matron and chaperone; Mr. Brown was an actor; and young Karl Brown, their son, was assistant to Billy Bitzer, Mr. Griffith's cameraman. Karl was a studious young man: I never saw him smile. He was always making tests of some kind on his own, either concerning his camera or *Intolerance*. One was of Pauline Starke in a Babylonian dancing girl's costume, wearing a leopard's head. I was supposed to be used for that experiment, too, but I had the presence of mind to be rehearsing at the time.

There was a studio dog. He was fawn-coloured, sleek-haired, long-nosed, and his name was Props. He came and went as he pleased, and for meals would go home with Lloyd Ingraham or any of the directors, assistants or prop men from the old Biograph. Mr. Ingraham would sometimes wrap a handkerchief round one of Prop's forefeet and say, 'Poor Props! Poor Props!' Props would look up mournfully and limp around feeling sorry for himself until he was 'healed' by having bandage removed. He was a veteran of the screen: I even saw him once as a puppy in an old Biograph film.

We sometimes rehearsed for *Intolerance* upstairs in the extra men's dressing-room, a big, new, unpainted frame building. I always remember how to pronounce the name of the god Baal from the time we were rehearsing the Babylonian period there. The dressing-room was very cold and Mr. Griffith, in his stentorian voice, rhymed, 'The priests of Baal are cold as hell.'

I once saw Mildred Harris in that same rehearsal room, standing in a shaft of light coming from a small window high up in the wall behind her and to her left. Mildred was so tenderly beautiful, so young, just growing up: her hair, which was blonde and naturally curly, fell over her shoulders and the light gave her a halo. Mr. Griffith caught sight of her: 'Mildred,' he said, 'don't move. You must always find a light and look like that.'

Mr. Griffith still me Mary – he never did call me anything else – so when we were on the indoor stage another time rehearsing and Mr. Griffith suddenly bellowed 'Mary!', everybody on the lot knew that meant me. Like Mildred, without realizing it, I was standing in the light, wearing a thin white dress; but *I* was wearing school bloomers underneath. 'Mary!' he repeated sharply, 'Get out of the light!'

I was never shy with Mr. Griffith, even from the beginning. I'm sure I could have taken any problem to him; he inspired confidence in everyone. Once – it must have been between set-ups during the filming of *Intolerance* – we were talking. It was extraordinary: I'd only been on the lot a few weeks, and he knew nothing about my childhood, yet he told me my whole life story. He read me like a book. He told me about my mother, my father, our hardships – heartaches – ambitions – disappointments – practically from the time I was born! I was soon drenched with my own tears – and I never did cry much in a studio, I waited till I got home.

Mr. Griffith could understand the inner workings of people. Understanding, compassion, interest in others: that's what it takes and that's what he had. He was a good director, and he was also a great man.

Bessie LOVE

FROM HOLLYWOOD WITH LOVE, An autobiography of Bessie Love
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