



# Moving Picture Bubble by Richard Barry

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ONE evening in the early summer of 1901 I stood, awed but keenly expectant, on the balcony of the Ethnology Building at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. By my side was a short, chubby man in an old suit of clothes, a negligee shirt and a string tie that had come undone and was flopping over his capacious chest. It was a warm evening, and he had removed his battered straw hat, which he held in his hand. The size of the hat was No. 8. The man was Thomas A. Edison.

Before us spread that dream in frozen music, the buildings fronting the esplanade, mall and plaza of the exposition. The twilight was done, and the moment had arrived for the night birth of that dream into splendor. For the first time in history architecture was to be made alive at night, more living than by day. Half a million incandescent bulbs were hid along the transverse lines of the buildings. The current was turned on and they simultaneously bloomed. Ensued a spectacle for which a Caesar would have bared a province—a joy that brought a gasp of ecstasy from every one of the millions who saw it.

Edison, bare-headed, squinted his eyes. The poetry missed him. The gallop of scenic history over the verge of a new era missed him. The glory of the spectacle itself missed him. Instead, he glanced shrewdly and carefully all around on the entrancing wonder, then cautiously into his battered straw hat and said:

"I could put every filament into that hat!" Economics, mechanics—these obsessed him. That brain, which required a No. 8 hat for covering, could think only of the compressed fact that all the space occupied by the vibrating, energizing and glory-working source of that gigantic spectacle could be replaced by about two pints of water—or a quart of human brain.

Edison is a rare man. In his speech, of which he is as careful as of his filaments, he pulls the core from a field of ideas and thrusts it at you as if it were a ponard. You think about what he says for a week, a month; and in years you don't forget it.

All of this is leading up to a consideration of what the wizard-sage said a few weeks ago when a select audience sat in his studio and watched the first performance of the kinetograph, that fabulous instrument which is destined to reproduce plays, operas, public spectacles with the action, the color and the voice intact.

The great bid inventor was gratified once again. Another thrill had come into his life. His latest adventure into the unknown had prospered, and his friends and associates clustered about him with congratulations, with questions, with assurances.

For some time Edison was silent. He is grateful that he is deaf. Then he squinted from one to the other, and said:

"Before long you'll be working that in an aeroplane, for you'll be able to pack it into a soap-bubble!"

A soap-bubble! Rather a fragile packing-case. Rather a small compass in which to place a grand opera. A curious comparison. Did Edison mean what he said? Did he know what he was talking about?

Ever since I heard that Edison said that, I have been thinking of moving pictures in connection with soap-bubbles. And not always in the way he meant bubbles in connection with the kinetograph.

A soap-bubble is cheap. It is easy to make—if you know how. It is fragile. It is very alluring. It reflects all colors, all forms. It appeals universally to children. Sages ponder over it. Poets celebrate it. Artists reproduce it.

Conundrum.—Why is a moving picture like a soap-bubble?

First, you find them everywhere.

On the back streets of Reno I saw the pictures of the bull fight at Guadalajara, Mexico. The Guadalajarans now look on the moving pictures of the prize fight at Reno.

At Punta Arenas, the southernmost port in the world, I saw Chileans applaud moving pictures of the Bowery and the New York water front. On the Bowery I saw pictures of the battleship fleet entering the harbor of Punta Arenas.

On an island 2,000 miles out in the Pacific Ocean the exiled lepers of Molokai gather daily before the flickering wonders of a world which before had been but vaguely in their dreams. The Sunday evening young people's class of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, looks in pity on the transplanted and resurrected life of Molokai which passes before their eyes—on the screen.

A group of travelers in the luxurious saloon of an ocean liner study the lifelike pictures of the country for which they are bound. The beggars who line the pathways of the tourist imploring backsheesh give up their pennies to see the living presentment of their prey bounding to them over the ocean wave.

In Iceland excited Eskimos applaud the heroism of a cowboy who rescues a captured maiden from the redskins. Half-way round the world, in Northern Russia, tearful peasants sorrow over the pictured plight of a French lover.

The Bengalee moves down Mowringhee Road and gives up two pennies to see the funeral of King Edward—to see it actually move. The Moro in the alleys of Zamboanga goes without an extra shirt, that he may view the reception of Universal as Froth.

Anywhere, everywhere, you find them. In the United States you will have to hunt a town of less than 2,000 inhabitants if you wish to escape the moving pictures.

Five millions of Americans daily visit these shows. The exhibitors pay \$18,000,000 a year for their films. The public pays \$57,500,000 a year to see them.

Mr. Edison has an average weekly royalty therefrom of \$3,000.

So it is a pretty big business, pretty thoroughly organized, quite universal in its reach, soap-bubbly in its universality.

The child of the poor, with a clay pipe and the suds from the weekly wash, can have just as good a time as any rich young fellow with an imported meerschaum and the best castle.

So it is with the moving-picture show. It requires little capital to run them. A long room, easily darkened, a nine-foot square patch of white cloth, some benches for the spectators, an operator at ten dollars a week, and a rented film, now takes the place of a company of actors, stage scenery, properties, lights and a properly equipped building. And the poor boy, gets as much value for his nickel as the rich boy can get for any number of dollars.

Yet, they run into dangers that no soap-bubbles can allure. Fire is of these the most patent. Of the moral dangers we will speak later. It is through the moral soap-bubble that we can see more clearly the moving picture's gossamer tinsel.

Fire, however, is the first and most vital danger. The Charity-Bazaar fire in Paris, in which so many women were trampled to death by cowardly men, was caused by the fall of a spark upon some celluloid moving-picture films which had been dropped into a basket. In Canton 600 men, Chinamen, were burned to death in a fire in a moving-picture show house. In Quito, Ecuador, fifty men and women lost their lives in a similar calamity.

It speaks well for the widespread and constant vigilance of the fire departments of the United States that no great catastrophe has yet come to the moving-picture houses of this country.

Lives have not been lost in the moving picture shows. Lives have been lost through the moving picture shows.

Where once the dime and nickel novels suggested ways of crime to unbalanced youth the moving picture has come to make a more ready and more potent appeal. The printed word is never so ardent with an impressionable mind as the acted word.

Several ways have been thought of to lessen these obvious evils. Charles Sprague Smith, late chief of the People's Institute in New York, thought he had solved the problem when he induced the manufacturers of the moving pictures to agree to a national board of censorship.

The manufacturers, good trade diplomats, readily assented, and then saw to it that the board of censorship should be advisory and not antagonistic. The result is that many pictures that create havoc among youthful minds when shown on the public screens "get by" the national board of censorship.

No. This bubble that Edison has loosed upon us will play itself out just so far as the instincts of the whole people of this country will permit; no farther, no sooner.

One night I went to a prize fight. Only men were present. The casual observer might have said they were a\* tough men. After the fight a canvas was erected in the ring and an announcer said, "An exclusive film will now be shown to the members of this club."

The picture proved to be of French manufacture and portrayed a vile situation in a dive. Instantly hisses and a storm of execration burst from the audience. The running of the film was stopped and the picture removed before it was all shown. Grim silence greeted the removal of the canvas.

The crowd that gloried in the action of the

prize ring would not endure any pictured sexual depravity. To me that was a wonderful revelation of Anglo-Saxon psychology.

Thus it will always be in our theater, whether the admission price be five cents or two dollars. American audiences want action; they want thrills; they want desperate courage and wild heroism; but they want it all clean. They want the good to triumph, the guilty to be punished, and wrong to be avenged.

A Parisian manufacturer offered \$200,000 for the right to make moving pictures of the Oberammergau Passion Play. His offer was refused. He went back to his studio, engaged a company of very skillful actors, rehearsed them carefully and reproduced the Passion Play, almost as well as it was originally done, and the cost was about a twentieth of what he offered for the original.

This manufacturer had an eye on a new field for the moving picture. While his imitation will, perhaps, find a comparatively small market, it cannot hope to reach the class that would have purchased a guaranteed reproduction of the Oberammergau play; viz., the churches.

For the churches have not yet come utterly under the sway of the moving picture, despite the fact that the Congregational and Presbyterian churches of Redlands, California, showed moving pictures all last summer in their outdoor pavilion.

Yet the moving picture manufacturers are devoting a lot of time and money to religious subjects. "Joseph Going Into Egypt," "The Repulse of Herod," "Jephthah's Daughter," "The Relief of Jericho," and "The Wisdom of Solomon" are a few of the subjects of moving-picture plays founded on Biblical accounts.

While the moving pictures are battering at the doors of the churches they have already partially sealed the walls of the school-houses. Out of every seven subjects passed by the National Board of Censorship, one is classed as "pedagogical."

In the catalogues of the manufacturers one finds films that show lessons in "agriculture, aeronautics, animal life, bacteriology, biography, biology, botany, entomology, ethnology, fisheries, geography, history, industry, kindergarten studies, mining and metallurgy, microscopy, military and naval life, natural history, ornithology, pathology, pisciculture, religion, travel and zoology."

It looks like the catalogue of an educational publishing house. Yet it is only the list of films that may be and are ordered by "the trade." Subjects under these lists are shown daily in the 7,500 theaters that exhibit moving pictures in this country. They form entertainment, not instruction. They have put the stereopticon out of business, not the schoolmaster.

For the public schools have no more surrendered to the new and plausible invader than have the churches.

Why?

Why not teach children history by showing them scenes from the lives of great men, pageants from the great moments that are duly and laboriously recorded in the books. Why not sit and watch George Washington cross the Delaware on the moving picture sheet, instead of having to puzzle your head over the dry print that records it on unlined paper? Why not learn about the growth of flowers pleasantly, by watching a picture instead of having to patiently dissect the flower and then piece it together again under the instruction of a botany textbook? Such pictures can be and are constantly shown. Do they not mean the revolution of pedagogy?

Not long ago the New York Board of Education appointed a committee to investigate this subject, and find out if it were feasible to install moving-picture machines in the various schools of the city. Superintendent Maxwell was on the committee. I saw him a few days after the exhibition.

He was not very enthusiastic about the pictures.

"A method will never be devised that will save any human being the labor of learning," he said. "We learn only by taking thought, and that is work, hard work. You cannot insert learning hypodermically. You cannot swallow it in tabloid form. There is but one way to take it, and that is the oldest way known. You will find after all of these will-o'-the-wisps have vanished that it will be the newest way, too."

Which throws the moving picture right back where it belongs—in the theater. It can have no permanent place in the church. It can have no real place in the school, though it may be auxiliary to either, or both.

## ORIGIN OF MAIL CAR

### Railway Postal Service First Operated in Missouri.

William A. Davis, Before the War, Postmaster at St. Joseph, Devised System Now in Vogue for Distributing Mail En Route.

St. Joseph, Mo.—Progress in the carrying and distribution of United States mails has been remarkable in this country in the last fifty years. A half century ago, the first railroad west of the Mississippi river, from Hannibal to St. Joseph, Mo., was constructed, and on this road the railway mail service of the country had its origin and inception. Then, only the mails for the whole western country came in bulk on freight and passenger trains to be distributed in ten lots and carried to many destinations by courier, by buckboard, horseback and stage lines, the only methods in those days.

It remained for William A. Davis, postmaster at St. Joseph from 1855 to 1861, to invent and inaugurate the great system now in vogue. Before this time the mails, all mixed and in bulk, were carried to some central distributing point. Independence, Mo., was one of these and St. Joseph later was another. When the railroad was built the task all came to the St. Joseph office, in distributing the entire overland mail.

The idea occurred to Mr. Davis that these mails could be distributed while in transit. It seemed to him in every way possible and desirable. So he wrote to the people in Washington for authority to fit up some cars on the Hannibal & St. Joseph railroad to try out the experiment. The authority came and Mr. Davis went to the railway headquarters at Hannibal and superintended the arrangement of several way cars with pigeon holes, doors, windows and other conveniences and



William A. Davis.

the initial run with a carload of mail was made from Hannibal to St. Joseph in record time, the mails properly distributed and ready for the overland stages, couriers, etc.

The first trial was so satisfactory that other cars were brought into requisition and soon a most remarkable change for the better was made in the receipt and distribution of mails. The great railway mail service had been inaugurated.

The problem of forwarding overland mails without delay was solved, and Mr. Davis was soon made a special agent of the department and given full charge of the branch of the service which he had originated.

William A. Davis, inventor of the railway mail service, was born in Barren County, Kentucky, in September, 1809. In early youth he went to Virginia, where he entered the postal service, at Richmond and other places, and with his career in St. Joseph he had been in the postal service about fifty years.

The first car for the distribution of the mails was an old-time "way" car, fitted up with pigeon holes. Extra windows were arranged and the "distributors" used candles to assist in lighting the cars. Mr. Davis made a trip on the first car as far as Palmyra, Mo., and then left the work with an assistant while he returned to Hannibal for the second car. There are many old railroaders yet alive who remember the first mail cars.

## GEESSE ON THE STAGE REBEL

Object to Understudy for Singer in Halle Performance of Humperdinck's "Konigskinder."

Berlin.—An amusing incident occurred this week at a performance of Humperdinck's "Konigskinder" at the Halle opera house.

Live geese are employed for the Halle production in contrast to the papier mache variety which indulge in make believe cackles at Berlin. The prima donna who regularly sings the part of the goose maid was taken ill suddenly and it became necessary to obtain an understudy. When the latter, however, went on the stage the geese rebelled against the intrusion of a stranger. They became so enraged they threatened to do the singer bodily injury.

The conductor of the orchestra had to stop the performance until the geese could be quelled. They refused to subside until the familiar figures of the wood chopper and the broom maker came upon the scene.

## IMPORTANT THAT PUBLIC SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GREAT KIDNEY REMEDY

The testimonial I am to give you comes unqualified. I have been suffering from lumbago for ten years and at times was unable to stand erect. A Mr. Dean of this city, saw me in my condition (bent over) and inquired the cause. I told him that I had the lumbago. He replied, "If you get what I tell you to, you need not have it." I said I would take anything for ease. He said, "You get two bottles of Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root and take it, and if it does not fix you O. K. I will pay for the medicine myself." I did so and am a well man. For five months I have been as well as could be. Before I took your Swamp-Root was in constant pain day and night. This may look like advertising, but it seems to me most important that the public should be made familiar with this treatment as it is the only one I know which is an absolute cure. I owe a great deal to Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, and am anxious that others situated as I was should know and take advantage of it. Hoping that this testimonial may be of benefit to some one, I am

J. A. HOWLAND, 1734 Humboldt St., Denver, Col.

State of Colorado } ss. City and County of Denver } ss. Personally appeared before me, a Notary Public in and for the city and county of the State of Colorado, J. A. Howland, known to me as the person whose name is subscribed to the above statement and upon his oath declares that it is a true and correct statement.

DANIEL H. DRAPER, Notary Public.

Letter to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y.

Prove What Swamp-Root Will Do For You Send to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y., for a sample bottle. It will convince anyone. You will also receive a booklet of valuable information, telling all about the kidneys and bladder. When writing, be sure and mention this paper. For sale at all drug stores. Price fifty cents and one-dollar.

## THESE MONEY BURNERS.



Miss Bondsen Stocks (at Monte Carlo)—What luck yesterday?

Miss Billynck—I won twenty thousand or lost twenty thousand, I forget which.

## "ECZEMA ITCHED SO I COULDN'T STAND IT."

"I suffered with eczema on my neck for about six months, beginning by little pimples breaking out. I kept scratching till the blood came. It kept getting worse, I couldn't sleep nights any more. It kept itching for about a month, then I went to a doctor and got some liquid to take. It seemed as if I was going to get better. The itching stopped for about three days, but when it started again was even worse than before. The eczema itched so badly I couldn't stand it any more. I went to a doctor and he gave me some medicine, but it didn't do any good. We have been having Cuticura Remedies in the house, so I decided to try them. I had been using Cuticura Soap, so I got me a box of Cuticura Ointment, and washed off the affected part with Cuticura Soap three times a day, and then put the Cuticura Ointment on. The first day I put it on, it relieved me of itching so I could sleep all that night. It took about a week, then I could see the scab come off. I kept the treatment up for three weeks, and my eczema was cured.

"My brother got his face burned with gunpowder, and he used Cuticura Soap and Ointment. The people all thought he would have scars, but you can't see that he ever had his face burned. It was simply awful to look at before the Cuticura Remedies (Soap and Ointment) cured it." (Signed) Miss Elizabeth Gehrlk, Forest City, Ark., Oct. 16, 1910.

Although Cuticura Soap and Ointment are sold by druggists and dealers everywhere, a liberal sample of each, with 32-page booklet on the care and treatment of skin and hair, will be sent, postfree, on application to Potter D. & C. Corp., Dept. X, Boston.

He who gives pleasure meets with it; kindness is the bond of friendship and the book of love.—Bastile.

To keep the blood pure and the skin clear, drink Garfield Tea before retiring.

A woman's mind enables her to reach a conclusion without starting.

## Millions Say So

When millions of people use for years a medicine it proves its merit. People who know CASCARETS' value buy over a million boxes a month. It's the biggest seller because it is the best bowel and liver medicine ever made. No matter what you're using, just try CASCARETS once—you'll see.

CASCARETS is a box for a week's treatment, all druggists. Biggest seller in the world. Million boxes a month.

Associated with Thompson's Eye Water