

Mammoth Race Production Finally Released

Much Heralded "Birth of a Race" Photoplay Makes Debut Sunday, December 1st at Chicago's Most Fashionable Theater, the Blackstone.

(Special to The Monitor.)

CHICAGO, ILL.—After more than one year of troublesome times, "The Birth of a Race" made its initial bow for public favor Sunday evening, December 1, at the famous Blackstone theater, the home of Chicago's elite.

In this most fashionable theater in the most cosmopolitan city of the nation, was released what is destined to be either one of those epoch-making photodramatic productions of the "Griffith class;" or one of the most colossal tragedies in the history of the screen.

More than a year ago the idea was conceived by a group of some of the best known white and Colored friends of the race to promote a mammoth photoplay entitled "The Birth of a Race" as an answer to D. W. Griffith's great picture of Thomas Dixon's story of Reconstruction Days. With this idea in mind a corporation was organized under the laws of Delaware with a capital stock of \$1,000,000 divided into 100,000 shares, par value \$10. Headquarters were established in Chicago and Edwin L. Barker, formerly of the Barker-Swan Film Service, was elected president. The financing of the proposition was entrusted to the stock brokerage firm of Giles P. Corey & Co., of Chicago, as fiscal agents.

Very elaborate literature was circulated including a prospectus which gave as its argument "Organized for the production and exhibition of the master photoplay 'The Birth of a Race'—an entertaining motion picture of racial understanding. The true story of the Negro—his life in Africa, his transportation to America, his enslavement, his freedom, his achievements, together with his past, present and future relations to his white neighbor and to the world in which both live and labor." Among its list of officers and prominent persons "interested and assisting" appear the names of some of the most noted men in the nation, viz: Julius Rosenwald, J. C. Napier, Bishop I. B. Scott, Mrs. Booker T. Washington, Wm. H. Taft, Wm. D. Jelks, etc. The Selig Polyscope Co. of Chicago was named as the producers.

A national stock selling campaign was inaugurated with alluring investment ads in leading white Sunday daily papers worded in part as follows: "If the 'Birth of a Race' returns as much as 'The Birth of a Nation' every \$100 you invest will return \$1,000. If as much as 'Traffic in Souls' every \$100 will give you \$3,000. Every \$1,000, \$30,000. Write for full details, etc." Stock salesmen also scoured the country, selling indiscriminately to both whites and blacks; with the result that prior to March 16, 1918, 7,000 stockholders had invested approximately \$140,000, the entire amount of which was spent in production work in Tampa, Fla., alone, with only one-half of the production completed. It was then estimated that it would take \$450,000 more.

Seemingly the indorsements of Ex-President Taft, Julius Rosenwald and other prominent men was secured as to the theme of the picture, but not in commendation of the stock project. January 1, 1918, the blue sky law of the state of Illinois went into effect and under this law Giles P. Corey was arrested and fined \$1,000 for violation of the law, plead guilty and paid the fine. About this time "The Billboard" came out with an expose of the methods of the promotion of the corporation, which resulted in a repudiation of the use of the names of Mr. Taft and Mr. Rosenwald in the stock selling campaign. About this time the Selig Co. dropped out, and arrangements were made with the Frohman Amusement Co. of New York to complete the production. This firm started work in Tampa, Florida, and filmed the wonderful prolog of biblical events in episodic form including scenes of the Christ period; the Noah period and Creation. This part alone cost \$140,000 and is considered by critics to be excellent pictorial work, considerable credit for which is to be given Geo. Frederick Wheeler, formerly of Triangle Film Co., who in association with John W. Noble, did the direction and research work. For reasons not given to the public the Frohman Amusement Co. quit production work in the middle of its contract. An attempt was made to continue the production work through independent filming by various parties. Owing to war conditions a change in the plans was made and certain phases concerning the advancement of the Negro were dropped out. The

second part was converted into a modern war drama, very different in treatment and effect and according to critics "melodramatic in the extreme and full of inconsistencies." Here after months of trouble, the production was finally made ready at the Rothdaker Film plant in Chicago and released to the public at \$1.50 per admission in Chicago's finest theater, which was leased for one month at \$6,000. Its change in treatment has so converted it into a war propaganda film that the original idea of moulding public sentiment into contra-distinction to that of the Griffith productions has been entirely lost. Critics differ as to the merits of the production. Genevieve Harris in the Chicago Evening Post writes: "The result is a truly great photoplay." "The Birth of a Race" is a picture worth seeing. It is a long picture, but there is little of it that you want to sacrifice. It is a fine piece of photodramatic production, a clean, sincere and beautiful picture drama." The New York "Variety" Chicago correspondent has a different idea and writes: "The most grotesque cinema chimera in the history of the picture business had its debut and in all probability its demise." "As long as the stockholders patronize the film business will be done. After the stockholders have seen the picture its day will be done. That is, unless by some amazing freak of public taste and press manipulation, it should get over." The Chicago "Billboard" writes, "The picture is perhaps the worst conglomeration of mixed purposes and attempts ever thrown together." It is to be regretted that such a fine conceived idea should have reached such a ignoble end. Financed by public subscriptions and philanthropic bequests and produced without thought of financial profits would have enabled the undertaking to have exerted its beneficial influence through successful promotion of better understanding, sympathetic and helpful relationship between the north and south, white and black as to deserve the highest commendation of the entire world.

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HONOR THE MEMORY OF WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Holds Enthusiastic Meeting.

By Walter J. Singleton
Special to The Monitor, Omaha, Neb.
WASHINGTON, D. C.—The District of Columbia branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People celebrated the one hundred and thirteenth anniversary of the birth of William Lloyd Garrison at the Metropolitan A. M. E. church, on the evening of December 11, in the presence of a very large and enthusiastic audience.

The general topic deemed appropriate for discussion in connection both with the times and the special occasion was, "What Is the Negro to Get Out of the War?" The speakers were Roscoe C. Bruce, assistant superintendent of schools; James Weldon Johnson, organizer for the N. A. A. C. P., and J. S. Shillady, secretary of the N. A. A. C. P. Mr. Archibald H. Grimke presided at the meeting, and following his usual practice, made quite extended remarks. At the conclusion of Mr. Grimke's remarks a statement of principles was read to the meeting, which at the close of the speeches, on motion of Mr. L. M. Hershaw, was adopted by the assemblage.

This statement expressed gratitude for the life and labors of William Lloyd Garrison; called attention to the war just closed and to the declared purpose for which the United States entered it, namely, "to make the world safe for democracy;" it called attention to the principles enunciated at the birth of the nation in the Declaration of Independence, and to the subsequent incorporation of those principles in the constitution of the United States; it enumerated lynching, inadequate school advantages, denial of the ballot, and segregation in travel and in working conditions as evils requiring redress and correction.

Mr. Bruce's speech was prepared with great care and delivered with the clearness of enunciation and excellence of elocution which make him always a pleasing speaker. He dealt very largely with the educational phases of reconstruction after the war, and in addition insisted that a reconstruction on democratic principles should embrace the repeal of all laws recognizing distinction of race, even to laws forbidding intermarriage of the races; not that Col-

ored men advocate or desire to marry women of the race designated as white, for most emphatically they do not. But such laws are an insult to any self-respecting human being. No man worthy of any sort of respect wants to be catalogued in the statute books as not eligible to marry any human being, even though in his own thought he might not desire to do so.

Mr. Johnson set forth most effectively the work of the N. A. A. C. P. It was his first appearance in Washington as a public speaker, and he created a most favorable impression.

Mr. Shillady was received with tumultuous applause, and made a plea for the replenishing of the lynching fund, by means of which the N. A. A. C. P. conducts investigations of lynchings. He said the only appreciable effect that President Wilson's pronouncement against lynching had had, was to suppress publication of their occurrence.

THE N. A. A. C. P. HOLDS INTERESTING MEETING

Earnest Discussion Anent Delegate to Peace Conference—Bishop Scott Expected as Speaker Next Sunday.

The local branch of the N. A. A. C. P. held another interesting meeting last Sunday afternoon at St. John's A. M. E. church. Owing to a misunderstanding as to dates Bishop Scott did not arrive in the city for Sunday, but is expected next Sunday. A lively discussion on the subject, "Resolved, That an American Negro Should Be Present at the Peace Conference," occupied the session. Those participating in the discussion were: Messrs. Thomas Reese, M. F. Singleton, W. H. Ransom, George Scott, A. Rayford, the Rev. W. C. Williams, Mrs. Moss, Mrs. Peebles and Mrs. Rayford. The position taken by the affirmative was that our people because of their unique position should have representation. The negative maintained that as American citizens we are represented by the American representatives and that international questions not domestic differences are to be settled at the peace table. Our problem is to demand our rights from the government to which we belong.

The forum will meet next Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock and it is expected that Bishop Scott who is scheduled to be in the city will deliver an address. The public is invited. The Omaha branch of the N. A. A. C. P. has a membership now of 110. It ought to be 500. Come out and join.

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The Call of Economy

Saturday, December 28

DOLLAR DAY

Get your dollars ready. Change your twos, fives and tens into ones. It will greatly facilitate matters and save you time. We have tried to provide quantities of articles for all, but cannot promise these big bargains for more than one day. New merchandise specially priced for this big bargain day will be remembered for many months to come. We always sell dependable merchandise at lowest prices.

We wish all of our customers a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

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WE NEED MORE ROOM.

THE GOVERNMENT SAYS DO NOT BUILD

RED CROSS ROLL CALL

Colored Citizens Respond Generously, Although Difficult to Separate Their Subscriptions From the General Total.

Omaha has again gone "over the top" in the Christmas drive for memberships in the Red Cross. The number enrolled is 85,000. A great showing. The purpose of the drive this year was not so much the raising of money, as the securing of members emphasizing the united strength of the people back of the movement. The Colored citizens again, as always, did their share. A conservative estimate would place the number of our memberships at about 2,000. It is, however, difficult to separate our subscriptions from the general total, because the great majority gave to the general solicitors instead of through the special committee as was done last year. The whole city was distracted and combed by energetic canvassers, so that none was permitted to escape. Then, too, many gave where they are employed. The district in which Mrs. Dan Desdunes and her lieutenants, Mesdames A. G. Edwards, H. J. Pinkett, S. B. Canty, Roy Robinson and T. Wheeler worked reported over 1,100 members secured by the women workers alone. Of this number Mrs. Desdunes committee reported 130 or about one-ninth of the total. This illustrates how the people worked. The Colored employees of the Cudahy Packing company through Mrs. Mary Cage reported over 300 members.

FREMONT, NEBRASKA, NEWS

By C. Herndon
A Tinsley has recovered from a recent attack of influenza and has returned to his duties at the station. Mr. and Mrs. John Berry are the parents of a fine baby girl. The two children of Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Brannon have been having quite a serious time with an infection of the throat. James Thomas, who has been stationed at Fort Logan H. Root doing clerical work, has been promoted to the 17th receiving battalion 67th Company at Camp Pike. Mr. and Mrs. Al Williams welcomed a bouncing baby boy. The graded department of St. John's A. M. E. Sunday school is preparing to give an Xmas program Xmas night to which everyone is welcome. Mr. W. M. Durgin is suffering from an attack of influenza. At last reports Lieutenant C. R. Brannon, who is a member of the 92d division, 368th infantry, was expecting to be returned home soon, but later reports give the information that the order has been cancelled which we suppose means longer service abroad.

Subscribers are asked to please bring in their subscriptions to The Monitor office, 304 Crouse block. Smoke John Ruskin 5c Cigar. Biggest and Best.—Adv.

We Wish You a

Happy New Year

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All orders promptly filled; send 10c for postage. Money must accompany all orders.

Agents wanted—Write for particulars. We carry everything in the latest fashionable hair goods at the lowest prices. We make switches, puffs, transformation curls, coronet braids, and combings made to order, matching all shades a specialty. Send samples of hair with all orders.

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