

Those Were The Days

OLD SCREEN VILLIANS

(Continued from page 15).

Alan Hale, the curly-headed, blonde villain (quite a departure) in "The Covered Wagon," with Lots Wilson and J. Warren Kerrigan thwarting his schemes; Stuart Holmes, villain who pursued Theda Bara through many a murky reel; Francis X. Bushman, who formerly had played heroes entirely, as Messala, the hard-boiled schemer in "Ben Hur," who opposed the hero, played by Ramon Novarro; Lowell Sherman, the villain who made things wretched for Mabel Normand in "Molly O"; Fred Kohler, huge, muscular giant, without whom it was once almost impossible to make a western; Mitchell Lewis, of many, many villain roles. (These last two, together with Alan Hale, still play heavies in films).

Noah Beery as the heavy in "The Four Horsemen" will never be forgotten; he outdid all the villains worth mentioning for years—particularly when a military villain was required. Do you remember "Beau Geste"? What a nasty Foreign Legion officer he was! When he'd lift his upper lip to roar you didn't need a sound track to guide you. The sound rose to your own lips.

ERICH VON STROHEIM was so successful a villain that he created a chimera which devoured him. He was so hated for his Prussian officer roles, with his sleek shaven head, his heel-clicking, his monocled, cold eye, that a personal reputation began to roll up like a snowball. It downed him. He was too good an actor. He personified to the motion picture audiences everything that war propaganda had painted the typical German officer to be. He was hissed and even struck at in public places. Women refused to sit at tables near him in restaurants. The situation was fantastic; in private life Von was well known to be a devoted husband and father, a gentleman, and a refined person. Try to tell that to the American fans who saw him do his dastardly deeds.

Much the same fate confronted Bela Lugosi more recently. His screen and stage reputation pursued him into private life. American girls recoiled from him and clutched their throats in alarm—all because Bela had been so convincing as the vampire count in "Dracula."

HOLBROOK BLINN and **Lon Chaney** were other heavies. Chaney was always the centre of interest in his films. While justice was meted out to him and he suffered horrible deaths in the endings, during the run of the film he held the stage.

In "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and in "Phantom of the Opera" Lon Chaney was hideous, so hideous that, in spite of themselves, audiences pitied him, and he achieved sympathy through it. While he was never let off anything in the way of punishment in the story, he did attract sympathy. It was a further stage in the blossoming of the "character leads" of to-day.

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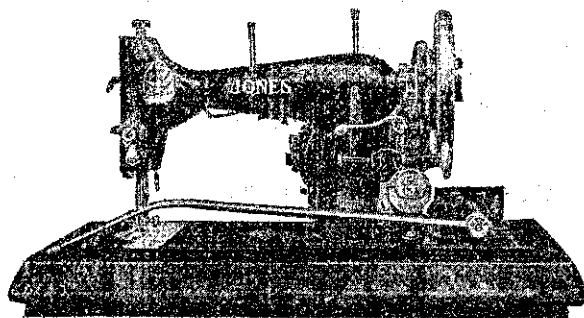
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