

---

# Frank Norris Studies

No. 17, Spring 1994

Copyright, 1994, The Frank Norris Society

---

## William A. Brady's 1914

### Film Adaptation of Frank Norris's *The Pit*

Thomas K. Dean

Cardinal Stritch College

The drama of life of Norris's "Romantic" writing, as he called it, naturally captured the attention of the theater world. Benjamin Franklin Fisher IV has shown this to be true in his article "The Pit as a Play." As Fisher relates, the play by Channing Pollock was commissioned by the famous producer William A. Brady, and the stage drama was quite a success.<sup>1</sup> However, Brady milked the dramatic potential of Norris's last novel further, for he also produced a film version of *The Pit* in 1914. The struggle and sensationalism of the ensuing negotiations and production became in themselves an interesting drama.

The mid-teens was a time of tremendous expansion in the movie industry, and many small independent studios were created. Not the least among these was William A. Brady Picture Plays, Inc., which produced films of stage successes. Brady's films were distributed through the World Film Corporation, which attempted to market itself as a "quality" company with its celluloid adaptations of famous plays starring well-respected thespians and made by highly regarded theatrical figures like Brady.

Brady acquired the motion picture rights to *The Pit* through a storm of controversy. He had obtained the theatrical rights to Norris's six published novels (*McTeague*, *Moran of the Lady Letty*, *Blix*, *A Man's Woman*, *The Octopus*, and *The Pit*) in 1903. Then, when the motion picture industry was in its infancy, production rights for films were subsumed under standing theatrical ones. Although separate laws governing motion picture rights had been established by 1914, Brady maintained that the 1903 arrangement was still in effect.

According to a 25 April 1914 letter to Norris's widow Jeannette (then Mrs. Frank Preston) from Norris's brother Charles, who was handling the rights to Frank's work at

the time, the Edison Company had approached him, offering \$1,000 down for the exclusive use of *The Pit*.<sup>2</sup> Doubleday Page and Company, Frank's publisher, pointed out to Charles that Brady held the dramatic rights, but nevertheless claimed that they themselves still retained the motion picture rights to all of Frank's work and could get a better deal than Edison was offering. As Brady entered the scene with his own claims, he threatened to sue Doubleday if it granted the rights to Edison or anyone else. Charles' position was weakened by United States District Court Justice Hand, who had rendered a decision regarding the theatrical/motion picture rights that supported Brady's position—though this decision was soon appealed to the Supreme Court.

While all of this was transpiring, though, the dispute at hand was being settled: Doubleday and Brady were securing their arrangement. As early as 5 March 1914, according to a letter from Russell Doubleday to Charles Norris, Brady had begun negotiations with Doubleday regarding a film version of *The Pit*. In this letter, Doubleday told Charles that he had had a meeting with Brady, who was hoping to start production in April with a June release. At that meeting, Brady also expressed interest in making films of *The Octopus* and *McTeague* and was also inclined to adapt *Moran of the Lady Letty* and *Blix* to film. Doubleday explained that Brady "has got to the point where he wants to make a contract" and urged Charles to desist from working out his own deal and to meet with them the following week to "coop up a proposition for Brady to decide upon."

The matter was finally settled when a contract between Doubleday and Brady was executed on 27 April 1914. Brady was "to produce 'The Pit' as soon as possible, 'The Octopus' within nine months and the other four [novels] within two years."<sup>3</sup> Doubleday was to receive ten percent of Brady's profits, and agreed to pay Jeannette half of their commission.<sup>4</sup> Brady paid Doubleday an advance of \$1,000, and the publisher was obliged to

pay 10% of that (\$100) to Frank Rice, an agent who handled the negotiations. On 8 May 1914, Charles sent Jeannette her share—\$450—of the remaining advance money.

Charles was clearly frustrated by the negotiations and worked to keep Jeannette above the fray. In the letter of 8 May, enclosed with Jeannette's advance check, he wrote, "Closing the contract has been fraught with all sorts of complications. Doubleday Page & Company followed their usual penny-pinch policy. At one time Brady, D. P. & Co., and myself all threatened to sue one another. Of course that was a bluff on my part; but I don't think it was on theirs. The one thing I wanted to keep you free from was the possibility of a suit and this I have done. When I see you next September I will give you the full story of it. It would be amusing if it were not for the fact that there was so much dirty squabbling."

When film production finally got underway, Brady engaged Maurice Tourneur as the director, and the famous actor Wilton Lackaye starred as Curtis Jadwin, repeating his role from Brady's stage version of the novel. Gail Kane starred as Laura Dearborn, with Milton Sills as Cort-hell. The production was shot mostly at the Peerless Studios of the World Film Company at Fort Lee, New Jersey.

Brady did not meet his June release deadline. Pre-release publicity hype began appearing in movie magazines in November 1914, and it focused on the pit scene itself as one of the most spectacular ever filmed. Brady had become known as a master of spectacle on stage and screen; the *New York Clipper* called him "the best known director of big situations in the theatrical world,"<sup>5</sup> and *Moving Picture World* pegged him as "the premier director of stage mobs."<sup>6</sup> To ensure realism, Brady sent director Tourneur and star Lackaye, along with other principals, to Chicago to get a feel for the real Chicago Board of Trade pit and to film local exterior scenes. The *New York Clipper* of 5 December 1914 reported that "many prominent traders in the wheat pit of the Chicago Board of Trade became moving picture actors temporarily during the past week, when Wilton Lackaye took various scenes in the room of the famous board for the photoplay version of the stage success, 'The Pit.' . . . In addition to scenes in 'The Pit,' Mr. Lackaye posed before the Auditorium [Building], at several of the large wheat elevators and the Chicago Stock Yards. Panoramic scenes were taken from the

Auditorium tower, showing the line of skyscrapers in 'the loop' district."<sup>7</sup> *The Billboard* reported the same information on 12 December 1914.<sup>8</sup>

Nearly all the major movie trade magazines reported Brady's production of the great pit scene back at the Peerless studios in Fort Lee, and it was touted as the largest interior shooting ever made.<sup>9</sup> The preparations were heralded in the 21 November 1914 issue of *Moving Picture World*: "At the World Film studios at Fort Lee, plans are being laid out to secure 500 supers for the big scenes of 'The Pit,' and when the time comes to take these scenes, William A. Brady will direct the work of rehearsing them and placing them so that the camera [sic] shall get the best possible effects."<sup>10</sup> With exacting realism that foreshadowed Erich von Stroheim's almost maniacal insistence on accuracy in *Greed* (his adaptation of *McTeague*) a decade later, Brady recreated the Chicago Board of Trade in precise detail. The grand defeat of Curtis Jadwin was filmed on 28 November: "Five hundred men took part in the picture, and Director Tourneur [sic] secured the services of sixty brokers from Wall street, the New street curb, the Consolidated Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange. . . . Several of the brokers had bought and sold wheat in the very pit which was being reproduced for the camera in the pit scenes. Forty Western Union and Postal messenger boys were used to add to the realism of the settings."<sup>11</sup> *The New York Clipper* did not forget director Maurice Tourneur's hand in the spectacle: "The wheat pit scene is an achievement that the World Film Corporation can well be proud of, and Director Tourneur can boast of another feather in his hat."<sup>12</sup>

The exhibition of such a grand film required spectacular gimmicks as well. World Film thought through its advertising strategy very carefully. In an article entitled "World Film Posters Highly Artistic and Distinctively Impressionistic," *The New York Clipper* of 16 January 1915 reported that "on the poster for 'The Pit,' . . . a very odd effect has been achieved by using nothing but the action of the photograph [of the scene in the pit], showing the bodies entirely in solid mass. Working it in strong poster colors is another treatment which is wonderfully effective, and will make 'The Pit' stand out. . . . No attempt is made to show any details of clothes or outline other than the actual faces and hands."<sup>13</sup> For

hype, the press advertisements too played up the now famous pit scene. An ad appearing in *Moving Picture World* pictured it and boasted, "This scene in the wheat pit is an example of the wonderful fidelity of detail with which this feature has been staged."<sup>14</sup> The same ad featured star Wilton Lackaye's name more prominently than Brady's and claimed, "The gripping plot and action which made this the greatest stage triumph of this great star insures its success in YOUR theater." Other *Moving Picture World* ads also played up Lackaye's stage fame: "A great star in his greatest stage triumph";<sup>15</sup> "WILTON LACKAYE'S GREATEST STAGE TRIUMPH."<sup>16</sup>

Chicago was naturally interested in publicizing the film greatly. The *New York Dramatic Mirror* reported that Harry Weiss, the Chicago manager for the World Film Corporation, made sure that, when Lackaye and company visited Chicago as mentioned above, he was there. He set up "the taking of a picture in which many prominent wheat dealers posed, and three weekly motion picture cameramen were on the job taking a moving picture of Wilton Lackaye making a moving picture. All the critics of the dramatic sections of the daily papers gave Wilton Lackaye space, with the result that two extra prints of the film will be needed to take care of the bookings in Chicago."<sup>17</sup> Once the audience was lured to the theater, the gimmicks did not stop. The *New York Dramatic Mirror* also reported that at Chicago showings, "each lady . . . will receive with the compliments of the flour manufacturers a silk sack containing a pound of flour put up in representation of a ninety eight pound sack."<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately, we will probably never find out if the film lived up to its hype, for no print seems to exist. I have queried the major American and British film archives, and none of them holds a copy. Furthermore, a number of major film scholars associated with these archives have told me that they do not believe a print exists. This would not be unusual, for films in this period were throwaway commodities; when a release had had its run, the film stock was often destroyed or recycled. If negatives or copies were kept, they often self-destructed (sometimes with explosive results) because of early filmstock's volatile chemical content. A ten-page shooting continuity script dated 20 March 1917, which was deposited for copyright purposes, does exist in the Library

of Congress, however. It describes the physical appearance of each shot of the film and includes the text of this silent film's intertitles. We cannot tell too much from this script, though, since much of the art of the film existed only in the film itself: the continuity script does not record the actors' interpretations of their roles. We can, nevertheless, get a rough sense of the film's content. Fisher, in the aforementioned article "*The Pit as a Play*," notes how a stage adaptation of this novel would require severe abridgement and would cater to the melodramatic tastes of early twentieth-century popular stage audiences.<sup>19</sup> The same could be said of the film, and perhaps even moreso with its more restricted time-frame,<sup>20</sup> its dependence on silent movement and gesture, and its limited number of dialogue intertitles.<sup>21</sup> The drama in the film is restricted to a melodramatic, simplistic struggle between business and love rather than the complex exploration of the components of life in Norris's novel. The complexity of all Norris's characters is severely curtailed in the film as well, and, perhaps to a greater extent even than in the play, we end up with Jadwin as a one-dimensional male chauvinist, exclusively obsessed with his market deals. Laura becomes simply an abandoned woman, mooning over her absent husband. Corthell, it seems, is merely a stage prop, a sufficiently mysterious temptation for Laura. Cressler appears to be simply a ruthless businessman who goads Jadwin into speculation, lacking even the camaraderie that the two share in the novel. The action of the novel is severely abridged, focusing mainly on the final wheat deal that brings Jadwin down, and we lose the powerfully relentless series of setbacks that plagues Jadwin and Laura in the novel. The characters' growth in awareness of the need of "mutuality" that Fisher notes as lacking in the play is also absent from the film;<sup>22</sup> the script suggests that the burden of the relationship is on Laura and her need to understand her husband's business.

Despite these artistic limitations, the film seemed to be at least a moderate success. A private showing occurred in New York on 24 December 1914,<sup>23</sup> and the film was released generally on 28 December to good reviews.<sup>24</sup> The *New York Dramatic Mirror* reviewed a showing at which much of the cast appeared. The reviewer acknowledges that the cast's performance was excellent—"it

is quite indisputable that the presence of these strong players gave the story its hold through their characterizations and that the work of the cast will stand by itself, independent of any outside influence"—but the main praise is reserved for director Tourneur: "Yet it is the breath of vital issue and quick concern that Mr. Tourneur has blown into the story that makes it worth remembering. Call it punch, heart hold, or what not, it seizes upon the imagination and holds it in a taut grip."<sup>25</sup> Other reviewers were equally complimentary of both actors and director, some of them judging that *The Pit* exhibited the artists' finest work. Of the actors, George Blaisdell in *Moving Picture World* claimed that "their work is of their best."<sup>26</sup> Peter Milne in *Motion Picture News* had even grander praise for the whole production: "It may be said without fear of contradiction that 'The Pit' is one of the very best releases turned out by the World Film Corporation. The director, Maurice Tourneur, has proven that however old the story in hand may be, it may be effectively treated in its production, causing it to be just as engrossing as if it had never before appeared. By simply devoting a reasonable amount of attention to detail, a matter often overlooked by producers, Mr. Tourneur has gained some excellent effects, both by the good acting of almost everyone in the cast and the realistic and faultlessly constructed settings."<sup>27</sup>

Ultimately, though, following the lead of the pre-publicity hype, these spectacular "realistic and faultlessly constructed settings" received most notice and praise. The Chicago exteriors as well as the opera house were often cited. The *New York Dramatic Mirror* declared, "It must be said that Chicago gets its full share of praise not only in exterior views but in a generous measure of trade appreciation in one of the sub-titles. Quite a whole reel is devoted to the 'showy' aspect of the operatic performances, the genuine ennui of the men, and the rapidly increasing interest between the business man and the elder of the two daughters."<sup>28</sup> George Blaisdell in *Moving Picture World* called the opera house scene one of the "two interiors of pictorial and spectacular value uncommon even in these days of big productions."<sup>29</sup> Although the opera house scene paled in comparison to the pit scene, Peter Milne of *Motion Picture News* nevertheless accorded "the same corresponding praise" to it, noting that while the opera house scenes did not play as integral part in the plot,

"they are not at all superfluous."<sup>30</sup>

The grandest accolades, not surprisingly, were reserved for the pit scene itself, which was recognized as the best such scene filmed to date. The *New York Dramatic Mirror* was perhaps the most enthusiastic: "To outdo anything that has been done in the way of 'exchange' scenes—and producers have vied with much earnestness and great success in the past—is the task which Director Tourneur has set himself. . . . a memorable setting for the big moment of the play, one that sets a new artistic and realistic mark. Some one will probably reproduce some other exchange, such as the one in New York, with wonderful exactitude and intensity, but it will be a difficult task to excel this picture of the wheat pit of the Windy City. It is a fitting scene for a fine play."<sup>31</sup> Peter Milne also compared the Brady/Tourneur scene to its predecessors, but did so a bit more colorfully: "In an exchange scene we have been accustomed to see shaky walls, men taking the parts of brokers who apparently have spent most of their lives as truckmen or the like, and the whole spectacle has often been grossly exaggerated. Here it is not; it is realistic; the men look as if they might have come from State street offices. What is more, they all are blessed with some sort of acting ability; they assume parts in the picture; they are not merely figureheads."<sup>32</sup> George Blaisdell described it this way: "The views of the speculators fighting in the pit are the best this writer has seen. They are a bit prolonged, but by no means do we imply that they tire. There are hundreds of men employed in them, and in but one instance—where a path is somewhat prematurely cleared for Jadwin—are they other than what might be expected on a smashing day in wheat."<sup>33</sup>

The storyline itself did not get completely lost in the obsession with scenery, however. Ultimately, the reviewers found it satisfying, with a few reservations. The *New York Dramatic Mirror* felt the film could have been more thematically clear: "Doubtless some of the dialogue in which the pros and cons of busy business men [*sic*] and their pleasure seeking wives is lost, but the hiatus is scarcely noticeable as handled by that able pair of stage stars."<sup>34</sup> George Blaisdell, perhaps recognizing the film's Naturalistic origins, found the drama decidedly un-melodramatic and objective: "The story is well and convincingly told. The interest is cumulative. . . . There are

no tempestuous love scenes leading up to the proposed elopement. It is done in cold blood—each with a full understanding of the proposed step. But this is only an incident in a story of a business battle, for the relation of which all tracks are cleared—with the exception of perhaps one other, that of a subsidiary theme [unidentified by Blaisdell], which is lost.<sup>35</sup> Peter Milne had no reservations about the story: "Throughout the story colorful and human interest touches are present, possessed with the creative powers of causing the picture to appear unusually true to life."<sup>36</sup>

Although I do not have specific information on the box office performance of *The Pit*, the film was nevertheless financially successful for William A. Brady since, under the system in place at the time, he made his profits by selling the film to his distributor, the World Film Corporation, which would be the entity that would lose if the film flopped. Unfortunately, Charles and Jeannette continued to suffer struggles with Brady and Doubleday long after the film was released. According to the contract with Doubleday, Brady was to provide "on the 1st of each month after the release of any film a true and accurate statement of the gross sums received by you therefrom, and should make cash settlement in accordance therewith."<sup>37</sup> As of June 1915, six months after the release of the film, no one had heard a word or seen any money from Brady. The Doubleday, Page & Co. attorney, Dean Emery, wrote to Russell Doubleday on 18 June 1915, informing him of the receipt of a letter from Brady stating he would settle on or about 1 July. Emery reminded Doubleday that since Brady had failed to provide the promised accountings, the publisher had every right to terminate the contract with the producer. He enclosed a draft of a proposed letter to Brady which stated that, because the producer had failed to provide monthly accountings and royalties and had reneged on his agreement to make a film of *The Octopus* within nine months of the initial contract, the contract for the rest of Norris's books was terminated. Emery suggested that Doubleday agree to let Brady retain the rights to *The Pit* even though they were within their legal rights to cancel those, too, and to demand an immediate accounting and cash settlement or that novel's rights would be cancelled as well. Emery also informed Doubleday that, in the meantime, he had sent a

letter to Brady stating that the producer's proposal to provide payment on or about 1 July was "not satisfactory to our clients, and is not in accordance with the contract but warrants a cancellation of it, and that his disregard of this and other provisions has continued so long that you have reached the point where you must take some action to secure your contractual rights."

Russell Doubleday wrote to Charles Norris on 24 June 1915, explaining the situation and enclosing a copy of Emery's letter. Doubleday recommended to Charles that they force Brady to carry out his contract rather than cancel and try to begin the other films with another producer. Doubleday reasoned that "the cancellation of the contract might tie up the property for some time, and it might not be easy to make so good an arrangement with another house." Doubleday actually seemed sympathetic to Brady, blaming the problems on a lousy system: "The moving picture business generally, has been very loose and badly managed, and I think it is due to this that Mr. Brady has not carried out his contract. I feel quite sure it is not his desire to avoid his responsibilities. In many cases that have come to my notice, the moving picture people have not kept their promises and the statements that are made as to profits are often greatly exaggerated." Doubleday further suggested that the kind of letter to Brady that Emery was recommending "would be a mistake . . . except as a last resort" and that he himself was planning a meeting with Brady the following week.

Charles sent a copy of Doubleday's letter to Jeannette to keep her apprised of the situation. In the undated letter accompanying it, Charles again expressed his frustration and embarrassment to his sister-in-law: "I have been hounding D. P. & Co. for the past two months on this and finally have got them to do something. It's been most exasperating but I want you to know that I have done everything that was humanly possible. . . . It is very, very hard to explain everything satisfactorily & clearly by writing but as long as you believe in me & trust me, I don't and won't concern myself with idle gossip." The gossip Charles was referring to was rumors circulating in San Francisco that he had "grossly mismanaged" his handling of the movie rights to *The Pit*.

Doubleday finally received an accounting from Brady on 30 June 1915. According to Brady, he had arranged

with the World Film Corporation to sell them the rights to the film for twice the cost of production. Brady stated that the production outlay was \$25,354.16, and that World Film had paid him \$50,708.32. Doubleday's royalty was to be 10%, for a total of \$5,070.82. One thousand dollars had been paid in advance, as stated above, so Brady owed Doubleday \$4,070.82. A 2 July statement from Doubleday accounted for the division of this \$4,070.82. Frank Rice, the agent who negotiated with Brady, was still owed his 10% of Doubleday's remaining cut, which amounted to \$407.08. Half of the remaining amount was then to be turned over to Jeannette, and a check in the amount of \$1,831.87 was made over to her on 6 July. In all, then, Brady, after production costs and royalties to Doubleday (and Jeannette), cleared a profit of \$20,283.34. Frank Rice, Doubleday's agent, received \$507.08. Doubleday and Jeannette, then, each cleared \$2,281.87.

With an undated letter, Charles sent Jeannette her remaining \$1,831.87, exclaiming, "Here's money at last! I'm glad there's something tangible to send you although its [*sic*] by no means what you ought to get." The proceedings had clearly taken their toll on Charles, for he also complained, "I've got a horrible stiff neck and I can't write without a great deal of pain so forgive me if this is short." He continued to implore Jeannette not to judge him harshly regarding the handling of the whole matter: "I love you very dearly and shall always. Don't believe that I have 'grossly mismanaged' your affairs."

William A. Brady made no other films based on Norris's novels, but at this point I am not aware if his contract for them had in fact been cancelled or if other circumstances prevented their production. A non-Brady film version of *Moran of the Lady Letty*, starring Rudolph Valentino and directed by George Melford was, however, released in 1922, and I am currently conducting research on that production. Although I have striven for a comprehensive overview of the history of the film version of *The Pit* here, new findings are certainly possible; it would be interesting to uncover more production details as well as information on the film's box office performance, and a closer analysis of the continuity script would certainly yield interesting results. The implications of the existence of this film and its history also confirm conclusions Fisher drew regarding the play version of the novel: because the film was made and because it was made by prominent fig-

ures, we can see that Norris's art was sufficiently dramatic, popular, and esteemed to warrant adaptation long after his death. Erich von Stroheim's major adaptation of *McTeague* ten years later further confirms Norris's staying power in the American consciousness, and the recent successful operatic production of *McTeague* reveals that William A. Brady's film of *The Pit* was only one piece of ore in the artistic mining of Norris's work that continues today.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Franklin Fisher, IV, "The Pit as a Play," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 4 (Autumn 1987), 4.

<sup>2</sup>Unpublished letter in the Frank Norris Collection (C-H 80), The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. All subsequent references to letters are from unpublished letters in this collection. I wish to thank Mary Lawlor for sharing her discovery of these letters with me as well as the Bancroft Library for permission to quote from them.

<sup>3</sup>Paraphrased from contract in a letter from Dean Emery to Russell Doubleday, June 18, 1915.

<sup>4</sup>In an undated letter from Charles to Jeannette, Charles laments that "Doubleday claimed they owned all the moving picture rights to all F's books, and that they were being merely generous in giving you half the royalties! However absurd this may be, they would have contested any contract you might have made in which they were not included."

<sup>5</sup>"Wm. A. Brady, Premier Director of Stage Mobs, Will Lend Valued Assistance to Production of 'The Pit's' Big Scenes," *New York Clipper*, 21 November 1914, 12.

<sup>6</sup>"Brady to Direct Mob Scene in 'The Pit,'" *Moving Picture World*, 21 November 1914, 1126.

<sup>7</sup>"Wilton Lackaye Visits Chicago—Scenes Taken in Board of Trade for Film Version of 'The Pit,'" 13.

<sup>8</sup>"Big Pit Scene Staged by W. F.," 51.

<sup>9</sup>The 9 December 1914 issue of *The New York Dramatic Mirror* noted that: "While greater numbers of characters have been used before the camera, it is said that never before have so many been seen in an interior. In the spectacular features such as 'Cabiria,' 'Quo Vadis,' and 'Damon and Pythias,' whole armies have been used in exterior settings, but not a single one reproduced as interior, with the possible exception of the temple scene in 'Cabiria,' which represents an interior, but was photographed outdoors" (25).

<sup>10</sup>"Brady to Direct Mob Scene in 'The Pit,'" 1126.

<sup>11</sup>"Five Hundred Take Part in Wheat Pit Spectacle," *Motion Picture News*, 12 December 1914, 40.

<sup>12</sup>"Biggest Interior Scene Ever Made Staged in Making 'The Pit,'" 12 December 1914, 6.

<sup>13</sup>12.

<sup>14</sup>2 January 1915, 26.

<sup>15</sup>26 December 1914, 1795.

<sup>16</sup>19 December 1914, 1639.

<sup>17</sup>"Boosting 'The Pit': Novel Schemes Adopted by World Film Corporation in Chicago," 16 December 1914, 39.

<sup>18</sup>"Boosting," 39.

<sup>19</sup>5-6.

<sup>20</sup>The script suggests a five-reel film, which generally would have lasted around fifty minutes.

<sup>21</sup>We must also remember that the film more than likely was an adaptation of the play *moreso* than an adaptation of the novel, especially since the producer and principal actor were the same for both.

<sup>22</sup>6.

<sup>23</sup>"Private Showing of the Pit," *The Billboard*, 2 January 1915, 52.

<sup>24</sup>I have so far been unable to find specifics on audience attendance and box office performance, but the fact that ads for

the film appeared in movie magazines for a few weeks suggests that it wasn't a flop. On the other hand, the film's relatively quick disappearance from public discourse also suggests it was not a huge hit.

<sup>25</sup>30 December 1914, 32.

<sup>26</sup>2 January 1915, 86.

<sup>27</sup>2 January 1915, 70.

<sup>28</sup>32.

<sup>29</sup>86.

<sup>30</sup>70.

<sup>31</sup>32.

<sup>32</sup>70.

<sup>33</sup>86.

<sup>34</sup>32.

<sup>35</sup>86.

<sup>36</sup>70.

<sup>37</sup>Letter from Dean Emery to Russell Doubleday, 18 June 1915.

\* \* \*

At center is The Big Dipper Mine, still in operation, as seen from a safe distance by Jesse S. Crisler and Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., during a research jaunt. At the general store in Iowa Hill one is warned not to trespass or even appear as though gold is of interest.



**Photographic Illustrations of  
William A. Brady's Film, *The Pit***

Joseph R. McElrath, Jr.

*Florida State University*

In *Frank Norris: A Descriptive Bibliography* (1992), I noted an "undated Grosset & Dunlap publication" of *The Pit* that I had not located or found listed for sale in the standard trade announcements publications (see A7.1.u). This uncopyrighted printing of the first edition I have finally obtained: it is one of the volumes, illustrated with

production stills, in the "Photoplay" series of which *McTeague* became a part in 1924 (see A3.1.v). It was most likely published in 1917 or shortly thereafter.

The volume includes the frontispiece portrait of the actor who played the part of Curtis Jadwin, Wilton Lackaye, followed by six photographic illustrations of scenes in the film. The first and third through sixth face pages 118, 246, 316, 382, and 406, respectively. The second in this montage spans two unnumbered pages appearing between pages 214 and 215—and is included here with apologies for the portion of the image lost to the gutter. The caption reads "THE GREAT PIT SCENE."



*Courtesy of Wm. A. Brady Photoplays, Inc.—World Film Corp.*

WILTON LACKAYE IN "THE PIT."

The Epic of the Wheat  
**THE PIT**

A STORY OF CHICAGO

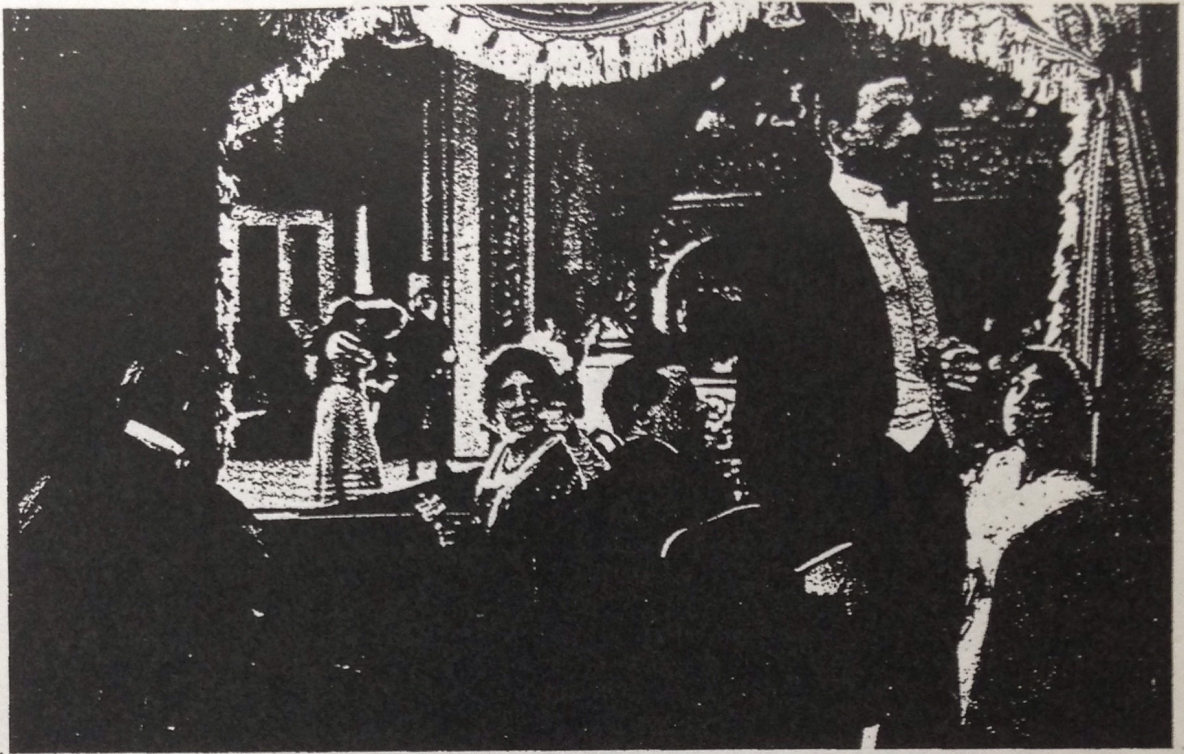
BY

FRANK NORRIS

ILLUSTRATED WITH SCENES FROM THE PHOTO-  
PLAY PRODUCED BY THE WILLIAM A. BRADY PHOTO-  
PLAYS, INC.—THE WORLD FILM CORPORATION.

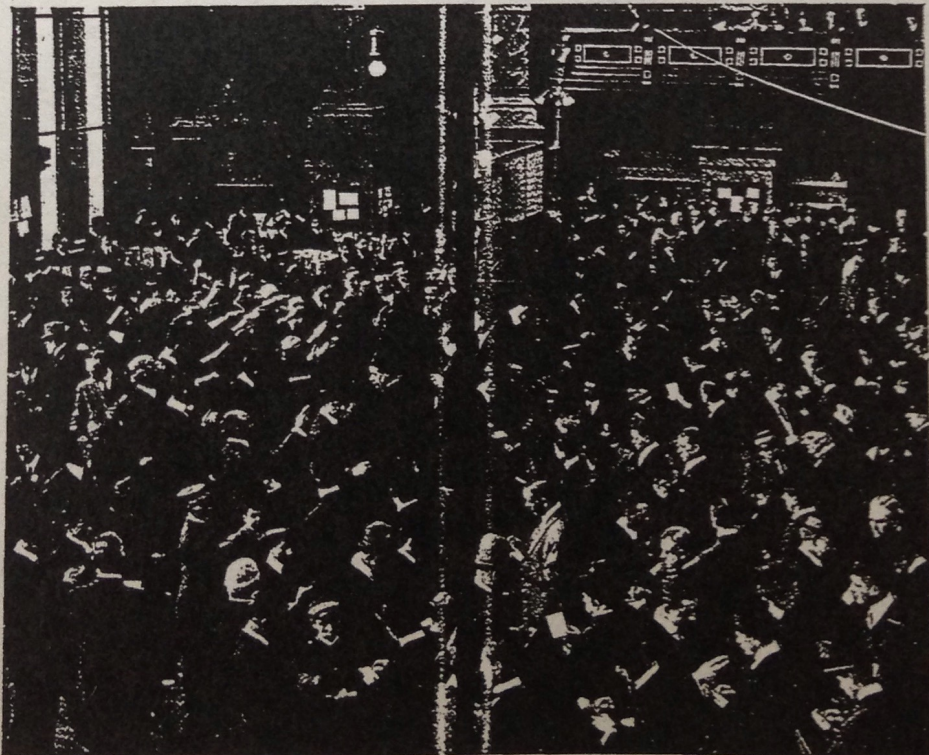
LIBRARY  
NEW YORK  
GROSSET & DUNLAP  
PUBLISHERS



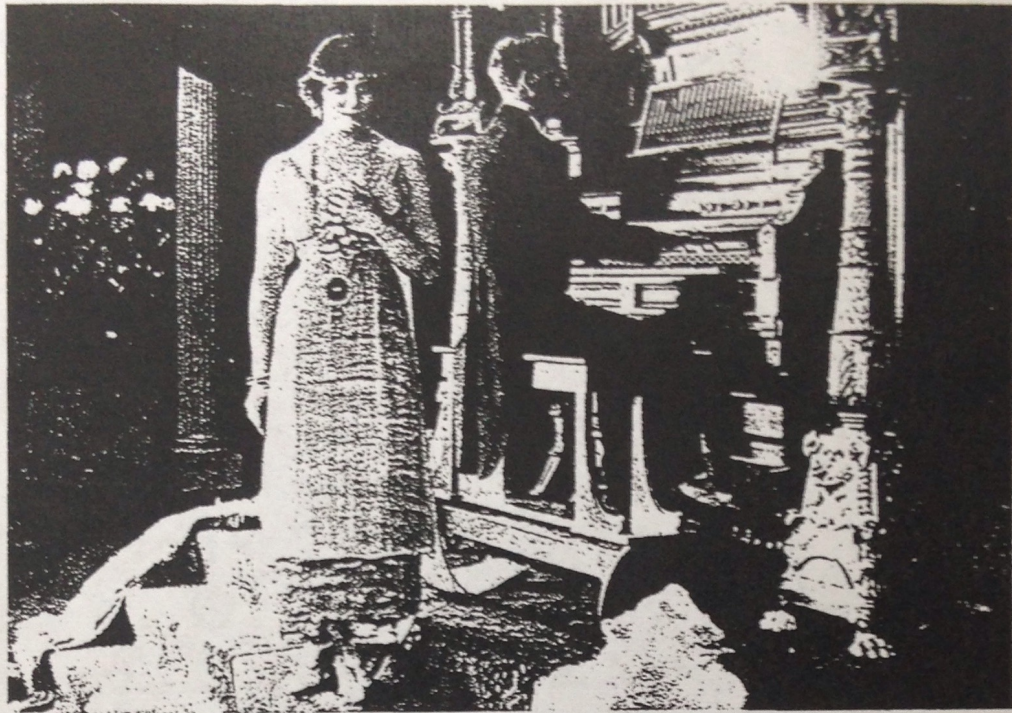


*Courtesy of Wm. A. Brady Photoplays, Inc.—World Film Corp.*

AT THE OPERA.



*Courtesy of Wm. A. Brady Photoplays, Inc.—World Film Corp.*



*Courtesy of Wm. A. Brady Photoplays, Inc.—World Film Corp.*

SHELDON CORTHELL FILLS SOME OF MRS. JADWIN'S TIME.



*Courtesy of Wm. A. Brady Photoplays, Inc.—World Film Corp.*

JADWIN BIDDING MRS. JADWIN GOODBYE.



Courtesy of Wm. A. Brady Photoplays Inc.—World Film Corp.

MRS. JADWIN ADMIRING HERSELF.



Courtesy of Wm. A. Brady Photoplays, Inc.—World Film Corp.

AFTER THE PIT CRASH.

## Current Publications: Update

Thomas K. Dean  
Cardinal Stritch College

Presented here is a tenth installment designed to complement *Frank Norris: A Reference Guide* (1974). The arrangement of items is chronological and alphabetical within years. Please forward new and omitted items to Thomas K. Dean.

Dean, Thomas K. "The Critical Reception of Erich von Stroheim's *Greed*," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 9 (Spring 1990), pp. 7-11. Traces the critical adulation and excoriation of von Stroheim's 1924 film adaptation of *McTeague* to the present.

Fried, Michael. "Almayer's Face: On 'Impressionism' in Conrad, Crane, and Norris," *Critical Inquiry*, 17 (1990), 193-236. Explores the relationships between the antagonistic forces of materiality and the production of representation and writing in *Vandover and the Brute* and *A Man's Woman*.

Hochman, Barbara. "Self-Disclosure in the Fiction of Frank Norris," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 9 (Spring 1990), 5-7. Norris wished at the same time for a strong authorial presence and its absence in his writing.

Korth, Philip A. "Adrift in a Sea of Dreams: Space and Time in America," *Journal of American Culture*, 13, No. 2 (Summer 1990), pp. 85-90. A common theme of American writing is escape from time and space through motion. At the end of the nineteenth century, works like Norris's *The Octopus* became cynical about such means of escape as the railroad.

Michaels, Walter Benn. "The Contracted Heart," *New Literary History*, 21 (1990), 495-531. In the late nineteenth century, female criminality was attributed more to economic motives than perversity. *McTeague's* Trina exhibits the paradoxical link between sex and money in her miserliness (the desire to own) fulfilled by her masochism (her desire to be owned and brutalized by her husband).

Miller, Edwin Haviland. "Toward a Biography of Frank Norris," *Frank Norris Studies*, No. 9 (Spring 1990), 2-4. Despite the lack of primary data, Norris biography needs to move away from the reductive idea of Norris as boy-man and to focus on omissions in past Norris biography such as family deaths, sibling rivalry, the parents' divorce, and the father's neglect of his children in his pursuit of success. Very careful close reading of Norris's fiction can fill in some of the gaps of Norris biography.

Miller, Elise. "The Feminization of American Realist Theory," *American Literary Realism*, 23 (1990), 20-41. Recognizing the mass female readership, realists were preoccupied with feminine metaphors. In his criticism, Norris personifies the new muse as female and as the symbol of burgeoning realism, yet he maintains that women themselves are barred from participating in this cultural development.

Moen, Ole O. "Frontier and Region: The West and American Exceptionalism from John Winthrop to Ronald W. Reagan," *American Studies in Scandinavia*, 22 (1990), 57-72. *The Octopus* was inspired by Westerners feeling exploited by the railroads and Eastern business interests, and is linked to modern-day Westerners' resentment of "New Westerners" as power holders.

Stein, Harry H. "American Muckraking of Technology Since 1900," *Journalism Quarterly*, 67 (1990), 401-409. Norris was sympathetic when recognizing the people's lack of control over technology.

Williams, Sherwood. "The Rise of a New Degeneration: Decadence and Atavism in *Vandover and the Brute*," *English Literary History*, 57 (1990), 709-736. Although his hero is not homosexual, Norris's representation of Vandover contributes to new late nineteenth-century codifications of homosexuality by "[stabilizing] and [publicizing] a set of signs—effeminacy, love of luxury, interest in art—which would come to constitute the popular representation of 'the homosexual,'"

*Frank Norris Studies* is a publication of the Frank Norris Society (a non-profit organization affiliated with the American Literature Association.) *FNS* is issued twice per year for members. Membership requires the payment of ten dollars dues in November of each year to The Frank Norris Society, Department of English, Florida State University, Tallahassee FL 32306-1036 (904-644-1522 and FAX 904-644-0811). Library subscriptions at the same rate may be directed to this address or initiated through the EBSCO, FAXON, and READMORE subscription services. Manuscripts should be addressed to either of the editors: Jesse S. Crisler, Department of English, Brigham Young University, Provo UT 84602; or Robert C. Leitz, III, Department of English, Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Shreveport LA 71115. Members of the Editorial Advisory Board include: Don L. Cook, Indiana University; Charles L. Crow, Bowling Green State University; William B. Dillingham, Emory University; Donald Pizer, Tulane University; and Barbara Hochman, Tel Aviv University. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., Florida State University, is the managing editor.