

The National Guide to Motion Pictures

N.S.E.

PHOTOPLAY

AUGUST
25 CENTS



Billie
Dove

The Best Motion Picture
Interview Ever Written

See Page 22

What Happens to



Clara Bow and "Buddy" Rogers with their best friend, the postman. Clara leads all the girls in fan letters. "Buddy" heads all the boys. They are both young enough to enjoy reading every serious communication

The stars find constructive criticism and real encouragement in their mail order applause

First of all, they go into your nearest mail box and thence to Hollywood. And what happens to them after they arrive depends entirely upon their contents.

From all over the world these letters come, in all shapes and sizes and with all manner of addresses to guide them. They are the stars' applause. They are the stars' best critics. They are the instrument that measures the stars' worth.

Of all the stars in the cinema capital, Clara Bow receives the most mail. Billie Dove comes second. Among the male stars, Charles Rogers leads the parade, with Richard Dix next. But no male star ever receives as many letters as an equally important feminine star.

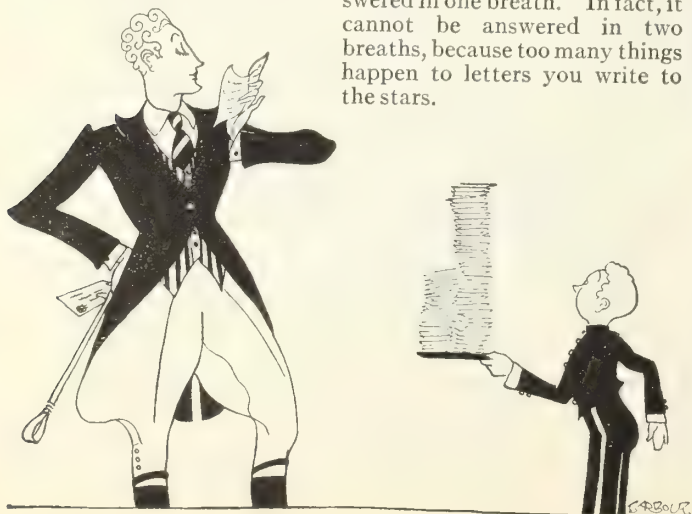
For the month of April, Clara Bow received 33,727 letters. Billie Dove received 31,128. Charles Rogers, 19,618, and Richard Dix, 12,002.

The author of this article should, by all odds, know his letters. As publicity director for Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks he supervised their fan mail for years. Read what he says about what the fans write to the stars and what the stars think about it.

—The Editor.

AND now . . .
We come to this matter of fan mail.

What, if anything, happens to the letters you write to the motion picture stars? That question cannot be answered in one breath. In fact, it cannot be answered in two breaths, because too many things happen to letters you write to the stars.



Billie Dove values the friendship of the thousands who take the trouble to write to her. In reading her fan mail or answering requests for photographs, Billie is one of the most conscientious of the stars. She is second to Clara Bow in post-office popularity

Fan Mail?

By
Mark Larkin

THE LEADERS IN LETTERS

Clara Bow.....	33,727
Billie Dove.....	31,128
Charles Rogers.....	19,618
Colleen Moore.....	15,000
Mary Pickford.....	14,000
Dolores Costello.....	14,000
Richard Dix.....	12,002
May McAvoy.....	12,000
William Boyd.....	11,000
Mary Brian.....	11,000
Bebe Daniels.....	10,900
Charles Farrell.....	10,000
Janet Gaynor.....	10,000

(Figures are for the month of April)

Since Clara receives the largest number of letters, let us peek first into the Bow mail bag. Here's what we find: letters suggesting stories; letters inviting Clara to parties; letters criticising her work; letters complimenting her work; letters asking for money; letters assuring her she has "IT," love letters; letters from persons who are sure they could succeed in pictures if Clara would only help them; silly and inconsequential letters; letters requesting photographs; letters asking for old clothes; letters offering Clara golden opportunities to get rich quick . . . letters, letters, letters, from an idolizing public that is interested in every red hair of the Bow head.

And the contents of Clara's mail bag is typical. In all general aspects, it is the contents of every star's mail bag.



When you write a letter to Harold Lloyd that letter is first opened and read by J. Darsie Lloyd, Harold's father. If your letter is particularly interesting, amusing or helpful papa passes it on to his boy



Most of the big studios maintain special departments to handle the fan mail. Here is the letter room at First National where 55,000 brickbats and bouquets are received every month. Billie Dove, Colleen Moore and Richard Barthelmess are the stars who receive the greatest number of letters in this studio

There are additions or subtractions, as the case may be, to fit the personality of each particular star.

It is too bad that people write begging letters. And it is too bad that they ask to be helped into pictures. And it is too bad, too, that some are incoherent and that occasionally one is raving mad. But that is life. It will be so to the end of time.

MANY of Clara's letters are about "IT." One was addressed to her recently as "IT," Hollywood, California." This letter came from Glasgow, proving that the Scotch have a sense of humor as well as a sense of economy; also proving that even if postal employees do not themselves possess "IT," at least they know where "IT" abides.

Fifty per cent of Clara's mail is from high schools and colleges; thirty per cent is from men, and five per cent is from women; another five per cent is from elderly men and women and ten per cent is from children under twelve years of age.

Of course, Clara is not the only film luminary who receives oddly addressed letters. One came to Colleen Moore last week from Dublin, Ireland, with only a drawing of the star on the envelope and the word "Hollywood" lettered neatly below. Mary Pickford receives countless letters from all over the world with only "America's Sweetheart" written on the envelopes. Sally Phipps received one from Rome

How your letters influence pictures

embellished, "To the kindest young lady, Sally Phipps, United States." Harold Lloyd received one from London with the name "Hollywood" and the picture of a pair of horn-rimmed glasses cut from a magazine and pasted on the envelope. Douglas Fairbanks, Tom Mix, Fred Thomson, Jack Mulhall, Charlie Chaplin and Rin-Tin-Tin receive letters with only their pictures cut from magazines and pasted on the envelope as addresses.

All the stars are vitally interested in their fan mail. Three secretaries are kept busy opening and sorting letters for Clara Bow. Every letter that is not merely a request for a photograph, or utterly inconsequential, is perused by Clara. She takes a youngster's pride in her mail, especially in the invitations she receives, and reads with eager interest every "bid" to a "prom," hoping she may be able to attend.

AT the Famous-Lasky-Paramount Studios, where Clara works, star mail is so heavy that a private post office has been installed. It is the only private post office in the world operated to accommodate cinema celebrities. It handles an average of 375,000 pieces of mail each month. Executives say these figures compare with postal records of the total mail handled in such cities as Syracuse, N. Y.; Topeka, Kans.; Pueblo, Colo., and others of like size. The greatest amount of mail that goes to any studio in Hollywood is handled here.

To give you some idea of the mass of fan mail that reaches the stars through this office, the following figures were taken from the records for April. Not counting Bow, Rogers and Dix, because their figures have already been quoted, other tabulations are: Mary Brian, 11,000; Bebe Daniels, 10,980; Esther Ralston, 8,000; Dick Arlen, 6,000; Gary Cooper, 5,852; James Hall, 5,032; Louise Brooks, 5,021 (with very few pictures released, her fan interest has been created



Anita Page has not as yet appeared in a picture, but here she is in the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer fan mail department collecting her letters. Plenty of advance publicity about Miss Page did it. Unusual or striking stories about the stars invariably result in a big increase in letters

primarily through publicity). Ruth Taylor, 3,240 (one picture and intensive publicity did this for Ruth). Wallace Beery, 1,485 (a very popular star with little fan mail because his appeal is to men, not women. Women, you see, write 75 per cent of the fan mail). Emil Jannings, 680 (a marvelous actor,

Jannings, but in no sense a romantic figure, and therefore he receives a very small fan mail. The fact that he is a foreigner may also have something to do with this).

Each studio, of course, has its own method of handling fan mail. In some instances the stars take care of their own; in other cases the studios assume the task. At all events, the purpose is the same; to serve the fan on a personal basis and to give an intimate touch to the correspondence.

Although the value of fan mail has always been somewhat in dispute, a majority of the stars and producers feel that it is well worth its cost because it builds good will. It also offers a star an ideal means of direct advertising. And, too, it shows the popularity of every production released by a star.

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All the letters you write to Charles Rogers first fall into the capable hands of pretty Kathleen O'Hagen. She answers all those requests for photographs. And now that Miss O'Hagen has had her picture in *PHOTOPLAY*, she will probably receive fan mail on her own account

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HOMEWORK: WOMEN WANTING. OBTAIN RELIABLE kinds. Write for information. Stamped envelope. Eller Co., P-296 Broadway, New York.

LADY TO REPRESENT US IN YOUR TERRITORY. Experience unnecessary. \$15-\$25 weekly easy. Write for particulars. Mazelle Co., Dept. AV, Gary, Ind.

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A simple, safe home treatment—16 years' success in my practice. Moles (also Big Growths) dry up and drop off. Write for free Booklet.

WM. DAVIS, M. D., 124-D Grove Ave., Woodbridge, N. J.

What Happens to Fan Mail?

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40]

A clause that is finding its way into stellar contracts nowadays requires producers to bear the expense of fan mail.

A short time ago Mary Brian's future was under discussion. Paramount was considering her release. Upon investigating her fan mail, however, it was discovered that she received as many letters as Bebe Daniels. College students particularly were interested in her, and women who wanted to mother her. Upon the basis of her fan mail, therefore, it was decided to take her out of the Beery-Hatton comedies and promote her as a featured player with stardom in the offing.

THE star's idea of the value of fan mail is set forth by Richard Barthelmess. "I think," says Dick, "that my fan mail is a truer gauge of what the public wants of me, and a more dependable thermometer of the quality of my work than any press criticism. After all, the public who write fan letters are the final judges and it is for them that we create our pictures."

Clara Bow expresses herself regarding the matter as follows: "I only wish that I could answer personally every letter I receive. Of course, the fans know I can't do that, but I would if it were possible. I'd like to accept every invitation to parties and dances that comes to me through the mails, but studio work is incessant, with little time for vacation or leisure. I like to hear from the boys and girls in school, what they are planning to do with their lives, what sort of pictures they want to see me in. I love to hear from women and from business men, for they are candid critics. A star's work is her greatest interest, and constructive criticism is helpful. Then, too, women stars like to feel that their correspondence is intimate. After all, the pictures that are most appealing are those with a love interest; the same can be said of fan mail."

CHARLES ROGERS says, "The biggest thrill I have received since working in pictures is the fan mail. I have kept the very first one sent to me in New York when I entered the Paramount Picture School. I like to hear from boys, young boys, about their athletics, about their schools or colleges. I wish I could know every person who takes the trouble to write me a letter. By the way, tell the fans I want to know if they like the sort of pictures I work in."

In order to get a comprehensive idea of the cost of fan mail, consider the case of Clara Bow, receiving approximately 1200 letters a day. To answer them costs in stamps alone \$750 per month. Envelopes come to \$300; photographs, \$900; cardboard protectors for the photographs, \$150; secretarial help and incidental expense, \$450. Thus the total cost is \$2550 per month. In other words, you could buy a very fine automobile every month for what Clara Bow's fan mail costs.

In some cases, fans who write for pictures enclose coin or stamps. The feeling prevails among the players that if the public realized the expense of answering fan mail, more money would be forthcoming with photo requests.

The type of fan letter that appeals most to the stars is the one that gives them constructive criticism.

Here is a letter to Charles Rogers, from a college girl, and he feels that it is the ideal fan letter:

Dear Mr. Rogers:

I have been watching you since I saw "Fascinating Youth," and wish to congratulate you on your splendid progress. You have learned how to bring out the best points of your personality, especially boyishness.

American youth, as in "My Best Girl," is your best rôle. Your rôle in "Get Your

Man" was not suited to you, though you did very well in it.

I would like to see you as a college student. Being one myself, I think you could play it realistically.

I enclose a quarter with the usual request. Best wishes. Sincerely yours,

Miss No Name.

And incidentally, Charles Rogers is a college student in his next.

ALL of which reminds us of Billie Dove. Conscientious indeed is Billie regarding her fan letters. To her, each is a treasure. Very often she takes great batches of them home and cons them over during the evening. On her last birthday, May fourteenth, the Dove fans remembered Billie with hundreds of cards. These she took home as personal remembrances and showed them to all her friends.

It is not surprising, of course, that Billie's admirers mention her beauty. Rare indeed is the letter that omits it.

"I think the greatest joy in life," she says, "comes from friendships. We in pictures make thousands of friends, yet never come in contact with them except by mail. Personally I get a glow of pride and satisfaction from the letters that come to me from all parts of the world."

So often the writers of fan letters express fear that their missives will be thrown away before being read. In the following letter to Billie from London, that feeling is shown:

Dear Miss Dove:

I do not know whether you are interested to hear what people think of your work—I hope that you are, but it is quite probable that your waste basket is filled with just such missives . . .

Never fear that a communication beginning like that finds its way to a waste basket!

Although First National does not receive the avalanche of letters that engulfs Paramount, yet the 55,000 or more communications that go to their stars each month make necessary a fan mail division. Into this department all the star mail goes, and seven secretaries segregate it. Many conferences with the stars are required before its final disposition, and these usually occur on the set.

About ninety per cent of a star's mail consists of requests for photographs and of "thank-you" notes for pictures received. Filling requests for pictures is, of course, simple. The name of the writer is copied on a sticker, the sticker is pasted on an envelope in which a photograph is enclosed and presto! the post office does the rest.

FOR stars who have long been in the public eye, fan mail is not so valuable as a gauge of popularity. Fan interest is always lively in newcomers. People want to know all about them; whether they are human; whether they possess qualities similar to those which they themselves possess; whether star-dust has in it the same ingredients that make up the formulae for just plain folks. And they write, therefore, to get acquainted.

It is interesting to know what affects fan mail. Just before Christmas it always grows lighter. Also there is a lull in a star's mail if she stays off the screen. It is astonishing how quickly the public forgets its idols. A good picture always sends fan mail soaring, and publicity likewise peps it up. Publicity value was convincingly demonstrated in the case of Clara Bow's life story in PHOTOPLAY. More than 2,000 new letters were added to the Bow bag, and comments such as the following were innumerable:

"In 'Photoplay Magazine' there was a wonderful life story of you. Clara, that life story has won you many admirers."