

his troops when every pore of the earth was apt to have an enemy ear.

Renée Adorée was charming as Jimmie's sweetheart. She was alluring without being openly sex-conscious. She overdid nothing, with one exception, and she cannot be held responsible for that. She hangs onto Jimmie's leg as he climbs into the truck that is to take him to the front, and when his leg does not obediently dismember itself and stay behind, Melisande (Miss Adorée) then swings onto the back of the truck and appears to think that she has to do to keep it from getting away from her is to hang on tenaciously. She is dragged in the mud for yards and yards, yet when she finally lets go and rises to her feet, she looks more lovely than she has looked in the entire drama—in spite of mud and tears. So that we are ready to overlook that absurdity. But what Melisande fails to do, a German machine gun very effectively does, that is to say, it removes the leg.

It is with pleasure that we find Jimmie's fiancée on the verge of marrying Jimmie's brother when the war is over and he returns home. We doubted her, along with Jimmie, from the first, for having a brass-button complex, and saying "You'll look gorgeous in a uniform. I'll love you more than ever. When are you going overseas?" And we felt even more elated when Jimmie announced to his mother, his relieved mother who had suffered a disillusion in advance for her son, that there was a girl in France, and his mother says, "Then there is nothing else that matters". Romance if you like, but who does not like it? And when we see Melisande and her mother reworking the ruined fields, preparing the land with plow and oxen, as the women did, and the long classic line of sparring, fluttering poplars against the subdued French sky, we wonder if it was not France that Jimmie ached to return to, as well as Melisande.

Don Juan. "If the movies have ever produced a picture that justifies the most extravagant superlatives, *Don Juan* is that picture."—the Manila Times of March 25. "Nothing about it, from the star to the last details of the authentic setting, but can be said to be the greatest and finest ever."

Of course we realize the *Times* isn't being serious, but if one goes on speaking in superlatives indefinitely one will in time reduce one's vocabulary to a row of exclamation points, about as intelligible as the Eskimo parlance of the comic strip. Truly the movie *Bismarck*, of whatever it is called, in most daily papers, tells absolutely nothing about a picture. Is one reading a critique of *Monte Cristo*? Or is it *Monte Carlo* this week? The flimsy tells one and the same thing. It is the most marvelous picture yet shown on the screen and the parts are more gorgeously, humorously, beautifully taken than any parts ever assumed by any actors and actresses since the world began.

But speaking of *Don Juan*, why all this blurbal mazzetta with the usual Fairbanks was his own tail? *Don Juan* can't be the poor dog that he is. *Don Juan* goes on to say that even if John Barrymore had never before been heard of—perhaps there is due significance in this, for who under the sun could associate him, for example, with the young poet of *The Jest*—his work in *Don Juan* would be sufficient to establish him as an equal—one of the many equals—of Fairbanks and Valentino in the minds of countless trillions of screen devotees." Another daily places him on the same high level of acting with Estelle-Jack-Dempsey-Taylor, whose imagination might be stretched to encompass what went on *Up in Mable's Room*, but hardly more than that. In other words, she is a retailer of the common or garden variety of E. A., with which the movie market is vulgarly flooded. As Lucretia Borgia she is convincing enough, if that is your conception of Lucretia Borgia. However, as in the case of the purple cow, it's easier to see a Borgia than to be one. If we were called upon to better the things we so ardently cry down, most of us

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would be in a sorry plight. Yet everyone has the privilege of stating preferences, with whys and wherefores.

As to our preference for acting in *Don Juan*, it went in bulk to Mr. Montagu Love as the swashbuckling, licentious, domineering Donati. Every man is self-conscious in his own right. Mr. Love as Donati was unobjectionably so, and at the same time undemandingly charming and witty. But Mr. Barrymore was so exquisitely pleased with every one of his own changes of facial expression that he must have the camera focus upon each with a time exposure. We would enjoy seeing him play the *Pied Piper of Hamelin* in the same costume he wore when he did his dipping swallow coup at Donati's neck in the typical movie final fight. So far as the Fairbanks clichés were concerned, the stage business would have been convincing enough in films like *The Gaucho* and *The Mark of Zorro*, but for fastidious noblemen of the Cinquecento, fisticuffs seem inappropriate compared to

stilettoes and rapiers. We regretted that *Don Juan* did not neatly run Donati through, as we believe was the socially accepted thing to do in the days when the more famous Borgias emigrated from Spain. Donati was his man. If he chose to let him go, well and good. If he did not so choose, and this *Don Juan* did not, the final thrust would have been brief, elegant, much to the point. But Hollywood would not get out of its time-honored groove. The stiletto must be placed on the floor within struggling distance of the villain. The villain must possess himself of it. The hero, now justified in no longer considering his adversary's life, takes the stiletto away from him and stabs him effectually to death. Mr. Barrymore registered much the same expression of sensuous satiety as he washed his hands of Donati as he did when he was gesturing graceful get-thee-gones to the innumerable beauties who surrounded him. There was much atmosphere of mardelhall sets, and little or nothing of Renaissance Italy.

Dear Bill: I Take My Pen in Hand To Say . . .

Life would be fine and comfortable in a nipa-hatch house in the Philippines, were it not for the inmates: the scorpion, spider, centipede and millipedes, cockroaches, termites (white ants), flies, ant lions, book lice, doing havoc to one's library, butterflies, shedding noisome pollen into the butter-tin, moths, supplementing the not altogether puerile efforts of the butterfly, to make the evening meal uncomfortable, fleas, bees, wasps, ants (true ants of a dozen species and countless varieties—all with the typical antish proclivities), beetles, frogs, lizards (including the vulgar and notorious talking lizard), and bats, carnivorous and vegetarian, only to be told apart by an examination of their teeth.

You catch a bat, when you have acquired the necessary technique, of course, hold him down in such a manner as will prevent his thumbnails from slitting the arteries in your wrists, and, prying open his jaws with a convenient pair of pincers, examine his mouth under the light of an oil lamp burning fitfully between times when flying ants, moths and butterflies are using it for a cremation plant. If the grooves in your fellow-householder's teeth run cross-wise, put a steel-mesh glove on your hand and wring his neck—whereupon the ants will take care of him. If, however, the grooves run lengthwise in his teeth, turn him loose with due apologies, since the worst he will do is to devour your garden. And in the tropics one may always make a new garden. The only drawback is, the ravenous hordes of bats and their aids and accomplices

among the insects are well aware of this, and, when your repeated efforts have borne fruit, return to devouring fruit.

Francis X. Williams, an entomologist in the employ of the Hawaiian Sugar Association, spent two years at research in the Philippines, lived in nipa houses, and found his companions in these huts that house the Filipino millions so diverting that he produced a paper about them which appears in the current issue of *The Philippine Journal of Science*. He found a good name for the paper too: *The Natural History of a Philippine Nipa House*.

What could be more apropos than that? The materials of such a house are rattan thongs in lieu of nails, bamboo in lieu of posts, beams, rafters, sheeting and siding, and the fronds of nipa palms made into a huge but light and feathery type of shingle. These shingles are fastened to bamboo strips laid over the rafters, with thin rattan thongs, and stouter thongs hold the strips fast to the rafters. Still stouter thongs lash the rafters together in pairs and as the framework of an entire roof. So you go on, with bigger and stronger rattans, tying the house together and lacing the floor, of bamboo strips, down to the joists of round bamboo beneath it.

In pastoral countries God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, until the lamb is fat enough to go to the butcher's. In the Philippines, He doesn't need to mind about the wind. There

(Concluded on page 34)

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Dear Bill... Concluded

are few lams, shorn or otherwise, and the building man makes for his own shelter mostly deft the wind by swaying and creating before its mightiest blasts. When it has blasted itself out, you simply push your house back into plumb. It squeaks, but push away; it won't fall.

Nothing could be easier.

The inconvenience of such houses consists in their being such ideal protection for a large part of the animal kingdom besides man. That is why Dr. Williams found their natural history so intriguing.

And Dr. Williams was thoroughly reassured by his study; he discovered hosts of animals and insects, and, with the aid of other scientists from Washington to Sydney, identified and classified them, but he also learned that they were, like prevolsteadian survivors in America, their own worst enemies. For the most part they eat each other up. Some of the ants, indeed, carry this reciprocity to extremes; they scamper hungrily about the house, eating the surfaces of things, but they have to harbor parasites in their tummies to digest what they eat and dole it out to them piecemeal! What a curse this is! Good providers they are, of toothsome wood and bamboo cellulose, acids and the like—and mayhap they could extract a decent alcohol from their varied provender—but with all this industry they must subsist themselves upon dole. If they eject the dole (or would it be the doler?), they die; they succumb, one might say, to 100-percentitis.

Worst among the beetles is the bukuk. As their name implies, they are far worse than the frogs, which only occasionally flop into the cream pitcher—whence they are easily fished out and sent hopping on their way. But take the bukuk, especially when bukukking at his level best. When you desert your desk for the day it is a good solid desk, reliable for the laying on of elbows and the enscorning of meditative feet. But overnight it has developed the rickets and is perforated like a sieve; most of it is in the form of fine sawdust strewn over your papers.

There is nothing strange about this, however;

the bukuk have merely taken your desk for the holding of their annual field meet; are just is the persistent and victorious gnawings of champion bukukbers, and no doubt medals have been awarded by the mayor's committee. When bukuk beetles have nothing else to gnaw, they gnaw iron, bronze and steel. They are the world's best gnawers. In gnawing they catch as catch can. Never leave a favorite book on your desk or the arm of your reading chair. Books, especially charming or valuable books, are the bukuk's meat; they gnaw them to tatters during an afternoon siesta.

After you have sedulously cultivated the intimate acquaintance of all creatures dwelling with you in your nipa house, as Dr. Williams did to such good scientific purpose, you have left the ubiquitous ghekkoo, the banal lord of your roof-tree or the bamboo sheltering the east window. It is midnight, your supper of prawns might have digested better than they really have. For hours you have tossed on your pillow, and at last fallen into fitful, nightmarish slumber. It is not the hallowed children's hour, nor merely that lurking hour of Shakespeare's "when churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead."

It is the ghekkoo's hour, and he makes the most of it. A scarce two feet from your fevered head near the open window, he perches and shrieks out: "Ghekkoo! Ghekkoo! Ghekkoo! Ghekkoo! Ghekkoo! Ghekkoo!"

Six times he sounds the stentorian call, ghekkoo! always ending in a gurgling stutter. Your sleep is gone for the night, but not, unhappily, the ghekkoo. Hurl a shoe at him, and he will retreat but a little way and call the louder. He is diabolical; the American soldiers gave him a slightly different name, suggested by his call, to describe the treatment they were giving the native enemy, or the treatment the native enemy was giving them. But of course, like much soldier talk, the less said about it the better. Still the ghekkoo isn't as bad as he might be. He might, for instance, instead of being eight or ten inches long, be as big as some of his brother lizards, a meter and a half long!

Then what a sound he'd make!



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Other creatures in the opening category must be omitted: the friendly pythoon, not mentioned by Dr. Williams, should by all means be included. He lives in the attic, where he gets to be 20 feet long, and subsists on bats, mice, rats, or what have you. He really is your salvation, you ought never take umbrage at his wild thrashing about for a meal. Once a householder did take offense, and with his walking cane whacked his pythoon on the snout. The result was nothing less than devastating. The pythoon crawled out of his attic, flirited his tail disdainfully, swam out across the river, and never deigned to return. It was not long thereafter that vermin, insects and rodents took full possession of the place, and the irascible householder was compelled to move away. Often, in his natural dilemma, the man stood on the river bank, whistled and gave the familiar call, but all he could see was the faint lifting of a lithe body through the wild cogen growing on the opposite bank, and a shaking of the pythoon's head—meaning nixie!

Philippine cockroaches merit more than passing mention: very stalwart creatures in buckram, and as voracious as half-famished men-at-arms. They are as fond of the light as front-row ballet favorites. On the stages of Manila theaters, where they regularly appear, scampering from feast to feast in the various cubbyholes called dressingrooms, strangers have often mistaken these cockroaches for a curious variety of trained seal. Yet cockroaches they are, as a night's deprivations will attest. One patient scholar, not Dr. Williams, persuaded the cockroaches in his nipa castle not to destroy all his books by teaching them to read some of them. He found them nearsighted, but when he had contrived spectacles for them they all learned rapidly. Tamed, they became his servants and were particularly apt at waiting on table, watching their erudite master and passing the bread, butter, and applesauce . . . dash it, applesauce! . . . 't will serve to discredit nearly the whole piece, honestly commended, however it may have ended, as a scientific review!