THAT GOLDWYN TOUCH

In Baghdad on the Pacific, Samuel Goldwyn has beenleaping agiley from terrific to colossal for the past thirty years

by SIDNEY CARROLL

"I HAVE BEEN in this business 30 years," says Samuel Goldwyn. "I have done rather well."

When he says that, Mr. Goldwyn smiles. Thirty years is a long time in his business, in which ulcers are an occupational disease and 30 days at one job is often considered a career. Truthfully, Samuel Goldwyn has done rather well. He can say it again and smile. He can say it without false modesty, because this year is a double anniversary for the great Goldwyn. This year he celebrates not only his sixtieth birthday, but his thirtieth year in the business.

It would be a good idea for Hollywood to pull out the klieg lights—the ones Hollywood uses for its world premieres and its gala openings—to celebrate, for one night at least, the birthday of Samuel Goldwyn. For there is this strange thing about the great man: he is the perfect symbol of Hollywood itself. He is the mirror of all its tempests and its triumphs, its past manias and its present maturity. His own career is simply a case history of the movies. His personality has changed exactly as the movies have changed. His accomplishments have grown with the art of the cinema itself. Even his vocabulary expanded when the mcuies learned to talk. It is a question whether Goldwyn grew up with Hollywood, or Hollywood grew up with Goldwyn. And the facts seem to favor the second point of view.

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These days Goldwyn is a suave man who knows—either through bitter experience or through his doctor's orders—how to take it easy. When he is making a picture he works hard, but his hours are regular and his meals always arrive on time. He drinks his homogenized milk at a definite hour each afternoon, and he makes a definite effort to control his temper. He is calm and assured, and he is quite frank about his own capabilities. "They tell me," he says, "that I am the best."

He dresses quietly, meticulously without a bulge on his body to mar the silhouette created specifically for him by his tailor. He carries no wallet, no fountain pen, no memo pads. When he needs one (or all three) he knows that an assistant will be somewhere in the vicinity with one. He speaks slowly, calmly, and with a great deal of good humor.

But when Goldwyn broke into the business he was the *enfant terrible* of the trade. He had no control over his temper or his enthusiasms. He was the jumping jack of the industry. He hopped willy-nilly over his subordinates, over his actors and all over the continents of the world in frantic attempts to catch up with authors and actors and—perhaps—with his own mercurial dreams. He was aggressive, he was tough, he was perpetually on fire.

Between the two—namely the album photo of the glove salesman who came out of a Warsaw ghetto and the contemporary portrait of a gracious gentleman who sits in a pale, impeccable office surrounded by English hunting prints—there is a perfect picture of the motion picture business, of Hollywood itself. There is the symbol here of Hollywood, which was born without background, without tradition, which was reared by the old catch-as-catch-can method, and today, 30 years later, is suave, calm,

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cock-sure of itself and its place in the sun. Hollywood was started by salesmen, developed by showmen and polished by artists. Samuel Goldwyn started in the business as a salesman, became one of its outstanding showmen and today is considered one of its most important artists.

"THEY TELL ME," says Goldwyn, "that I am the best."

The great point is not that he is the best but that he has been the best for so long. Thirty years. After 30 years of it he is, moreover, the only absolute monarch in Hollywood. He is the only large-scale producer in Hollywood who finances his own productions down to the last red cent and supervises every detail down to the last tuck in the bodice of a Goldwyn Girl. When you read that Mr. Goldwyn is about to start another two-million-dollar production you can be sure that the two million dollars are Mr. Goldwyn's very own. He is not beholden to any man or bank. He can afford to gamble so lavishly with so much money because, in his own words, he has done rather well in this business.

He has done many remarkable things in 30 years. He has made as many stars as any man in the business; he was the first to make feature-length films; he was the first to bring the great writers to Hollywood. The list of his distinctions will fill chapters in the books of his future Boswells. But Fame is a wall-eyed deceiver, particularly in Hollywood. And Goldwyn the trailblazer, Goldwyn the battle-scarred veteran, the star-maker, the miracle man, the apostle of good taste, the bald eagle, the gray fox, the lone wolf of the industry—Goldwyn of the golden touch is known mainly as a coiner of phrases. Goldwyn has become most famous for his Goldwynisms.

A few years ago the members of the Dutch Treat Club invited Gold-

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wyn to speak at one of their luncheons. The gentlemen of the Dutch Treat Club gather once a week to eat, drink, and be merry. The food is plentiful, the stirrup cup runneth over and the speakers of the day are supposed to provide the merriment. The Dutch Treat Club had heard—as who hasn't—of Mr. Goldwyn's talent for distorting the English language. When he got up to speak, the members of his audience loosened their belts and otherwise prepared themselves to be transformed into helpless hulks of hysterical flesh.

Goldwyn delivered a few well-chosen words. When he got through, his audience was laughing with, not at, him. What he said, in essence, was this: "I am supposed to say funny things, and I would like to say a few for you now. But I have a confession to make—I am not the man you think I am. I do not say all the funny things you read in the columns. The columnists have to make a living, and the columnists like to put words into my mouth. Mind you, I don't object. In fact, I'm often sorry I don't live up to their conception of me. I sometimes wish I *had* said all those funny things!"

That statement was, peculiarly enough, more fact than fancy. Of course Goldwyn was speaking as the Goldwyn of today, not as the Goldwyn of the formative years of the legend. There was a time when his vocabulary was far more limited than it is now, and certain things he said with that desperate inventiveness of all new users of the language were memorable. But that was a long time ago, and it is a fact that he never did say most of what he is reported to have said. The whole thing was a potent weapon for a long succession of press agents who found out that a good way to keep Goldwyn's name before the public was to manufacture

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scrambled sentences for him. Goldwyn is, among other things, a connoisseur of the sweet fruits of publicity. He simply let the press agents have their way. How it all started, and who started it, we shall never know. There are four press agents in Hollywood now who claim sole and exclusive rights to having created what is commonly known as the Goldwyn legend. When four press agents are fighting it out on a matter of historical fact, the true origins of that fact must be given up as lost for all time, for the truth will out only when three of the combatants give in.

ONLY ONE thing is sure. About 90 per cent of the cracks attributed to Goldwyn were ancient when Caesar was in Gaul.

There is, then, this further similarity between Goldwyn and the city he helped to build: each is most famous for its indiscretions. Hollywood makes many good pictures these days, but when you say "Hollywood" you think of bearskin rugs, false eyelashes, libido by the bushel and claptrap by the ton.

Goldwyn is the greatest maker of motion pictures ever to come out of Hollywood. But when you say "Goldwyn" what do you think of? You think of a gentleman who is supposed to have said "Include me out!"

Chances are when the chips are all in and our children look back at these infant years of the cinema with infinitely more cold-blooded perspective than we can assume in this present topsy-turvy world, Samuel Goldwyn will be better remembered for other things. Chances are he will be better remembered for *Wuthering Heights*, and *Dodsworth*, and *The Little Foxes* and *These Three*.

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