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Jack London Sees Movies Made of His "Sea Wolf"

I'd rather see a moving picture actor than to be one — to paraphrase Gelett Burgess and his Purple Cow.

This is the first thing that bobs up out of my experiences yesterday following the "movie" people about San Francisco bay as they made the first part of the films for the moving picture reproduction of my yarn, "The Sea Wolf."

It was the beginning of the picturing of my stuff, and the first time I've ever seen moving pictures made, and I had one of the best times of my life.

I'm amazed at the actual amount of work involved, and I was particularly impressed by the daring and the adventurousness of the movie actors. One doesn't have to go to the North Pole or the heart of Africa to take risks any longer. Just join a moving picture company and take a trip with them about San Francisco bay. You'll get all the thrills you can stand, and maybe a little bit more now and then.

Same Boat as In Story

A very curious and to me a very interesting coincidence came about yesterday. The moving picture people hired the ferryboat *Sausalito* for their stunts, and engaged about sixty people. Neither Hobart Bosworth, the producer, nor I, nor Charmian, nor anybody else among our crowd knew that the *Sausalito* really had a very intimate part in the drama of the "Sea Wolf" which we were putting upon the films.

It happened that while I was writing "The Sea Wolf," or maybe a little bit before that, the *Sausalito* collided with the San Rafael in the fog and sank her, and a lot of people lost their lives. I used the incident in my yarn only for fiction purposes I altered the name *Sausalito* to "Martinez."

By sheer coincidence Bosworth hired this very boat, the *Sausalito*, from the Northwestern Pacific people, and, as I say, none of us knew that she was one of the two steamers actually engaged in the incident that figures so importantly in my story, nor did we learn of it until in the interval between the taking of two pictures, while joshing the captain in the pilot house, the captain stated his steamer was the one that sank the San Rafael.

Boat Plays Two Roles

Today, for our purposes, she was both the *San Rafael* and the *Sausalito* — both the steamer that was sunk and the one that did the sinking. One vivid touch of color in the day's adventures was a woman in the town of Sausalito who saw what she thought to be the regular boat coming into the ferry slip. To her utter amazement the steamer was named *Martinez* instead of *Sausalito*. For we had laid a cloth painted "Martinez" over the real name board on the pilot house.

To her further amazement, gazing from her quiet, sunny little house among the trees on the hillside, she observed a furious crowd of men, women and children struggling madly on the fore lower and upper decks of the ferry boat. What was the matter? The steamer missed the slip entrance. It collided with the side of the slip. She saw all those scores of frantic passengers fall on their faces in massed heaps on the decks.

Not believing her eyes, she got her marine glasses to bear on the amazing scene. The steamer backed out from the slip. It came crashing in again. One more time the struggling, maddened mass of people rushed for life preservers, grappled with each other to get near the boats, and fell pell-mell in kicking and writhing heaps.

When I met her as I landed she was running madly down from her home on the hill to see what was going on. The moving picture camera was busily buzzing, and the people were doing another stunt, and that was all.

The launches and other steamboats on the bay were highly mystified by our erratic behavior, and by the utterly irregular and bewildering nature of our whistles, and they rushed toward us time and again to tender us their assistance.

Of course, Charmian and I were in the thick of the fun — though not in the acting, not in those stunts of jumping into the cold water time and time again and falling down a dozen times or more as the ferryboat bucked the slip at the director's order, hurling everybody right and left.

No, none of that for us. As I started to say, I'd rather see a moving picture actor than be one. Though I'm mighty glad I've seen him at his work. He's a corker.