

THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO

or, Why Can't We Film Such a Thing If We Won the War in the First Place?

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An epic, according to the dictionary, is a narrative that displays heroic events in an elevated style. Its subject is usually therefore historical, its canvas broad, and its manner theatrical. The term originally applied to narrative poetry, but in modern times we can find epics in various forms, according to the practicalities of staging and expense - in the novel, on television, on the stage and on the cinema screen. From being strictly a mode of narrative verse, the epic has become a narrative convention, with understood conventions of scale, form and effect, that any medium can adopt. Thus the early film industry, expanding all the while and greedy for ideas, naturally adopted the epic form and made it especially its own.

The subject of my talk is the early British epic film, and how what had become an international convention of filmmaking once feature length films were accepted by audiences was adapted to become a particularly British phenomenon. The full title of this talk is - *The Battle of Waterloo; or, why can't we film such a thing if we won the war in the first place?* but it could perhaps more properly be called *The search for a national film*, and it covers in particular the quest for just such a national film during the First World War that would be an adequate expression from the film industry of the national sacrifice and the purpose of the war.

If one is looking for the roots of the British epic film, then they would seem to be fourfold. First, and no doubt most importantly, there was the influence of literature, particularly such novels as *Quo Vadis*, *The Last Days of Pompeii* and *Ben Hur*, which thrilled a mass audience brought up on the Bible and a romantic view of ancient history. Such novels were, of course, often the sources of the first epic films, notably those produced in Italy. Secondly, there was the influence of stage spectacles throughout the Victorian era in which quite extraordinarily elaborate recreations of wars, disasters, triumphs and natural phenomena were presented with the original cast of thousands in London auditoria. Chariot races, sinking galleons, marching armies, erupting volcanoes - all had been presented in giant, realistic form to awe-struck audiences. Illustrations of some of these can be seen at the current *London on Film* exhibition at the Museum of London,

which makes the sound point that such spectacles prefigured film and whetted the public appetite for epic films.

Third, and less familiarly, was the taste for medieval pageants. The idea of a town involving all of its population in a giant outdoors historic recreation of scenes from its past had its roots in medieval practices and the Victorian love of the past, but was specifically the invention of one man. In 1905 one Louis N. Parker wrote and organised a pageant at Sherborne. The following year his ideas had grown and a pageant was put on at Warwick, celebrating the 1000th anniversary of the conquest of Mercia by Queen Ethelfelda, no less, and showing in eleven episodes various stages in the history of Warwick from AD 40 to 1572 and performed over seven days in the grounds of Warwick Castle. The pageant idea appealed greatly both to that romantic view of history and to local pride, and many such spectacles were put on over the next twenty years or so. The 1906 Warwick pageant was filmed, a record which survives, and several others were subsequently filmed, generally for local consumption.

But the most direct influence was of course the epic film itself, especially those being produced in Italy, which amazed audiences by their vast sets, huge crowds, and spectacular effects - heroic events in an elevated style exactly. The first British epic film, however, preceded the major Italian feature films, for I would say that it was the 1911 *Henry VIII*, a 30 minute recreation of the Shakespeare play, starring Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree, and produced for Barker Motion Photography by Louis N. Parker, the pageant-master himself. This static series of tableaux, intended as much to show off the sets and costumes of the originally stage production as to work as drama, was considered to be astonishing (if not strictly entertaining) enough to demand high prices from the film renters, and it got them. As with most of the films I will be discussing today, the film is lost - but in this case because Will Barker publicly burnt the negative after a limited period during which audiences would have to rush to see the film, as a publicity stunt and to emphasise its exclusivity.

But the true epic film demanded a longer screen time, and the example of such feature-length epics as *Cabiria* and *Quo Vadis* persuaded producers that audiences could tolerate a film that lasted as long as a play, and that they would love to see grand historical scenes recreated on the screen. It was, ultimately, a simple question of economics. Audiences were starting to demand elaborate historical narratives, and British producers had to respond according. Moreover there was a strong element of national pride. The British film industry was already aware that it was falling behind its continental and American rivals in film production, though it could not really see

why. An obvious, indeed unanswerable response, was to put true British history on the screen. It was a subject that could not fail.

Hence the first British epic films start to appear, in one form or another, around 1913, of which probably the first and certainly the most famous was *The Battle of Waterloo*, produced by the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company. A review of this remarkable production in the *Bioscope* trade paper says a lot about the feeling of national pride and inferiority that were besetting the film industry that I have indicated, as this quote illustrates:

Naturally, one's first sensation, on hearing that the British and Colonial Kinematograph Company were preparing a film of 'The Battle of Waterloo' was a feeling of gratification that at last a great chapter of our national history was to be immortalised in pictures by a native firm of producers. It has too long been a justified reproach against the British cinematograph industry that it has been unable to hold its own against foreigners, and that it has allowed all our finest literary classics and the most stirring episodes in the story of our land to be turned into film plays by men of other countries. That the latter have often been notable successes cannot be denied by the fairminded observer, but this does not lessen the bitterness of this unpleasant fact. Without further ado, therefore, one may offer the very warmest congratulations to the British and Colonial Company on their admirable courage and enterprise in attempting this big national production. Even though they had been less successful in their effort, they would still be entitled to praise, and, in the days to come, when the British industry has attained the importance it must eventually have, they will always be remembered as having been amongst the pioneers.

In those last sentences one can see the note of qualification coming in, because *The Battle of Waterloo*, it was clear, did not match up to what those men of other countries had come up with. The film is lost, alas, but we know quite a bit about its production.^{*} It was filmed for British and Colonial by director Charles Weston at the village of Irthlingborough in Northants, and in true pageant form large numbers of locals were roped in as extras, as well as a local regiment of Lancers. British and Colonial were best known as producers of actuality film, and *The Battle of Waterloo* was made less as a drama and rather more as a recreation of historic actuality. It was in fact a series of elaborately recreated scenes from the battle, 'from the point of view of an ordinary soldier in the thick of the battle', as the *Bioscope* put it, with explosions and charges a-plenty, but almost no dramatic or human interest. *The Battle of Waterloo* was one of the first British films on which a stills photographer was employed and the existing illustrations indicate a film that certainly achieved something in the way of a newsreel accuracy, and it seems that the film thrilled certain audiences and bored others. The film was 5,000ft long (nearly an hour and a half), was filmed in an absurdly quick five days, cost £1,800 to produce, and the British rights alone were sold for £5,000. It was seen as a considerably prestigious production that did credit to the film

^{*} Two reels and a further fragment, representing roughly half of the film, have been discovered since this talk was written and are now preserved in the BFI National Archive.

industry, and if all those battle scenes did get somewhat confusing and boring after a while, nevertheless it showed that British history was there for the filming, if only British producers would put their minds and money to it.

Other epics followed. Charles Weston, the director of *The Battle of Waterloo*, in early 1914 made a two-reeler called *The Seventh Day* which employed 3,000 extras. Ambitious literary dramas such as the Hepworth production of *David Copperfield*, a massive 7,500ft, were starting to be produced, and the Clarendon Film Company in particular, having built up a reputation for short comedies and juvenile adventures, turned now to versions of British historical epic novels such as those of Harrison Ainsworth, whose *Old St Paul's* was made by Clarendon into a 3,000ft feature in February 1914. Hundreds of extras were employed, the Great Fire of London and in particular the burning of St Paul's Cathedral were faithfully recreated, and a huge advertising campaign emphasised its Great British Historical qualities. As with *The Battle of Waterloo*, little attention had gone into the drama, and much effort into the recreation of the actuality, its news qualities in effect. A tart review of the film in the American journal *Variety* gives a good idea of how British films were viewed by everyone except the British at the time:

This is styled Clarendon's masterpiece. The plot amounts to little, the picture makers making use of the bubonic plague and days of religious fanatics, one enthusiast in this picture setting fire to a baker's shop that resulted in London burning. One lordly knight, with the wig of black curls, the ruffled breeches and polished sword, named Rochester looks with designing eyes upon one Annabel. His suit is frowned upon by Leonard Holt who thinks a heap of Annabel himself. Rochester appears to have a charmed life. He encounters the plague in its most virulent form and it never touches him. He engages in a left-handed duel with swords and easily kills his opponent. He helps the King kidnap Annabel but the girl escapes when the Royal carriage becomes afire. Some pretty good studio sets of houses and a bridge are shown on fire but the directors make the picture move very slowly in order to work up the impression that everything in London was completely destroyed by fire. The directors had an excellent subject to work along but failed to make the best of it. Some splendidly staged situations are cameraed. Credit is due to some of the people for some clever pantomiming. There are several things that need explanation but the picture will give fairly good satisfaction. In some neighborhoods this picture will prove a mighty big feature. In others it won't accomplish much.

Well, not too bad a review given *Variety's* usual contempt for British productions, but the line to note is that such films were thought to please some types of audience, not others, meaning I think that there was still an audience (just) prepared to gawp at spectacle pure and simple. In the same issue of *Variety* there is a review of the Italian production *Cajus Julius Caesar*, which gives a sobering assessment of this epic wonder:

The Cines Co. of Rome claims that this is a wonderful revelation in the art of film producing and a masterpiece. From the standpoint of handling mobs, or in other words,

quantity, they are not very far wrong. They have gone to an undoubtedly big expense for the creation of ancient Roman architecture and the showing of battles. It is probably historically correct and if good photography, excellent reproductions of ancient architecture and the constant showing of mobs go to make up a great feature film, the Cines production of Julius Caesar may be regarded as among the foremost. But it is a betting point, however, that a modern melodrama of strong suspensive interest, well acted, will hold an audience more tensely than any historical story requiring the expenditure of stupendous amounts of money.

Well, no-one in Britain was prepared to put in the sort of money into epic production that the Italians were keen to, but they had to learn the lesson that audiences wanted drama as well as spectacle. Crucially that had to understand that their epic subject matter would be nothing but empty and irrelevant spectacle without human interest or clear dramatic purpose. Both, it appeared, were made available to them by the First World War.

It is a commonplace that European production was crippled by the War and that it was at this time that the Hollywood feature film became dominant worldwide. True, British film production was severally hit by falling markets, American competition and simply the problem of staff being called up, but regular production continued and even the occasional expensive epic production, made with the sense that such a film could be a statement of British greatness both in the face of military aggression and oppressive film competition. Leading the field was the larger-than-life character Will Barker, a notorious film producer of bold ideas and fearless manner, who made the *Henry VIII* mentioned earlier, and early in the war producer of an epic considered a marvel in its day, *Jane Shore*.

Barker had already in 1913 co-produced with the Samuelson company a famous epic life of Queen Victoria entitled *Sixty Years a Queen*, a 6,000ft production of which only a 100ft fragment survives. This too, in common with the British epics so far discussed, put its emphasis on actuality and the tableaux effect rather than constructing any sort of coherent narrative. *Jane Shore*, made in 1915, was different, and we are fortunate that the whole film survives, and hence my first sequence of film this afternoon.

[Clip: JANE SHORE (1915)]

The scenes you are seeing come from the start of reel one of *Jane Shore*, the opening of which became justly famous and is still very striking even today. These scenes were filmed at Devil's Dyke near Brighton, reportedly with 5,000 extras, though this would appear to be something of an exaggeration - and apparently a number of them are local convicts. *Jane Shore* is the story of the

Lancastrian and Yorkist wars and of the tragic fate of Jane, of a Lancastrian family, who became the mistress of Edward IV. More or less based on history, the plot is far too complicated to summarise here, but these opening scenes give a good idea of the style of the picture, its varied settings, its general theatrical style of acting, and its good and bad points as a production. The completed film was 5,500ft long, lasting about an hour and a half.

Jane Shore was considered the greatest thing British producers had achieved to date - indeed there is much that looks good about it even today - and this was not only the view of the British, as the film sold readily abroad, and once again *Variety* gives us an illuminating account:

There is still hope for the English film producer. He is showing signs of improvement. One of the latest features offered for public approval is Barker's 5,500 feet of 'Jane Shore' that has over 200 scenes and is wholly a British conception and execution. Blanche Forsythe has the title role, and while an excellent emotional actress is lacking in ethereal appearance. The story is well known to Americans through the stage production by Virginia Harned some years ago. This feature enters into direct competition with the Italian productions that employ vast mobs. It is claimed that the Sixteenth Century battle scenes of 'Jane Shore' employ no less than 5,000 supers. It would probably be much easier to believe the claim than to count them. The photography is very good and 'Jane Shore' will make an acceptable feature anywhere. It is an excellent picture - judged by British standards.

The virtues and vices of *Jane Shore* are plain to see: on the positive side, plenty of action sometimes imaginatively put over, grand crowd scenes, varied and not too wobbly sets, fine exterior work and often a real epic sweep. On the negative side, plenty of failures of the imagination, a confusing narrative, a crudely theatrical style, and the certainly less than ethereal presence of Blanche Forsythe, Barker's regular leading lady and, it has to be said, one of the most unlovely leading ladies ever to appear before the camera. But by British standards, an excellent picture.

Other ambitious, if not strictly epic films continued to be made in Britain, notably Thomas Bentley's ambitious family saga film *Milestones* and the Hepworth company's production of Charles Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge*. But these do not really qualify as epics, given our need for that heroic theme in an elevated style, and if one is looking for such a British production at this mid-war period it would probably be more correct to look at what was being done with the genuine, rather than the recreated actuality film. The great British film of 1916 was undoubtedly *The Battle of the Somme*, the official British Topical Committee for War Films' feature-length account of the June offensive on the Somme, which was certainly epic in its wish to give history in the making the fullest coverage possible on the screen. Chronological rather than dramatic, it can be seen to

come out of the same, particularly British documentary film aesthetic that produced *The Battle of Waterloo*, and indeed the producer of the *Waterloo* film, J.B. MacDowell, was one of the two cameramen who filmed the *Battle of the Somme*. Certainly awe-struck audiences viewed the film as they might have done a spectacular epic, the scale of the undertaking and the greatness of the drama unfolding before them being commented on again and again in contemporary reports, as audiences equated the film with the actuality.

The Battle of the Somme was the highlight of a British filmed propaganda campaign. The history behind the British official filming of the war is fascinating but very complex, but in very simple terms the British film industry and the War Office came to an agreement in late 1915 for the organisation of the filming of the war, particularly on the Western Front, and at various times in the war the War Office changed tack as it changed the sort of films it was producing in order to hold the public interest. Producing a film with propagandist intent was one thing; persuading audiences actually to go and see it was another. In 1915, before the agreement was signed, there had been an official epic documentary showing scenes of British military preparedness entitled *Britain Prepared* - certain an epic in the sense of awe it inspired through its naval scenes in particular. Early in 1916 short documentaries were made. *The Battle of the Somme* showed that what the public wanted were feature-length accounts of battles. Two further such films followed and it was then obvious that audience interest was waning - one such epic had been enough. So then the propagandists turned to newsreel production, which was ultimately successful in its propagandist intent and as an outlet for Official film, but which hardly made much of an impact, and the renamed War Office Cinematograph Committee was beginning to warm to this sort of work and was getting ambitious. Having kept strictly to the actuality film, showing audiences the war as it really was, they began to consider making fiction films. Fiction films were after all what people went to the cinema to see, and with history in the making before their eyes, why not a national film, a national epic to stir hearts at home and persuade audiences abroad of their cause? This thought must have seemed an obvious one, as there were several attempts largely during 1918, from both Official and ordinary commercial sources to produce just such a national film.

Five films that seem to fit this definition were produced in 1917/18, very different in style if similar in ambition: *The Life of Lord Kitchener*, *Nelson*, *Hearts of the World*, *Victory and Peace* and *The Life Story of David Lloyd George*. The first two I will not discuss here, for they were primitively done, the simple scenes from history in the now archaic recreated actuality manner. *The Life of Lord Kitchener* sounds to have been the more interesting film, with its scenes from recent history including a recreated desert with sphinx, camels and a reported cavalry charge of 2,000; *Nelson*

survives, and is of interest for its nationalistic attitudes and parallels between the present and the past, but makes for tedious viewing and is of most interest for my purposes in that it was directed by Maurice Elvey, more of whom later.

Hearts of the World is a famous film; it is also, strictly speaking an American film, but was produced at the behest of the British propagandists and so needs discussing here. It is famous because it was made by D. W. Griffith, director of *Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*, and it was precisely because he was famous as a director then for those films, in particular *Birth of a Nation*, that he was approached by the British propagandists, chief among them Lord Beaverbrook. Beaverbrook, head of the War Office Cinematograph Committee and later head of the Ministry of Information formed in March 1918, was already at this stage in his career a skilled handler of the media and in particular a great enthusiast for the cinema with a genuine understanding of the medium, its power and potential. Certainly Beaverbrook would not have made the mistake of getting a lowly British director to make a British national epic - he went for the best, even if he were American, and undoubtedly because he wanted to see a British *Birth of a Nation* produced.

Hearts of the World was filmed during 1917, mostly in Hollywood despite publicity claims that much of it was shot in France close to the fighting, and released in 1918. Griffith was, however, filming at the British War Office's invitation and not to its specific instructions, and it is unlikely that *Hearts of the World*, a melodramatic romance with the war as a backdrop, is quite what they were looking for, even if it did make a sizeable amount of money for war charities. Of greater interest are Griffith's own views on the challenges of putting the war on film. One of his pronouncements to the press specifically compared the task in hand with the usual epic fare:

In one way, this is indeed a great day to be alive. In another, terrible. It is terrible when you see the things you must feel. It is the most terrific moment in the history of the world. We used to wish that we could have experienced the days of Caesar and Napoleon. And now incomparably greater times are taking place around us all.

This was the prevalent view, that momentous history was here all around you, and that it had to be recorded. The trick was to make a two-hour feature out of it that audiences would pay to go and see. Another of Griffith's pronouncements has become famous, when taken out of context, for its rather cold view of the situation: *Viewed as a drama, the war is in some ways disappointing*. Of course it was, as the British Official cameramen and cinema audiences had already discovered, hoping for dramatic charges and gunfire, and instead getting views of a dismal, barren no-man's land, with the enemy hidden far away, and much of the anticipated drama taking place at night when the cameramen could not film, had it ever been safe for them to

do so anyway. There was no drama in the war itself, not one that the cinema could comprehend, and this Griffith understood:

It is too colossal to be dramatic. No one can describe it. You might as well try to describe the ocean or the milky way. A very great writer could describe Waterloo. But who could describe the advance of Haig? No one saw it. No one saw a thousandth part of it.

History, the past, can be viewed with detachment and a shape put to events which at the time were confused and still forming. The Bioscope reviewer of *The Battle of Waterloo* felt that its view of the ordinary soldier in the thick of battle was:

... something of a pity, because Waterloo was one of the most dramatic battles ever fought, and, were its story carefully and logically developed, it would make a real-life film play far more thrilling and deeply interesting than any fictional work.

Thus it was that the great filmed dramas of the war were all produced after it: *The Big Parade*, *Wings*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*. History, like poetry, has to be recollected in tranquility. Finding the essence of the struggle while it raged all around was far harder, and Griffith failed to come up with a drama to match his theme, much the same as happened with the other great national film encouraged by the British propagandists, *The Invasion of Britain*, or, as it was to have been known had it ever been released, *Victory and Peace*.

The parallels between this film and Griffith's are quite striking. The director was another American, Herbert Brenon, hardly any the less celebrated after his great pacifist production *War Brides* and other titles, and well known in Britain, where he had produced a 1913 proto-epic production of *Ivanhoe* starring King Baggot. Once again the propagandists, keen to break into fiction film production and wary of employing a British expert, turned to a renowned American (actually Irish by descent), this time with a background in British production, to create a national epic. The British filmed propaganda campaign was a confused mess of different bodies often duplicating one another's work, and *The Invasion of Britain* was sponsored not by the War Office Cinematograph Committee but this time by the National War Aims Committee. Late in 1917 this Committee approached Hall Caine to write a scenario. Caine, a now justly forgotten author of quite unreadable turgid novels, was at the time held in national reverence, and when he demanded total control over the production he got it. He turned to Low Warren, editor of the *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* for advice, and it was Warren who suggested Brenon as a director.

Caine's wish was to come up with a narrative that was comprehensible to the ordinary working man, he whose resentments towards the protracted war were becoming ever more apparent in strikes and a general air of gloom that presided particularly during the Spring of 1918 when the war seemed endless and there were some serious reverses for the Allied forces. To achieve this he envisaged what life in Britain would be like if Germany had invaded Britain. The details of the plot, requiring the German who ordered the sinking of the Lusitania to be the same as order the execution of Nurse Edith Cavell - although he was in love with her - sound too awful for words, and certainly the sort of patronising claptrap that the ordinary working man would have despised. The film interestingly followed the British epic-cum-pageant idea of being set in a particular town - in this case Chester - and of employing the townsfolk as extras. A starry stage cast was also chosen headed by Ellen Terry, and including Marie Lohr, Jose Collins and Matheson Lang, the cream of the London theatre. The production was singularly ill-fated, no more so than when the completed negative was destroyed in a fire at the London Film Company in June 1918. Undaunted, and deeply emotionally involved in his work, Brenon returned immediately to make the film all over again, but it took another four months and the war was coming to a close. Tragically the film was now completely redundant, despite costing nearly £25,000, and Brenon in particular was devastated, having struggled so hard against what he described as *the undramatic, phlegmatic temperament of the British* and their *bad photographic climate*, endless production difficulties, and fire, and then worst of all, the war ending. The film was never shown, and two years later was destroyed on official instruction. Only a 900ft fragment was preserved, to show the performance of stage legend Ellen Terry, from which will now this a short extract:

[Clip: THE INVASION OF BRITAIN (1918)]

The failures of the various national films were more failures of the imagination than of actual execution. The writers and producers involved could only see the British war aims in terms of the crudest or most sentimental melodrama; at the root of it, we may say that really they did not know what they were fighting for and that the films form the perfect evidence for this. Had someone only found that elusive great theme, then there would be the true British national film of the war.

And someone did find that theme. Two men, in fact, and their names were Harry and Simon Rowson. They ran a moderately prosperous British film company, Ideal, and they were supporters of the Liberal party, and particularly the Prime Minister for the latter half of the war, David Lloyd George. In common with other British film companies in the middle of the war Ideal wanted to make a film that expressed their feelings about the war, and had approached Winston Churchill to assist in preparing a scenario about the causes of the war. This fell through, but the

project transmogrified into a life of Lloyd George. The film was written by Sir Sidney Low and was constructed chronologically, showing various significant episodes in Lloyd George's life, culminating in his contribution throughout the war. The film was in production during 1918 with Maurice Elvey, who made *Nelson* in the same year, as director. The production was conceived on the grand scale and production costs were a huge £20,000. Interest in the project was considerable and so long as Lloyd George remained popular the film seemed to be guaranteed of success.

What happened next is very strange. The film was suppressed. In October 1918 the popular patriotic magazine *John Bull*, run by Horatio Bottomley, the Robert Maxwell of his day (except that Bottomley was eventually caught), began a campaign against the film, insinuating that the Ideal firm was run by Germans. The Rowsons were of Jewish origin, having changed their name from Rosenbaum. *John Bull* declared that so patriotic a subject should not be in the hand of such suspect people, and despite official claims to the contrary it appears that the Lloyd George government, having previously given its support to the project, now ordered its suppression, simply to avoid the embarrassment that could be drummed up by Bottomley, who was a considerable national figure. The film was shelved, Ideal were compensated by the government for the production costs, though not of course for the anticipated revenue, and *The Life Story of David Lloyd George*, also known as *The Man Who Saved the Empire*, disappeared.

You will have noticed a somewhat unfortunate tendency among British epic films, particularly wartime epic films, to be lost, unfinished or otherwise unavailable to posterity. Until two years ago this was believed to be the case with *The Life Story of David Lloyd George*, which became a mere curious footnote in British film history. Two extraordinary things then occurred. One, the film turned up again, at the home of a descendant of Lloyd George. Two, the film is a masterpiece.

No-one, looking at the track record of Ideal films or of Maurice Elvey as a director, or of British films and particularly British epic films could have held out much hope for the *Lloyd George* film should it ever by any sort of miracle turn up one day. It would have to be a shoddy, quaint episodic drama, of interest to political historians only. Well, the film is certainly constructed along episodic lines, as it depicts key scenes from Lloyd George's life, and it is certainly in the established British epic tradition of putting your faith in the drama of recreated actuality, but the result is a revelation. The producers really cared about their theme - about Lloyd George's libertarian values, his campaigns for old age pensions and national insurance, his work as minister of munitions and then prime minister, his steadfastness in war and his determined attitude to maintain the peace thereafter. The photography is often superb, the use of Welsh

landscapes exquisitely done, the House of Commons set in particular is very good, and some of the crowd scenes are truly awe-inspiring. And Elvey directs like a master, specifically like D. W. Griffith, for this film seems to have as its inspiration *The Birth of a Nation*, the film that Lord Beaverbrook wanted to see produced for Britain, only he got *Hearts of the World* instead. No, it is probably not one of the truly great masterpieces of the silent cinema, judged by the usual aesthetic criteria, and it does have its failings, but it is a damned good movie, a treasure trove for the historian, and it looks an absolute treat. It just goes to show what British film producers of the time, supposedly such a low period in British film production, could actually do when they put heart and mind to it. For *The Life Story of David Lloyd George* is a film with a heart and mind, and the producers must have been profoundly shaken when it was suppressed.

The newly-restored film, put together by the Welsh Film Archive with much assistance from the National Film and Television Archive, it is to receive its premiere in Wales next month - its actual premiere, since it was never released in 1918 of course. Thanks to Kevin Brownlow, who has a VHS tape copy of the film, I can show you a short section from it now. It is hard to select any one sequence that gives that epic flavour - and I should say that I think the film is an heroic tale told in an elevated manner, as we have defined epics - and there are better sequences than the one I am showing now, but the final scenes from the film do illustrate a number of key points and show the film's particular power. So we will see the last five minutes or so of *The Life Story of David Lloyd George*.

[Clip: THE LIFE STORY OF DAVID LLOYD GEORGE (1918)]