

Little Boy Bountiful

UK : 1914 : dir. Warwick Buckland : Hepworth
 prod: : scr: : dir.ph.:
[Eric Desmond \(Reggie Sheffield\)](#)
 Adult cast unknown

Silent : 14 min

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω	8	€	M	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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The British Film Catalogue 1895-1985 listing:

"Drama. Rich boy takes supper to poor boy who stole his lunch. Eric Desmond plays Reggie."

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Desmond:

"Matthew Reginald Sheffield Cassan came from a family with a strong sense of pedigree. He claimed direct descent on his father's side from the 17th-century soldier, poet and courtier John Sheffield, 1st Duke of Buckingham, and on his mother's side from Benjamin Franklin. Hopes of a transatlantic dynasty were not, as it turned out, to be wholly disappointed.

The sturdy, curly-haired little boy was discovered by the British director, producer and inventor Cecil Hepworth, and appeared as Reggie Sheffield in what is said to have been his debut film, "**LIEUTENANT PIE'S LOVE STORY**". In August 1913 he changed his screen name to Eric Desmond (after the Earls of Desmond?) but appeared on the London stage the following month, in a Charles Hawtrey farce, as Reginald Sheffield. It was as Eric Desmond, though, that he continued busily to perform for Hepworth until 1915, when he became a war evacuee to the USA and appeared in his first American film – as Reginald Sheffield. All very confusing.

In 1939 a sturdy, curly-haired little boy called Johnny Sheffield burst into the Hollywood jungle wearing nothing but a loincloth, but otherwise looking the spitting image of pre-1914 Eric Desmond. Needless to say, this was the evacuee's son, and the evacuee himself had made a very useful Hollywood career as a

debonair, aristocratic character actor – one which he kept going right up to his death in 1957. He played President Grant in "**CENTENNIAL SUMMER**" (46).

It hadn't, though, lived up to the hopes of one who had played the hero of "**DAVID COPPERFIELD**" both as a child (in 1913) and as a man (in 1923). The boy David in Thanhouser's 1911 "**DAVID COPPERFIELD**", incidentally, was played by one of the company's female stars, Flora Foster."

[no listing in "Classics of the Silent Screen", "A Pictorial History of the Silent Screen", "Silent Movies: A Picture Quiz Book", "Halliwell's Film Guide", "Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

No further information currently available. There is more pith in that eleven-word synopsis than in many contemporary features. Starving waifs – expiring and being wafted to heaven or rescued by allegorical benefactors – were a popular item of early British melodramas, and echoed the late Victorian spirit of enlightened solicitude to the poor, thanks in no little part to the writings of Dickens. [Eric Desmond](#) was 13. For a good contemporary study of him, see his biographical entry. He also featured in the 1913 **"THE PRINCES IN THE TOWER"**, **"ENTERTAINING UNCLE"** (14), **"THE MAGIC CLASS"** (14) and many others.

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