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"HOW I WON THE $10,000 PRIZE"

BY

WINIFRED KIMBALL

Winner of the Chicago Daily News
$30,000 Scenario Contest

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THE PHOTODRAMATIST FOR JUNE will be, in our opinion, the best number we have issued. From cover to cover, it will be inspiring, helpful, educational. The many departments—including, of course, "H. H. Van Loan's Own Corner"—will be bigger, better and more interesting than ever before. Do not miss it

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What Happens to Your Story Following Its Approval
by the Scenario Editor

By Bradley King
Of the Thos. H. Ince Scenario Staff

SOME time ago I wrote an article for *The Photodramatist* about the original scenario—from the time it was received at the Studio until the time it was marked by the editor to go “higher up” and have its purchase O. K’d. So many letters have come to me, asking me to continue the journey of the scenario, that it has convinced me that the subject must be of interest to those on the outside.

We left the story, remember, on the desk of “Mr. Bee,” the producer. He reads it, and likes it, but before passing final judgment, usually submits it to one or two others—depending a great deal upon the amount of money involved. For not only the purchase price must be considered, but also the amount of capital entailed in the production. This preliminary skirmish resulting satisfactorily, the most interesting part, to the author, is gotten speedily over with, and the story is turned over to the continuity writer.

We’ll presume he has not read it before. If he doesn’t like it, “can’t see it,” as the saying goes, the wise producer takes it from his hands and passes it on to another. For unless a story appeals to the one who is to adapt it, unless he can visualize it, it stands to reason that he won’t get the best out of—not put his best into—it. The people are real—the situations natural. Of course, the story needs changing, building here and there, maybe a climax or beginning put in wholesale, but his grasp on the characters enables him to do this logically.

If his ideas necessitate some radical change, he tells it to the producer, who, maybe, adds a few of his own, and then with a general O. K., the writer hies himself to some solitary spot and gets busy.

I have been asked very often how long it takes to write a continuity, and I always hesitate in answering. There are continuities—and continuities. Some companies like a script with no closeups written in, and only a general idea of titles, and some like them in regular “shooting form,” so that the director can take the script and film the story directly from it. This last is the kind of script I learned to write—so it is the only one about which I am qualified to speak. And right here I will announce that it is no joke. One must know camera angles and lighting effects, and technical terms galore—and not just know them, but have studied and watched enough to use...
them in the most artistic or dramatic way and to the best advantage. Don't think I mean that the director will necessarily follow everything that is written in the script—he brings his own interpretation to the story—but the more the writer can give the director, the more the director can give the production. And that is what everyone is working for—not for just individual glory, but to make the production as fine as possible.

I've wandered away from the question of time required to write such a script—but again, it depends upon the length of the story, whether it is to be a "Special" feature, or a program release. I've spent six weeks on some and three weeks on others, so we'll split the difference for the story in question now and say it was written in four. When finished the continuity is turned over to the director, together with the story, and let me tell you that if anyone in the world can tell you the good points you overlooked, the drama you missed, the comedy you failed to see—it is the director, and it is surprising how short a time it takes for him to see it in. After my first few experiences along this line, I conceived the bright idea of asking the director beforehand about certain changes; and getting his ideas—but that does not always work, for if the idea doesn't happen to be so good when it is worked out, he won't claim it anyhow. I will say for the director, though, that a great many times he is right in his contentions. He has an angle that the writer has not—a more intimate, truer one. He has a definite knowledge of just what he can and cannot "get over," of how much the characters can really interpret, and usually he possesses more actual dramatic experience than a writer is able to get in his line of work.

So, after some adjusting maybe, the script is ready for production. It used to be a great surprise to me how many people had to have a copy of the script—now I wonder that they do with so few. The director, the assistant director, the casting director, who must know the story intimately in order to choose those who will portray the parts—the property man, who dresses the sets—the architect who builds them—the electrician who lights them—the cameraman—and so it goes on down the line, not forgetting, of course, the Production Manager, who has nothing to do but allot stage space to all the companies, see that they keep from stepping on each other's toes, check the scenes that are taken each day—and keep the general peace.

How long does production take? Depends on many things. The director—the length of the story—the weather, particularly if a good bit of the story is out-of-door work. From four to six or seven weeks is the usual time necessary to make a picture, unless it is of unusual length.

When it is finished being "shot," it goes to the cutters, who have the nice job of making twenty odd reels of film into six or seven. Some job! It is, and the cutter has to bring to his work a keen sense of humor and of the dramatic as well as a real knowledge of "tempo." Those "higher up," as well as the director, usually "sit in," on this part of the production, and watch the story unfold from a tangled mass of disconnected scenes to a smoothly running picture. And then comes the titling—which is an art in itself, for many times the directed action of the story, or the cutting, makes the script titles impossible.

And when the picture is finished—if it is to be a "Special"—it is usually given tryouts—that is, shown in different theatres and the effect on the audience studied. If the spectators fail to laugh at a supposedly funny point, if they giggle in a moment of drama—if they grow restless—it is noted and the "reason why" sought for and corrected.

Now, perhaps, you understand why producers must be careful in selecting a story. A tremendous lot of money and time and effort go into its production, and the story must make the cost worth while. But I think the knowledge of all that is given to your story should be a spur to make you put into it the very best that you have, and maybe it will take away from the tediousness, re-writing. At any rate, I hope it will help.
“How I Won the Ten Thousand Dollar Prize”

By Winifred Kimball

Winner of the Chicago Daily News $30,000 Scenario Contest

THE suggestion that I might enter a scenario in the Chicago Daily News Contest, did not originate in my own mind; instead, it came from the fertile brain of my dear sister. Most of the decisive steps which I have taken—those steps that have lead me from the beaten path of everyday life—have had her for their inspiration; and to her confidence in me, to her persistent efforts in my behalf, is entirely due my present success. So it was only seemly that once again, it should be her eyes which remarked the references made in The Photodramatist to the Chicago Daily News Contest.

She wanted me to send in an application at once. At that time I had several stories on hand. I usually have. And I was working on one—I usually am. So she urged that we make a try for the Chicago Contest. She was eager in her enthusiasm. “Remember,” she said, “that Mr. Read wrote you that your script held its place down to the last twenty-five in the J. Parker Read, Jr., Contest.”

But she couldn’t get any enthusiasm out of me. I only saw the work of revision and the expense of retyping. In plain English, I was “way down on my luck,” and a prize contest was all bread and no cake in my philosophy! I said, “Nothing doing!” Fortunately, there is another happy feature in the perfect intimacy which has grown up between us two. It is that we never both despair at the same time. So, in spite of me, Minnie—my sister, Mrs. Minnie Kimball Alexander—subscribed for the News. She asked for three applications; and she informed me that she was going to enter three scripts, one historical, one a love story, and the story on which I was then at work—the one which afterwards won the prize.

Right then and there, I put my foot down. I said I’d not do anything so absolutely conceited as submit three of my stories. So we argued and argued over that. At length we compromised the matter—she should enter her three; but they should go in this manner. One was entered in my name, one in hers, and one in our cook’s name. This pleased Lavinia and she said, “Now Honey, you just see if I don’t bring you luck.” She was quite right. It was the script that Minnie entered in her name which was the winner.

This ends the first chapter of the story of my success—a recounting of which The
Photodramatist has requested. The intervening months passed, as all such teasing intervals must do, if you only give them time enough. The New Year came along; and February brought the taxes! Ever since my father died and my sister was left a widow, I have hated February, because it grew to connote—Taxes! And taxes are so persistent. They are like crying babies—they have got to be attended to! So when February waxed old, and March was coming, I looked with half envious eyes at my married friends whose husbands paid all the bills and taxes.

But along with the first of March, Mr. Johnson, Editor of the Times, our newspaper, visited me. I remember it was about noon. And I said to Minnie, ‘‘There is Herbert—he is coming about some work that he wants me to do for the Times.’’ But he didn’t want to talk about my work. Instead he brought me the first telegram from Chicago. This telegram asked him to identify one Lavinia Henry, care of Winifred Kimball, possible winner in the News Contest, and to forward a picture of her at once. That was the first anyone knew of my entering the contest. As the Daily News requested, Mr. Johnson said nothing in his paper; but for myself, I felt that I was reasonably sure of one of the five hundred dollar awards. However, when the second telegram followed inside of a week, I perked up considerably; and my sister said, ‘‘You certainly have a place among the second ten.’’

You see both telegrams asked for pictures. I have one peculiarity, which I acknowledge. I hate to be photographed; and it isn’t such an illogical aversion, for pictures usually make me look a fright. So the only pictures I had on hand, were a few that had been taken fully fifteen years back, when I spent two years in Tokio with my father’s friends, Hon. Col. A. E. Buck and Mrs. Buck, American Ambassadors to Japan. I had kept this picture because it flattered me. I sent one on; and they wired back instantly, ‘‘Send a recent picture, or have such picture taken at once—rush!’’

All of us wondered how those newspaper men found out that it was an old picture. Puzzled, but obedient, I took my vanity in my hands and sacrificed it on the altar of my ambition. I went to the local photographer, who dwelt in a building known locally as the Tin-top. I let him photograph me; and I sent the ghastly result to Chicago. Another week passed. This last seven days was a time of torture; for I was left to my own devices; and knowing nothing, one hour my imagination sent my spirits rocketing, whiles with the setting sun they tumbled. Tomorrow and tomorrow were just the same. When Friday, March 31st, arrived, I got up with a brave determination that I would not become unduly excited. Firm in this resolve, I went down town and dictated to my stenographer on ‘‘The Mustard Seed’’—that is the new screen story I am inditing. After two hours with her, I returned, and calling the boy to help me, I sought solace in the garden. I told the family that I was going to plant my nerves along with some acalyphas. I was working so hard that I never heard our doctor’s admonitions when he passed by. But I caught the remark of the banker, a Mr. Fannin. He said, ‘‘Miss Winifred, what are you digging after? Why, you scatter the earth like Roxey at her wildest.’’ Roxey is my airedale, and buries bones in every flower bed.

It was ten o’clock that night when Mr. Johnston brought Mr. Briggs and Mr. Jens Erickson, of the News, and presented them to me; but it was not until Saturday morning at nine o’clock sharp that Mr. Erickson, Mr. Briggs and Mr. McAuley gave me the check for Ten Thousand Dollars! After that I had my prejudices slaughtered; for what could I do? These gentlemen had come all the way from Chicago to give me one of the greatest pleasures of my life; and if they wanted photographs of me—those photos they should have. They were their due. But I assure you that the modern possibilities of photography appall me! Why, I took one of their creations, and I showed it to my blessed sister, and I asked, ‘‘Do I look like that?’’ And she said, ‘‘No!’’

This is the story of my success; but it says nothing of the long months and years of hard work that have preceded it. I took the Palmer Course when Mr. Frederick Palmer first opened that school. I found it then, and I still think it, by far the best. Through The Photodramatist I learned of this contest; and Mrs. Kate Corbaley now has my story, ‘‘The Prophet’s Prayer-rug.’’ I have come to the conclusion that it is only through the efforts of a reputable broker, that an ‘‘unknown’’ writer can reach the producer; and, dwelling in this out-of-the-way place, I am glad to avail myself of the Palmer Sales Department.

To those among your readers—if there
are any such—who think the writing of a screen story is a balmy, pleasant occupation, I would say that, on the contrary, it demands the ready service of more imagination, more concentration, than the story-teller must use; for where the story-teller depends on his technique and a scene or two, the good photoplay must have a sequence of as many dramatic scenes as a strong novel. Oh, no! It is no easy task to create a good movie, but for one who is ready to work and has a picture-making faculty in his imagination, this work is most interesting.

In writing for the screen, I have made two friends, whose confidence and criticism I value—Col. J. K. Gordon Magee and Mr. Bryan Irvine. These gentlemen are of the movie world; and it gratifies me immensely that I can couple their names with my first great success.

Now, while the air is rife with prejudicial attacks upon the silver screen, while the insect minds of many little people add their buzz to the general hum, I am happy to state that I have worked and studied among screen craftsmen for five years; and such of them as I have known have been both kind and true.

Many letters of congratulation have arrived; and it is remarkable that so many of them are from other contestants—those who were less fortunate than I. These in time, I shall answer; but permit me to say upon your pages that their generosity rebukes me. I fear that such kindness would never have entered my head, if I had gone down in defeat. I am afraid I should have taken my disappointment to some secluded spot and withdrawn from the world. So I have learned from their magnanimity how to accept my next defeat.

It is a great delight—this using of the pages of The Photodramatist, to gossip about my success. Moreover, I feel that all of you will deal kindly with your latest "sub-deb" among screen writers. Yes; you will be patient with me, even though your thoughts now accord with mine in the opinion that it is high time I should "Iris out!"

"Write if You Must"
By J. H. McEldowney

"I'm thinking of writing a photoplay"
Is an off-hand assertion made each day
By many, and then ourselves betray
By asking the question, "Does it pay?"
Is it tokens of wealth they would secure?
Is the jingle of coins the only lure?
Is that motive worthy? Will it insure
A picture that will for time endure?

Perhaps, there's a better payment in mind.
A recompense of another kind.
Is it looking, searching, hoping to find
The tie that man unto man will bind?
Some way to convince mankind that the cares of each individual the whole world shares?
That it's man's concern how his brother fares?
That a harvest of wheat comes not from tares?
That love in its coming brings its pains?
That to taste of joy one must share his gains?
That to fetter the feet with dragging chain,
And cripple the hands and clog the brains;
And stifle the yearnings of the soul,
Make, "What coin will it bring?" the only goal.
There is a reward when you've paid the toll.
Fame, fortune or pittance may be the dole;
Fine linen, loaves, fishes—maybe, a crust;
A canopied couch—a bed in the dust.

"No matter!" you say? Then write! For lust
Is not driving your pen—the writing will live
For you write 'cause you must.
The Screen Drama League
An Organization to Combat the Censorship Evil

A small dog attracts more attention than a large dog—because it makes more noise. When a Terrier snaps at the heels of a Saint Bernard, the bigger animal generally, in a good-natured way, ignores it. When, however, the Terrier—encouraged by the apparent indifference of the Saint Bernard—reaches the conclusion that the other really fears him and ventures to sink his teeth into the Bernard’s flank, something generally happens to the Terrier—and happens suddenly.

The average so-called “reformer,” advocating censorship, greatly resembles a Terrier. Because worthwhile men and women generally have other real work to do in this world, and can spend little time in giving him attention, he gradually becomes obsessed with the belief that he is really important—that his arguments are unanswerable, that he is a veritable “voice in the wilderness,” and before long, he follows up his snarling by attempting, figuratively, to “bite” his opponents. It is then that the “Saint Bernards” take action.

Recently, in Kentucky, the “reformers” attempted to “jam” a censorship bill through the state legislature. Kentucky chances to be the native state of David Wark Griffith, one of the greatest directors the world has ever known. Leaving important work, Griffith hastened to the state capitol. He went before the legislators, and told them, in a straightforward, masterly way, what censorship really is—and what it leads to. For the benefit of members of the Screen Drama League we are reprinting his address. We advise every reader to clip it, take it to the editor of his home newspaper and urge that it be given publicity:

“The right to express freely any thought upon any subject is the very bulwark, bone, and sinew of the rights guaranteed by our Constitution,” said Mr. Griffith. “The right to speak freely, to utterances to the law for whatever we may say, is a part of the idea of our American Government:

“Censorship is an institution of autocracy. Censorship has been in the beginning of time, the chief instrument used by autocrats, kings and rulers. If an autocrat in any form of government has the power of censoring forms of expression, he can rest assured that no one can dispute his autocratic governing power.

“This same censorious group that are working for censorship of motion pictures are brothers to censors of the past. It was these censors of the past who threatened Gutenberg, the inventor of the first printing press. It was these censors who believed that the printing press was an instrument of the devil. These censors came very near burning him at the stake.

“Had censors been waiting behind the back of Shakespeare when he was writing his plays, it is absurd to believe that he could have written those immortal works of art. Censors would have made impossible the printing of the Bible.

“Who is there to whom you are willing to give the power to say what you yourselves shall or shall not see upon the stage; shall or shall not read in the printed pages; shall or shall not see in the motion picture? The motion picture is a form of speech, just as potent as writing or a spoken word. Why should it be censored any more than the stage or a printed work? Can any man think of any other human being to whom he is willing to trust this mighty office?

“Even if we admit that there are bad pictures, (Continued on Page 36)
Common Faults in Continuity Writing
Synopsis, Being Basis for Completed Script, Should Follow Rules of Screen Technique
By Frances Harmer

ANY who live far from picture centers do not realize that continuity itself—the articulation of the story into scenes and “shots”—can never be finally done away from the studio. They do not know that consultation with the director; inspirations behind the camera; discoveries that an effective scene has been used in a recent picture and cannot be repeated—that a dozen such incidents and needs make it essential that the recreation of the story behind the camera must be a fluid and immediate thing and can not arrive by mail, cut and dried.

(This does not mean for a moment that the ability to do all this work may not be conveyed by mail!)

In consequence of this misunderstanding, many continuities arrive from all parts of the States—almost, in fact, from all parts of the world; and it is about some of the more common errors of these, as well as those written very much nearer home, that I wish to speak.

Too few writers, whose laurels are yet to be won, are able to visualize—to look at a blank wall and see thereon the figures of their characters in Moving Action.

While titles are necessary to express, to elucidate, to psychologize moods, they play a small part in the development of the story. The ideally perfect screen story—which I never saw—should be told without them.

This inability to see the action performed by acts results in such continuity items as the following:

1. “Then he tells her that while his father was a poor man, he was also honest.”

2. “She regrets her action deeply and feels that she can never do enough to show her sorrow.”

3. “Knowing that she has not a moment to lose, Elsie dashes upstairs, snatches at her coat and hat, and flies out of the house.”

The foregoing, of course, are ludicrous errors. They are almost the equivalent of the non-grammatical phrase, “I have saw”—but they are more frequent than “I have saw.”

To come to more frequent and serious faults, it must be admitted that many of them are incidental to the story itself, and I will itemize these as they occur to me:

First of all, let us in preparing a screen story for continuity, avoid time lapses as far as may be possible. The story that covers years is rarely the best story for the screen. The main exception to this rule—all rules have exceptions—lies in such stories as “The Lost Romance,” “What Every Woman Knows,” etc., in which time alone can bring about structural changes in characters and character relationships. But usually it will be found that the best screen stories, as the majority of the best plays, agree, more or less in the acceptance of the Greek unities.
—time, place and action.

Another very common continuity fault is a too minute articulation—a too careful “planting”—a too meticulous attention to detail.

As Mr. William DeMille once said, "When I see a man in a boat in the middle of the stream, I know he got into the boat; I do not have to see him approach the boat on the river bank, push it off and jump into it, to convince me that he actually did get in it, and that is enough." This has always seemed to me a very clear illustration of what I wish to say.

Reading the other day an excellent continuity by a writer who has gone from success to success, I noticed how far we had gone from this kind of articulation. In this play a man has to leave one house for another. We see him

a. Assuming his outdoor garments;
b. Descending the stairs;
c. Leaving the house;
d. Entering the automobile;
e. The automobile going through the streets;
f. Leaving the automobile;
g. Ascending the steps of the other house;
h. Being admitted;
i. Ascending the stairs;
j. Entering the sick-room of the friend he is to visit.

Now it can be seen that one subtitle, such as, "The sick man is as yet unaware that his real friend is rushing to his side," would cover all these shots.

This brings me, then, to one golden rule for continuity-writing: Do a great deal of the cutting in your writing.

In planning your story for continuity it seems better to leap from high light to high light.

Now, against all the foregoing must be set, however, the need of Proper Shading. Big moments must be lead up to gradually, but you do not lead to any big moment by a series of dull and uninteresting detail such as I have outlined above.

It is very difficult to write about errors in continuity without realizing that these errors were really made in the synopsis. And it is to writers of synopses that I should like to address the following suggestions:

Realize that the story to be told in dumb show must deal with elemental situations—with elemental passions (granted this base of strength, a coming picture, "Bought And Paid For," will show with what delicate subtlety they can finally be delineated on the screen). The story for the screen must be impelled by the momentum of a tremendous force. Underneath even comedy there must be an emotion of some strength; otherwise, the picture sends the audience away with the feeling that it has eaten a chocolate meringue.

Now, the great situations arising from elemental passions are not many in number, and the writer should study these much as a chess-player studies the pieces, trying to see what new moods fresh combinations can achieve.

I should be inclined to say, myself, that the average rejected script is rejected more for lack of strength than for lack of skill. What is written about is not important enough. I repeat the word "important." When a story is brought to Mr. William De Mille, his first question is, almost always, "What is at stake?"

Now while in life the mortgage is serious enough, it has been so much exploited on the screen as to have lost value. If it is a mere question of a man keeping or losing money, jewels, treasure of any kind, that is not really important enough because it is not elemental. In life it matters very much if one has money or not. But in telling a story dependent on money for its value on the screen we give only a sense of something at once hard and hollow, because emotion is not there.

The next element of value, so frequently omitted from the scripts I read, is the element of character. So many writers send in quite ingenious plots, with puppets moving about in them.

The power to characterize is of the utmost value in writing a story for the screen. You must have your people sympathetic. If something is to be gained by a hero or heroine, the audience must like that hero or heroine well enough to be interested in seeing the prize go to the right winner.

Not so frequently absent, though not present as often as it should be, is the element of justice. Your story should satisfy the audience that the thing "has come out right." Don't shower good things upon your hero and heroine unless they deserve to have things so showered, and even then if possible let them earn and win them.

I have read stories in which the difficulties surrounding hero and heroine were overcome by the single expedient of a leg-

(Continued on Page 36)
"The Third Dimension"
Proper Characterization Essential to Writing of Successful Photoplays

By Jessie Maude Wybro

E VERYONE who attempts to create is a Columbus, adventuring upon uncharted seas, filling sail with winds of fancy and guiding by the stars of his aspiration. Some are looking for a short route to an India of wealth and fame. Of these 999,999 out of every million perish in the attempt, and the unknown waters admit not even of the marking of their resting-place. But the true Columbus cries "Sail on! And on!"—through darkness and discouragement—through the mutiny of reason and self-advantage—through that black time, even, when the winds of fancy die and the stars of aspiration grow dim. For such, a New World waits. It may not be the world of which he has dreamed; it may be better—it may be worse. But it is a world which he himself has won, and by so much he has enriched humanity and is entitled to take his place with the creators. Drama is the most vital of all the arts. "Vital" means, "that which pertains to life." Drama must, above all else, give the semblance of life; not of a single moment, such as may be caught by painting, or sculpture, or music, but life itself,—people, who live and move and have being, who act, and bring upon themselves the results of those actions.

Between the spoken drama and the silent a great gulf is fixed. Yet, widely separated as they are, they still have certain fundamental principles in common, and the one who creates in either field must use these principles, either consciously or unconsciously. Much art,—perhaps the best art—is unconscious. That is, the artist has acquired such perfect mastery of his tools and materials that he can abandon himself to the breeze of fancy, conscious only that he is being carried on. The outcome of such a moment is as inevitable as the pointing of the magnetic needle to the north,—inevitably a vital creation. But such a moment is possible only after long striving. The mastery of tools and materials must first be acquired. Without this he might as well attempt to sail the Atlantic in a peanut-shell. And it is here—and here only—that the experience of others may profit the beginner. His fancy—his inspiration—must come from the depths of his self-hood. But the rudiments of his art he can acquire from others,—knowledge of how to use his compass, when to reef his sails and when to fling them to the breeze, and when to bend to the steady oar-stroke that alone can carry him through certain crises. In fact, he who is most skillful in availing himself of the experience of others is he who, other things being equal, is best started on the way to success.
The essence of all drama, whether it be bodied in the spoken word or flashed as pictures upon the screen is conflict,—the struggle of will against will, or will against circumstances. Conflict is made concrete,—that is reduced from general principle to definite circumstance—by means of plot. Plot, stripped to its nakedness, is merely what happens and the result of its happening. These happenings constitute the action of the play, which must be carried on by means of persons. The creation of plot, therefore, is in its process a series of created images passing through the brain of the creator and conceived as saying or doing certain things.

When I turned my attention upon this process in the effort to discover something that might be helpful to others, it was as though I dived down into the particular cauldron of my brain where plots are brewed and groped about to find what I wanted. And when I came up with a mathematical phrase in my hands, I gave a gasp of horror. Mathematics have been my particular abhorrence ever since the days when quadratic equations cost me bitter tears. But the phrase continued to stare me brazenly in the face. The Third Dimension suggests a most vital phase of the constructive principle.

As I looked back over my experience, I saw that at first these mental images had passed through my brain as flat figures, moving over a flat surface, whom I jerked hither and thither. That is, the figures had length and breadth—but not thickness! And then had come the time when I could see behind them—around them. They had acquired a third dimension!

A figure that has bulk cannot be stationed upon a background and moved by the jerk of a string. It must have space in which to move about. This space, in the case of the created image, is provided by impulses and motives arising out of the character itself, in the first place; in the second, by the antecedent causes of those impulses and characteristics. That is, why does the character do what he does do? It must not be an arbitrary action at the will of the creator. The circumstances that arise may be arbitrary. The creator has the power to postulate that this or that thing occurs. But this is as far as he may go. The reaction of the character to this happening lies in the character itself. He must respond according to the laws of his being. He rises in resistance, or gasps in defeat, according to his innate power. And the more perfectly he is created in the semblance of life, the more entirely he takes matters into his own hands. He may bid defiance to the will of his creator, and go his own sweet way. And that way is the right way! I have often had some such experience as this: I say, “Now Mary falls to her knees and weeps,” only to have Mary turn upon me with a stony stare and say “But I shall do nothing of the sort! I shall remain perfectly calm. I shall even turn an epigram!” And calmness and epigram it must be, or Mary dissolves into a hodge-podge of nothingness out of which I must recreate her a different person, or let her perish altogether and with infinite pains fashion a Jane or a Dorothy to take her place. That is, Mary has definite substance of her own,—she is a human being, with the something around her and behind her that causes her to move in given directions and in given ways.

What is this something? If Mary does as she does in response to the laws of her being, what are those laws? What is the antecedent reason for that characteristic in Mary that makes her turn an epigram when other women would dissolve in tears? Is it from the long combat with antagonisms in her own environment? Is it the heritage from a crusty, sharp-witted father? Is it the legacy of a temperamental or superficial mother? Is it some unguessed self-hood, long repressed, that arises suddenly in a crisis and takes expression in an unguessed way? In Sarah Padden’s “The Clod,” one of the strongest one-act plays that has ever been produced upon the American stage, it is the sudden flaring out of resistance in the drudge that had endured, and endured, and endured until she seemed to be incapable of resistance, that precipitates the crisis of the play and brings the solution.

Clemence Dane’s “A Bill of Divorce-ment” is one of the few really vital plays of the current theatrical season. In spite of the fact that it deals with a phase of the recent war, and that it postulates a time some fifteen years in the future,—either of which is sufficient to kill an ordinary play,—it is one of the outstanding successes in a season whose way is heaped high with the bones of the dead. In this play the treatment of antecedent causes is most significant: A taint in the blood has made insanity the result of shell-shock in the father, and accounts for a certain nervous irritability in the daughter. Here the re-

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Training is essential, according to George Wallace Sayre, who advises, from his varied experience as a studio writer, that the experienced and inexperienced screen dramatist alike must have a firm foundation of technique, on which to base the acceptable photoplay. Without this, no "story" can achieve success.

"Writing by Ear"
Photoplaywright, Like Pianist, Must be Trained to Succeed as Professional

By George Wallace Sayre

The other evening was Ladies' Night at my Club and one of the items was a piano selection by a young man. He played a very known classic with what appeared to me to be wonderful expression and with what I thought to be technique. Upon discussing the young man afterwards, with a friend of mine who happened to be a music critic, I was astounded at his statement that this young man not only had never studied but also never had a music lesson in his life. My friend considered it a very rare gift but I considered it the abuse of a rare gift, for instead of mastering the technic of music generally, thereby making himself a true interpreter of the great Masters, and perhaps a Master himself, he had allowed his gift to stagnate and himself really to debase his undoubted ability by apathy and neglect.

To look at that man so careless and unconcerned positively hurt. I have always pitied waste of any kind, even material waste, but to see a gift that is positively divine lie unheeded and unappreciated by its possessor struck me as the next thing to a crime.

Perhaps you know of someone in your acquaintance who can produce some of our finest classics upon the piano, who never studied to perform this repetition but rather doing it naturally, with a sort of divine instinct that needed only a touch of the hands upon the keys to bring out and perform blindly and innocently this work of an intelligent art. But put this same person before an audience of Music Critics. How far do you think his art would go in their minds? He lacks the most essential thing of the stronghold upon which the arts are builted, and that is technic.

On the other hand, one might have a fine voice and be able to render an operatic selection fluently, but place him before a Master of Voice Culture and note the latter's criticism.

I often wonder if the embryo writers realize what a vital connection this has with each and every one, for if he would but stop to think a moment and realize that his scenario is going before the Masters of the Moving Picture Industry, he could easily see why his effort was turned down, just as much as Hammerstein would turn down an untrained voice to sing in an opera. The Masters in any art are looking for those things which are not only inspirational but of constructive value as well.

Practicability is unsentimental and untechnically correct as imaginative; technique is an art itself that can be acquired by study. Cultivate the sense of a well-knit plot, of effective situation, and of the interplay of character and action. But on the other hand, cultivate the idea of the proper structure.

The most comprehensive element of ef-
fectiveness is proper structure. A story that does not hang well together, a work that means a mere scattered episode which has no palpable thread, no climaxes and no conclusions, is not likely to be read through. It arouses no deep interest, intellectually or emotionally, and leaves no definite stamp on the memory of the reader. The factors which it lacks are those that give unity of structure.

From this point of view, the problem of the photodramatist is to make as close-knit and thoroughly organized a plot as possible without violating natural probability in appearance or reality.

The critical apprehension of structure is one of the greatest powers to be acquired by the embryo photodramatist.

An author might have a wonderful personality which predominates his characters, the background of which is his artistry, coupled with the observations and meditations which he has practiced throughout his life, and yet he wonders how he can put all this personality, this artistry in the cold facts of a scenario. He can do this in only one way and that is by the proper technical treatment and application of his material.

The trained screen writer does not treat his story as beads on a string, running along and along, but rather as stones in a great building, placing block upon block and setting each one snugly into its place. If a certain block or situation does not fit, he knows how to discriminate, or in other words, how to build up his many situations to make a strong story that will not topple over at a gust from the critics.

Suppose you had acquired the many intricate parts that comprise an automobile, but did not know the proper structure, or the method of putting together these parts, do you think that you could build a machine that would be mechanically correct, and furthermore, one that you would dare trust upon the highway? No! You would not trust your own knowledge but would acquire the services of a mechanic that knew his business and have him build up from the parts an automobile that you would be sure of.

Every author has these parts that comprise a good story in his mind. Animate these parts of his brain-child in an improper structural manner, and naturally his story will not run past the studio reader; but, rather, will hit fully upon that solid wall and crumple, again to be returned to the originator as the same fascicule he had once started with.

The thing that is most commonly lacking in the work of a striving author is a sustained plot, worked out with close regard to cause and effect. Still more characteristically, it lacks the study of character and the intellectual analysis of such varied problems as occupy life today.

I have been forced to the conclusion that many people, both men and women, are afraid to confess, even to themselves, that they have any gift for writing. They in their sub-conscious mind glimpse the difficulties ahead and are afraid that in order to develop this gift, hard work and perhaps some vital change in their own mentality must necessarily result. They are afraid and so shirk a serious responsibility. A man has no right to hold back anything that will tend to make this world more cheerful or a better place in which to live.

The days of Lincoln are past. Very few of us now find it incumbent upon us to carry the handicap in the race for knowledge that Lincoln carried. Opportunity is knocking at our doors. It is our own fault if we fail to take advantage of it. The extra toil incurred in studying technique is not work, but recreation, and recreation in its highest and purest form. To create puts you on a level with the Gods of Olympus, but you must create worthy things. Who is there of any worth at all who does not aspire to give the world some message of good will, and to justify his existence? If we do nothing to leave the world better than we found it, we have no justification for living. To accomplish something, and something worth while, is a glorious achievement. But to do this means work and study. This work and this study should be rightly directed by experts in the art in which we are anxious to succeed.

The proper technic together with the endless variety of human life supplies an equally endless variety of themes for the Photodramatists, and the very nature of the theme will properly lead to emphasis now on the external, now on the internal, now on the ordinary, now on the extraordinary, with appropriate variation to the technical methods employed. But with all this variation the demand of our audiences, I am sure, holds for truth to the permanent and essential traits of human nature and human life, and for vitality and interest in the presentation of this truth.

So to sum up and make a grand total of what an embryo photodramatist’s needs are: viz. a study of life about him broadly and (Continued on Page 38)
First Stories
Common Errors Which Inexperienced Photoplay Writers Must Learn to Avoid
By Adele Buffington

It is probably the easiest task of all for a studio reader to select “first efforts” from the dozens of scripts which he reads daily. The inexperienced writer, in attempting his first screen vehicle, usually chooses exactly the same series of mistakes with which to clog up his “brain child” as his numerous brothers and sisters.

The average “beginner” seems either to forget or to fail to realize that the greatest demand of the screen is dramatic action. Pages and pages are devoted to mere words, sometimes describing the beautiful colors in Mary’s dress, or the disturbing thoughts running through her mind, or the melodious tone of Jim’s whistling. Imagine what it would mean to “register” color, thought, and tone upon the screen!

Some writers lose themselves entirely in their desire to create a good narrative style. It is all very well to develop an interesting narrative style of writing one’s stories, but there is such a thing as “over doing” it. Furthermore unless accompanied by a good dramatic plot, narrative is worthless as screen material.

Another great weakness in the usual “first effort” is characterization. The author seems to create merely “types,” rather than the real, human, lifelike characters. And the implausible things which they cause these poor characters to do are most astonishing. For example, there is the case of the murderer who was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was sent to the “pen” and given a suit of stripes. He found his bed was shy the usual pillow, and so the warden, who was also the hero, gave him back his suit of clothes upon which to rest his weary (?) head. Yes, he escaped that night, wearing not the stripes, but his own suit of civilian clothes. (This was not a comedy—it was meant to be serious drama.) As a warden, I might say, the hero was a good nursemaid, and I believe the audience would agree with me.

There is no better way to test the situations of a photoplay story than by determining whether they might naturally occur in real life.

The inexperienced writer should strive to create human characterization, and to make his imaginary children do the things which they would do if they were living human beings. If he draws his heroine as a sweet, lovable, self-sacrificing character, he must not later show her planning to commit murder for that would be contrary to her established nature. Untruthful characterization should be very closely guarded against as it is a very common error in the work of the average beginner.

Another very common fault is the employment of incidents in which the charac-

As a former member of the Thos. H. Ince and the Wm. Fox staffs, Miss Buffington—who achieved her success by means of several powerful, original screen dramas—has passed upon thousands of “first stories.” Her views, therefore, are certain to be practical, and of value to aspiring photodramatists.

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“Leadership”

A CAREFUL analysis of history will reveal the fact that it is largely a record of the achievements and progress of the human race—under leadership. Minus able leaders, mankind, as a mass, seems unable to accomplish anything worthwhile. The great nations, the great religions, the great industrial projects—all are a result of efficient direction by some master organizer and leader. The Israelites had their Moses to lead them out of slavery into the Promised Land; the Greeks, their Alexander the Great; the Romans, Julius Caesar; the French, Napoleon; America had her George Washington and her Lincoln. Without men such as these, our civilization today would be a sorry thing indeed.

Conditions in the motion picture industry up to recently resembled greatly those faced by the Allies prior to the day on which Marshal Foch assumed command of the armies that were battling the Hun invasion. Several factions, most of them sincere and honest in their efforts, to be sure, and striving toward the same end, were getting nowhere because of confusion in the ranks and woeful duplication of expense and effort. The picture industry needed a leader just as did the allied troops; and just as the cause of freedom was given new impetus and fresh confidence by the appointment of General Foch, so has the appointment of Will H. Hays, it appears, brought harmony and confidence to the world of motion pictures.

Although Mr. Hays has been “in the saddle” but a few weeks, the results are already noticeable. Petty animosities are being subdued; bickering between minor factions is abating; the big men of the industry are loosening the purse strings; and with the investment of additional capital, production for the ensuing twelve months bids fair to surpass that of any previous period.

Not only is there greater activity in production, but also the entire spirit of the industry seems to have changed. Artistic standards are being elevated. The cheap “hokum” is being passed up in favor of productions possessing greater moral and spiritual values. We do not doubt but that the presence of Mr. Hays is largely responsible for this new trend of affairs.

To assume leadership of this vast industry—an industry peculiar in that it is dependant upon an art—no one could have been found more fitted than Will H. Hays. An organizer of rare ability, a man “big” in every sense of the word; a man of whom it has been said, “He hates liars and side-steppers; with him there is no bunk and pharisaism; no hypocrisy; no simpering and snivelling, and no confusion,”—he brings to the film world qualities that are bound to create respect for a much maligned industry and to render a vast service to the millions who enjoy motion pictures, assuring them of entertainment of the highest order.

Much criticism has been directed at Mr. Hays for having abandoned his high political office to enter the motion picture world. Most of this, however, has been so bitter and so scurrilous in tone as to render it ridiculous; and a large portion of it has come from men who, being of small calibre themselves, have made a business of attacking big men who attempt to do big things. Aside from the results that Mr. Hays is accomplishing, we believe the best answer to the snarling demagogues who have attacked him is contained in his own statement to members of the press, upon assuming his new position:

“...The potentialities of the moving picture for moral influence and education are limitless, therefore its integrity should be protected as we protect the integrity of our churches, and its quality developed as we develop the quality of our schools. I think the day will come, and, mind you, in our day—I'm 42—when the movies will be as common in the schools as McGuffey's Reader.

“If I didn’t believe in this future of the moving pictures I wouldn't have taken up this work, but I did believe in it and I have left politics and public life forever... I am very happy to be in a cause where we are all on the same side of the table, where there is no
acrimony and everything isn’t strife. I approach this task with much concern but with that confidence which springs from an earnest purpose and from the conviction that we will have the generous help of everyone in accomplishing what must be recognized as an effort for the good of all.”

“Opportunity”

OF UNUSUAL interest to readers of The Photodramatist, should be the statement of Miss Winifred Kimball, winner of the $10,000 prize in the Chicago Daily News scenario contest, that she had heard nothing of that competitive test for photoplay writers until she read the announcement thereof in our columns.

Opportunity, through the pages of this magazine, knocked at her door, and, heeding the signal, she grasped the chance to achieve both financial and artistic success. Full credit is due her for her foresight, and The Photodramatist was among the first to congratulate her upon her success.

At the same time, however, we cannot help but take to ourselves some portion of the credit. Had The Photodramatist failed to give publicity to the Chicago News contest, in all probability Miss Kimball would never have heard of it; and in consequence, she would never have entered her story, nor have been awarded the honors she has received.

Readers of The Photodramatist may rest assured that they will receive, at all times, the latest and most authentic news of activities in the world of screen drama. Although the Chicago News Contest is now a thing of the past, there will undoubtedly be others of a similar nature. If you are not a reader of The Photodramatist, you may never hear of them.

Federal Censorship

A READER of The Photodramatist writes us that she is convinced that state censorship, as exemplified by the various boards now in office, is a ridiculous failure. She suggests that they be abolished and that the problem be solved by the appointment of a “good national censorship board.”

Undoubtedly a good national board of censorship would be a solution; but, our correspondent defeats her own argument when she states that such a body is made necessary because of the failure of the state boards to function properly. If state censorship has been so grossly inefficient and absurd, what reason is there for presuming that the character of a national board would be any different? As a matter of fact, a federal film commission would be subjected even more to insidious, political influence than are the smaller ones now in office. Men and women, whether serving the constituency of a small town or of a nation, are merely human beings, and a body of censors sitting in Washington, D. C., would be no more capable of impartial judgment than the censorship committee in Corneob Center, Kansas; and would have the power, when the inevitable errors would be made, of inflicting infinitely more damage.

Of course, there is little chance of the establishment of a national board of censorship. The constitution of the United States distinctly declares that citizens shall not be deprived of the right of freedom of expression. Admitting that some of our congressmen apparently have never read the constitution—at least the clause referred to—we still believe that there are enough level-headed statesmen at the Capitol to ward off legislation that might wreak havoc upon the citizens they represent.
Federal censorship would savor greatly of the type of government that swept Germany and Russia to destruction. It is nothing more nor less than paternalism of the highest order—and paternalism has never resulted in anything but corruptness and discontent.

“It Makes a Difference”

JUDGE J. P. DAY, prominent Oklahoma politician and noted jurist, dropped into the living-room of his palatial home, at three o’clock in the morning, some days ago; found his young wife struggling in the arms of Lieutenant Paul Ward Beck, war-hero and high in army social circles, according to press reports; and, returning with a pistol, shot the man to death. Judge Day, in his statement to the coroner’s jury, branded rumors that liquor had flowed at the party, that evening, as falsehoods; and declared that the young officer’s attentions to his wife had met with vigorous resistance on her part. Mrs. Day in a statement to the newspapers, says, in effect, that she is a victim of cruel circumstance. The jury has exonerated Judge Day of all blame, declaring the shooting justifiable, and has refused to hold him for trial. Friends of Lieutenant Beck, on the other hand, maintain that he had always been the soul of honor, and declare that they intend to see that “something is done about it.”

Nothing will “be done about it,” of course. Neither do we expect to hear of any congressman introducing a bill calling for a “probe” of Oklahoma politics, the legal profession or the social life of the army. We doubt, even, that the Rev. Straton, of New York, will preach a sermon—similar to the one he delivered recently on “Hollywood and the Picture Industry”—denouncing judges, army men and young wives as “moral lepers.”

We shudder, however, to think of the ensuing turmoil had the regrettable incident occurred in Hollywood—or if Judge Day, his wife or Lieutenant Beck had been connected, even in the remotest way, with the motion picture industry.

“Anonymous”

THE editor of The Photodramatist, being more or less human, has never held in high esteem persons who approach their enemies in the dark, from behind, and stab them in the back. No more does he relish the reading of letters attacking members of the motion picture profession, when these letters are unsigned. It is a significant fact that letters written by persons who conceal their identity are almost invariably ones in which vicious attacks are made on men and women who are beyond reproach. Writers of anonymous letters, “stool pigeons,” “informers,” spies, and others of their ilk, have always been classed in the same category. There is no place for them in the society of decent people.

The Photodramatist welcomes at all times letters from its readers. In fact, without such missives we would have no means by which to ascertain whether or not we are following the right paths, or if we are doing our best for the betterment of those who look to us for guidance. No reputable editor, of course, would presume to publish correspondence received in confidence, without permission of the writer thereof; but any reputable editor may be depended upon to consign unsigned communications to the wastebasket, no matter how important the information contained therein may appear to be.

Taxing the Pictures

STUDENTS of economics should be greatly interested in a bill recently introduced in Congress by Representative Herrick, of Oklahoma. This bit of legislation is headed, “A bill for the purpose of raising revenue and diverting a portion of the citizenship of the Nation from nonproductive employment to productive employment.” The substance of the bill is contained in the following excerpt:

“Any person manufacturing a movie film, producing a photoplay, or running a vaudeville or theatrical show shall be required to pay into the United States Treasury 50 per centum of their ticket sales, if operating a show, or net profits, if a manufacturer of films.”

The editor of The Photodramatist does not lay claim to being a master mathematician or an authority on the laws of economics. Possibly this is why it appears to us that the only result of such legislation would be to force the average man, woman and child to pay approximately one dollar to see motion picture films which they may now view for a third of that sum. Just why Mr. Herrick’s scheme would divert, as he says, “a portion of the citizenship of the Nation from non-productive to productive employment,” is not apparent. In all probability, it would divert a large number of persons from productive employment to non-employment.

The bill has been referred to the Committee on Ways and Means, and printed in the Congressional Record. We trust that the aforesaid committee, being composed of gentlemen of intelligence, will find “ways and means” to treat this bill just as it deserves.
RETROSPECTION in photoplay writing should be avoided, for the reason that it is confusing to the audience, as they are just beginning to find interest in the story when their trend of thought is interrupted by an entirely new story. However, it is permissible to use retrospection when it is impossible to construct a photoplay without it. In that case, it should be very brief. It is also inadvisable to resort to dreams and visions, although, in a few instances, this has been done with some degree of success. These examples, however, are very rare.

WESTERN pictures are always popular and are easily sold, if well constructed. However, they must be “different.” The public is tired of the old dance hall scenes and the daring twogun man, who is a superhuman character. A western story must bear new characterization—the hero must be a more plausible being, even though he possess great strength of character and win out in the conflict. Life in the west should be portrayed as it is, not as it is imagined.

NOW that the novelty of “going to the pictures” has worn off and the public as a whole is becoming more critical, it is more and more essential that photoplaywrights endeavor to give to picturegoers originality in theme and characterization. By sitting in an audience and listening to the comments of your neighbors, you may hear such remarks as “he wouldn’t have done that in a million years,” or perhaps just an ejaculation of “Piffle!” Also, in the “Why-Do-They-Do-It” columns of the “fan” magazines, may be found proof of the keen critical eye of the onlooker. Although originality and theme are perhaps more important than characterization, it is the latter that meets with the most criticism from the audience; and which, consequently, must be the most carefully studied.

COMEDY is more difficult to write than drama for the same reason that the short story is harder to construct than the novel—the time in which a given purpose must be accomplished is more limited. This fact renders it imperative that a comedy contain many more situations per reel than drama, and each bit of action must count either for a laugh or for working up to a laugh. Also, on account of the limitations of time, the subjects that are suitable for treatment are limited, and that makes it hard to construct comedies that are original.

ALTHOUGH the use of good English and correct grammatical construction are important factors in the writing of a photoplay, it is not necessary to decorate a story with flowery and non-essential language. Words do not photograph. What need to say that Tillie has “violet-hued eyes and Titian curls”—colors are reproduced on the screen in tones of black and white. Neither producer, critic nor director is interested in such minute and unnecessary detail, except, of course, such general description as will give an idea as to type of the various characters, and the general atmospheric settings. Dramatic action is far more important than a “pet vocabulary.”

SUBTITLES should not be included in the synopsis of a story. That is the work of a professional title writer. However, if you can help some particular situation by the use of a spoken title, inserted in the form of conversation, use it, as it not only helps the scene but also the characterization. The greatest care should be exercised, however, that the spoken subtitles are not overdone. They must be very short and concise.
ONE of the real enemies of the photodramatist is the star who is such a good director that he wants to write his own stories. This attempt to do everything usually harms no one but the star who attempts it. It probably does satisfy their vanity to see their name spread all over the billboards, as per: William Peppensneffer presents William Peppensneffer in, "The Camel's Last Drink," by William Peppensneffer, directed by William Peppensneffer. And then, not satisfied with that, the whole absurdity is completed with: "Copyrighted by William Peppensneffer Producing Company." Such a fabulous display of name inspires unfavorable comment by an intelligent audience which regards it as very crude. There is room enough for everybody to receive credit for the success of anything, and those connected with it should receive their just portion. The egotistical star who presents himself in his own story directed by himself cannot take the credit for the photography. The cameraman can mess up the whole thing or he can make it a work of beauty. Granting this, then why do some of our most famous stars persist in the belief that they can write? Shakespeare, Sheridan and George M. Cohan are the playwrights I recall at this moment who have been able to appear in their own plays graciously. But even these gentlemen would hesitate at shouldering as much credit as some of our screen stars like to. They have yet to learn that a very limited number of people can do two things and do them well. At present, we haven't any Shakespeares, Sheridans, or George M. Cohans in our industry.

CORRESPONDENT writes me from Milwaukee, asking me to define an idea. An idea is a thought. All there is to life is, thoughts. They are good or bad. A book, play or photoplay is composed of a series of thoughts; a series of mental pictures. The photodramatist who takes the screen seriously will endeavor to make those thought pictures beautiful in order to please the audience and give them something good to think about. A good photoplay sends the patrons out of the theatre with a series of pleasing thoughts which are not soon forgotten. All we have are thoughts, and the lives we live are in accordance with the thoughts we think. If we think good thoughts we will live good lives; if we think bad thoughts we must live bad lives. If we think good thoughts we will write good stories and many people will be benefited; if we do not think good thoughts we cannot write good stories. We can tell a man by the way he drives his car and the care he takes of it. We can tell pretty much about an author by the stories he writes. If the writer puts one real good thought in his photoplay—a thought that will improve those who see the picture—his story can be called a success.

"DON'T waste your time and energy on the movies. They don't appreciate it," says Professor Walter Pitkin of the School of Journalism at Columbia University. He informs us that he has made a study of the demands of American moving picture companies for story material. We are inclined to believe that that study could not have been an exhaustive one, for he is passing around very poor advice. His words should not be taken very seriously. He is not speaking for the film companies. He says movie editors receive thousands of contributions each week. He is wrong. They don't. If he had said hundreds, it would have been an exaggeration. However, out of that number will come the successful screen authors of the future. We might inform this learned authority that the number of plays submitted to New York producers last year far exceeded the number of scripts sent to the film producers. Pitkin has undoubtedly been reading some press agent "copy." His investigation has not been very complete and he has made himself look a little ridiculous.

Such producers as Belasco, Tyler, Lederer, George M. Cohan and Al Woods, spend a great deal of their time in reading plays written by unrecognized writers. They will tell you that some of the best plays on Broadway were purchased from new writers. If Pitkin...
A MAN sent me a script from Philadelphia and in his letter asked me if it was a good story. It was not a good story. The mere fact that there was a doubt in his mind proves that it was not a good story. The first one to be sold on a story is the author. If the author doesn't know whether it is a good story then nobody can tell him. A good story strikes the author like a cyclone and he knows as soon as the idea hits him that he has a good yarn. He will be so excited over it that his enthusiasm will know no limitations. It will make him nervous and panicky and he will sit right down and start to work. When he has finished writing it he will not ask anyone if it is a good story. He knows it is. He will immediately try to dispose of it, and if he doesn't sell it to the first producer to whom he submits it, he won't become discouraged. He will sympathize with that producer for not being able to know a good story when he reads one. If he submits it a half a dozen times, and it comes back every time, that will not cool his enthusiasm. He will send it out again. If it comes home to roost again, he will get some more postage and send it to someone else. He will eventually sell it. He will not be surprised when he does, for he knew all along it was a good story. Remember this, aspiring writers, it is just as hard to sell a good story as a bad one. Sometimes it's much easier to sell a bad one.

Assumed the responsibility of advising the aspiring playwrights to cease their attempts to write for the stage, we feel certain such gentlemen as George Tyler, David Belasco and many other leading producers would politely, but firmly, reprimand him. There are many names that have yet to be “discovered.” Many of them are among those who today are sending their scripts to film producers. It is really too bad that such learned men as Prof. Pitkin, who ought to know better, should seek to discourage those who feel they have creative ability. But, it is safe to predict that those who are sincere in their belief that they have the natural genius for creating, will not permit such erroneous statements to cool their enthusiasm. Persistence is the keynote of the explorer. But people in all walks of life, depend a great deal on it as they climb to success. In fact, they can't climb very high without it.

Mary Pickford told the members of the Screen Writers' Guild recently that in the future she wanted tailor-made stories written for her by writers who knew their screen, Producers want photoplays. They are not written overnight, or dashed off during lunch hour. Those who take the screen seriously will find that their work will be treated accordingly.

A CHAP in Phoenix, Arizona wrote me the other day to relieve himself of the belief that there was no necessity for his attempting to write for the screen—as “everybody seems to be doing it.”

We might inform him that not more than ten thousand scripts were submitted to all the producers in Los Angeles last year. The editor of most any popular national magazine will admit that he receives approximately twenty thousand stories in that same length of time. One of the largest film producing companies received only thirty-five hundred scripts during 1921. One of the largest newspapers in the country recently conducted a national scenario contest, which ran for four months and gave away thirty thousand dollars in cash prizes. There were twenty-seven thousand entrants. Another newspaper, one of the best on the Pacific Coast, held a similar contest a few weeks ago, and offered five thousand dollars in cash prizes. There were twelve hundred entrants. A newspaper in Arizona recently devoted two weeks to locating the aspiring screen writers in that state and succeeded in obtaining one hundred and fifty entrants. A Southern California daily devoted six weeks and unlimited space to a scenario contest and aroused the interest of one hundred and seventy-five aspiring writers.

There are at present over one hundred million people in the United States. This proves conclusively that the gentleman in Phoenix is wrong when he says, “everybody seems to be doing it.” The trouble at present is, that too many untrained writers are dashing off stories without giving time, care and thought to the preparation of their work. If those who possess real creative ability, real talent and genius for writing, would take the screen seriously and resolve that they would make a supreme effort, the result would be more encouraging. Contests are beneficial. They usually introduce new talent and new names.
Results of Chicago News Contest

"Unknown" Writer Wins First Prize of $10,000 Against 27,000 Contestants

WITH 27,000 contestants anxiously awaiting the decision of the judges, announcement of the winners in the $30,000 Chicago Daily News scenario contest was made on March 31st. Miss Winifred Kimball, of Apalachicola, Florida, hitherto unknown as a writer, was awarded the first prize of $10,000. Her photoplay, "Broken Chains," a story dealing with the theme of spiritual regeneration, was declared by the judges to be almost a perfect example of screen drama. It was immediately forwarded to the western studios of the Goldwyn Pictures Corporation and is now in course of production.

Miss Kimball, who won out against practically every professional in the country, again demonstrated to skeptics the fact that the art of writing for the screen is different from that of creating fiction, as only two of the professional fictionists landed in the money. The story of the winner's good fortune reads, itself, like a scenario. A member of an aristocratic Southern family which, through financial reverses, had been brought almost to the point of desperation, Miss Kimball gained success just in time to avoid losing the ancestral home, which was soon to have been sold for non-payment of taxes. With her widowed invalid sister, Miss Kimball, according to reports, has bravely maintained the burden of supporting a family left destitute and in the history of which tragedy has played an important role. Some time ago her father, his fortune wiped out by a sudden change in the lumber market, committed suicide. A few weeks later her sister's husband, driven to extremity by worry, also ended his own life. Left alone, the two sisters, with a faithful colored servant, did everything possible to fight the battles of daily existence. Hoping to find a means of support for herself and her sister, Miss Kimball took up the study of photoplay technique. For three years discouragement was the only result. Story after story from her typewriter was returned to her by the school in which she studied, as not being up to the standard. Eventually, however, building upon the lessons learned from previous failures, she constructed the drama that won the $10,000 prize, and which undoubtedly will make her famous.

The contest conducted by the Chicago Daily News has done much to encourage interest in photoplay writing, and the fact that but two professional writers were able to win prizes—both of them being authors who have made a special study of screen technique—should be highly encouraging to those who may have believed that their ignorance of writing might militate against their success in the motion picture world. A complete list of the prize winners, with the titles of the winning photoplays, follows:

First prize, $10,000: Miss Winifred Kimball, Apalachicola, Florida, "Broken Chains."


VI—CASTING THE CHARACTERS

TO VISUALIZE the type, characteristics, temperament and physical and mental qualities of a conceived character and to determine the actor or actress who can best interpret that part upon the screen and secure the services of that actor or actress, is the trying task of the casting director of a modern film studio, who, because of the responsibility attached to his position is one of the principal figures in importance in the film industry.

Such a task may not seem on first thought to be so difficult, but let us consider. In the first place, there is an infinite variety of characterizations to be filled, in any large studio where several unit companies are being cast all at the same time. This necessitates a rare qualification. The casting director must be a keen student of human nature. He must be able to pick types who look and act the part naturally. If the story calls for a weakling, he must pick a man with a weak face. If the story calls for a suave "heavy" or an eastside crook, he must call to mind someone on his list whose face and characteristics convey such an impression.

From this it follows that the casting director must be a man of long experience in the theatrical and motion picture professions. He must be intimately acquainted with the type and ability of a good majority of all the actors and actresses on the stage and screen. Such a knowledge can only be built up by years of association with stage and screen talent.

"For a point of general information," says L. M. Goodstadt, casting director at the Lasky studio, "we try to know a little something about everybody who wears a make-up—from stars to the cheapest extra people. We never can tell when we will need just such a character as a certain person might be best fitted for, both from a standpoint of type and acting ability, and the only way around the problem is to know them all, or as many as possible.

"In order to accomplish this colossal aim, I find it necessary to keep constantly in touch with what the players are doing, by seeing their work on the screen. This means that I must see at least ten or twelve pictures every week—not only our own pictures, but those of other organizations as well. When I see a picture I take special notice of the work of each player in the cast, just how much ability he has, what possibilities he may have, how he photographs and for what kind of parts he is best fitted. If possible, I see them in the theatre, as the opinion of the audience is always valuable.

In considering a player for a part, I have the director and often the studio manager or supervising director sit in with me as I run a reel or two showing his work. In a matter of such importance, several heads are better than one.

"In casting," continued the official, "we always try to combine type with the ability to act. In fact, if it comes to an absolute showdown, histrionic ability will supersede type, because the good actor can assume expressions other than his own, but the type without ability cannot do justice to a part. The ideal combination is a good actor who is also the right type. We cannot afford to take a man with little or no ability and put him in a part just because he is a type. It is also imperative to get as many well-known and capable people as possible in each cast. Some producers may have said, 'The star is popular—she is a good actress, she will carry the picture. We needn't worry much about the other players.' This is a very poor policy. To make a good picture it is necessary to have every characterization interpreted by a good actor or actress.

"In addition to selecting and employing the
players who have already achieved fame and proved their ability, we are constantly on the lookout for new talent. When we discover new personalities—men or girls who show signs of latent ability, we put them in small bits. If they do those well, we give them small parts, and so on up the ladder until they have established their respective abilities and can be entrusted to ably execute a big role. It is necessary to keep the new material coming in to supplant those who drop out or change in type because of age or other conditions. Many of the most famous screen players of today have been discovered and developed right at the Lasky studio.

The great army of extra people, many of whom depend upon the studios for the wherewithal for their daily existence, is another interesting phase of the casting director's work. There are something like five thousand so-called "extras" in Los Angeles and Hollywood. The percentage of these that climb to the top and achieve success is about one in every five hundred. The great majority of them will never be ranked as anything else but extras. Not a day passes but what a few new people make their appearance in the casting directors' offices and make known their desire to work in motion pictures.

"Nearly every extra player or beginner thinks that he or she can easily act," says Mr. Goodstadt. "They do not fully realize the verity that acting requires study and work and faithful application, just the same as all arts. It is up to us to determine just which ones have latent talent or possibilities. The first impression which a casting director gets of a new aspirant counts for much. Some, I can take one look at and realize that they have not one chance in a thousand years to succeed. Others, I can see might perhaps be useful as types and I catalogue them as such. Others show promise of good possibilities for several kinds of work—show versatility and histrionic ability. Those that are given an opportunity, I keep in mind and watch closely.

"The result of this is that we maintain at all times, a sort of reserve of about a hundred extra people—boys, girls, men and women, who have tried and proved, who we know can do the work, who have satisfied the directors and who can be depended upon.

"It must be remembered, however, that despite these figures, this profession is much the same as any other. It is the person with ability and initiative who gets to the top, and I do not believe it an exaggeration to say that it is possible to 'arrive' in less time, in motion pictures, than in any other professional line."

The average casting office has a very complete set of files which are cross indexed to save time and make them more practicable. For every principal, free-lance and extra player there is a big card with figures giving his or her height, weight and other physical data. These are cross-indexed into files of types, segregating heavies, juveniles, character people, leading women, leading men, etc. According to Mr. Goodstadt, the casting director begins his work after his first conference with the writer of the story or scenario, wherein he obtains a definite idea of the story and characters. He then goes through his list of players in the files. He chooses a leading man and if the latter is available, puts him down for the part, and so on with the other players. When the first draft of the scenario is finished, the casting director gets a copy and proceeds with his work of casting. In this he confers with the director, the supervising director and possibly the general manager of the studio. By the time the picture is ready to star, a complete cast of characters has been assembled.

A Tip

By Clarence M. Lindsay

"Say, what's the matter with my script?"
"Why doesn't it ring true?"
It's not in writing it you've tripped;
The trouble is with you!

Go get another slant on life!
Go live before you write!
Go suffer, fight, love, win the strife!—
And then you'll write 'em right!
The Guild Forum

A monthly department devoted to the interests of the Screen Writers' Guild of the Authors' League of America, the official organization of recognized photodramatists and studio staff writers.

The Screen Writers' Guild

OFFICERS
Frank E. Woods, President.
Marion Fairfax, Vice-President.
Elmer Harris, Treasurer and Executive Secretary.
Lucien Hubbard, Recording Secretary.

Executive Committee
The officers and Thompson Buchanan, Waldemar Young, Eugene W. Presbrey, Jeanie MacPherson, Mary O'Connor, Milton Schwartz, Al Cohn.

Eleven new members were selected for the Advisory Council, and the Guild roster of the council, including both old and new members, is as follows: Ruth Ann Baldwin, Thompson Buchanan, Jack Cunningham, Dwight Cleveland, Marion Fairfax, Elmer Harris, Rupert Hughes, Frederick Palmer, Peter B. Kyne, Lucien Hubbard, Earl Percy Heath, Eugene W. Presbrey, Elmer L. Rice, Charles Kenyon, Edna Schley, Doris Schroeder, Rex Taylor, Bayard Veiller, Frank E. Woods, Rob Wagner, Waldemar Young, William C. DeMille, Charles Chaplin, June Mathis, Jeanie MacPherson, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Perley Poore Sheehan, Beulah Marie Dix and Albert Shelby LeVino.

Registration Bureau

For the purpose of aiding members of the Screen Writers' Guild who are "free-lancing" or who are temporarily at liberty, the Executive Board of the Guild has established a registration bureau. This bureau will co-operate with both producers and authors, and studios which are seeking capable, experienced writers to add to their continuity or scenario staffs have expressed considerable satisfaction with this arrangement, as it enables them to secure on short notice a list of the best trained experts in screen technique to be found. A number of calls from the big production units have already been received and the positions open satisfactorily filled. Any trained scenarist who is a member of the Guild and who wishes either to secure a position or to make a change may register with the secretary of the Guild for this purpose.

Entertains Executive Committee

Frederick Palmer, well known scenario writer, was host on April 12th to members of the Executive Committee at a dinner in

NATIONAL elections shrank into insignificance on Thursday evening, April 16th, when members of the Screen Writers' Guild met at the Club House, Las Palmas Avenue and Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood, to participate in the annual election of officers.

Realizing that the coming year will mean much to the Guild and that those elected will have heavy responsibilities upon their shoulders, the members cast aside the usual jovial spirit of the Club House during the procedure, and for the time being one might have imagined that those present were voting upon the Four Powers Treaty—or that the destiny of nations was at stake. However, considering the many matters of policy that those at the helm must decide during the coming months, there was good reason for the extreme care taken by the members in the selection of the organization's leaders. The ones elected are men and women who have been foremost in the ranks of those in the movement to spread the truth about the motion picture profession throughout the country and to ward off the attacks that have been made upon the profession by various organizations and persons antagonistic to the art of motion pictures.

The new officers are: Frank E. Woods, President; Marion Fairfax, Vice-President; Elmer Harris, Treasurer and Secretary; Lucien Hubbard, Recording Secretary.

The following were elected members of the Executive Committee: Thompson Buchanan, Waldemar Young, Eugene W. Presbrey, Jeanie MacPherson, Mary O'Connor, Milton Schwartz and Al Cohn.
the Club dining room. The affair was in commemoration of the retirement of Mr. Palmer from the executive body with which he has been associated since the organization of the Guild. Those present were: Mr. and Mrs. Frank E. Woods, Mr. and Mrs. Rob Wagner, Mr. and Mrs. Tully Marshall, Marion Fairfax, Albert LeVino, Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Harris, Mr. and Mrs. Milton Schwartz, Thompson Buchanan, Mr. and Mrs. Lucien Hubbard, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene B. Lewis, Mr. and Mrs. H. E. Teter, Roy L. Mankar, Mr. and Mrs. S. M. Warmbath, Kate Corbey, Jeanie MacPherson, June Mathis, Dwight Cleveland and Eugene W. Presbrey.

Amend By-Laws

A number of changes in the constitution and by-laws of the Guild were made at the annual meeting on April 6th, upon recommendation of the Legal Committee, of which Milton Schwartz is chairman. The principal changes had to do with the method of electing officers of the Executive Board, such elections to be made directly by members hereafter instead of by heads of the committees and the Advisory Council. Various sections of the constitution and by-laws also were simplified under the new ruling.

Showing Results

Although the publicity campaign inaugurated by the Guild for the purpose of abating the vicious attacks made upon the picture profession by reformers and sensational newspapers in various parts of the country has been in progress but a few weeks, results already indicate that great good has been accomplished thereby. Literature telling the real truth about Hollywood was recently mailed to editors of all the leading publications of the country. This information was authoritative and accurate, and sponsored by many of the biggest writers in America. In consequence, the newspapers realize that the early reports printed in their columns had been founded largely upon rumor, and those of the better class have hastened to make amends for the injury that had unintentionally, in most instances, been inflicted upon the men and women who derive their livelihood from the screen. As is often the case, in cases of this kind, the wave of prejudice against motion pictures which was caused by early sensational reports of the Arbuckle and Taylor cases has not only subsided; but has, in fact, swept back in the opposite direction, overwhelming a large number of opportunists who had thought to gain political and financial profit therefrom. The Guild, however, does not intend to cease its efforts in placing the eighth art in its true light before the public, and during the coming year will carry on even more zealously its campaign of enlightenment.

Seek “Different” Photoplays

As predicted by many noted educators and other authorities, the motion picture is rapidly spreading its influence over other fields than the purely theatrical one. Despite the enormous attendance at picture theatres during the past year, the government reports showing an average attendance of twenty millions per day, an insistent demand has arisen for films to be used in connection with schools, churches, club-houses, lecture courses and other non-theatrical purposes. Such pictures, of course, will be somewhat different from the ones shown in the theatres. At the same time, they must combine the element of entertainment and helpfulness, else they would necessarily fail in achieving the purpose of those fostering them.

In a recent letter Mr. J. B. Monnette, Secretary of the Silver Shield Service, a company formed for the purpose of producing this type of non-theatrical motion pictures, outlined story requirements of that corporation as follows:

“These pictures must, of necessity, be of a much different type than those which are produced for the theatrical field. They must be pictures equally as entertaining and fascinating and have just as much suspense and human heart interest in them; yet they must be cleaner, more wholesome and upon a much higher plane than other pictures.

“For instance, a love story should be the kind of a love story that would make our young people a little more tender and kind, a little more loving, and the kind of a story that would make you and me and every other man and woman look back at their real sweetheart days. The same thing would be true of both comedy and drama. In other words, it would be the difference between the real and the counterfeit expression of such things.”
CAREY WILSON has been made associate editor of the Goldwyn scenario department, according to announcement by Vice President Abraham Lehr. Mr. Wilson joined the studio staff three months after his story, “Captain Blackbird,” had been purchased. The company has since bought from him two other originals, “This Way Out” and “Women Love Diamonds.”

BEATRICE VAN and William Parker have just sold to Robertson-Cole an original story, “In Search of a Thrill,” for Doris May.

ELINOR GLYN has been engaged to write a story, “The Eyes of Truth,” depicting life in Hollywood as it really exists. Sol Lesser will film the production.

ORIGINAL STORIES, if the following may be taken as an indication, are being given preference over adaptations. Lottie Horner and Clyde Westover have sold another original story entitled, “The Greater Redemption.” Mr. Burston has just completed production of, “The Man From Downing Street” and “The Milky Way,” by the same authors.

“THE MAN UNCONQUERABLE,” is being directed by Joseph Henabery for Paramount. The photoplay is an adaptation by Julien Josephson of an original story by Hamilton Smith.

SCIENCE has always been considered a difficult and uninteresting subject to interweave in the photoplay. However, Marshall Neilan’s next First National production is based upon the invention of the radiophone, the new wireless talking instrument.

THE SELZNICK picture units will soon arrive at the United Studios in Los Angeles, according to announcement made by M. C. Levee, president of the studio corporation. A COUNTRY-WIDE canvass by the Goldwyn Scenario Department shows that public taste is swinging toward society dramas. Consequently, the company is in the market for a series of big stories depicting life among the rich.

FOR ONCE the movies have got ahead of the magazines in the publication of a story. Clarence Budington Kelland’s “Across the Deadline,” written for Frank Mayo as an original story, is shortly to be published in a national magazine.

WITH THE PRODUCTION of “Her Man,” Marshall Neilan’s newest picture just started, artificial sets will be eliminated entirely. Mr. Neilan has leased an old fashioned hotel in South Pasadena, which offers settings for both interiors and exteriors.

HUGO BALLIN is working at the New York Biograph studio on his next production—based on a story that won the $1,000 prize recently offered by Ballin to Chicago writers.

JOHNSTON MCCULLEY has written an original story for Jack Pickford, and production will begin shortly at the United Studios.

CHARLOTTE STEVENS, the beauty contest winner from Chicago, is making her first appearance as a leading lady in a Bobby Vernon comedy written by Robert Hall and directed by Harold Beaudine and Bobby Vernon.

THE M. P. Utility Corporation will leave San Francisco presently for Japan to film two stories written by Elean Jurado.

GEORGE RANDOLPH CHESTER, the widely known magazine writer, has been made supervising editor of the scenario staff at the Universal studios.

“FIRES OF VENGEANCE,” the Irving Cummings production starring Lon Chaney, is nearing completion. Louis Weadock is working on the subtitles.

FRED CALDWELL is writing the continuity for a seven-reel comedy drama starring Jack Perrin and Josephine Hill.

EARL METCALFE will portray the leading role in Rupert Hughes’ “Bitterness of Sweet.” Hughes and Metcalfe served together as Majors in the 69th New York Regiment during the World War.

LASKY STUDIO will consider stories for the following stars: Betty Compson, Gloria Swanson, Dorothy Dalton, Thomas Meighan and Wallace Reid. Also, unusual stories for all-star special features.

UNIVERSAL FILM Manufacturing Co. is in the market for stories for five-reel productions, for either star or all-star features.

ROBERT SHERWOOD in a late issue of “Life” says: “Superficially, Hollywood has somewhat the appearance of a quiet college
town. The studios take the place of the university buildings and the picture people take the place of the students."

IT IS NOTHING new when a producer adapts a stage play for screen purposes, but a reverse of procedure should prove interesting. There is insistent talk that C. Gardner Sullivan's original screen play, "Hail the Woman," is to be considered seriously as a stage production next season.


MRS. LILLIAN Trimble Bradley has joined the Lasky scenario staff. Mrs. Bradley is the author of such successful stage plays as "The Wonderful Thing," and "Mr. Mid's Mystery" and co-author of "The Moon on the Index."

RICHARD BUTLER GLAENZER, poet, short story writer, and critic, is the latest literary celebrity to hear the call of the movies. Mr. Glaenzer has been added to the Goldwyn scenario department.

"REMEMBRANCE" is the tentative title of another personally directed Rupert Hughes production, which is said to be of the same genre as "The Old Nest."

ESTABAN LLOYD SHELDON, a well-known writer from New York, is now writing for Mary Pickford at her ranch at Crescent Junction.

**Will H. Hays Bans Arbuckle Films**

Following a consultation with the heads of the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation and Nicholas Schenck, representing Joseph Schenck, financial backer of Roscoe (Fatty) Arbuckle, Will H. Hays, head of the newly organized Motion Picture Producers and Distributors, has issued an order banning any film, in which Arbuckle plays a part, from distribution in America.

This ruling will cost the Lasky organization and Mr. Schenck several millions of dollars, since three films made prior to the now famous "Labor Day Party," that ended in the Arbuckle trial at San Francisco, have been held on the shelf, awaiting a final verdict by the jury—a verdict, by the way, which resulted in a complete exonerat-ion of Arbuckle.

Asked to explain the purposes that resulted in such a drastic ruling, Mr. Hays informed members of the press that the move was made for the best interests of the motion picture industry as a whole. "The purposes of our organization," he said, "are to attain and to maintain the highest moral and artistic standards, and the ruling has been made in accordance with that idea. Beyond that, I have nothing to say at the present moment."

**Plot Recipe**

*By Myrtle Bella Graves*

First, choose a thrilling situation  
From out the list of thirty six;  
Then add to it, Imagination,  
And stir until they start to mix.

Next plan the hero's knotty problem  
Of how he wins the girl he wants;  
Insert the force which tries to rob them  
Of love. Within each heart ensconce  
Real, life-like traits. Then add some humor.  
Have ample cause for each event—  
Write logic, not mere talk or rumor;  
And leave no doubt just what is meant,  
And then — unless your plot is better  
Than those the famous authors do,  
Best tear it up! — Make Fame your debtor  
By working; then she'll smile on you!
PICTURIZING NOVELS
By S. P. Kingston

Recently I saw the photoplay Rip Van Winkle, and while the picture and the acting are good I was disappointed because it did not come up to what I imagined or pictured when previously reading the story. This brought up the question in my mind at once, why does the picturized book story so often fail? Probably no two people picturize the same story in a like manner, even when minute details are given, and naturally most everyone will feel that the picture is not just right. You read of a mountain in a story, a hundred people see a hundred different mountains. Madam DuBarry seemed so odd in the picture that we looked it up in the book upon reaching home. So far as we could find, the picture was correct but not as we had imagined. This is where the original photoplay will always take the lead over the picturized book story. Perhaps to read the story in book form after seeing the picture would go very well, never tried it, but to read the story, then see the picture, I find generally they do not synchronize. Perhaps other readers of The Photodramatist have had a similar experience.

“HUMAN CHEER”
By Norman F. Smith

To live the longer story must in the main have cheer. It must create impressions of the soul that are fond to human memories and are beautiful to feel. Though it may tear the heart with sorrow, it must leave it sweet with human cheer ere it is done.

Cheer can only be where human sympathies are saved. Though to create it, those joyful sympathies must once be all lost, but to read the story in book form after seeing the picture, I find generally they do not synchronize. Perhaps other readers of The Photodramatist have had a similar experience.

MORE SENSE OF FITNESS
By Charles Kern

It would be perhaps a good idea if students of photoplay writing learned not only photo-play technic, but also good manners and tact. To elucidate: The other day I went to see “The Iron Trail;” a large group of men are building a railroad bridge over a river covered with floating ice. Every minute of the day they are risking their health, limbs and life. When the bridge is completed, the heroine steps up to these men and calls them cowards. The bridge is located on Copper River underneath Childs Glacier in Alaska. I recognized it at once, because I was one of the men who built said bridge. You can take my word for it, that cowards could not survive the hardships and dangers of Alaska railroad building for very long. They either turned tail or they were buried underneath three feet of frozen ground, alongside a lot of good men. After seeing “The Iron Trail” I felt naturally very kindly towards Rex Beach or whoever wrote the scenario.

Sometime ago I was a foreman, in charge of a railroad construction camp. A traveling motion picture exhibitor asked my permission to show his wares. His film depicted a railroad under construction, in one of the subtitles we railroad men were called: Human Beasts of Burden. After the performance I had to lend the exhibitor the fastest piece of snobbery, in which they were told that (Continued on Page 38)
POLLY OF THE FOLLIES
Reviewed by Elizabeth Niles

Comment: With almost no plot at all in the accepted sense of the word, this clever little comedy in the usual John Emerson-Anita Loos style affords abundant entertainment. No one but writers who thoroughly understand how to please the people could put together as many dissociated bits and make as pleasing a whole. Not the story of Polly's struggle will remain longest in the spectators' memories, though that is distinctly there as the backbone of the piece; but the interpolated shows which give the greatest opportunities for laughs. The small town amateur performance is a "riot." Because it is a "movie" there is not a word spoken; instead, signs from the store are displayed; at the appropriate moment, "Do you cut the cuticle." This is one of the cleverest burlesques on the hackneyed "movie" seen on the screen in many a day, and includes, beside, the emotions and sophisticated as well as ingenious remarks of the childish spectators. In the other interpolated portion, the inimitable "Connie" gives a screamingly funny burlesque of Cleopatra and again the subtitles carry a large share of the amusement. In spite of all the buffoonery the picture presents a theme and a number of tense situations. While exaggerated for effect, the story still contains a number of exceedingly human touches, especially when Polly sets each amateur actress doing the thing she likes to do and therefore does best. Only master hands could screen so much technique under so much humor.

Synopsis: Polly Meacham, who is but a drudge in her uncle Silas' country store, puts on an amateur "movie" for the benefit of the children when her uncle causes the local house to be closed. Meanwhile, in the city the half-intoxicated Bob Jones proposes to Alysia Potter that they elope and thus avoid boredom. Because they take in Polly's show while waiting for the justice, they are caught by Alysia's mother and promised a big wedding. Unable to endure her uncle's cruelty, Polly goes to the city, forces herself into a Ziegfeld rehearsal and masterfully engages herself for the show. Bob finds her and persuades her to come to the assistance of his mother who is trying to put on an amateur performance. Polly rearranges the affair so that each person does what she likes, and thereby makes each a success and wins the love of Bob. Alysia revolts against her mother's plans, assumes Polly's place in the Follies, and arranges matters for Bob and Polly.

LOVE'S REDEMPTION
Reviewed by Elizabeth Niles

Comment: Banal is the only word to describe the plot of this stereotyped story. It is lacking in thrilling action; there is no gripping human interest; it is not even amusing. Its one redeeming quality is that it is a very pretty story to which no censor could take exception; occasionally it is a pleasure to find the world running all so smoothly. The characterization is too crude on the part of the family in England to arouse much interest and the climax is too easily guessed. The characterization is inclined to follow the rubber stamped types, except as Norma Talmadge and Harrison Ford give their own personalities to their roles. The story without these stars and the Jamaica setting would interest very few spectators.

Synopsis: Jennie Dobson, commonly called Ginger, who has been the housekeeper for Captain Hennessey until his return to England from Jamaica, applies to the steward of the men's club for another position. At this moment Clifford Standish, a younger son not wanted at home by his snobbish family in England, reeds across the veranda and is helped upon his horse in an intoxicated condition. Ginger asks the steward for a letter to Standish. Arriving at Standish's unkempt plantation, she takes over the management of the negro servants, the unscrupulous overseer and finally Standish himself, whom she persuades to leave whiskey alone. Meanwhile a remark from a former admirer of Ginger's is taken as an insult by Standish; this reveals to him he is in love with her. While he is gone for a license, his brothers arrive from England to inform him that he has inherited a large estate; learning his relations with Ginger they persuade her to write a letter renouncing her love for Standish. In spite of protests, however, the young people are married and go to England. There Standish's family try to make Ginger appear very much out of place; after she has made a scene upon discovering a supposed friend's cheating her husband at cards she resolves to return to Jamaica. Standish agrees that his wife is out of place in England and packs up and goes with her.

FOOL'S PARADISE
Reviewed by Elizabeth Niles

Comment: The first part of the story offers an unusual series of situations which hold the interest at high tension. Not for many days has such an excellent emotional appeal been made to the picture public. The latter half of the story, however, dealing with the chase to the ends of the earth, begins a picture of
an entirely different caliber. It has its appeal but it is to the eye and not to the emotions. While the scenes are interesting as marvelous sets, they serve little purpose in the story beyond emphasizing Rosa’s lightness of character. The characterization in the first part is potently appealing and the gorgeous sets reserved for another story.

What could be more dramatic than the relations of the blind poet and the Mexican girl of the streets whom he thinks is his idolized Rosa? We can only wish the latter half had been treated more subjectively and the gorgeous sets reserved for another story.

Synopsis: Having once met the beautiful Rosa Duchene during the war, Arthur Phelps carries her image in his heart to the oil fields of Texas and decorates his shack with her posters and photographs. To her he addresses his poems. One day she is scheduled to dance in El Paso. While awaiting her arrival he unconsciously fascinates a Mexican dancer, Poll Patchouli and arouses the jealousy of her lover, Roderiquez. Because her advances are scorned, Poll thinks to play a trick on Arthur by giving him a loaded cigar. He smokes it as he stands at the stage door after greeting Rosa; when it explodes he staggers to his seat. He watches Rosa to the end of the performance and then goes utterly blind. One day he wanders into a group of men whom Poll is amusing with an imitation of Rosa. He thinks it is the real Rosa and Poll conceives the idea of winning his love by pretending to be Rosa returned to him. At last he accepts her sacrifice and they are married. They live happily until one day Poll reads in a newspaper of a great eye specialist. Realizing the risk she is running, Poll takes Arthur to him for an operation. When the bandages are removed, Arthur discovers the deception Poll has been playing and his anger knows no bounds. Only the timely coming in of his oil well saves her from his anger.

After a long search Arthur finds his beloved Rosa at the far ends of the earth at the court of Talat-Boi. He tries to persuade her to come away with him, but finds a strong rival in Talat-Boi. When forced to choose between them, Rosa throws her glove in the alligator pit in which Arthur is thrown down. When Talat-Boi, who had immediately jumped into the pit, loses his footing and in falling strikes his head against a stone, Arthur jumps to his rescue. Disillusioned Arthur returns to Texas and though Poll scorches his friendly advances, he is saved from the knife of Roderiquez by her throwing herself in front of him. Roderiquez flees and Arthur and Poll are reconciled.

ONE GLORIOUS DAY

Reviewed by Laura Jansen

Comment: A very interesting story, which may go over the heads of many people, however. The dramatic tempo has been well carried on until the time it turns into farce, then it switches back into drama. Without Ek, a joyous imp, the story would be quite commonplace. It is an interesting novelty, no more.

Synopsis: Taking the commonplace little story of a pretty girl loved by a bashful professor and desired by a wealthy young man, the authors, by working in spiritualistic doctrines and bringing the character of "Ek" an unborn soul in search of a human body have created a unique story with a great deal of laughable action and some drama.

Ezra Botts, professor, is very shy. He is considered as a "nut" by the village people and is interested in spiritualism, claiming that he is able to release his spirit from his body and will do so at a certain time. This claim is made before a group of enthusiastic spiritualists.

Botts lives alone and Mrs. McIntire is his housekeeper. Her young daughter, Molly, has long been in love with the professor but he does not notice it. Ben Wedley, rich and idle, sees Molly and wants to marry her. Mrs. McIntire would not be averse to the marriage and, Molly accepts Ben rather reluctantly, it must be said.

The professor is supposed to send his spirit at ten o'clock to entertain the gathering at the spiritualistic society. Ben's mother leaves her home for a visit and Ben calls up Molly, saying his mother is ill and wants her. Botts is half asleep in his library, preparing himself for the experiment.

Pat Curran, a grafting politician has been fostering the candidacy of Botts for mayor as he hopes to be the real mayor and reap a big harvest in graft. The professor has weekly done everything Pat has ordered, so far.

"Ek" the spirit of an unborn child, waiting his turn to reach the earth in a baby's body, decides he is tired of waiting, shoots through acorns of stars and satellites and lands on the earth, one second too late, as the stork has brought the baby into whose body he intended to creep. He wanders aimlessly and listens to people talking about Bott's expected harvest, which is controlled by men's deeds and desires and watches an opportunity to find a body.

This opportunity comes when the professor succeeds in making his soul leave his body and "Ek" creeps into it. While the spirit of the professor wanders outside and goes to the spiritualistic meeting where he fails to make the people "see" him, and, in despair decides to re-enter his own body, "Ek" takes Bott's body first to the club where Ben, Pat and others are drinking. He drinks after knocking down several men down. When Ben arrives, Bott's body is a big cigar and a mug of beer, encountering the spiritualists, leaving the hall, convinced that Bott's failed in his attempt, and shocks them all.

He then goes to a gilded cafe where he has a good time. Pat, who has been advised of the strange behavior of his mild candidate re-proves him and is properly beaten, the onlookers, voting to support Bott's candidacy, pleased with his new self.

Molly, before leaving the house, since her mother has gone to a picture show, left a note for Botts advising him that she had gone to Wedley's house. Botts finds this note and hastens there, while his spirit, dejected, goes home and is staggered to find his body gone. He begins an aimless search for it. He meets a soul just leaving a body after a night attack by gunmen but refuses to accompany it to Heaven. He must find his own body first.

Botts runs to Wedley's and arrives in time to save Molly from an attack by Ben, who is thoroughly drunk. Ben gets treated roughly and Botts tells Molly of his love. He takes her home where her mother has been anxious.

(Continued on Page 38)
Q. Which is it advisable to write from a commercial viewpoint; drama or comedy drama? V. L.
A. It is our belief that good comedy drama is the easiest to sell.
Q. What should be the difference between a Brief Synopsis and a Detailed Synopsis? M. S. T.
A. The brief should contain a short statement of the purpose of the story and the main situation. Any claim to novelty or originality in treatment should also be indicated. In other words the brief is chiefly valuable in interesting editors in the reading of the detailed synopsis. The detailed synopsis should tell the story in a straightforward manner omitting nothing that is of value in characterization, creation of atmosphere or plot development.
Q. What is the difference between a Multiple Reel and a Serial? H. Mcc.
A. Multiple Reel is usually applied to subjects over five reels—Super Features. A Serial is released in installments; two reels a week—about fifteen episodes.
Q. Which is better to use, a prologue or a cutback? N. Q.
A. It is much better to avoid prologues, or retrospective action, in the main body of the story. Generally this can be accomplished by proper construction of your plot material. If it is necessary to show action which takes place several years previous to the main action of the story, it is generally better to make use of the cut back. It is difficult to advise you definitely in regard to this question without your material before us, as a great deal depends upon the construction.
Q. Why don't we see more children's stories upon the screen? The average audience is over twenty-five and sometimes fifty per cent children, and to my idea this fact should be considered by the producer. What is your opinion? R. S.
A. You are right in your contention that the screen should have more good children's stories and that children should be considered as an important part of an audience. We believe producers are coming to realize this more and more because there have been some excellent productions recently such as the Edgar stories of Booth Tarkington and the Jackie Coogan and “Freckles” Barry stories.
Q. Is it good policy to use a business deal as the foundation of a photoplay story? A. E.
A. Business deals, when used in photoplays, can only be made interesting when they serve as the background for a big emotional dramatic conflict. Be careful, therefore, not to allow the business conflict to predominate over the character conflict.
Q. In writing a photoplay synopsis is it necessary to put in every little detail and happening? Is that not the continuity writer's job? W. P.
A. Do not place too much burden upon the continuity writer. Develop your action and incidents thoroughly. By this we do not mean that you have to describe every trivial movement of the characters, but merely all action and incidents that advance the plot to lesser or greater degree.
Q. How long should a photoplay be? Have understood that brevity is desired. M. B.
A. There is no standard rule. Needless conversation should be eliminated, and also long descriptions. Make the story interesting to read, and one that will hold the attention of the readers. It is not the length that counts, but the subject matter and the appeal. F. W.
Q. Is it necessary to copyright my stories? B. R.
A. If you desire absolute protection against infringement, by all means attend to the copyright. After this has been taken care of, plainly write this upon the first page of the manuscript, giving the date and the Act under which it is copyrighted. A. P.
Q. Just what is meant by characterization? A. J.
A. It is the detailed description of each of the characters in your story. For instance, their clothing, individual traits, habits, characteristics, actions, and even their ideals that must be shown in action upon the screen. D. B.
Q. I am mixed up on the terms “theme” and “plot.” These are used in many publications. Will you kindly explain the difference? W. N.
A. Theme is the base upon which the story is founded. Plot is the elaboration of this base or theme. For instance, in “The Old Nest” the theme is “Mother Love,” the plot is the skeleton, or outline upon which the story is built. M. M.
Q. Should the cast of characters simply state the names of the people or should it explain and describe each character? D. N.
A. The cast should give the names and a brief description of each character and should also state their relationship to each other.
Q. Should I use the present or the past tense in writing my synopsis? H. L. M.
A. This is a matter of individual choice. However most screen writers prefer the present as they feel they can present their story somewhat more forcibly and as if it were an actual happening of the moment. A. M.
Q. Do court room scenes make good climaxes to a story? S. K. D.
A. Generally speaking, no. The reason for this is that it is not too impossible to get the excitement into them that is present in the real thing. There is bound to be a certain amount of formality in a court and this has a tendency to repress what might otherwise be big emotional scenes. If the climax can be arranged so that it takes place in less formal surroundings, there is a far better chance to bring out the individuality of the characters.
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In a national search for new screen writers, motion picture producers are combing the highways and byways of American life for everyday people to write screen stories that will command the handsome figures they offer. In the last six months more than $50,000.00 in scenario contest prizes have been offered by producers and newspapers in the quest for screenable stories.

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Recently a California school teacher; a Chicago society matron; a Pennsylvania newspaper reporter; an underpaid office man in Utah; a prisoner in the Arizona state penitentiary and many others, sold their stories at handsome prices, became studio staff writers or won big sums of money in scenario contests. Not one of these was a recognized author; not one was a master of literary skill. All were sought and discovered by a photoplay corporation aiding the producers in their search for undeveloped screenwriting talent through a novel questionnaire test. You have the same opportunity to test your ability to write scenarios.

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For your convenience the coupon is printed on this page. The questionnaire is free and your request for it incurs no obligation on your part.
Common Faults in Continuity Writing
(Continued from Page 12)

acy. That is not real justice, because it is good fortune. Let the prize, whatever it may be, come as the just reward, not the accidental reward, of true merit.

But I come now to one of the things more frequently omitted from the average synopsis submitted almost than anything else. I mean beauty.

It is astonishing (and here we go back to what I said at the beginning; that very few would-be writers seem able to visualize) how little provision writers for the screen make up for the eyes of the audience—astonishing how seldom they give us sufficient beauty.

I believe any director is instantly attracted by a setting that means beautiful, or even unusual, shots.

In this connection I close with a “pointer.” One of the European plays attracting very much attention because of its originality was “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari.” Many directors would welcome a story that gave as logical a reason for having settings so unusual and interesting. Who will invent us one?

The Screen Drama League
(Continued from Page 10)

there are also words spoken that should not be spoken, plays which should not be shown, books that should not be written, but not on account of these shall we lose the priceless heritage of free speech? Prosecute the offenders against decencies, but do not lose our right of freedom, our right of expression.

“No picture can please everyone. Each human being thinks differently on different subjects from every other human being. Thus it is that a picture which may seem all right in the West or in the East may displease the South, and vice versa. Three individuals in each area will view a picture. By the time they get through with it, there would be nothing left of the original picture, while, if seen by an average normally-minded audience in its beginning, there might not have been a single thing in it to offend them.

“Censors are to be appointed by the party that happens to be in power, as I understand it. Follow this out to its logical conclusion, and let the political party that happens to be in power appoint censors, show only what they want to be shown, and eliminate what they do not want to be seen or heard, and they could become seated on a throne of autocracy forever.

“The bigger and better class of films are not made for children. Do you want to censor all of these—ideas that are put into pictures and shown to grown-up people—according to the idea of a child six or seven years of age? If the laws upon the Statute Books are not strong enough to punish adequately the guilty, then make them stronger; but let us leave censorship where it belongs—to the government of such as the late Kaiser of Germany, and the late Tsar of Russia, and the old intolerant governments that broke men’s bodies upon racks and wheels of torture.”

“The Third Dimension”
(Continued from Page 14)

action to circumstances goes back beyond the characters themselves to the inherited strain. This causation is so powerfully presented that critics have repeatedly referred to the play as a study in hereditary insanity. I disagree with this label most emphatically. It is first of all the portrayal of conflict between desire and duty; and it is the wife’s conflict primarily, not the daughter’s. It is the daughter’s discovery of the hereditary taint that solves the situation, true; and the daughter’s conflict is a poignant one. But it is the reaction of the wife upon which the plot turns and that makes it her conflict.

The treatment of this principle of the third dimension, more than anything else, perhaps, marks the difference between the mere literary workman and the artist. The workman has a certain skill in the use of his tools, he can turn out an article for which he receives payment. But a workman is a workman. And unless he can acquire that instinct by which he gives depth and vitality to his creations,—until, in other words, he can endow them with the third dimension,—he can never be an artist.
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First Stories
(Continued from Page 17)

He can make the proper and correct presentation of his observations. One might observe for years, but without the knowledge of the proper technic, his story will not get over.

scene where the child grabs his blue-eyed companion by her fair hair and drags her out of the path of the on-rushing taxicab! After witnessing all this, it is no wonder that the audience becomes confused and wonders what story the author is really trying to tell—Betty’s story and her oil problems, or the story of Jenny’s cute little heroic nephew. Getting the audience confused is one of the curses of retrospection—and yet, the beginner seems to insist upon writing his story in such a way that retrospects of every nature, form and size burst right in upon each seemingly worth while dramatic situation.

Writing by Ear
(Continued from Page 16)

intensely, to feel himself in a world significant at every point and palpitating in response, to study the customs and conditions of the people of whom he is writing, and on top of all this to study technic so that he can make the proper and correct presentation of his observations. One might observe for years, but without the knowledge of the proper technic, his story will not get over.

Photoplays in Review
(Continued from Page 33)

ly waiting for her. There he faints. Ek, disgusted, leaves his body giving a chance to Bott’s own soul to re-enter his body, which he does.

The professor is brought to and becomes accomplished a little good, decides that after all, it might be best to await his turn to go back into the earth and floats back to the limitless spaces.

Comment From Student Writers
(Continued from Page 31)

it is not well for the rich to mix with the poor and that it is preposterous for the poor to aspire to be rich. The budding scenarists, who do not know the meaning of the word Democracy, should see “The Ruling Passion,” which is in beautiful contrast to “Saturday Night.”

Twenty-four years ago the Spanish American war was brought to a successful conclusion. Last week a picture was shown on Broadway, in which the villain is a villain because he is a Spaniard, in which a mob commits a very unchivalrous act, because it is composed of Cubans. The hero is a hero because he is a prohibition agent. Prohibition is no doubt a very popular institution with people like the author of “A Game Chicken.” The heroine in this play is more than “game.” With her great talents and beauty she saves a hopeless and mannerless play from becoming an absolute failure. Eventually “A Game Chicken” will drift to South America, and no doubt it will help to boost the American motion picture industry.

People who are too narrow minded to overcome their ingrown prejudices, people who want to use the screen to make propaganda for their pet theories and bigotries will do well to stay with their present vocations of manuring cows, grooming bed-rooms and posting ledgers. The motion picture industry will be better off without them.
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But he does meet H. G. Wells and Sir James Barrie and Barrie asks him to play Peter Pan.

In Berlin Charlie meets Poli Negri. He is enchanted. “She is beautiful. She is Polish and true to the type. Beautiful jet-black hair, white, even teeth and wonderful coloring. . . I ask Kaufman how to say in German, ‘I think you are divine.’ He tells me something in German and I repeat it to her. She is startled, looks up and slaps my hand. ‘Naughty boy,’ she says. The table roars and I sense that I have been double-crossed by Kaufman. . . I learn later that I have said ‘I think you are terrible.’ I decide to go home and learn German.”

This is just a peep into the fascinating book, “My Trip Abroad,” by Charlie Chaplin; Screenland has just secured exclusive publishing rights of this amusing account of the great comedian’s triumphal journey in Europe and will publish it serially, beginning with the June issue.

No writer should miss these intriguing glimpses into the lives and thoughts of the greatest modern authors. If you would know Barrie as Chaplin knows him; if you would meet H. G. Wells in his home; if you would wander through London slums with Thomas Burke, the gifted author of “Limehouse Nights,” by all means read every instalment of “My Trip Abroad.”

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