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TECHNIQUE OF THE PHOTOPLAY

THIRD EDITION

BY
EPES WINTHROP SARGENT

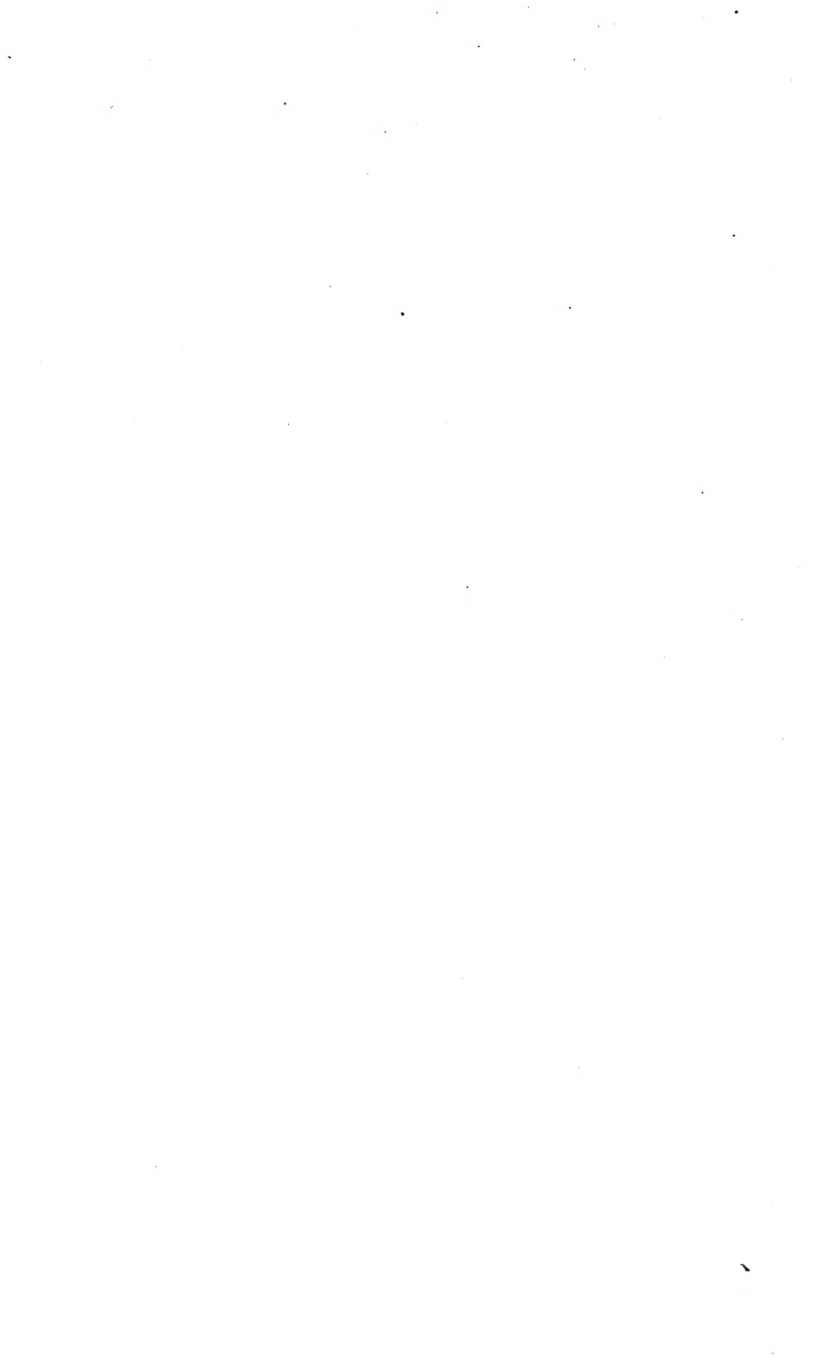
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TECHNIQUE
O F T H E
PHOTOPLAY

THIRD EDITION

By

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT

— Published by —

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Key to Chapter References

CHAPTER headings have been arranged to serve as a rough analytic index, and all material on any subject is substantially found in the chapter in which it belongs, but to provide a more complete study of the subject by topics related matter in other chapters has been indexed by cross references at the end of each chapter. Each paragraph of the various chapters is numbered, affording a ready means of reference to the precise matter intended to be read. All references to a paragraph of the current chapter are contained within the same parenthesis marks. Where but a single reference is given the first Arabic numeral refers to the paragraph of the chapter being read. The Roman numeral refers to other chapters and the second Arabic numeral to the paragraph in that chapter. Thus (5.XIX:3) indicates that Paragraph 3 of Chapter XIX should be read by the student in connection with Paragraph 5 of the chapter under study. If two or more combinations are given within the same parenthesis marks, all refer to the same paragraph indicated by the first Arabic numeral.

These references are given for the benefit of those who would make a detailed study by chapters and to aid those who may use the work as a college text book. If the entire work is studied, these cross references are not essential and may be ignored.

FOREWORD

IN offering a Third Edition of *Technique of the Photoplay* it has been the aim to take the material of the second edition and through rearrangement make the information more readily accessible. It is for that reason and not through any desire to suggest a more important work that the chapter headings have been increased from thirty to seventy-two. Under the new system of dividing, the various elements of the play may be taken up in detail without the intrusion of other discussion. A series of foot-notes to each chapter will refer the reader to related matter in other chapters. In this manner all of the information upon any topic, no matter where it may appear, will be available to the student who wishes to concentrate upon that particular phase of photoplay without the use of an analytic index.

Another departure will be found in the presentation of examples of script writing other than the form used and recommended by myself. The precise form in which the play is written is a negligible matter compared with the writing of the plot in graphic action, but it is essential that the form be clear and easy to follow. Through the courtesy of Phil Lang, of the Kalem company; of Bannister Merwin, of the London Film company; of Marc Edmund Jones, Norbert Lusk, Walter E. Mair and Emmett Campbell Hall, a variety of examples, each having its good points, is presented from which the student is at liberty to make his choice. But one complete script is given because the complete script is seldom helpful as a guide and is apt to be confusing. All of the examples are reproduced from the actual typewritten page and not merely set in typewriter type, the line about each defining the limit of the page. This shows the exact placing and spacing and will give the student a better idea of script preparation than can be gained from the printed form. The use of typewriter type in the body text has also been dropped in favor of contrasting type since now there is a better form to follow.

More space is given the multiple reels, which were just coming into favor when the second edition of this work was in preparation; but the multiple reel is merely a longer script than the single reel and does not require very extended comment save suggestion as to the manner of laying out the plot. Some correspondents have suggested that a book might be written on the preparation of the multiple reel alone, but it is believed that the matter is fully and sufficiently covered in the material here presented. With the multiple reels, as with the single subject, it is not possible to tell how to write but what should be done to write.

To be of service, this book should be regarded as a text book, to be studied. It is not to be read through once. It must be absorbed. It supplies the information necessary to the writing of photoplays, but the individual must learn to apply the information for himself and in his own manner.

The Second Edition has been accepted as standard in many studios both here and abroad, and has been recommended by practically everyone in authority. It is the hope of the writer that this Third Edition will be found even more helpful because of its arrangement. It is offered with sincere good wishes to those who aim to take up the writing of photoplays, but they are reminded that success must come through their own work and effort and not through the purchase of a book.

And lastly I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Honorable Frank K. Shaw, to whose suggestion this new form is partly due and to whom I am indebted for much practical and helpful advice.

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT.

Waterville, Maine, 1916.

Technique of the Photoplay

DON'T forget that the heart and soul of the scenario is its story. That is the great thing, the essential thing, and the all-important thing about the scenario. If the story is a fascinating thing of heart-interest or mystery, or full-blooded adventure, then your scenario is good at heart.

But just as the finest soul in a man has to have a body with muscles and eyes and arms and ears and tongue before it can be of any earthly use to other men, so the greatest story must be skillfully, dramatically presented, and in such a way that all the in-between artists who are to help the story on its way to the screen, and thus to the minds of the picture-goers, will be able to understand exactly what to do in order to make the story clear and fascinating.—*Philip Wright Whitcomb, Hepworth's, London.*

PART I

INTRODUCTORY

BEFORE taking up the study of photoplay writing, it is necessary to know what the photoplay is and something of the business in general. This brief division will give the student a survey of the field and some knowledge of studio needs and methods. It is not intended to be complete and exhaustive. This, if properly done, would constitute a volume in itself, and those who are interested are referred to works dealing with this subject alone. It should be borne in mind, however, that too close a study of production *from books* is more apt to be hurtful than helpful. A thorough and intimate practical knowledge of the studio is helpful, but it must be gained through constant presence in the studio and not merely from a few visits. Unless one knows thoroughly the methods of work there is danger that a half knowledge will work against the best efforts of the author. The study of photoplay acting in so-called schools will not be helpful in the slightest degree and, unless the student has actual employment in the studio, it is best not to make an exhaustive study of production methods, but to concentrate upon the writing of good plays. It is not for the author to worry as to the precise manner in which an effect is to be produced. It is his duty to indicate the effect desired and to leave the rest to the director and his camera staff.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

BEFORE taking up the study of the technique of the photoplay, learn clearly what technique is. Technique is not, as many suppose, the code of rules for mechanical form. That is a part of technique, but by far the least important. The manner of writing down music is a part of the technique of composition, but the same notation is employed for the jingling song of the street and to express the musical thoughts of master minds. Both look alike, but properly interpreted, one shows the work of a genius and the other that of a charlatan. Both look alike, but only one is a masterpiece.

2. It is precisely the same with photoplay. Any person of average intelligence can quickly master the simple rules of form and prep-

aration. Given a sample script and a brief explanation, and the schoolboy can turn out a product that looks much the same as the work of a writer of merit. There are the same leaders, the same inserts, the same numbered scenes. Intelligence alone is lacking. The technique of form has been superficially mastered, but the greater technique, the technique of creation and development, is a sealed book still.

3. It is important that the author should be able to express his ideas in the clearest and most intelligible manner. It is necessary that the greatest of creators should write in the exact form that is taught the novice. There are some who profess to be superior to these needs. They discard the technical form and write as they please. Generally it is because they are lacking in the ability to write in form or are too lazy to study it. Their ideas must be made over into practical working scripts by some studio employee when their scripts are taken, because of the excellence of the idea. They are mentally deficient in this one point, for the thoroughly equipped author is familiar alike with creation and form and is able to communicate his ideas to others in proper form. He can not only think good plots but he can expose these plots in the proper action.

4. Technique, then, is the combination of an idea and the expression of that idea in competent and adequate action.

5. But technique of form is something more than the mere setting down of idea in words of action, in leaders and in inserts. Even in this seemingly mechanical process there lie vast possibilities. The novice writer merely does his idea into action by scenes. The artist-author so skillfully and cunningly contrives and places these scenes that each helps the others and so gives to the idea its fullest and most complete exposition. This is something that few realize and that many cannot understand. Too many accept the proposition that a photoplay is merely a certain number of scenes and the proper inserted matter written in set form. If the product looks like the model they follow, they presume it to be as good as that model. They cannot understand that the artistry of scene placement gives to one script a value superior to another.

6. Unless the reader here and now comes fully to a realization of the fact that technique is complex and many sided, that the technique of form alone is but the means of expressing the technique of idea—of creation—it will be well if he close this book at once and give no further thought to the study of photoplay writing. Photoplay writing is something that cannot be taught or communicated in any way. There is not, and in the nature of the work can never be, devised any system of instruction that can make competent the unfit. You cannot *read* this book and write photoplays. You cannot *study* the volume and write plays unless you are gifted with the proper quality of imagination and are willing to cultivate and develop this imagination through hard work. Unless you are willing to work hard for perhaps a year or more without

immediate financial return, it is useless to undertake the study of photoplay writing.

7. The technique of the photoplay is like the technique of speech. A study of and adherence to the rules of grammar and pronunciation will enable any person to speak correctly; the clown as well as the thinker. But it is the thought expressed in this correct speech that alone gives value to the words.

8. The mathematician and the primary pupil may alike add two and three and gain a total of five, but only the former can perform the higher operations and devise new and more simple methods. In the same way the rules of photoplay form tell you how to express yourself properly, but they cannot enable you to think, and it is thought and the expression of thought that is of value. Patrick Henry might have said "I will die before I longer submit to the despotism of the King." His skill in the formation of phrase brought forth the immortal "Give me Liberty, or give me death." The idea is identical, but the expression of the idea differs. In photoplay it is the same. You must not only have the idea, but you must be able to present this idea in its best and most favorable light if you would gain the best results.

9. This book, then, does not teach you to write photoplays. It teaches you how they should be written, sets forth the rules and makes such suggestions as can be given from the experience of others. It offers all the help that can be communicated, but it does not profess to make you an author. It will assist you in learning correct form and aid you to avoid the common errors, but it cannot shorten by a single instant of time the length of your study period.

10. The would-be athlete does not hire some substitute to put up the bar-bell or work the weights for him. He knows that this will benefit the substitute but that it will not do him a particle of good. A qualified instructor can show him how to handle the bell and tell him what weight exercises he should employ to gain the most perfect and even development, but the work must be done by the man who would gain the benefit. It is precisely the same way with photoplay writing. You must first develop your imagination to the highest point of efficiency and then train it to work along the proper lines. Each time you exercise your imagination you develop it, just as in working with the weights you develop your muscles through use.

11. Few outside of the editorial offices realize the harm that has been done through the advertisements of schools, sales and revision bureaus. From the infancy of the business the lay press has carried the advertisements of these swindles and the public has grown familiar with the statement that "anyone can write photoplays," that "no literary experience is required," and that a play can be made salable through the expenditure of a few dollars. As a result, too many aspirants approach the work with a spirit of contempt

or assurance. They write a few plays, carelessly and without thought. They send these to the studios and they are returned. They waste time and money on a school course or on a revision bureau, then they abandon the work in disgust.

12. Not "everyone" can write acceptable plays. Back in 1909 and 1910 the motion picture business was in its second stage of development. Photoplays had progressed from the fifty-foot comedies of 1896 to the full-reel lengths of 1903. Most of this stuff was written in the studio, generally by the man who directed the production. Now and then outside ideas were taken and paid for at the rate of from two to ten dollars. In those days "anyone" could sell to the studios some such idea as this:

Write a story about a little boy who goes about with a pin in the toe of his boot, kicking people. He kicks a policeman who is telling an old lady where to go, and they both fall down. Finally the boy is chased into the river.

This required no great effort, but if the suggestion was new to the studio it could be elaborated into a play. By 1908 this source of supply had failed to keep pace with the improvement in the pictures and there began to appear alluring advertisements that read "\$10 to \$100 paid for plays."

13. At once the studios were flooded with ideas and crude plays. Men of judgment and literary skill were employed to read and reconstruct such ideas as were accepted. To lighten their work they issued free instruction sheets, wrote articles for the magazines appealing to writers and, where it seemed that the author was worth while, they supplemented this with personal correspondence. All ideas were relatively new then and it was not required that the script be in exact form, since the editor expected to reconstruct the story for the director.

14. Today most companies demand not alone a good story but one in proper form. The men who sell the bulk of plays are those who know how to write out their ideas so that any qualified director can, by following their scripts, make an acceptable play. In addition most studios maintain staff writers to write original stories and reconstruct the work of others. The day of the tipster has passed. No longer is it possible to dash off stuff and sell it, nor do Editors spend much time giving free instruction. They are too busy with more important matters, and there are other sources of information now. The widow, the cripple and the girl who suddenly finds herself compelled to go to work (all familiar types to the Editors) must now learn their profession before they can practice it.

15. The developments of the future, it would seem, will still further help the practiced writer. Frank E. Woods, who as "Spectator" in the Dramatic Mirror did much to advance script writing in the early days, and who was the first to force upon the makers of film an appreciation of the need for good stories, is now chief assistant to David W. Griffith. In a recent letter he says:

The thing which makes the professional writer indispensable is this. That every producing company has its stock company of players whose peculiar qualities must be taken into consideration in the selection of stories. This is also true when stars are engaged; the picture must be chosen for the star and not the star for the picture. It is therefore difficult to find book or play material which is the proper vehicle for star and stock company players, and it then becomes necessary to write original stories that will fit all conditions. This is why the staff writer is so necessary in feature as well as regular program work.

From this condition some of the discouraged argue that there is no chance for the free lance writer, but it must be remembered that the free lance of today is the staff man of tomorrow, if his work is satisfactory to some studio, and it is in preparation for this work that he is now free lancing and making a record for himself.

16. Today, as in the past, literary skill is not required in expressing the story in words, but almost weekly the demand increases for scripts with ideas of a higher degree of literary merit. Florid expression in a plot of action is out of place, but the five reel story must contain an idea as meritorious as that contained in the average novel. Literary skill and judgment most assuredly are required of the author in plotting his story as well as in originating ideas, but literary expression can be shown only in the leaders.

17. To sum up: The writing of photoplays has ceased to be a pastime whereby the dabbler could make a few dollars. It is now a profession and must be prepared for with the same serious attention as any of the other professions. It is well for the competent that this is so. If the writing of photoplays was a simple matter, requiring no great mental equipment, the prices would remain as they were when a five-dollar check was uncommon and a ten-dollar payment a curiosity. Better work is required, for which better pay is offered, and it is now possible for an author to obtain a rate of remuneration commensurate with the value of his work; and this condition, it would appear, will improve steadily as the need for better stories is more fully realized. Be willing to work if you would win, and apply yourself with diligence to the period of preparation that you may become fully qualified to follow your profession.

(5.IX:10 LXX:4) (6.VII:2 LXX:5) (10.LXII:11) (II.LXX:3)
(15.XLIX:5) (16.XXIV:25 XXXI:22 LVIII:4).

CHAPTER II

THE MANUSCRIPT DEPARTMENT

THE first step in the making of a photoplay is to procure a story. For this purpose each studio maintains a manuscript department, where the stories are prepared. It is in charge of an Editor who has under him one or more clerks and a staff of writers and reconstructors. He is supposed to see that the directors are kept supplied with suitable stories for production and either to purchase these or arrange for their preparation by the staff.

2. The Editor is generally a man of sound knowledge of general literature and familiar with current production of stories and photoplays. He must have a good knowledge of studio procedure and familiarity with the players under engagement to the company. He should be thoroughly in touch with the producing heads and know precisely what style of productions it is their desire to obtain. He has charge of all manuscripts sent in for consideration and is required to see that they are handled as promptly as time and the pressure of other duties permit. He is supposed to keep in personal touch with authors of known ability and to some extent to encourage those unknown writers who display unusual promise.

3. His staff of writers work under his direction and in accordance with his suggestions. He may have only one or two staff men or may have a dozen, but generally the staff is small—writers in close touch with the studio needs and known as inside writers supplying the special wants. He may also have some contract writers who supply a story a week or every two weeks or once a month. These are either men whose work particularly pleases some director for whom they write exclusively, or they may be particularly good at a certain type of story or familiar with an unusual phase of industry about which they write. A manufacturer planning a series of railroad stories, for example, will not make a costly contract for their production and then trust to luck and the free lance authors. He first makes a contract with some author familiar with railroading, the author getting a certain specified amount for each story.

4. It is generally the aim of the Editor to provide for a certain fixed supply of material and to be in touch with others who can help out in an emergency, but writers are prone to think along certain restricted lines and the Editor turns to the general market for novel stories with which to vary the program. Moreover he knows that he will by this means keep in touch with the rising writers. It is a mistake to suppose that an Editor does not watch the newcomers. Any good man can reel off long lists of names of writers he has under observation. If he finds that they write the particular line of stories that his company needs, he will presently open correspondence with them.

5. A few of the studios maintain a clerk whose duty it is to record all scripts received and to make entry of their acceptance or rejection, but such a mass of material is received by the larger companies that it does not pay to go to the expense of recording scripts, many of which are immediately returned. In this case note is made only of those retained for action.

6. The scripts are first gone over by an assistant who is competent to discard the manifestly unfit. If the scripts come in addressed to the Editor, he passes them over to the assistant unless they are from authors known to him. The assistant rejects all scripts that are written by hand. It is not possible to spare the time to go through a pen-written script, and long experience has proven the correctness of the theory that an author who does not yet use a typewriter does not yet write a story worth looking at. In the same class are manuscripts improperly prepared. Some come with one side stitched into a "book." Others have one edge or top glued, or they are tied with a ribbon or bound with several permanent fasteners. Long before he knows how to write, the novice learns how to prepare manuscript, and so it follows that these freak forms are all the work of beginners so new as not to deserve consideration. Either carelessness or an excess of care has the same result. The story is returned unread to save time for reading the manuscripts that give more promise.

7. Another and different class of immediate returns comprises the stories that are manifestly out of the style of the company. A studio may make no Indian stories. It would only waste time to read the synopsis of such a play. It is immediately returned. Also returned are the plays with plots so hackneyed that they may be expected in every mail. There are some plots that come in so regularly that their absence would be noted. These are the more elemental stories that every beginner writes because he has not yet learned that they are old. The assistant knows and returns them without reading more than enough to be certain that no new twist is offered. Probably eighty per cent of the scripts do not pass the first reader. The remainder are sent along to the Editor.

8. Here the scripts receive a second reading and the number is again materially reduced. Of those which are in accordance with the company's production standards the best are retained for further consideration and action. There are three methods of ultimate disposal. They may be purchased on the word of the Editor or by him with the approval of the head of the concern; they may be purchased on the approval of some director who wishes to make the story, or they may be passed upon in conference.

9. The first method of procedure is the simplest and the quickest. The story is purchased and given some director to produce. Here it is simply a question of getting the time to read and pass upon the merits of the script.

10. The second method is followed in studios where the prop-

osition that a director cannot make a production from a script that does not appeal to him still holds good. The script is sent to the director most likely to approve of the story. If he likes it it is purchased. Most directors are busy men and have little time for script reading. Some will read only when they are in need of a story for immediate production and may carry stories for weeks and even months. If the author hurries him he promptly decides that the story does not appeal to him, so back it goes, often the worse for wear.

11. In the third method copies are made of the synopsis of the story. A sufficient number is prepared to supply each director. Once a week the directors meet and discuss these synopses. Purchase is made of the stories of which they approve, but before purchase the action plot is read and passed upon. Sometimes the director who first asks for the story will decide, upon hearing the full script, that he does not want it, but that very fact may gain the interest of some other director.

12. If a story is good, but the action poorly worked out, orders are given that it be reconstructed. This work is done by one of the staff-writers, who takes the story, throws away the plot of action and writes a new one in accordance with the ideas of the director who will make the story. Parts of the old action may be retained, but it is more usual in reconstructing to make a new continuity of action, since this is easier than to patch up the old, though some of the action ideas may be retained from the old plot. Entire rewriting is more apt to result in a harmonious story. The changes are apt to be sweeping and sometimes decidedly surprising to the author, who finds that the story he hoped would be played by the much-admired Miss Smith has been made over to give the leading role to the equally admired Mr. Jones.

13. The reconstructors are also required to make adaptations of books and plays, and to write original stories along certain required lines. They may also write serials or series stories, though more generally these are taken from inside or contract writers.

14. Generally the Editor tries to get the stories out of the studio as quickly as possible, or to send a check in payment. He knows that promptness makes for friendships that in turn give him first chance at desirable stories; but it is seldom that the Editor has power to purchase without consultation with the director, his employer, or both. When it is realized that no two men ever view a matter from precisely the same angle, it may readily be understood that there is not always an agreement and the story that he may hold for some weeks because he believes that it should be purchased will be returned after that period because he is in the minority. Until this condition changes the Editor should not be blamed for delays. He is doing his best to get quick action.

15. It is seldom wise to make inquiry as to the status of a manuscript. It will not hasten its acceptance and it may result in a

rejection. Letters of inquiry are not replied to in most studios, simply because it would take a force of several clerks to answer all the letters that come in from inexperienced and timorous writers. If, as sometimes happens, the staff must stop reading and work on other matters, the scripts pile up and the inquiries multiply. A little thought will show the folly of asking a busy man to look through a pile of several thousand scripts to see if "Mamie's Vow" has been received, particularly when two or three hundred others have made similar requests for information as to other scripts. It is easier to spend the time reading down the pile than to search for particular stories.

16. Staff men are generally picked from the ranks of the insiders. The inside and contract men are usually free lances whose work has found particular favor. The best and about the only way to get a studio position is to break in with good stories. Get yourself established in the mind of the Editor as a writer of merit and then suggest that when a vacancy occurs you would like to be remembered. Most probably you will be if you are better than the others who have offered the same gentle hint.

(6.XXVI:9 & 22 LXIV:3) (7.XXVIII:5) (10.IV:4 V:2) (11.XXVIII:6) (12.XLIX:19) (13.XLIX:6) (14.LXV:27) (16.LXV:47).

CHAPTER III

THE STUDIO

STUDIO is the name given any place where motion pictures are made—whether it is a glass or electric indoor establishment, an open air studio or a combination of both. It may be nothing more than a yard with a wooden platform or it may consist of buildings of six figure valuations.

2. A glass or daylight studio is one provided with a glazed roof through which the light is admitted. Generally one side is also of glass, as well. Daylight is the natural and even illuminant for photography, and daylight is used where possible, but it is not unusual to provide electric lights for use on dark days or to gain light effects.

3. The electric studio has no skylight, but derives its illumination from banks of mercury vapor lamps or from these and arc lights in combination. Generally the lights are placed at the top and one side of the stage with a row in front, above the camera.

4. The outdoor or open air studios have neither electricity nor glass. They are little more than platforms or stages of board on which the scenes are set up. Overhead a light muslin curtain is spread to diffuse the direct sunlight and provide a softer illumination. These outdoor studios are used when a company is working in the field and

in Florida and California, where there is generally good sunlight and where the temperature permits work in the open the entire year.

5. Studios are provided with carpenter shops and paint frames for the purpose of making scenery, for the scenes must be constantly changed or painted over to provide against sameness. The scenes are made of muslin stretched on light wooden frames and painted in water color. As a rule a small set is about fourteen feet high, so the flats or pieces of scenery are of that height and three to ten feet wide, that they may be handled by one man. The setting is built up of these pieces fastened together. Some of the flats may contain openings for doors or windows and some have the half of an arch or curtained doorway. Doors and windows are set into the openings and are not the painted affairs that were once considered good enough, but are solid in construction. Generally the doors come in pairs, one opening right handed and the other the reverse so that either may be used.

6. Scenes are not set up as they are in the theatre. It is seldom that more than two sides of a room are shown in a photoplay except in large built-up sets. More often there is shown only the back and a portion of one side or even a straight flat showing one side of a hall. As the flats are of different sizes, it is possible to vary the form of the set. One may show a straight right-angle corner and another, made with the same material, may be broken up with a jog or small piece set in to avoid a sameness of outline. Stairways are provided for hall settings, and some, but not many, stages are trapped, or provided with sectional floor that may be taken up when it is desired to show a descending stair. Generally this sectional floor covers a concrete tank that may be filled with water if desired, giving a double use.

7. Scenes are set up from plots or diagrams; rough outlines or finished scale drawings of the floor plan showing how the flats are to be angled. In some studios architect's scale paper is used for all plots and this may be printed up with the camera angle.

8. Most persons are familiar with the principle in optics that the curvature of the surface of a lens determines the angle of its ray. In other words the lens collects the light rays in the form of a cone which terminates in a point at the optical centre of the lens combination and gains in diameter with distance from this point in proportion to the angle of the lens, a wide angle lens increasing the diameter of this cone more rapidly than one with a narrow angle. All that is found within this imaginary cone will be registered on the film and constitutes the stage. It follows that the stage widens as the distance from the camera is increased in proportion to the angle of the lens used in the camera. It is customary to mark this angle with chalk marks, cord or strips of wood to show the player just what portion of the full stage will be included in the picture. These are known as the lines. At the front, generally at such a distance from the camera that the space included is about

six feet, is the front line. As the closer an object is to the camera the larger the image, and as this image rapidly decreases in size as it is moved from the lens, it is the object of the director to bring his players down to the front line when they are shown in an image so large that every detail of expression can be noted. For practical purposes the photographic stage is but six feet wide and four to six feet deep, no matter how much more may be included in the scene. The so-called French stage sets the front line further back so that the feet and head of a player standing on the front line are both within the angle of the camera. On the American stage the lower part of the legs of a player standing on the front line is not shown. Erecting the camera and determining just what is to be included in the field of the lens is termed making a set-up.

9. Most studios also have a costume room where unusual articles of dress are supplied for the use of the players, who are supposed to have a complete modern wardrobe as part of their personal equipment, but who are not required to have police uniforms and similar dress. Here special costumes are made, though most of the wardrobe not regularly in use is hired from the theatrical costumers.

10. The property room is supposed to have on hand or to obtain anything required for dressing the scene or for use in the play in outdoor locations. The property staff is distinct from the stage staff. These latter set the scenes, forming the walls of the room with doors, windows and stairways. Wherever there is an opening in the wall a backing is used. This is a flat that shows either another room in perspective or the landscape seen through a window. Then the property man and his assistants set down the rugs, hang the pictures and place the furniture under the direction of the director or his assistant. All of the scenes in one set are made at one time and then the set is struck or taken down and another put in its place.

11. Most studios have more than one stage, and in some of the larger plants fifty or sixty sets may be put in position at once and two or three may be assigned a director who must work several people in each of these sets in different costumes. Having all the sets up avoids constant changing of costume.

12. Not all interior scenes are made in the studio. Sometimes it is easier to take portable lighting apparatus and make the scenes in actual interiors than to endeavor to reproduce these places in scenery. With the constantly increasing improvement in portable lights this device is being more and more resorted to. This aids the author in that it increases the range of scenes he may obtain without undue expense, but this should not lead him to the excessive use of machine shops and similar places, for the temporary installation of the lighting system is costly and to be figured upon.

CHAPTER IV

LOCATIONS

LOCATION is the term employed for any place away from the studio where an exterior scene is made, though not all exterior pictures are made on location. An exterior scene is any scene supposed to have been made out of doors, just as an interior scene is any scene supposed to have been made indoors, though it has already been shown that an interior scene may be set up in the studio yard. In the same way an exterior scene may be made in the studio under glass or in the yard if it is cheaper to build a set than to go to the proper location. In the winter it is generally easier to make snow scenes out of doors even though the company may have to be moved a few hundred miles in order to get proper surroundings. In summer the travel would lead too close to the north pole and so it will be cheaper to make the snow scene an interior-exterior set, and this is not infrequently done; not this alone, but any exterior where it is desired to be free from interruption. You write into your script that the hungry mob attacks the bakery, smashing the plateglass windows and taking the bread. It is for the director to decide whether he will arrange with some baker to put in a sheet of cheap glass, smash it and replace the original plate or whether he will build a bakery in the studio yard where the mob and the breaking of the glass will not draw a crowd of the curious. If he does the latter he uses a built-up set, but in the former case he goes on location.

2. Most large studios have a location man who is supposed to make himself familiar with the surrounding country. He knows where there is a Chinese garden and where may be found a spot that will do for a cliff. He can tell just how far you have to go for desert scenes and where the best mining camp may be erected. A good location man can take a director to almost anything within reason and all within reaching distance of the studio.

3. For large productions it is more general to move the company to a proper place rather than bother with tricking the available locations. A company working in New York can get many tropical looking houses if they know where to go, but if the scene of the story is laid in Cuba it will be cheaper in the end to send the company there and get the correct atmosphere, for in New York the house that looks so thoroughly Cuban may be only a few feet away from a Queen Anne cottage or in line with a five story flathouse. Careful shooting of the camera will permit the director to avoid the contrasts, but will result in a succession of close up scenes that will become tiresome in time. It will be better to go to Cuba and obtain locations with wide fields.

4. Any outdoor spot where an exterior is made is a location, wheth-

er it be merely the entrance to a house or the Rocky Mountains. In the city location work is disliked by many directors because of the crowds that gather when the camera is set up. For this reason directors as a rule avoid scripts that call for crowded city streets. It is not only difficult work to keep the crowd back, but the players get nervous and make mistakes. Some directors take a pride in doing difficult stunts, and by working their people without make-up will get the scenes in the most congested districts, working from a cab with a hole in the curtain for the camera. In this case the actors are rehearsed thoroughly before leaving the studio.

5. Locations may entail a cost all the way from a cigar to several hundred dollars. Each must be arranged for in advance if a suit for trespass would be avoided, but usually they cost less to hire than the inside sets cost to erect and so locations are favored on account of price as well as their greater variety.

6. A majority of production managers prefer stories to offer exterior scenes, particularly landscapes, since these are more pleasing to the eye, and some companies will refuse all stories that carry only interior scenes, though some demand interiors only because they cannot well work in the open. It is rather confusing to the new writer, but in time he learns that almost any scene can be played either indoors or out and that a good Editor will realize this and change the script to suit his company without requiring the author to reconstruct.

(1.XXX:2 & 10) (2.LI:8) (3.XVII:3) (4.II:10).

CHAPTER V

THE DIRECTOR

THE director or producer is the man who directs the production of a play. Usually, though not always, he is a former stage director from the speaking stage, though he may have graduated from the ranks of the photoplayers. He is the autocrat of the studio because the first directors were, in their time, the only men about the place who had the slightest knowledge of stage affairs and their word was law. Succeeding directors have followed the lead of the first comers.

2. It is customary to permit the director to pick his own stories and to do as he likes with them. This is because it is supposed that a director cannot make a good production from a script in which he is not interested. In a certain sense this is true, but a competent man should be able to direct the production of a play that does not appeal to him personally. Because of this tradition the director is, within certain limits, able to select scripts of the sort he wishes. Some di-

Directors are not appealed to by scripts involving outside work. Others prefer exteriors to interiors. Some want elaborate trick effects and others avoid these troublemakers. It is largely because of these traits that a story that is in every way a good one is repeatedly returned. It does not suit the director because it may have too many exteriors or because it does not contain enough.

3. Few directors work from the script as written. Most of them make elaborate revisions and some of them reduce every script to the same dead level of mediocrity that represents their own ideas. Between the director and the cutting man the author has small chance of seeing his own work on the screen in the form in which it was written, though conditions in this regard are constantly improving.

4. When a director is given a script he either works it over or has it reconstructed by one of the staff. A carbon copy is given his assistant and the assistant prepares the property and scene plots. One lists all articles required for use either in the settings or on location. The other gives the outline of the sets. The assistant also prepares the cast of the play under instruction from the director. Each director has from two to six or seven persons in his own stock company who work for him alone. Others are drawn from the general stock company which is at the disposal of any of the directors. Others, where many are needed, are drawn from the extras, who are players hired by the day. These are also known as jobbers since they work by the job. Sometimes there is no general stock company, all save the stars being jobbed or else worked on guarantee, which is a promise that they will be given two to four days' work a week or paid if they do not work.

5. When all is ready to begin one or more scenes are set up or perhaps the director starts with some exteriors to save time while the scenes are being set. In either case all of the scenes in one set or location are made at the same time and without regard to the order in which they appear in the script. Some directors do not tell the players what a scene is about, but merely tell them to do this or that. The scene is rehearsed until it pleases the director when word is given and the camera is started, recording the scene.

6. Each scene, as it is made, is given the number or letter of the negative in general and its own consecutive number. The first scene made is negative Number 1, though the script may designate it as 53. The director's assistant notes these negative numbers against the properly numbered scene. He also jots down the action in brief; not the action the author wrote, but the action that was played. Later on he prepares from this memorandum a joining slip to guide the assembling of the film. On this scene 53 is described as "Negative 1." that the assembler may know which number to look for. Sometimes for the sake of convenience and speed several small scenes in one set will be made at the same time and cut apart. Then each scene has the same negative number, but the action tells the cutter where to separate the film. A small section of a joining list might look like this:

- Neg. 36 Scene 1. Beach. John and Sally coming to camera. They come out of scene.
- Neg. 19 Scene 2. Beach. Boys and girls playing. Johnson rises and waves. CUT.
- Neg. 37 Scene 3. Beach. John and Sally see Johnson. Wave back.
- Neg. 19 Scene 4. Beach. Johnson calls the others. All run out of scene.

Here scenes two and four were made together. When the man waves the negative is cut apart and that much is used for scene two, and the remainder of the negative for scene four.

7. Generally there is much more negative than there is room. Some directors may turn in twice as much as is needed. One company actually produced twenty-one miles of film for a six-reel picture, and a hundred thousand feet of film negative may be turned in for a ten or twelve reel feature. The negative is first assembled in full and from this the best parts are selected. Entire scenes or sequences of scenes may be removed or replaced with a leader. Some directors time their pictures and get only an exact allowance, but most prefer to overrun that there may be a full reel of really good material when the poor scenes are thrown out. If an essential scene is thrown out it is made over again, this being known as a retake.

8. Many companies require that their directors shall observe a minimum of production and generally each is required to turn in not less than a complete reel a week or perhaps three reels in two weeks, in the case of multiple reel stories. Naturally where speed is placed before finished and artistic production, there will be poor photoplays, showing the effects of the hurry in which the scenes were made. The director is sinned against as well as sinning, but there is a growing tendency to regard both speed and finish as a test of a director's ability, and in time it is possible that we shall see decided improvement in production because a director does not have to race against time.

(2.II:10) (3.VI:2) (4.III:7 & 10 XXVI:21) (6.VI:1 XXXI:3 XXXIX:10) (7.XXXIV:5 XXXVII:32).

CHAPTER VI

MANUFACTURE AND DISTRIBUTION

EXPOSED negative film is sent to the factory to be developed. This process is not unlike the common kodak tank development save that the tanks are larger and the film is wound on a rack instead of a reel before being immersed. Film comes in lengths of two hundred feet, but it can be cemented to give any length, though most cameras do not take more than four hundred feet at a time. The de-

veloped negative is fixed, washed and dried and sent to the printing room. Here the film is faced against a strip of positive and passed through a machine that separately exposes each picture or "frame" to the action of an electric light boxed in a light-tight container and capable of being moved close to the negative or some distance from it in accordance with the density of the film. This positive film is developed and this first print is sent to the joining room, where the various pieces are cemented together or spliced in accordance with the joining slip.

2. This done, the print is sent to the cutting room, where the director or a cutting editor or both look it over. Generally the film is too long and must be cut down to length. This is done by removing unnecessary or the least necessary parts and, if required, replacing the omitted part with a leader that will explain what the missing action shows. Sometimes the film is about the right length, but it is seen that an action runs too long. Removing a few feet of the unnecessary action will smarten the scene. If the dead action occurs in the middle of a scene the cutter will try to remove it by cutting the scene there and inserting a part of a previous scene or cutting back. It is the object of the cutter to get the film to a length approximating one thousand feet, since this is the trade standard of measurement. Sometimes he works with but little judgment and then the result is a thousand-foot reel, but one that an author is unwilling to acknowledge as his own.

3. Once the length is attained, the negative is marked just where the cuts come and also marked to show where the inserts appear. It is then sent to the printing room, where the negative is taken apart and the scenes printed singly. These are sent to the joining room, where the girls splice them together to obtain the complete reel which is shipped out to the exchanges.

4. The exchanges are concerns which make a business of buying film from the makers and renting it to the exhibitors by the day or longer. They purchase the regular releases of certain companies, generally under some form of contract. A release is the film put out or released by a company at one time. It may be a single reel with one or more subjects or a single subject in several reels. A combination of several companies offering their releases as a whole constitutes a program as against a feature release, which may be given out with much the same regularity but not in accordance with a schedule, though there are some programs of feature releases. The release day is the day on which the exchanges throughout the United States are at liberty to begin renting the subject, which they may have received several days before. A subject shown the day it is released is said to be a first run. The next day it is second run and so on to the end of the first week when various other terms are used to designate the age of the film as "not more than ten days" or "from ten to fifteen days." Film rentals decrease with the increase in age.

5. In the early days film was sold as made and sold outright to the

exhibitor, who traded with another exhibitor when he had shown the subject. Later the program was devised that exhibitors could count upon there being enough new material to keep the business going and to adjust the supply to avoid overproduction at times and prevent a scarcity at others. Each company in a program was assigned certain days and a company releasing film on one Monday released every Monday, the exchange buying all the Monday releases no matter what they were and renting to the exhibitors on the same "sight-unseen" basis. The present tendency is toward the open market, in which film is sold without restriction and upon merit alone.

6. This makes for improvement in the situation of the author, for to sell on merit stories must be good and varied. It is not possible to put out the same material over and over again. Under the program scheme, where exchanges were required to accept whatever a manufacturer chose to put out, there was small incentive to always offer the best work. If a fair average was kept up, the general run of release did not so much matter. Now and then money would be spent on a story for the sake of the advertising, since the quality of the brand had to be maintained at a certain standard, but where each film must sell upon its own merits alone, the standard must be raised and this means better stories as well as more careful production of those stories.

(1.V:6) (2.V:3 XXXIX:5).

PART II

PLOTTING

PLOTTING is easily the most important part of photoplay writing and should be given the earliest, most careful and constant study.

Plots displayed in faulty technique may be disposed of, but technique without plot is utterly without value. Plotting is the imaginative and creative part of photoplay writing. Form is merely the expression of the plot in the simplest and most direct manner. It will be best for the student first to master, through practice, plotting and the development of plot. Let the first practice work be merely the origination of plots with no attempt to develop them in detail, writing them simply as synopses. Later some of these ideas may be worked over and in the light of subsequent knowledge developed into suitable and salable material. Do not work overlong at one time on any one plot. Aim at first rather to write many of varying grades than merely a few good ones that are worked over and repolished. Each new plot will offer new angles which may be found applicable to other plots and themes.

CHAPTER VII

IMAGINATION

THAT the prospective author should be able to spell with reasonable accuracy and to express his thoughts in grammatical form and clearness and force is to be understood. These are the signs of intelligence, and it requires intelligence to become a writer. But there is one even more important qualification without which it will be useless to seek to gain success as an author. This is imagination of the proper sort—the creative imagination.

2. This is something that may be developed through study, but not acquired if it at least does not lie dormant. God alone can give imagination, and He, in His wisdom, has given to many men many minds. It would be a dire catastrophe should all men come into the world endowed with the same quality of imagination. To some men are given to understand and grasp the realization of concrete facts. Such men are fitted to be executives. They plan gigantic mergers, organize financial coups and lead the armies of finance and commerce. Others of

lesser degree of the same imaginative quality serve in these armies. None of these can think in terms of story plot. A man may be highly imaginative and yet not possess the sort of imagination that makes for the creation of new ideas for stories. The men who have formed the gigantic film companies cannot write stories to be produced. They are organizers. They can imagine and devise the details of the company and undertake its financing, but they cannot write fiction. Thomas A. Edison, himself, could imagine motion pictures, but he could not write his own scripts.

3. It follows, therefore, that the writer must not only have imagination but that this imagination must be of the proper sort. Creative imagination is that quality of mind which enables a person to elaborate and improve known facts and to devise new ideas and combinations of ideas. Some persons imagine themselves to be possessed of this quality when they lack it. If Uncle John tells of his trip to the World's Fair, they remember the details and write them down. This is not authorship. It is merely mechanical reproduction. They will give to their readers all that was given to them, but they will give it unchanged and unimproved. They may, perhaps, frame the story in a better choice of words than the original hero of the story, but they add nothing to the elaboration of the story. They give it no new and entertaining quality. They have memory, but no imagination.

4. This is where so many aspirants fail. They have good memories. They recall many stories. They feel that they are qualified for authorship. They might make excellent newspaper reporters perhaps, because of their retentive memories, but even newspaper work, supposed to favor exactness of statement, requires some imagination that the facts may be seen and presented in the most interesting and attractive light. It is not possible to determine in advance just what the quality of imagination in a person is. It cannot be said in advance that this man can and that man can not write fiction or photoplays. He must learn through experience and effort whether or not he can. A man may give great promise and never make that promise good. Another may start more slowly because he has never cultivated his imagination and yet he may evolve into a star through slow and painstaking study and practice.

5. The mind must be taught to think just as the child is taught to count. The child that has learned to count from one to ten is better qualified to count to the hundred than the child who cannot but who seeks to do so. And the knowledge of hundreds leads to an understanding of thousands, and that to millions, though only the most expert mathematician can grasp even faintly the limitless possibilities of figures. It is the same with developing the plotting quality. First simple plots must be mastered, and these in turn lead on and on until the mind thinks in plot instead of plot factors or suggestions.

6. Imagination is creative only in that it can develop and embroider known facts. It cannot imagine new ones. We know that there may be a fourth dimension, but we cannot imagine what it is. Knowing

length and breadth and thickness, we can imagine in these dimensions, but we cannot imagine in the fourth because we do not know what that fourth dimension is. Even a Verne or a Wells cannot imagine the unknown, though their imaginations have been trained to a point of proficiency that enables them to imagine new and strange combinations. Mr. Wells, for instance, can bring Martians to this earth, but he cannot imagine new attributes for them. He may give them a dozen arms instead of two, but he borrows these from the octopus. They may have a hundred legs, but so has the centipede. Their bodies may be unable to withstand the lighter atmospheric pressure of this planet, but this holds good of certain deep sea creatures at the surface atmosphere. All that the most imaginative author can do is to evolve from old material new and startling combinations. We admire the new combinations and do not trouble to trace them to their source.

7. A score of men may see a man killed by an automobile. John Smith sees only that the man is struck and killed. Frank Jones, more imaginative, may argue a design in the supposed accident. He may imagine the happening to be a clever murder of an enemy through a knowledge of his habits of daily life. Samuel Sprague may change the thought to a duel in the air between an aeroplane and an airship. William Davis may see in the tragedy a baby carriage propelled by an attractive widow which knocks down a rich and crabbed old bachelor who becomes enamored of the widow through the rencontre. Starting from a common fact, each man according to his degree gives back that fact. Only Smith reports the bare occurrence. The others all change and add to get something new. Smith alone is hopeless.

8. The simplest form of imagination gives back the thought very slightly embroidered, as Jones held the automobile accident and merely added to that a new motive. The higher types of imagination both embroider and transform incident, gaining something new and better. Eventual success will come in precise proportion to the richness of the imagination tempered by good sense. It is not merely extravagance of the returned idea that counts. It is plausibility, as well, that is required. Anything else is untrained and unworthy. This is a point many overlook. It is not sufficient merely to be unusual. It is necessary also to be convincing. It is in this phase of imagination that the authors already cited excel. Thirty or forty years ago Jules Verne's "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" was held to be a pleasant and highly imaginative bit of fiction. Today every imaginative feature of that story has been realized. Perpetual motion inventions are regarded as the toys of the crackbrained because it is a well-known fact that in all these devices the friction of the parts gradually overcomes the original force. It is known also that in theory gravity ceases at the centre of the earth because there the force of the mass attraction is exerted from every point. Verne used something of this idea in his "Trip to the Moon," but another may imagine a gigantic perpetual motion machine in the centre of the earth furnishing

power for the entire world, and perhaps thousands of years from now the idea will become an accomplished fact, provided that some other force than gravity operates the machine.

9. Imagination is inherent, but untrained. It can be developed to think along sane and plausible lines or permitted to develop as it will without discipline or direction. One is the imagination of the story writer: the other the mind of the fool. The imagination cannot only be developed but directed in its development so that it does its work well and properly. It is important that in the early stages this be done.

10. The statement is frequently made that the uneducated can write as good plays as the college graduate. This is not true. The man who does not possess a college education may, and often does, write better plays, but he must have been educated in some manner, and the more ample his education the more fully equipped he becomes. Nothing can be taken from the mind that has not already been placed therein. It follows that the educated mind is better developed and better stored with facts than the mind uneducated. The education does not have to be of the schoolroom or the lecture hall, but the mind must be properly stocked, just as the shelves of the storekeeper must be filled, before business can be done. No man, no matter who he may be, can evolve stories from his inner consciousness. He may be singularly inventive, and able to draw upon his imagination for elaboration, but he cannot think more than he has learned, no matter how that learning was acquired. Imagination is merely the ability to store away a fact and remove a fancy precisely as the chemist can take common brown sugar and in the electric furnace transform it into a diamond. If you cannot perform a similar operation you cannot become an author, no matter how great your eagerness nor how convincing the assurances of your friends or would-be teachers.

(1.LXX:4) (2.I:6) (3.XIII:4 LXX:3) (8.VIII:12 XII:8) (10.VIII:1).

CHAPTER VIII

FEEDING THE IMAGINATION

NO matter how active the imagination may be, it must be kept supplied with material with which to work. We are born with minds absolutely a blank. Imagination may be one of its qualities, but the mind contains nothing with which it may be supplied and so it is dormant. The mind must be stored with material through reading and observation else imagination is useless. The process of imagination is not so much a process of creation as a process of transmutation; projecting the base material of unoriginal idea into the gold

of unusual thought. There must be a supply of the baser metal or the process cannot proceed. The recording (as opposed to the imaginative) mind receives lead and gives back lead. It may melt and refine old material and give back pigs for scrap, but it is lead still and not something better. Perhaps this simile of transmutation is not the most apt, for the process is less a transmutation than a reassembling of facts. The single fact is not taken into the brain and restored as a plot, but the basic fact draws to it many other factors previously received, to combine into a plot. Perhaps in your earlier days you have made a mineral tree or have hung strings into saturated solutions and have watched the crystals form upon the strings. This is perhaps a better comparison. The mind is saturated with incident and fact. A plot idea draws to itself a deposit of these to form a complete story.

2. As this chapter was being written a note was received from an aspiring author who stated that he had a good plot but that he could think of no minor action with which to tell it. He wanted to know if he could not, by visiting the photoplay theatres, acquire sufficient material from what he saw on the screen with which to complete his story. He was told that this material should already be existent in his brain, and that if he could not call up the incident and by-play, either the plot really was no plot or else he was no author. A competent author draws on plot material remembered since childhood.

3. This leads to the second essential fact that imagination must be supported by recollection. Recollection and not memory is the proper term, for the mind never fails to remember what it receives, but the person may be unable to recollect what he has heard and remembered. The brain stores each isolated fact within its cells. Recollection is the key which opens these cell doors. It follows that recollection is a quality also to be cultivated, and, like imagination, it is developed through exercise. There are many advertised memory-systems, so called, most of which are dependent upon recollection through the association of ideas. There is only one good way and it requires no "system" and no course of instruction. It is merely exercise, but systematic exercise.

4. Take a book of facts, not figures. Read a page once. Set it aside and write down as many facts as you can recall. Do this with another page and another, but perform this study regularly. Each night sit down and make a note of the happenings of the day. Write down all that has occurred. At first you will do well to turn out a dozen or a score of facts. In time you can record correctly the entire doings of the day. After you have done this for a while, lay aside your daily notes and on Sunday see how many of the facts you can call to mind without reference to your notes for the week. In time you will become so used to recollecting things that the incident of ten years ago that will work well with the plot of the moment will present itself without waiting to be called up.

5. The value of recollection over note-taking is quickly apparent once you start to plot. You do not have to stop and think or look up

material—your mind is concentrated upon the plot, and the assembling of the incident does not in the least interfere with this concentration. The subject of note-taking will presently be touched upon, but note-taking should be made subordinate to recollected fact and used more as an inspiration than a working tool.

6. Since nothing can be taken from the mind that has not been put into it, it follows that the more we know the more diversified the information we can use. Suppose that like Mr. Wells we seek to create a monstrosity. We give our imaginary Martian the head of a hare, the beak of an eagle, the body of a snake, the tentacles of the octopus, the single eye of the Cyclops and a snaillike form of locomotion. These we know, therefore we can use. Did we not know of the snake we could not imagine such a body. We would have imagined something else. It is most important that we should have on hand the largest possible stock of attributes that we may outfit our celestial visitor most uniquely.

7. The best sources of information are reading and observation of daily life, but we can see more of life through books than through our own limited opportunities for observation, and so reading occupies a higher place. The would-be fiction writer is required to do a certain amount of reading for style. This is not demanded of the photoplay author, who is not required to possess literary style beyond that which will enable him to write with correctness and intelligence. For the photoplay writer there can be suggested no prescribed books or courses. The reading must be catholic and all-embracing. Fiction alone will not suffice. There is as much vivid incident in the newspapers as in stories and magazines. To some extent elementary works on technical subjects should be read, simple and easily understood books on surgery, on wood and metal working, on building and construction, on railroading—in fact on any subject you can acquire without undue effort and expense. It will not pay you to purchase a number of technical works, but read them if you get the chance. The encyclopedia is excellent, but do not be like the man who could talk intelligently only as far as G. Read through to Z and then read the appendix, if there is one.

8. Anything and everything you can get hold of is material; the catalogue of a mail order house is as apt to give you a suggestion as is the Bible or the daily paper. The chances that you will obtain an idea from the catalogue are fairly remote and it will not pay to make an effort to acquire one, but if you run across one read it and get an idea of the mail order business. Some day, in a western story, the recollection of the Wind River Bible will be helpful. One comedy that was received with favor was suggested by a book of instructions to ticket agents on the New York Central Railroad, and it is probable that there are more suggestions to be found at the same source. You will not find complete plots, but you will find ideas, and these ideas, combined with others, will in turn become plots.

9. You do not have to travel to observe life. If you are in the con-

course of the Pennsylvania Station in New York ahead of your train time, note how other people say good-bye. You may never write a story set in that station, but Jim and Millie, at a flag station in Arizona, will say good-bye in much the same way. Your young people must part. You bring in review all the partings you can recollect and select and improve the one most suitable. The setting is changed, but human nature is much the same the world over. Make life a book you are constantly reading and you will learn much.

10. Most advisers on writing strongly favor the taking of notes. Recollection, properly trained, is much better, but a note book can be made helpful if it is not made too complex, but those who have the note-taking habit are prone to make it complex to a point where utility becomes lost in a matter of sub-division.

11. A note book may range all the way from a shoebox half full of newspaper clippings and penciled memoranda to an elaborate form of loose leaf or card catalogue. As a general thing the loose leaf or card form is the best, since it enables you to roughly classify your clippings and ideas, but roughly means that and not the Dewey decimal system. There is danger that you will presently develop into a cataloguer instead of an author.

12. Not everything should be noted in the book, but only the most novel and strongly suggestive ideas. There should be a division for titles, and into this should go everything that even looks like a suggestion for a good title. Try at the time of entry to translate the old into the new. You may think of a situation wherein a man marries his own mother. If you know that this has been done before, change the suggestion to read that the young man elopes with his prospective mother-in-law when he thinks he is eloping with the girl of his choice. When you find that this, too, has been used change once more so that the youth elopes with his pretty step-mother because his plans and hers become crossed. He saves his father disgrace and a broken home and shows her the folly of her intended action. Now through imagination you have a new plot factor.

13. For the reason that any idea is flexible and can be used as comedy or drama, do not classify your sheets by dramatic classification. You are too apt to lose for a comedy what you have filed under drama or vice versa. The idea as above started as drama, was turned to comedy and turned back to drama of a lighter type. This could not be done once a story was entered by class.

14. The chief value of the note book is as a suggestion maker. Each entry of any value is a plot in embryo if only you can hatch it out and by looking over the entries when inspiration flags you may freshen your thought and get the start you need. Here, rather than as a supply of detail of manners and customs, your book or catalogue will be of real value. The minor incidents should be kept so freshly in mind that you will not need to refer to memoranda.

(1.VII:10) (6.XI:10) (12.VII:8) (13.LXV:29) (14.XXIII:15).

CHAPTER IX

WHAT CONSTITUTES A PLOT

PLOT is to photoplay at once the skeleton upon which the flesh of incident is hung and the spirit which animates that flesh, for plot comprises both the outline of incident and the idea which that incident seeks to tell. One gives form and the other soul. You may see a beautiful woman or a handsome man, well proportioned, of good complexion, noble in carriage and possessed of every desirable physical attribute and yet repellent because there is no soul; no intelligence, to animate the flesh. On the other hand, you may see women plain of face or men rugged and almost uncouth sway the world because of the force of their personality, the strength of soul within them.

2. It is not required that the wax figure shall be possessed of intelligence because it merely *simulates* life, but photoplay *reproduces* life and should be animated by life.

3. This point cannot be too strictly insisted upon, for on plot rests the entire structure of photoplay. Without plot there can be no photoplay, yet the novice is apt to ignore this most important fact and regard as plot any series of incidents more or less closely related. Such plays are not really plays at all, because they lack the essentials of plot. They are incidents, and incidents, however sprightly, cannot retain interest since there is no central object upon which interest can be concentrated. The wise student will first thoroughly master plot before going further in photoplay studies and then learn to distinguish between plot and incident before seeking to unite the two. Were these points fully and intelligently understood and appreciated by all writers, not ten plays would be offered where a hundred are now presented. In other words, not more than ten manuscripts in each hundred sent out really possess the fundamental necessity of plot, and of these ten plots not all are good.

4. Almost invariably the beginner mistakes incident for plot. If things happen, they form a story if they all relate to the same group of characters. This is an error. Incident is no more than the flesh of happening that clothes the bones of plot. Incident is attractive and interesting only where there is an underlying reason for the recital of that incident. Behind incident there must be the support of plot just as the skeleton must sustain the flesh. We look upon a lovely woman and say she is very beautiful. We exclaim at the soft curve of the cheek and throat, the noble arch of the brow, the graceful contour of the head. We do not realize that all this is flesh built upon bone and that without the bone, the skeleton, the lovely face would be a pendulous, tumorlike mass, disgusting and repellent.

5. On the other hand the unclothed skull is unlovely. It must be clothed with flesh, for the bare bone is suggestive of death, and we

seek the suggestion of life. But bone and flesh without soul are death and not life. We must have the trinity of bone, flesh and spirit, just as in plotted plays we must have the idea, the form and the incident. There is required the skeleton of plot form, clothed in incident and animated by idea. The idea of a triad still further suggests itself. A plot should consist of struggle, suspense and climax; the centuries-old definition of Aristotle declares that a play must have a beginning, a middle and an end. We have, too, the Greek triad of time, place and action.

6. A plot is the recital of the means by which a definite and pre-determined object is gained or lost. George wishes to marry Agnes. If he does so, he attains his object. If he does not, he fails. If George merely asks Agnes if she will marry him; if she says "yes," and they go to the minister or she says "no" and George hangs himself, there is no plot. It is history, but not plot. It is evident, then, that there is another requisite of plot. This factor is termed struggle.

7. Struggle is the clash of determination against obstruction. If George wishes to marry Agnes and there is no opposition, no struggle, there is no clash, and therefore no interest. But if John also desires Agnes for his bride and seeks to rid himself of his rival, or if for some reason Agnes' father objects to George, then there has been raised an obstacle to be overcome, and mere incident, *through struggle*, becomes plot. The overcoming of this obstacle, through struggle, or being overcome by it constitutes a question of interest, and through interest in the plot the incidents in which the plot is told become of interest.

8. But you may have a story replete with struggle and still not interesting. It may present a lively series of struggles against obstacle and yet be so one-sided that there is little doubt as to the outcome and therefore of small interest as to that outcome. The answer is simple. One factor is yet lacking. We have obstacle and struggle against obstacle, but we have no suspense. The outcome is assured.

9. If we know from the outset that George will win Agnes from John or overcome parental objection, then we cannot become unduly interested in the struggle. But if we are interested in George and want to see him win Agnes, then if we are made to fear that John will win or that the father cannot be placated, suspense makes this struggle interesting because the outcome is in doubt and we are kept in suspense. If the plot can be so planned as to make it appear now that George will win and then that John will be the victor, again swinging the odds to George and returning them to John, we will be kept in a state of suspense that will engage our interest unless the struggle is so long continued that even suspense fails to hold interest and we become indifferent as to the outcome because we have tired both of George and John. Clearly the play must be brought to a definite and conclusive end. The proposition proves itself. The play must have a beginning, which is the statement of the object of the play and the obstacle to be encountered; a middle, or struggle against this object

made interesting through suspense; and an end or termination of the struggle, wherein either victory is gained or defeat sustained.

10. Taking the slight plot outlined above, study it in diagram.

BEGINNING.

George wishes to marry Agnes. (Object.)

John is his rival. (Obstacle.)

MIDDLE.

The father favors John. (Struggle and suspense.) Struggle because the father's favor improves John's chances, and suspense because we fear that the odds against George's success have become too great.

George and Agnes quarrel. (Struggle.) George now has to overcome this additional handicap and so fight the harder. Agnes turns to John. (Suspense.) Will Agnes marry John or forgive George and restore him to favor?

George loses his fortune. (Suspense.) How will this affect his chances of winning forgiveness from Agnes?

John inherits money. (Struggle.) This adds to the difficulties that John must overcome.

Pitying George, Agnes forgives him. (Struggle.) Since an obstacle has been overcome.

The father's opposition to George grows stronger. (Struggle.) This obstacle has become more pronounced.

George and Agnes elope. (Struggle.) They will overcome the obstacle of opposition by outwitting the father.

The father and John give pursuit. Suspense predominates here, as the spectator fears that the elopers will be overtaken and the union prevented.

END

George and Agnes are married. (Climax.) The object is attained.

The father forgives them. Falling action and end of the play.

It should be noticed that the quarrel between George and Agnes is not immediately patched up. John first comes into his fortune to increase the obstacle and the suspense. Then the forgiveness becomes of greater interest through the introduction of the new factor. John's inheritance makes it appear that he will become the favored suitor. Now we are more than ever pleased that Agnes forgives George. Agnes, too, wins greater favor now because she forgives George not only though his own fortune is gone, but in spite of the added affluence of John. She is given twice the credit that would be hers did she merely forgive George when he lost his money and before she knew of John's inheritance.

11. It might be even better to have John come into his fortune before George loses his. This will put the two men on a more even footing. Now the loss of George's money becomes even more apparently a calamity. The story as it is framed gives the benefit of the factors to Agnes. This latter form will gain greater sympathy for George. It is a question of which character needs the advantage

most and which outworking will give the greater interest to the story as a whole.

12. This story is a plot because each plot factor has a direct bearing upon the object of the story: the marriage of George and Agnes. Nothing else of importance is introduced. Each feature is vital to the settlement of the question as to the outcome of the courtship. During the time covered by the play it may be that there have been other interesting things happening to our characters but not germane to the plot. Agnes may have had a narrow escape from being run down by an autotruck loaded with coal. George may have killed a mad dog. John may have thrashed a loafer who insulted a strange woman. The father may have been shot at by a political rival. All four of them may have been arrested for speeding while driving in an automobile. All of these matters are not without their visual interest. All of them concern characters in the play. But none of these incidents in the slightest degree affects the chances of George, and so, no matter how interesting they are, they are not permitted in the story. No matter how exciting or thrilling such things may momentarily be, unless they are intimately connected with the advancement of the plot, they should not be admitted to the story. It will not improve the story, for they do not belong. They may hurt the story for the same reason, interesting as they may be in themselves, because the introduction of an action is a virtual announcement that the action has a connection with the story and failure to make use of the material to advance the plot will distract the attention of the spectator in wonderment as to how the incident will change the course of events.

13. If Agnes is seen to escape death under the wheels of the heavy truck, we naturally suppose that this is because her escape or her peril will in some way affect future developments. You note the incident and thereafter are on the watch for a development that never comes. Perhaps you have attended some dramatic performance where the theatre cat has strolled upon the stage. Perhaps the big scene of the play has been hurt if not ruined. The moment is tense and dramatic, but the cat is a novel surprise and for the moment is stronger than the acting of the star. The cat has no place in the scene. We wonder how she is there. An unrelated incident is like the strange cat, out of place and distracting. The bearing of the incident on the play must be explained to the sub-conscious mind before the conscious mind can again give attention to the story. Every incident must have a direct bearing upon plot. It cannot be put in merely "to make it more interesting," as so many students explain.

14. If John saved Agnes from being run down, then he established a certain claim to her favor that has a bearing on the story. If George's father was the political opponent who took a shot at Agnes' parent, then the incident will explain the opposition to the match. If George killed the mad dog just as it was about to bite John or the strange woman whom John rescued was known to be Agnes' aunt, who

becomes John's partisan, then the incidents are permissible because they advance the story.

15. A plot can have but a single objective point. This is even more binding on photoplay than on the drama of the stage. We cannot have as objective the twin facts that George and John both wish to marry Agnes. We must select either John or George and state our preference or, by changing slightly the factors, make it plain that it is because we are interested in Agnes and know that she prefers George to John that we wish to see George and Agnes wed. This matter of choice of protagonist is the first matter to be settled. We must first select the chief character and then plan to hold all the interest to that character. In the story as stated George is the protagonist, Agnes the object and John the antagonist. If we made Agnes the protagonist (or heroine) then George would be the objective and John would remain the antagonist, but would be forced to change his tactics and through the father seek to force Agnes to marry him. If George is the hero all the action must directly or indirectly relate to his chances. If Agnes is the favorite, George is interesting merely because he is the man we want to see Agnes marry because it is her wish.

16. The best way to determine the question of protagonist is to state the plot in the form of a question and its answer. The question shows in its formation who must carry the interest. It reads:

George desires to marry Agnes. Does he?

Clearly George is our hero and the action must be directed to his chances. If the question reads:

Agnes wishes to marry George. John seeks to marry her. Does she marry George?

then it is plain that we must center the interest on Agnes and not on George or John. In the drama of the stage it is customary to have a second pair of lovers, played by younger persons, for the so-styled comedy relief, but photoplay is too direct and too short to permit these intrusions as a rule and the attention must be held to the protagonist more rigidly than in the spoken drama, where dialogue permits explanation to be given more readily.

17. The statement of the question is the start of the play, the solving of the problem the middle action and the reply the climax or end. If the answer is affirmative, then the desirable happy ending is achieved. If the reply is in the negative, the ending is unhappy. Sometimes changing the framing of the question will permit the ending to be a happy one though the result is the same. This is true both of the dramatic play and the comedy, but particularly true of the latter. To use a familiar plot, John Smith has been out with the boys the night before. He seeks to convince his wife that he was at the office. She endeavors to learn the truth. If the question reads:

Mrs. Smith seeks to learn if her husband was intoxicated. Does she?

then the story has a happy ending if she finds out and an unhappy ending if she fails. Change the question to read:

Smith seeks to prevent his wife discovering that he was drunk. Does he?

and practically the same action will give a happy ending if Mrs. Smith is deceived and an unhappy ending if she discovers his fall from grace. In one case we get the audience interested in Smith and in the other we give the interest to her.

18. Whatever the form of the question, the answer must be distinct and unmistakable. You cannot say, for example, that perhaps Agnes will marry George after she gets a divorce from John. The moment she marries John the question is answered and this story stops. You cannot say that Mrs. Smith does not find out but you think she will when Tom Brown drops around that evening because Tom never could keep a secret. You must wait and see if Tom betrays his friend before you can answer the question and end the story.

19. If question and answer are distinctly stated, you cannot possibly make the mistake of regarding mere incident as plot material. If you will only remember that all happenings must contribute to answer the question asked, there will be no trouble in making a decision. Suppose you have to write a story about the fact that John goes to the post office to purchase some stamps. You state the question:

John goes to the post office to buy stamps. Does he get them?

You make it clear that John is going after stamps, then start him on his travels. He lives at First Street. The post office is at Tenth. At Second Street John sees a trolley car crash into a furniture van. The driver of the van is killed. Between Second and Third streets a painter falls from a scaffolding and is crushed into a shapeless mass. At the corner of Third street a policeman clubs a street peddler and a mob tries to take his prisoner away. The reserves are called out. Further up the street two men engaged in a duel with knives and in front of the post office he sees two men in a taxicab abduct a baby from its carriage. Then he goes in and gets the stamps.

20. Surely this will make a most exciting story, since it is so full of exciting things. The trouble is that none of these things have any bearing on the plot. None of them has prevented John from getting his stamps. He went to get stamps and he got them. That was all. So far as the story is concerned it might have been Sunday afternoon and the streets deserted. Had John been the van driver, had he been shot by the reserves, had he fallen from the scaffold, been one of the principals in the duel or the father of the child, the probabilities are that he would not have gotten the stamps. As it was nothing that happened concerned him and his quest of the stamps and so no part of the adventures concern the story. It may be granted that the incidents concerned John, in a way, but did not concern John *and* the stamps as well.

21. The first step in plot formation is to learn to state clearly your

proposition or question. The next is to learn to select only those incidents and happenings that serve to advance the story to its conclusion and lastly to clearly and explicitly reply to the questions. The reply must be "Yes" or "No." It cannot be "Perhaps."

22. Plot generally concerns three persons or two persons and an object or ambition. We have the man who desires the woman who also is sought by the second man, the two women who have set their affections on the same man or the person with an ambition that runs contrary to the ambition of another. It is customary, though not wholly correct, to speak of these persons as the hero, heroine and villain or villainess. Where an object replaces a person on one side of the triangle, then we have a hero or heroine, a villain or villainess and an object.

23. The terms, however, are misnomers and sometimes mislead the novice who cannot understand that his leading character is a hero though he may not be heroic and who hesitates to call his villain by that term because of his good moral character. He cannot understand that in such a plot as the Raffles stories present the hero is a thief and the villain the person of good character who seeks to prevent these thefts. Moreover the terms hero and heroine seem to contradict the rule in paragraph fifteen of this chapter to the effect that there cannot be two chief characters of equal interest. The very naming of these personages suggests a sharing of the interest.

24. Substituting the proper terms will make the matter more easily understandable. Plot concerns three persons or two persons and an object. One of these is the protagonist. The protagonist may be either the hero or heroine of the story. The villain, who is a villain only because he offers obstacle to the achievement of the object, is the antagonist. The objective is the thing desired by the protagonist and which the antagonist opposes. The objective may be a woman, a man, an honor, or whatever it is that the protagonist desires.

25. In its last analysis, then, the plot consists of a protagonist who has an object which he seeks to attain and the attainment of which the antagonist seeks to prevent through the interposition of obstacle which the protagonist seeks to overcome through struggle, the interest in which is determined by the quality and preservation of suspense. It has a start, or beginning, a middle and an end, and it consists of a question asked and answered in definite and unmistakable terms.

(2.XXIV:27) (3.XIII:4) (4.XXXIII:11) (5.XI:2) (6.XIII:2 & 6) (7.XIII:9) (8.XIII:1 & 10 XXIV:18) (9.XIII:12 L:11) (10.I:5) (12.X:9 XIII:4 XV:6 XXV:4 L:4) (13.XLVII:5) (15.XIII:7 XIV:11 L:27) (16.XIII:7-8) (17.XX:10 L:29) (19.XIII:5 XXV:13) (21.XXIV:9) (24.LXIII:19).

CHAPTER X

MOTIVES

MOTIVATION and motiving are much the same except that motiving provides a reason for the acts of persons and motivation accounts for the results of those acts. In other words, motiving explains why persons do certain things and motivation explains why these actions have certain results.

2. No person performs an act without a reason which seems good to him, but it may be necessary to explain the motive to others before they can understand his mental attitude. There must be a reason before there can be an impulse to act, although to others this reason may seem to be absurdly inadequate. A drunken man slapping at the atmosphere may seem to be doing a silly thing unless we know that he sees a green cow in a terrific combat with a pink mouse and that he is trying to drive the infuriated animals apart. So far as his befogged intellect is concerned, he has a good reason. To the bystander there is no reason, therefore the action is absurd. In photoplay action must either be explained or self-explanatory if it is not to be absurd. The action of a man opening a gate that he may pass through is self-motived. If he climbs over the fence beside the open gate, the action must be motived if it is not to appear absurd. We must know that he has sworn never to pass through that gate again and seeks to compromise with his conscience by climbing over the fence.

3. If, in a photoplay, we see the beautiful Beatrice and the effeminate Algernon wrapped in each other's embrace, we can understand that love motives the action. If her father enters and kicks Algernon out, we can share his feeling of disgust and understand the action. If, however, the suitor is apparently in every way desirable and yet is ejected, we must know the reason: must be informed as to the motive, which may be that the parents of the young people are enemies or that the man really is a drug fiend.

4. Either reason is sufficient to motive the action and either might motivate the story. The young man is a drug fiend. Out of the depths of his love he seeks to overcome the slavery to narcotics. Now when we see his sufferings, we feel for him more than merely pity for a fellow-being in pain. We sympathize with his efforts and hope to see him win the mastery of himself, appreciating the terrible price he pays for his freedom from habit. We are sorry for his physical and mental sufferings, but through motivation we are given a stronger reason for sympathy. We want to see him win for the sake of his own happiness and for the sake of the happiness of the girl.

5. Motivation, it then appears, is giving a reason for action that the action, *through the reason*, may become important. This must not be confounded with punch, which gives interest to action through the idea behind the reason. Motivation gives interest to action through

making it understandable and therefore appreciated. Punch gives interest through the idea.

6. Every action must be motived to show its connection with the plot, and so must be related to plot. We see a man setting fire to a stately mansion. The fire, and not the man, is important. We need a fire. We cannot merely have one. We must explain or motive it. We have no person in the cast who has any reason for setting fire to the house. The only reason we have for wanting the fire is to give the protagonist an opportunity to save the girl and so motive her interest and motivate the subsequent story. We use a fire instead of a runaway horse, and to have a fire we need to start it just as we must show the horse is a runaway. A lunatic incendiary is better than an overheated flue because he is an animate instead of an inanimate explanation and therefore more interesting. Therefore we motive the action of the incendiary by making him a lunatic and so gain a fire which permits the rescue of Muriel, the mill owner's beautiful daughter, by John, the young and handsome employee. The love, in turn, motivates the story.

7. Perhaps we have already motived the love and wish it to be supposed by the father that John set fire to the house when he was dismissed from the mill because his love for Muriel was discovered. To have a clear understanding of the circumstances we cannot merely say that the house catches fire and that John is under suspicion. We must show first that the fire occurs and then that John is suspected unjustly. In a fiction story we might let the origin of the fire remain in doubt until the next to the last paragraph, and have John under a cloud until the lunatic confesses that he set the fire because the mill owner struck him with a whip when he was caught trespassing. In photoplay it generally gives a greater interest to plot if we know that John is innocent. It is important that the motiving be given clearly in action as the story progresses and not held in reserve until the denouement. If the lunatic sets the fire, we must be shown. If the antagonist, who may be the mill foreman, sets the fire in the hope of throwing the blame on John and getting the girl for himself, then we must see the foreman that we may understand his action when John is led away by the constable.

8. In a word, every action and the result of every action must be explained to the spectator, either by inference or by statement of fact.

9. But motivation means something more than this. It means that each action and sequence of action must be shown to have some definite and positive bearing upon the plot; that each action and happening more important than mere by-play must in a definite and positive way advance the story toward the climax.

10. If the insane man had not set fire to the mansion there could not have been set in motion the chain of events that eventually led Muriel into John's arms. The action had at the moment no seeming bearing on the story. It was the wanton act of an irresponsible person, but John, passing, sees the blaze and comes to the aid of the fam-

ily. Muriel, from an upper window, calls for assistance. John rescues her. Love is born. To take the other suggested development, the house is afire. John is accused of having set the blaze. Until now Muriel's love for him may have been a vagrant, fleeting passion. The unjustness of the charge rouses her to a sense of fair play. She becomes John's defender, and what was little more than a flirtation is fanned into true and permanent love. The fire has motivated the story through precipitating a crisis.

11. It should be understood that motivating action does not mean that from a given action there can arise but one result. At all stages in the progress of evolving a plot we can, through a change in motivation, change the action of the story. We have shown that the fire and rescue give birth to love or that the fire and unjust accusation serve to strengthen love. By drawing Muriel's character differently it might be shown that she, in common with her father, believes in John's guilt and turns from him. John is forced to serve a jail sentence and emerges an enemy to society. Now the fire and the consequences motivate a new plot in which revenge upon Society and not the winning of Muriel is the objective. At each fresh development there arises the opportunity to accept a new motivation, provided that the new action is in harmony with what has previously occurred. It is this which makes possible new twists to old stories. No start requires one certain and inevitable end. If the motivation is clear, the story may move in any direction that promises to give novelty.

12. Each action must be clearly explained, each motive clearly understood if interest is to be retained. Nothing can happen "just because," or it will be illogical and unacceptable. The motive must not only be explained, but it must be such a motive as will be accepted by an audience as reasonable and logical.

(2.XVI:6 XLVII:7) (5.XXV:2) (6.XXIV:32 XLVIII:2) (7.XXV:8) (9.IX:12) (10.XIV:11) (11.XXIII:13 XXIV:21 XLVIII:40).

CHAPTER XI

ACCURACY OF COLOR

EXPLANATION of motive is necessary that we may understand the reason for actions, but there can be no accurate motivation unless the action is such as will be natural to the person performing it in the position in which he is placed. In simple phrase the local color should be correct.

2. Local color does not mean that a story gains in picturesque effect through the selection of unique scenes and locations. This is generally true, but it is not local color. The latter is more correctly the

harmony between environment and action. It is, in a sense, the working out of the Greek unity of time, place and action. In other words action must be suited to time and place. If your time is midnight and your place a desert, you naturally would not show a score of people in pajamas eating breakfast. It is possible that you may make, through ignorance, some similar mistake that will seem as glaring to others. Local color has also another phase. It means that a given character should act as such a character might be expected to act and not at variance with custom.

3. When Mrs. O'Grady hangs over her back fence to tell Mrs. Flynn that Rosie Connor is no better than she should be, taking a pair of shoes from Tim Murphy, the color is correct. It is natural that they should gossip over the back fence. But Mrs. Van der Veen, wife of the rich contractor, would not lean over *her* back fence to tell her affluent neighbor that Patricia Gotrocks lost fifteen hundred dollars at bridge the week before and is suspected of having paid it back with money she borrowed from Victor Van Tassel. Here the coloring would be incorrect and most persons would know it. Knowing it, they would feel the remainder of the story to be uninformed and therefore uninteresting. Persons are interested only when statements are made with authority. Show by the way your characters act that you do not know what you are talking about, and you will be voted a bore as well as a liar.

4. Knowledge is one of the first great requisites of story telling of any sort, and more plays have been spoiled through false coloring than through any other one source. It may be but a single slight lapse from correctness, but let that lapse be observed and the entire story will lose interest, not completely, perhaps, but in some degree.

5. Probably not even the raw novice would show a bank president eating his lunch out of a tin pail balanced on a pile of greenbacks, but more than one has shown a scene in which the hero seeks to borrow money from a bank. He goes to the president, speaks, the president nods, calls a clerk and tells him to give the man five thousand dollars. Then the hero follows the clerk to the paying teller's window and receives the money without having signed a scrap of paper. The author never had to borrow money. He does not know how bank loans are negotiated, so he goes about the transaction in the way that seems good enough to him, but good to few others. It is not a very important matter in the story, but at once a majority of the persons in any audience realize that the author is unfamiliar with the life he seeks to write about, and therefore cannot have written a good story.

6. But it is not alone the novice writers who need to guard against errors. The more advanced workers are similarly careless. A man whose novels are printed both as serials and in cloth wrote a story in which a confession by wireless cleared a man about to be executed for murder. The wireless company took the telegram to the Governor, the latter telephoned the prison warden and the warden kicked the hero out of jail. The Governor did not investigate the message nor did

the warden require a signed release. The author needed his hero out of jail in a hurry and could not bother with legal formalities, so he ignored the color and spoiled his story.

7. If you write of the law courts be sure you know how they are conducted and do not use police court procedure for the Supreme Court nor the reverse. If court scenes are to be employed, ask some lawyer friend or visit a court of the proper sort. If you lay the scene in a physician's office, have your characters act as physician and patient would. Do not let the hero come to a strange physician for an examination, let the doctor tap him on the chest, pound him on the back and announce that he has but three weeks of life. Let him make the proper tests or prepare to do so and pronounce the verdict only after proper investigation.

8. It seems to be a strong temptation for city men to write of the country and the rural authors to write of the city. The reason for this is not far to seek. The city man invests the country with a certain halo of romance. To him it is the Land Desirable. Moreover he fails to see clearly the charm of the city. To an extent he is hampered by a too exact knowledge of facts. He writes of the country of his romance, and does not realize that his coloring is no more correct than the country boy's ideals of the city. The clever man writes of the city correctly but with a slight touch of idealism, if he is of the city, or of the country if his home is there, but he loses no opportunity to become intimately familiar with the other side that he may write with equal authority on both phases.

9. Generally the author differs from his fellows in that he is able to see the romantic and the ideal in what is commonplace to his fellows. That is why he is an author instead of a book-keeper or shoe clerk. He can see stories where others see only their daily tasks, but even he is apt to be hampered by a lack of perspective. He stands too close to his subject to see it clearly. The city man writes more interesting stories of the country than the rural writer (providing he really knows his subject through study) because he does not stand so close to his subject. You cannot stand six inches from a large picture and get with proper values all of the details of the subject. You must stand back. It is a general practice to recommend that the student write only of his own time and place, but this advice is not wholly good. It should be qualified. It is all well enough to say that the clown should not write of kings, but there is no reason why he should not, provided that he goes to the trouble of acquiring an intimate knowledge of the habits and personalities of kings.

10. He is best fitted for authorship who trains himself to acquire an almost limitless fund of knowledge of all sorts and conditions of men, their environments, their habits of speech and thought, their manners and customs and their appearance. The author should write only of that which he knows about, but the real author should and generally does know more than the daily life he leads.

(2.IX:5 LI:12) (8.XXII:9) (10.VIII:6).

CHAPTER XII

PLAUSIBILITY

EVEN motivating the plot, motiving the actions of the characters and supplying the proper local color, does not render the plot wholly acceptable. The action of every character may be accounted for, the rise of every situation be prepared for, the color may be correct to a shade and yet the plot may be impossible because the average spectator cannot accept it as an actual happening because of its improbability. It may be possible and yet not probable, and Melville Davisson Post put the matter compactly in an article in the Saturday Evening Post when he said that once past the bounds of probability it was better to offer the absolutely impossible than the possible but improbable. The entire subject matter of this chapter is comprehended in the latter half of that statement. It is better to be impossible than improbable.

2. Understand clearly the difference in meaning. Anything is *possible* that can be accomplished, but it may not be *probable*. It would be possible to take the Capitol building at Washington, lift it into the air and drop it upon the top of the Parliament Buildings in London. This is possible. It is possible to move a house along the ground. It is possible to shore the foundations of the Capitol and to build balloons of sufficient lifting capacity. It is possible to do this, but it is highly improbable that it ever will be attempted. It is impossible for a man to lift the dome of the Capitol by the statue on the top. It is impossible, but it would be more readily accepted than the other and possible incident because we would present this latter feat as a rare-bit dream and not ask that it be accepted as a fact.

3. It is no unusual thing for an author whose story has been returned with the comment that it is too improbable to take issue with the Editor on the point and offer to present documentary evidence to show that the incident in dispute is an actual happening and not an imaginary event. This is a matter of supreme indifference to the Editor. He does not care whether the fact be a truth or an invention. His experience tells him that the fact will not be accepted by the average person as a thing likely to happen. That is all that he cares about. The story is improbable no matter how possible it is that the thing may have happened. It will not be accepted; therefore it will not interest. Nothing else matters.

4. It is better to offer a plausible fiction than a possible but improbable fact. Truth may be and often is stranger than fiction, which is precisely why fiction is preferred. It is immaterial that a thing has happened. That it has happened is not sufficient to require its acceptance from those not familiar with the facts, and film stories cannot be accompanied by a mass of affidavits proving that an improbable story really happened. The fact must be plausible to gain acceptance,

and the plausible fact is something that may never have happened, but which might have happened, not once, but many times. Every now and then it is announced that a sea serpent has been sighted. It is possible that there are such monsters of the deep, but until the fact is so well established as to be accepted *without protest* by all, the sea serpent will remain a fabulous animal. If you could send out a live sea serpent with each print of a film, then you could write stories about sea serpents and ask that they be accepted as serious fact. Until then the sea serpent will be available only in farce.

5. The dictionary definition of plausible is "having a fair appearance: apparently right; specious." The second of these is particularly apt in this connection. The plausible statement is "apparently right." It does not matter that it is not true; that it is not a fact. It is apparently right. It will be accepted as a fact without argument because it has a fair appearance. That is all that is necessary. Photoplay is entertainment; not history. If it is specious it succeeds in its purpose, but if it presents a fact so strange and out of the ordinary that to ask its acceptance as fact without corroborative testimony is to offer apparent insult to the intelligence, then that fact, *real as it may be*, has no place in photoplay.

6. Originality of plot is greatly to be desired, but it is possible to be too original; to offer such amazing statements that they cannot be accepted as truths. Unless you present such a story purely as an appeal to the imagination you cannot ask serious consideration for it. It is possible that the centre of the earth is inhabited by a race of creatures thirty feet high, sightless and capable of withstanding several hundred degrees of heat. It is possible, since no one has knowledge to the contrary. If you ask that this fact be accepted seriously, you will not be believed, but if you write a fantastic story in which this locale is employed and these and other creatures are introduced, and offer it in such a way that you invite your spectator to enjoy the creation of your vivid imagination, then the resources of your inventiveness will be applauded because you do not ask or pretend to ask that your statements be accepted as fact. You say in effect: "This story is not real. I am not such an ass as to suppose you will accept it as real—but see how cleverly I can contrive fable." Your spectator is slightly flattered by your appeal to his appreciation of your cleverness and decides in your favor.

7. Suppose that you devise a situation such as this: Miss Millions is astride a runaway horse. A mounted policeman dashes alongside her and removes her from the maddened animal. This will find ready acceptance, for there is record of hundreds of similar rescues. But suppose that in your search for novelty of scene you employ a dismounted policeman who commandeers an aeroplane. Hanging by his knees from the framework, he orders the pilot to guide the plane over the endangered rider, pulling her from the horse as he passes. Here is something that might be done, but it will not be plausible because it will not be accepted as a possibility. Audiences may regard with in-

terest the manipulation of the aeroplane and applaud the acrobatic ability of the officer, but they will not regard the story as convincing. It is not plausible, and therefore not to be accepted.

8. Your story does not have to be true; indeed most true stories are to be avoided since you will be hampered by facts, and some of these facts may be so purely local that they will not be understood by persons not resident in your section of the country. It is better to offer a story that sounds true than one that is true, since the former will be accepted and the latter will not. When "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" was written there were no practicable cruising submarines, no diving suits that enabled the wearer to be independent of a source of air supply; indeed, the whole story was almost purely imaginative. But it was all possible and probable, and today practically all of the inventions have been realized; some of them, perhaps, through the suggestions contained in the book. Others of that time who sought to imitate Verne did not last because they were not plausible, because they were too wildly speculative. Verne was imaginative, but plausible. He was merely ahead of his time. He was accepted then. He is proven now.

(1.XLVI:8) (3.XXII:7) (4.XXXIII:23 L:16 LIV:3) (8.VII:8 XXII:1).

CHAPTER XIII

STRUGGLE AND SUSPENSE

ALREADY it has been shown that struggle and suspense are the two chief factors which make for interest in photoplay. Without struggle there is nothing to arouse the interest. Without suspense there is nothing to hold it, and the greater the uncertainty as to the outcome the greater will be the sustained interest.

2. A mere record of events, even with some struggle, is history. History oftentimes is dull. It is only when history approaches plot that it gains interest. Josephus records the history of the Jewish people accurately, but not vitally. He makes it a valuable record of his race, but he does not engage interest. He gives no struggle and suspense to battles as vital as those of the Trojan war. The latter is both history and plot. It has become a classic, not so much through its importance as through its plot and through struggle and suspense. The story of the Siege of Troy is familiar to many who remember only disconnected incidents in Jewish history.

3. The wandering of the Israelites had an object. There was struggle and suspense, but the story is not told with a punch and with this omitted it is history alone; a most engrossing history, but too long continued to hold interest.

4. Most beginners are prone to regard anything they write as a story whether it be merely a recital of facts they have heard or a string of incident without plot because without the object that provides the opportunity for struggle. If the student of struggle will bear in mind that without objective there cannot be anything to be struggled for, and that without struggle there can be no suspense, then he cannot go far wrong in realizing what his plot must be. He will know the difference between the tale and the story with the plot.

5. In Chapter IX. is given an example of a tale of lively action, but which is a tale and not a plot because none of it concerns the protagonist. An even better example may be taken from the previous edition of this book. The beginner, in search of a theme, decides that the adventures of a book agent should be interesting. He writes the story of Tim Smith, who sells books. Tim suffers various indignities at the hands of irate housewives whose door bells he has rung, but the story gets nowhere because it has no objective; no place to which to go. The recital can continue so long as the author's ability to invent fresh incident holds out. The story might even be continued beyond Tim's death if he wills his business to a successor.

6. Taking the same start, the tale can be made into a story if an objective is provided. It is supposed that he calls upon John Green and that Green is particularly offensive in his manner of replying. Tim vows that he will sell him a book. At once the object provides the element of struggle. Tim struggles to sell the book. Green struggles to avoid Tim. Each time Tim gains access to Green suspense is created because our hopes are raised. Each time he fails, hope is dashed and suspense is continued. Tim enters Green's office through the door, through the transom, through the window and from the next office. He is the waiter at Green's club and waylays him as he comes from his home. Each time Green escapes. Finally Tim catches him coming home, late at night and at peace with all the world. He not only sells him a book, but also sells to Green's convivial companions. Each time the attempt is made and fails the crisis improves the suspense while providing for fresh and more determined struggle against the obstacle.

7. Struggle must be directed against a specific and not a general object. Tim struggles to sell books in order to gain a livelihood. In the loose collection of incident this objective is present, but it is too general, too long continued to hold interest. The objective must be concrete; something that may definitely be realized in order that the struggle may be terminated by the accomplishment of this object. That Tim is trying to make a living is an object, but it is too general to focus interest. There is no definite point at which the answer can be given and the story terminated. Tim tries to sell a book to Green. He does. That is all we need to seek to know. Struggle here is directed against a definite and positive obstacle, and it is easy to centre the interest.

8. The question might be more broadly stated in that Tim is a book

agent because he wants to pay off the mortgage on the old home, for here the story would stop when the mortgage was paid off, but the struggle now would be to pay off the mortgage and not to sell books. Selling books is merely the means by which Tim struggles to pay off the mortgage. It is not now a matter of definite interest. He might change over and sell potato slicers without impairing the value of the story.

9. Objective is always necessary to struggle, just as struggle must make the objective interesting. The sales and rebuffs he meets in a general practice of his career may be interesting or amusing for the moment, but they carry no punch, for there is no object aimed at upon which he can concentrate his energies of struggle. It is the aim or objective that gives interest. A fine horse galloping down the road is a pleasing picture of spirited action, but a picture and not a story. Pit him against another horse in a race and the struggle for supremacy gives interest to the mere beauty of the action. What before was pleasing for its beauty now becomes of absorbing interest because of its struggle.

10. To continue the simile, if it is a runaway race; if one horse goes to the front and stays there throughout the distance, then the race is less interesting because of the one-sidedness of the struggle. Suspense is present only when the outcome is in doubt. If our interest is engaged in one particular horse, we follow his fortunes with breathless interest so long as he has a chance to win. If he leads we are exultant. If he drops behind we are in despair. If he regains the advantage we are hopeful. Each time he comes to the front we exult. Each time he drops behind hope is dashed, though if he gamely fights every foot of the way we never lose hope, for we know he still stands a chance and is not a beaten horse dropping back. When he wins we feel more enthusiasm because of the gameness of the fight. Had the issue never been in doubt; had he romped in ahead of the field the last half mile, we should have lost suspense. It would then merely be a case of waiting for him to cross the wire. The more frequent the alternations of hope and doubt the more deeply are we moved and the more intense is our enjoyment of the winning. Up to a certain point the sustaining and slight prolongation of suspense makes for greater interest. Past that point interest wanes through sheer force of excess of emotion.

11. This holds good in every line. In the late nineties Ralph Johnstone, one of the earliest of the Wright Brothers' exhibition aviators, and who was killed in an aeroplane accident, was appearing in vaudeville in the stair climbing act on a bicycle. Discussing showmanship one day he made this point: "I can climb the flight of steps the first time, every show," he contended, "but to do so would rob me of applause. I must work them up. To do the trick the first time would make it look too easy. The first time you are in the theatre I'll do the trick twice. The second time I'll fake it. They'll not know that I am there the first time." He made good his point. Early in the act he

rode to the foot of the steps and mounted them, one after the other, without the least effort. There was a mild ripple of applause. He performed some other tricks and came back to the stairs. This time he dropped to the stage four times. The fifth he fought his way, step by step, ascending three and dropping one, gaining four and losing three, until, with a final effort, he lifted himself to the platform. This time the applause, which had been growing as the struggle continued, was deafening. Precisely the same trick had been performed with almost absurd ease earlier in the act and had passed almost unnoticed. This time he had worked up enthusiasm through playing on suspense. By interposing obstacle, heightened by suspense, he had made his point. It is precisely the same in photoplay. What appears to be easy and without struggle or suspense cannot interest.

12. If the result seems predetermined there can be no suspense because there can be no question as to the outcome of suspense. We must first make it apparent that the protagonist must fight to attain his object and then make it clear that the outcome of the fight is in doubt. We get the spectator interested in Mary and Sam. Sam wants to marry Mary. Then we introduce Gregg, a miserly old man, who admires Mary's youthful freshness and seeks her for his wife. A struggle between a young man and an old one generally has but one outcome in fiction. The younger man wins. Gregg interests the father. Suspense begins. The odds seem to be against Sam. But Mary declares she will never marry Gregg. Sam is in the ascendant. Gregg gets a mortgage on the farm. Mary does not care. Sam has a farm and will care for her father. Gregg gets a mortgage on that, too. Now Mary does care. She does not want to injure Sam. She does not tell him she loves him still, but she does promise to marry Gregg. It looks black for Sam, but at the church door Gregg is arrested for usury, Sam's rich uncle dies, he pays off both mortgages and lives happily ever after.

13. Each time hope is dashed and revived the interest becomes stronger through the use of suspense, and the more cleverly this suspense is planned the greater becomes our interest in the story. The placid surface of a lake is beautiful in a way, but it lacks the life and action of the rush of that same water down rock-strewn rapids.

(1.IX:8) (2.IX:6) (4.VII:3 IX:3 & 12) (5.IX:19) (6.IX:6)
(7.IX:15) (9.IX:7) (10.IX:8 XXXIX:12) (12.IX:9).

CHAPTER XIV

CRISIS AND CLIMAX

DOUBTLESS, before the advent of a Safe and Sane Fourth of July, you have discharged firecrackers. You remember how first you took a cracker from the pack or from a box of loose ones already untwined from the central fuse. You touched the fuse to a

bit of punk. There was a moment of anticipation and then the fuse lighted and burned slowly toward the thicker part where the powder had been added to the saltpetre-soaked paper. The smolder became a splutter. Your anticipation increased. Then the spark disappeared into the clay with which the cylinder was stamped; there was an instant of acute suspense—then the explosion. After that you lost interest in that particular cracker and turned to the next. It might have fallen to the ground to smolder for a while and burn out, or it may have blown under the piazza to set fire to the house, but your interest in that particular cracker was gone. It ended when the cracker exploded, for that was your object in touching off the fuse. When the explosion came the climax of anticipation was reached and passed. You turned to another cracker.

2. It is much the same with a plot. The cracker is the theme you have in mind. The lighting of the fuse is the start of your story. The moments of minor suspense are crises and the instant of the explosion is the climax. That is what you have been waiting for. Toward that end you have performed all of the earlier operations. Nothing can be of greater moment than the explosion, because it was your object in lighting the cracker to cause it to explode. It follows then that

3. A crisis is the peak of a moment of suspense.

4. A climax is the termination of the suspense and the accomplishment of the object aimed at from the start.

5. Once the climax is reached and your object is achieved, the story, like the exploded firecracker, loses interest. There may be something more, but it should be your aim, in photoplay, to end the story when the climax ends suspense. This differs from the teaching of the drama where the last act is supposed to be reserved for the falling action following the climax, but photoplay is not drama, and in photoplay the climax should be so led up to that there is nothing more to follow and detract from the interest. Nothing in your play can be of greater moment than your climax, therefore whatever follows the climax is falling and not rising action and the longer it continues the more tiresome does it become. In this regard the technique of the photoplay is more closely akin to the technique of the one-act play, where the curtain should, if possible, fall upon the climax and not a couple of minutes later.

6. To illustrate, we will suppose that Joe, our protagonist, and Ben, the antagonist, both love Jane. Jane prefers Joe. Ben murders Harry and declares that Joe killed him in a moment of jealousy. Jane discovers that Joe really is the murderer. The object of the play is the union of Joe and Jane. The achievement of that object should, if possible, be the climax, but here the climax is found in the discovery by Jane of the fact that Joe is the murderer. Unless it can be managed to make the release of Joe of greater importance than the discovery, then the suspense ends with the discovery, since the rest is merely a matter of detail. Perhaps it can be planned.

7. To continue the use of the plot above, let us study the crises and

climax. The first scenes naturally establish the fact that Joe and Jane are sweethearts. This may be shown in action with a pretty background, but there is no particular value to the scene. There is nothing as yet to gain interest, for there is nothing to show that this courtship will offer anything out of the ordinary. But there comes Ben to show that he, too, seeks Jane's favor. Now interest rises because there is to be opposition. It will not be plain sailing for Joe. We not only reach the opposition, but also the first crisis—mild enough, it is true, but crises should grow in strength as the action progresses. The crisis perhaps takes the form of Ben's oath that Jane will marry him under duress if not of her own free will. The second crisis is that Ben seeks to abduct Jane and carry her off to the minister. This scene does not immediately follow the first, for each crisis must be followed by a falling action to give the spectator time to prepare for the next crisis. We first see Ben making his plans, then the attempt and the rescue by Joe, which forms the second crisis. This crisis is stronger and more forceful than the first, but part of its strength is derived from the first crisis—Ben's oath, in the light of our preference for Joe. If we did not know of Joe; if favor had been thrown to Ben, we might be glad he was going to get Jane, but, wanting to see her married to Joe, Ben's action is more forceful and exciting because it is an obstacle to Joe's success.

8. Each crisis should be possessed of greater strength than its predecessors, but may derive a part of this strength from previous crises.

9. Again there must come a period of preparation. It cannot be as weak as the opening of the story nor even the preparation for the abduction. Just as each crisis must be stronger than the last, so must each period of falling action be stronger than the preceding periods.

10. When the tide is coming in, each wave breaks higher up the beach than the last and does not go quite so far back before being carried along by the next incoming wave. We are leading to a stronger crisis. We must do so in stronger action.

11. Joe has reason to believe that Harry offers himself as a possible rival. The two quarrel. Jane comes upon them and begs them not to fight. They agree. Joe goes on and Jane argues with Harry. He agrees not to continue the quarrel. In an excess of gratitude she kisses him and runs away. Ben sees both the quarrel and the kiss. Mad with jealousy he kills Harry. This is not a crisis. The action has not yet been connected with Joe, the protagonist. It is not until Ben accuses Joe of the murder and calls upon Jane to deny that there was a quarrel that the crisis arises, for this does concern Joe. It precipitates a crisis because it is the end of one period of suspense and the commencement of another.

12. In the falling action that follows Joe is tried and found guilty. The crisis comes with his sentence to death. In falling action Jane engages a famous detective-scientist to free Joe. Ben, sensing danger, shoots at the detective. The detective makes an analysis of the bullet from his arm and of a portion of the bullet which killed Harry.

They are identical in composition. The proportions of metal in the bullets in Joe's revolver is different. With this information he forces a confession from Ben. This is the climax. All that remains is to present the confession, and either secure a reopening of the case or a pardon for Joe. This cannot be as dramatic or as vital as the discovery, so it cannot be as interesting. The interest must fall with the action.

13. But here arises one of the nice points of play building. If something can be found to prolong and heighten the interest, then the play can continue and the climax will be reduced to a crisis. The essential difference between climax and crisis is that crisis heightens suspense and climax ends it. If we can prolong the suspense we can work to a new and stronger climax. If Ben can prevent Jane and the detective from making use of the confession; if he can, for example, overpower them and make them his captives, then the story continues because the issue is yet in doubt.

14. Now the interest takes a new twist and concerns itself with the problem of how Jane is to make use of the information she possesses for Joe's benefit. No longer is the confession the terminal point of suspense. Suspense will not end until the confession can be used to save Joe and so achieve the object of the play. Action can continue to the climax so long as suspense continues and increases and this subsequent action should be more intense than that which has gone before.

15. A diagrammatic representation of the plot should offer a succession of peaks and valleys, each peak a little higher than the last and each valley above the level of the one before it. The highest peak represents the climax, and from there the diagram of the action slants sharply toward the bottom. In its best form, the diagram ends with the attainment of the highest point. More than this, each peak should not only be higher than the last, but the relative increase in height should be greater toward the close.

16. At the start of a play explanations should be made. These should be gotten out of the way early before the movement of the plot fairly commences. At the start the crises are not strong, relatively not much stronger than the falling action. Here the explanations will not be as intrusive as will be the case later on when the plot action quickens. At the start the crises are spaced further apart. They come closer together as they gain in strength, but they should never come with such rapidity that the mind of the spectator cannot grasp and assimilate one before the next is presented. Press agents love to tell of stories in which every scene is a crisis, but these stories are not the best because they fail of their fullest effect and leave the spectator bewildered and unable to assimilate all of the points of the story. It is not artistry to assemble a succession of crises in close order. It is far better and more workmanlike to so space the crises that each is assimilated and understood and yet keep them so close as the climax approaches that there is no appreciable wait.

17. Illustrate this diagrammatically on your own typewriter. Slip a sheet of paper into the carriage and print twenty lower case m's. Now go up a few spaces and alternate between the key and the space bar. The first will give you a succession of letters so close together that they cannot well be distinguished. The second permits you to see the letter without confusion. It is the same way with crises too close together. They will run into each other and become jumbled and confused.

18. In the diagram in Chapter IX, Paragraph 10, is shown a story in its crises. It is an excellent plan in writing to make a similar division of the story into crises before developing the plot into action. A study of the diagram will show that each plot factor is, in effect, a crisis. By knowing where these crises come, you can plan your plotted action with more assurance than if you wrote it out without definite form or plan.

(4.IX:15) (5.XLIII:15) (8.L:32) (11.IX:15 X:10) (13.
LVIII:10) (15.XV:8) (16.XXXIII:15 XLV:2).

CHAPTER XV

ANTI-CLIMAX

ANTI-CLIMAX is something the plotter must guard against. Anti-climax is a self-defining word, in a sense, as being something that is against the climax and in its broader phases may be very simply exemplified. You board a battleship and see them handling the big guns. You do not know that it is sub-calibre practice. The order is given to fire. You prepare for a shock and hear only the report of the small cartridge. You have prepared to have your ears assailed by the greater noise. The light report is anti-climactic. On the stage the comedian enters, dragging a huge rope. There is a tremendous noise of stamping and shouting from the wings. Suddenly the rope dwindles to a cord and a tiny dog is dragged in. You were expecting something the size of an elephant.

2. Professor Robert Wilson Neal, whose book, "Short Stories in the Making," is most unusually helpful, contributed to the *Moving Picture World* a brief but very comprehensive survey of the anti-climax in these paragraphs.

3. The most deadly form of anti-climax is that which follows a fairly strong situation with a weaker one, producing the effect of bathos. Bathos in anti-climax is one of the main reliances of comedy in producing the humorous effect, but it is fatal in any other form of drama.

4. Naturally the first test of any situation, to determine if it is anti-climactic, is to determine if it agrees with the spirit and action of the play as a whole. Whatever is in-

consistent is in some degree anti-climactic. Thus, a situation that arouses the deep tragic emotions is inconsistent with a comedy purpose, and therefore results in anti-climax. On the other hand, an abrupt let-down from tragedy or drama to comedy level results in anti-climax. Evidently a great deal of the effect actually produced depends on the management of the incident, not on its nature. A director can turn a well-planned incident into anti-climax, just as he can sometimes save a poorly-planned situation from falling into bathos. Indifferent acting can spoil a situation in the same way—by failing to appreciate its true significance in the larger action, and reducing it to anti-climax. Anyone who has seen Warfield in "The Auctioneer" will understand how his acting not only preserves situations from being comical, but out of their comic elements brings forth a greater pathos.

5. The next test for anti-climax is significance. The scene and situation must mean something, and mean it unmistakably in connection with the principal action. There isn't any use of showing Sister Susie sewing shirts for soldiers in a play concerning American labor, but there may be in showing her sewing shirts as a sweat-shop job. Another reason why scenes give the impression of anti-climax is that their connection with the play as a whole is not made clear. Yet another is that the connection itself is remote; it may exist, but it is not essential. All this means, frequently, merely that the idea is not made clear. Sometimes it is too remote to be made clear without excessive explanation; so that proportion and emphasis and direct advance have to be sacrificed unless the idea is left obscure. Sometimes, on the other hand, the idea is good, but its connection with the rest of the play is not clear. To illustrate: Suppose Susie sewing shirts comes near to the close of a play in which Susie has passed through tempestuous experiences, the idea being that the turmoil is gone and peace is hers. If, without explanation, we see Susie thus occupied, we are more than likely to be puzzled. But a leader will avoid this anti-climactic effect by making the connection clear: "Peace after turmoil," or an equivalent, would make it plain. In brief, incidents and situations may be anti-climaxes because they are inconsistent with the atmosphere or action of the play as a whole; because they have no real significance in the play; because their connection with the general action is not made clear, or because the connection is so remote that it cannot be shown without sacrifice of more important action or of other important elements of interest.

6. In other words, anything that militates against the climax, which is the resolution of the plot, is anti-climactic and works against the plot. It may be extraneous matter or it may be a sudden twist. Professor Neal challenges our own contention that anti-climax may also be a scene prior to the climax and of greater visual interest, but he writes more from the fiction than the photoplay technique. It is entirely possible in photoplay to kill the climax with a scene before that climax, since in photoplay we deal with pictures and not with words. This, we contend, is also anti-climactic in that it also opposes the

climax. A preceding scene may be shown in such effective picture that when the climax does come it seems tame in comparison and there is a sense of disappointment at the letting down in the action. This form of anti-climax is more apt to come from the direction than from the writing of the play, but it should be remembered that a sequence of action that will overshadow to a marked degree the *visual* appeal of the climax must necessarily militate against that climax.

7. In theory nothing can be more important to story than idea, and in truth it is idea that *must* give real importance to the story and therefore to the climax of that story, but it is possible, in picture, to dwarf the indicated climax by previous action, obtaining a reaction through contrast.

8. Suppose that you have a story of a railroad engineer. He is about to marry the usual beautiful young girl. There comes a strike. He promises her that he will commit no act of violence. He keeps his word, but events so shape themselves that when the strike is over he is supposed by the officials of the road to have been guilty of planning and directing most of these acts of reprisal. They refuse to reinstate him, but something happens to prove his innocence and he is taken back. This proof, whatever it may be, is the climax to the story, but proof may be obtained in a manner so quiet, as contrasted with the burning bridges, dynamited freight stations and wrecked trains that the spectator, his mind tuned to heavier action, feels a sense of disappointment at the lack of vivid action here. The mechanical appeal of the havoc overshadows the more quiet appeal of the real story. This is but another way of saying that each succeeding crisis should be of greater importance than the preceding ones, but the fact remains that a greater visual action may dwarf a lesser if shown before. In a word, do not overload your action with mechanical effect to the prejudice of your climax.

(6.IX:12) (8.XIV:15).

CHAPTER XVI

CHARACTER

CHARACTER sketches have no place in photoplay. They lack action and consist too largely of description, of analysis of modes of thought and of reason for actions rather than the actions themselves, but it is essential that the characters of your leading players be understood in order that their actions be understandable.

2. In general the character of the person cast to play a part will determine the characteristics of your mimic personages on the screen,

but it is required that you give the players and director some hint of the sort of people you have, that their character sketching may be correctly done.

3. This may be accomplished by describing your personages in the cast of characters, as will presently be explained, but it is better to put the character drawing necessary into the action itself. What you write on the cast will be seen by the director and possibly by the players. What you write in your plot of action will be seen on the screen if clearly explained. You may write in the cast that Martin Grimes is a miser. You must do more than this. You must show that he is a miser. This does not mean to pattern after "The Chimes of Normandy" and show old Grimes down cellar trying to rob his golden eagles of their tail feathers. You *can* do it. Hundreds of others have. It is better, however, to get some small but suggestive bits of business that will convey the same impression and be less hackneyed. You can show him turning some poor widow out of her home, but then you have to stop and tell all about the widow. You can show him receive the payment on a mortgage that may figure in the plot and then turning to his frugal meal of bread and water. Small but effective bits of business that convey unconscious suggestion are to be preferred to scenes that obviously have no other purpose than to establish character. Do not drag Grimes into a scene and virtually say "Look at this man. He is Grimes. He is a miser." Let the spectator deduce the fact that Grimes is a miser, and while he marvels at his own cleverness he will be willing to admit that the play is good.

4. Perhaps your heroine is a hoyden. To show that she is it is not required that the first five or six scenes shall be wasted to show her climbing trees, playing ball and throwing green apples at the minister's silk hat. Show her in a scene in which her character is established while the action is advanced. Perhaps she climbs a tree. The man she is to marry chances along and sits down to smoke a cigarette. He is startled when presently she comes tumbling out of the tree into his lap. If you do not use the tree perhaps she is running a race with her small brother and bumps into and knocks down the stranger. In either scene we get a double value in that we show character without seeming to do so and at the same time bring about the meeting between the protagonist and objective.

5. Character drawing, where character drawing is necessary, is of the utmost importance, but it is not necessary to offer minute details of your leads or more than briefly indicate the minor cast. If you have a maid in attendance on your heroine, and it does not matter what sort of a maid she is, say simply that she is a maid and let her be grave or gay so long as her gravity or gaiety does not conflict with the humors of the more important personages. If the maid must be sympathetic then show in action that she is. In the appendix (A-3, Scene 1) it is shown that the maid is in sympathy with her mistress' feelings. It is just a momentary action, but it makes

understandable her later assistance in the elopement. (Scene 26. A-5. Scene 29. A-6.) There is no elaborate attempt to show that Ruth appeals to the maid to help her. We see in that first scene that the maid feels much as her mistress does. Later actions are perfectly understandable. No special scene has been required.

6. Perhaps your story runs that your heroine marries the first man who asks her hand merely to escape her miserable home. If she merely snatched at the first man to propose, the action would not be clear, but if you first show that her home life is miserable because her father is a brute, a drunkard or a miser, then you make it understood that this treatment has formed her character. By establishing the fact, you help to establish her character and also aid the motivation of the story. If the girl marries without love and for no apparent reason you show her a man-struck little fool. Having clearly established the reason for the marriage we can become interested in the outcome of the marriage.

7. Should you wish to show that this man she marries is a brute, you do not write in a series of scenes wherein he goes about breaking cripples' crutches and stealing pennies from little children. In drawing, caricature is but an exaggeration of natural line, and in drama travesty is but an overemphasis. In sketching character there is a tendency to overdo that will result in caricature instead of proper line and turn your scenes to travesty. Instead of this gross emphasis, you write into some existing scene a bit of business wherein the husband runs into and knocks down an old man. Instead of apologizing and assisting him to his feet, he rushes on, shouting back a curse. Now we know that the man is altogether a brute and that his attitude toward his wife is not due to his dislike for her but is merely a manifestation of his general character. There is now no question as to whether or not his treatment of her is not due in some measure to her attitude toward him. If we merely show that he is brutal to her the reason for that brutality might be found in her feeling of repulsion toward him.

8. To draw character you must know what the character of each of your personages is and have them act always in consonance with their characters. You cannot show your heroine a frisky, frothy young person in one scene and in the next show her a woman of strong emotions and great depth of feeling. You cannot, on the other hand, introduce her as a woman of fine mental development and great depth of feeling and later show her leaving her husband on the impulse of the moment. The frothy young woman would leave her husband because he tried to break a plate with the biscuit she baked, but the woman of more mature temperament would not act in this manner; she would require great and long-continued provocation. You must match action to modes of thought and not have your play-people act at variance with their established characteristics merely to help you out of a hole.

9. It is all very well to explain to yourself that a great moment

will completely change a person's character. Sometimes it does, but the moment must be a very great one to bring about so revolutionary a change. It is necessary to select a type of character for each person and hold to that type, unless a change in character is a basis of your play, when you must prepare your audience for the change by showing a gradual deepening in feeling. You cannot show a woman marrying on impulse and then patiently enduring humiliation and ill-treatment through feelings of love or a realization that she has brought this misery upon herself. She may conceal her woes through feelings of pride, but if she married on impulse she is more apt to divorce on impulse. She will not suffer in silence and patience merely because you think it will make the story more effective. Effect does not arise from inconsistent action.

10. You cannot have your personages change their characters as they do their coats. If you have shown your villain to be a seeker after novelty and a lover of fleshly delights, you cannot, without warning, present him in a noble act of renunciation. He cannot be made to abandon his pursuit of the heroine merely because he realizes that it is for her own moral good. He may give her up because her brother is a better fighter or because he has seen her husband buying a gun, but he will not abandon her pursuit merely for the sake of her soul's salvation.

11. The beginner is too apt to be guided by action and dramatic effect rather than by logic, but illogical action is neither dramatic nor effective. It may make a great scene when Tom Darnton is about to elope with Jim Bolton's wife to have her little child cry and have Tom pause beside the cradle and exclaim "Alas! M'ree! I fear this cannot be. I cannot take you from this innocent little cheild!" It may make a great scene, to the author's mind, but too many spectators, knowing Tom's character, are apt to argue that he will be back presently with two railroad tickets and a bottle of soothing syrup. If, however, you prepare for the event by showing that Tom's one redeeming trait is a love for children, then, through this establishment of character, we are prepared for the unexpected turn.

12. To summarize, let your characters be real to you and you will make them real to your audiences. Make them inconsistent and your play as well will be inconsistent.

(3.XXIV:26 XXIX:1 & 7 XLIII:3-5 XLVIII:12) (5.XXIX:6)
(6.X:2) (8.XXIV:26) (9.XXIII:6) (11.XLVI:7).

CHAPTER XVII

PRACTICABILITY

PLOTS may be good in all other features and yet worthless because they are not practicable. In one sense a play may be practicable in that it will be possible to produce it, but the cost will be too great in comparison to the return likely to be received. Cost must be counted against effect and price compared with product.

2. Since the first outside writer undertook the writing of photo-plays, it has been his excuse that "anything is possible to the camera." This is practically correct. Anything is possible; but will it be practicable? Unless it is an exceptional feature film it is sold at an average price. If it is program stuff, it is sold at a flat rate; the reel costing \$300 to produce commanding the same price as that which costs \$3,000, the manufacturer and exchange arguing that the matter will average up in the long run. It follows that the story which does not put the manufacturer to great expense is given the preference, other things being equal, and that cost can be raised to a prohibitive point.

3. There are several factors of cost, such as time, labor, waste and travel. Each must be considered. A picture that requires twenty interior settings in which to display forty-five scenes costs more than one requiring but seven sets. Each set must be built up, which involves the labor of the stage hands. It also represents a time loss of the services of the players if they must wait while the scene is erected. If the company must travel to get the proper locations, then there is both a railroad expense and the cost of salaries while the players perform no service.

4. It does not follow that a story will not be made that costs more than the film will sell for. Now and then a costly story will be made that will be put out at a loss merely to advertise the brand and keep its name up, but more often the seemingly costly stories are the result of chance. A manufacturer may not be willing to purchase an old ship and blow her up for the sake of a few scenes in a story, though this has been done a number of times. On the other hand he may be advised that a wrecking company is going to dynamite an old hulk for the sake of the metal. For a small part of what the ship would cost, he can obtain the privilege of taking scenes on the deck and around the vessel before the explosion and film the explosion itself. On the screen it looks precisely the same as though the ship had been purchased for no other purpose than picture making. Such a story would not be purchased. If one is needed, it will be put together overnight by one of the staff writers.

5. In the same way a wrecking company about to raze a tall smoke-stack will arrange with a picture company to rent it. The scenes near the stack are made and the stage carpenter will prepare a reproduction of the top of the stack on which the scenes at the top of

the stack will be played in the studio or on the studio roof. Then dummies will be placed on the stack and the cameras will turn as the structure collapses.

6. One of the best railroad wreck stories was written as the director and his little company sped through the night in automobiles to the scene of the accident. The director heard of the smash late in the evening. There was no time to arrange for a special train, if, indeed, one could be had. He routed his players out of bed and wrote the story on the way to the wreck. As soon as the sun was high enough the camera recorded the wreck scenes and the rest was merely the usual studio work.

7. No script was written in advance or purchased against the chance that a convenient wreck would occur, but the showing of a wreck picture or any similar novelty is generally followed by a shower of manuscripts along those lines. Some of these doubtless could be made with stock negative, but most companies prefer not to use stock material.

8. Stock pictures, or "stock stuff" as it is generally called, is negative made as opportunity offers. This includes scenes at fires, at the race track, aboard ships, circus parades or any feature that might be required at some future time. A director may desire to produce a play with scenes laid at the race track. He takes a small company to the track some morning or when the track is not being used for racing. He makes close-up pictures of the grand stand, using just enough extra people to fill the field of the camera. When the film is assembled the story will be told in these small pictures, but a scene showing the villain (who stands in partnership with a book-maker) inducing the hero to bet his last dollar on the wrong horse will be followed by a flash of the betting ring on a race day with thousands of people. In the same way the grand stand close-ups will be sandwiched in between large pictures of the stands packed with a real audience. None of these large flashes will show the players, since the stock stuff was made with reference to no particular play, and this is the reason that only a sparing use of stock stuff is made.

9. From what has been written above it will be seen that it will scarcely pay the free lance to offer stories depending in any great degree on special effects. There is no reason why a story cannot be written showing a few scenes aboard ship while she is in dock, and it is possible to show a ship leaving her dock if it is not required that the players be distinctly seen, but a ship at sea or being blown up or sinking is not practicable unless it falls into the hands of a director who likes to make that sort of thing and who can persuade his employer to let him go to the expense.

10. Costuming forms another stumbling block. Each player supplies his own wardrobe for plays of today, but for the plays of yesterday and tomorrow as well as strange lands of the present and mythical lands of any time the company must supply the costumes.

These may be rented from the theatrical costumer or made by the studio department, but in either case an expense is incurred for which there must be an adequate return. From another angle it might be remarked that not many costume plays are in demand because the general preference favors plays of here and today. Costume plays are shown and now and then they are demanded, but it is so seldom possible to tell just what this demand will be that it does not pay the free lance to gamble his time writing them.

11. In the same way the story that requires elaborate properties will stand small chance if the properties must be made. These will be made if the story is liked, but it is more usual to write stories around existing odd properties than to make the properties for the play.

12. Cast is an important item on the bill of costs. It is as easy to write of a thousand persons as of one, but on the screen you must pay these persons from one to five dollars a day, and if the scenes in which a mob is used are numerous or far removed from each other, then they must be employed two or more days. All race track crowds, theatre audiences and similar gatherings are "mobs" to the director, no matter how correct their deportment. It might be possible to make pictures of a regular theatre audience instead of hiring a special audience, but the regular audience would not do as the director told them but would insist upon looking at the camera and spoiling the picture. It is easier and safer to hire an audience than to use a free one.

13. Cast offers another angle of practicability. Stories that call for very stout persons or very thin ones may be acceptable to a few studios but unavailable to most. It does not pay to write to suit a unique personality unless you have an order and know precisely what to write. It is said that during the lifetime of the late John Bunny the Vitagraph was in constant receipt of stories all along the same lines and generally entitled "John Bunny Reduces." Very few of these were purchased and some of the comedian's greatest hits were stories not specially written for him but suitable for a man of any size. One, for instance, was written to be used by a comedian about five feet tall and rather slender. He did not get a chance to use it and so it was sold to the Vitagraph and played by Mr. Bunny. The most practical story is one so written that no particular physical type is required. Better still, it should not require that it be made in any particular locality, but be as suitable for New York as Los Angeles or Jacksonville.

14. Much can be done by the practiced writer to suggest a lavish outlay with a small expense bill. There are many little tricks of saving time and salaries that will suggest themselves to the man who knows the studio, but the free lance writer cannot make a study of these. On the other hand there are some points that he can and should take notice of. If mob scenes are written to show the exterior of a handsome country house and also the interior, it is probable that one day the mob will be taken to the country and another day

used in the studio. If the story can be planned so that there is a mob before the house and but few are seen inside, then a mob can be hired for the effect and a few retained for a second day for the interior. When the scenes are joined, the scenes inside, alternating with the exterior scenes, will give the suggestion of the mob throughout. There should be a certain unity of locale. It does not pay to write scenes in which orange groves and snowbound forests are mingled. These are made only when some director works north in summer and south in the winter. He may take some snow scenes before he starts and finish in a sub-tropical environment, but unless you know the director and just when he is going and precisely the type of story he wants, you cannot sell.

15. It is better to write a story all northern or all southern if you cannot get a story that could be made either in the north or south as convenience suggested. There is no reason why you cannot. If you have a story of a Michigan lumber camp it might be turned into a Georgia turpentine camp and made in Florida. Precisely that change has been made to enable production and even more radical changes might be made if required.

16. Little things count as well as great. There is no expense attaching a scene wherein John takes a train to go away. The director takes him to the station about the time a train is due and sets the camera up. When the train comes in, John gets aboard. Instead of entering the car he goes down the other side and when the train pulls out he is close to the camera still but out of range of the lens. Such a scene costs nothing. If you cannot get a railroad station you can have the rear of the platform. A couple of hacks and a few people with satchels and suitcases will turn a warehouse platform into a station very nicely at a pinch just as the First National Bank may be a bakery in real life. But if you require a train to stop between stations it is necessary to hire a train to run under the orders of the director at a cost varying from \$50 to \$100.

17. It costs money to go up in an aeroplane, but if you merely want to drop a brick or a sand bag from the plane on to your comedian, then you can use a stock picture of the aeroplane and a real cloth brick in the succeeding scene.

18. Most beginners make the mistake of trying to compete with the advanced writers on their own ground. They try to get effects too novel, knowing that novel effects are liked, and they do not know when they are practical and when they are not. In an effort to convince the Editor that a story is practical they will write in a lot of suggestion and direction and so still further irritate the Editor and director. This is always a mistake. If the studio wants an unusual story an order will be given someone who knows how. Perhaps a fifty word synopsis will be telegraphed an author with instructions to write a two reel story and hurry it along. These men are looked to for the special stories. The early field of the free lance is limited almost entirely to the story carried by a simple but unusual

plot. The rest is done from the inside, but the man who can write good plots will not long be kept on the outside.

(2.VI:6) (3.IV:3 XXX:6) (4.LI:9-10) (9.XLVIII:26) (10. III:9) (12.XXIV:31) (14.XX:6) (15.XLVIII:37).

CHAPTER XVIII

HEART INTEREST

NO term is more misunderstood by the beginner than heart interest. The student is told that heart interest stories are most in demand and at once he begins to load his stories with marriage and giving in marriage, not realizing that this is not heart but love interest.

2. Heart interest is that quality in a story that excites the kindly emotions. It appeals to the heart and not to the head. It is the deft touch of the practiced hand that invests the characters with a personality that engages our interest and causes us, through that interest, to become absorbed in their adventures and engrossed in the outcome of their small affairs. There need be no trace of sex-love in a heart interest story. Some of the best heart interest stories produced have contained not the slightest allusion to the love of man for a woman.

3. Take, for an example, the threadbare theme of the old mother from the country who visits her city son. She finds that he has grown away from her and the homely ways she represents. He has married a rich wife; he moves in society and he is ashamed of the rustic and uncouth old woman whose sacrifices and privations enabled him to obtain the education that procured his business and social advancement. He tries to hide her from his friends and she, understanding, returns to her empty, cheerless life "back home." Properly told—and it has been well told dozens of time in film—there is more grip, more appeal, to this than to the story of the wife who grows above her husband's social sphere, though the two themes are by no means unlike. In this latter theme there is the ever-present feeling that perhaps the husband is to blame rather than his wife; that he is at fault in not having kept pace with her. There is the conviction that if he loved her well enough he would have made some effort to keep her instead of letting her go away. Here, in many instances, heart interest does not develop because the husband does not seem to be a person deserving of the sympathy we are asked by the author to lavish upon him. If he cannot hold his wife's love, he is a rather stupid sort of ass in whom we cannot become interested. On the other hand the mother, lonely in her old age, is a pathetic figure because it is through no fault of her own that her boy drifted away from her. It is a part of the cross mothers bear that they bring their children

into the world only to lose them to other interests. The mother is a figure wholly deserving of sympathy. Her condition makes for heart interest.

4. Mother-love in almost any manifestation is apt to win the heart, for it is the strongest of all human emotions; more powerful and lasting than sex-love because based upon a higher attribute. But the mere statement that it is mother-love does not suffice. It must be advanced skillfully, it must be presented adroitly so that pathos does not become bathos. A too evident appeal to the theme of mother love is like the waving of the colors or the playing of the national air. It will bring only a mechanical, surface response. Heart interest must make a deeper appeal than this. The mother must not be a lay figure on which is draped the conventional appeal. She must be a living, breathing woman; something more than a woman in a white wig and a general appearance of suffering. We must be shown that she is real, genuine. Then we must be made so interested in her that whatever affects her happiness is vital to us. It is not the happening, but the result of that happening in happiness or unhappiness to her that rouses our interest.

5. To turn to patriotism, which too often is made the basis of false appeal, we will suppose a hero captured by the enemy. The villain is, of course, of the opposite side. He is a military man or courtier, and it is through his scheming that the hero is stood against the wall to be shot. At the last instant the United States Consul hustles in with the hero's sweetheart and file of marines from a battleship. The dear old flag is waved and the villain sneaks away, while the audience is supposed to break up the orchestra chairs in their wild delight.

6. Of course there will always be present in any audience a certain proportion of persons with large hands and small brains to whom this will appeal, and the cunning producers know they will use the hands to convince the manager of the house that he has booked a success. This class of persons has no real intelligence, and the really intelligent in the audience will realize the falsity of the appeal and remained unmoved. There has been nothing in the early action to show that the hero suffers unduly from love of country. The preceding scenes have all been about his love for the girl and his efforts to win her or save her from the villain. The flag is dragged in—literally—to create a diversion and make a cheap appeal. It fails in this, with the majority, because the appeal is so palpably forced.

7. On the other hand take a man whose love of country amounts to worship. Let him give his life, sincerely, for the sake of the flag he loves and the appeal is made to the heart. One of the earliest fiction stories the European war brought out was the tale of a peasant who is given his choice between death and treachery. He must lead the army of his enemies to the secret pass where a bridge will enable them to gain a strategical advantage. With seeming reluctance he

consents and leads the way, despised even by those who are to profit by his falseness to his trust. The author, through half apologies, leads the reader to share this scorn. Then it was suddenly shown that the peasant had deliberately sought to entice them into the trap, knowing that his countrymen were ready to wreck the bridge when the troops should be upon it. He was a hero and not a traitor. Later (by a very few months) the same story but by a different author appeared, with the hero this time a North Sea fisherman who accepted German bribes to lead a submarine through a mined channel and who deliberately steered her into the nets, knowing that he would share the fate of the submarine's crew.

8. In these cases were shown love of country proven by deed and not dragged in to make a "hot finish." There was no waving of the flag, no playing of the bands, just the calm, unemotional acceptance of death in the performance of duty to country. It was appealing. It touched the heart. It did not irritate.

9. Appeal to heart interest must be deft and certain. The characters, particularly the leading character, must be so finely drawn that the persons seem real and convincing. Repression, more often than abandonment, is the proper keynote. The mother does not slubber all over her son but takes in silent patience her rebuffs, and only in the solitude of her chamber does she expose the depth of her wounds. She does not cry out after him and follow him around the stage on her knees like a painted lady playing emotional tag with her latest former flame. Real emotion of the tender sort does not manifest itself in violent action but in greater repression. The hurt is too deep to show upon the surface. It is like the malignant cancer, in contrast to the surface boil that heads, breaks and is cured. This is an error that too many writers make. They think that in pictures forceful acting is always an essential, no matter how untrue to life such action may be. In reality, even in pictures, repression, if backed by heart interest shown in situation, is far more impressive in its effect upon the spectator than the most violent ranting.

10. In its lighter aspects heart interest may arise not through a recital of sorrows, but through a feeling of intimacy and charm that is created between the protagonist and the spectator. We are made to love the people of the play because of their simplicity and genuineness. They become so real to us that we are able to share their delights and suffer their sorrows. They are clean and decent people, whom we like to know.

11. We must, of course, feel a polite interest and some sympathy for the simple country maid who goes to the city to seek her fortune and who comes home in a black dress with a baby in her arms. We are sorry for her in a way, but the sorrow is polite and the sympathy conventional. We regret because regret seems to be required, but we are inclined to feel that a woman with sense enough to keep out of trouble would be a welcome innovation. But draw the pathetic little figure of the boarding house drudge, the unloved

daughter of a country home or the girl who is a slave to a father brutalized by drink, and if the character is well sketched we can take a far more genuine interest in such a character than for the more conventional heroine. The wronged lady appeals to the head. We are sorry for her because she got in trouble. We know that she suffers shame and disgrace, but she brought it on herself. On the other hand the slavey or the country maid suffer through no faults of their own. They are clean and companionable, and we can become more interested in the slavey's lost ten-cent piece than in the wronged woman's departed virtue.

12. This is not to be taken as saying that there are not rich dramatic possibilities in the wronged lady. She can be made the central figure in many important plays, but even here the closer we come to heart interest the stronger becomes the appeal. Perhaps the woman is worse than wronged. Perhaps she deliberately sought a life of shame. Perhaps she adopts a waif to satisfy the craving for affection that she may not otherwise gratify. The officers of the law, advised by the neighbors, come and take the child. A story with this base will be far more vital than one in which the woman shoots her traducer or one in which the lady collects compound interest for her own broken heart. These stories may be vivid, perhaps too vivid, but they will not live in memory. You are working for something more than the immediate check, it is to be supposed. If you are, work for heart interest. It is more permanent. Painted ladies and nudity stories move in cycles, for they soon exhaust themselves. Heart interest is in constant demand.

13. Heart interest may also be made to contribute to effect without being the base. It may be action and not plot. There may be little touches in a play that lighten and relieve it. In one of the early Biographs there was a scene where the hero sits at the telephone bidding his family good-bye while a friend in an auto is rushing through the streets to save him from suicide. To prolong the action without making it break through increasing tension a messenger enters the outer office with a telegram. He puts his cigarette down upon the polished surface of a table, goes inside, delivers the telegram and returns to resume his smile and the cigarette. It was a momentary, trivial action, but it put a new touch into the scene and enabled the situation to continue. In another suicide story the man, in writing his farewells, upsets a bottle of ink on the table. In a few minutes he will be where spilled ink does not worry, but habit is strong and he mops up the ink before taking the fatal step. The delay enables a friend to arrive. The following scene is tense, but it gains naturalness because of the humanizing touch.

14. Heart interest, it then appears, has two purposes. In its best exposition it is a story that appeals to the kindly emotions. In its secondary manifestation it serves to give reality and naturalness to a forced and unconvincing situation. Its essence is genuineness and sincerity, an intense and convincing sincerity like the personality of

a big-hearted, broad-minded man as contrasted with the assumed cordiality of the floor walker. It cannot, in its best form, be manufactured. It must come from the personality of the writer, though the adept author can, to an extent, train himself to make use of touches and perhaps to achieve the full play.

15. Take, if you please, the story of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Through the latter pages runs the intensely dramatic story of Cassie and Legree. None of this appears in the stage version other than the introduction of Cassie. That story is a story of passion. It is overshadowed by the heart interest in the story of the slave. Uncle Tom is a creature of the heart, Cassie a person of the head.

16. Come closer to the present. Compare the Wallingford stories with David Harum. Wallingford is the supreme type of adroit man of the world, just a shade too clever for the clutches of the law. We enjoy for the moment the brilliant schemes Mr. Chester concocts for his hero, but the stories lack the charm of the central character of the York State horse trader. We admire the acumen of Sherlock Holmes and Arsene Lupin, but we love Colonel Carter, of Cartersville, and Pollyanna.

17. It is a fine thing to be able to thrill thousands with brilliant dashing exploits. It is a gift of God to be able to move their hearts.

(1.L:18) (4.L:20) (5.L:22) (11.L:26) (13.XLIII:13).

CHAPTER XIX

CHARM AND DISTINCTION

TWO other qualities should be brought under consideration before the creation of a plot can be intelligently undertaken. These are charm and distinction. It must be admitted that many successful plays wholly lack either charm or distinction, but the story that possesses either is better than the story which lacks this quality. A story with a proper punch that has either charm or distinction stands a far better chance of selling and to good advantage.

2. Charm, in a photoplay, is a certain gracefulness of thought, a simple directness of plot or perhaps a certain suggestion of intimacy. It is difficult to define with any degree of exactness because it is an evanescent quality that cannot be reduced to words. It must be sensed. It cannot be explained by any exact definition. It may even be that the manuscript of the story will possess a charm that the produced play lacks or that the screened play will possess the charm that is not shown in the written scenes. This is either because the director has failed to grasp and pass along the charm or because he sees deeper into the story and gives to it something the author has failed to contribute.

3. Two plays may be seen on the screen. At a glance it would seem that they were of equal value in plot and punch, yet one gives you infinitely more pleasure than the other, though perhaps you cannot tell why. One has charm and the other lacks it, but of what does this charm consist? You cannot tell, at least in words. You cannot, as a general thing, isolate the particular thing that gave you pleasure. You only know that one play was far more to your taste than the other.

4. If you will look a little deeper you will probably find that the pleasing story is more spontaneously told. It runs from one scene to the next, from one development to the succeeding crisis, with no appearance of labor. The story seems to tell itself, rather than to be told. It is more like a happening than a narrative of past events. There are no lapses where the interest falls because the telling is not exactly right; no moment when you are conscious of a feeling of slight irritation because you can hear the creaking of the wheels as the machinery grinds away. It is all so smooth and pleasant; so utterly lacking in the appearance of artificiality, that you are carried along by the movement of the story, hardly conscious of the grip in which you are held until the story ends.

5. It is the highest development of artistry to select a proper theme and to so tell it that you hide the fact that a story is being told. It means not only the selection of a good theme, but the elaboration of that theme into a play with the utmost skill and its narration in action with the least annoyance to the spectator through the intrusion of foreign matter. You make your people seem flesh and blood and not merely parts assumed by men and women who act the roles you create.

6. A study of photoplays on the screen will present to you only occasionally instances of charm, but you can add this factor to your stories, not always, perhaps, because it is not always possible, but with reasonable frequency, even if the director does not carry the charm over to the screen, and this charm will not be without effect, for the Editor will know and credit you even if the public is not permitted to see. Even without attaining full charm you can at least invest your story with a suggestion of this element through care in the selection of the plot and its development. To do this you cannot use the first plot-suggestion that comes to hand nor yet the first development of suitable material, but it will pay you in the end to send to Editors only such stories as at least possess some charm.

7. To almost all authors, and certainly to all authors possessed of discrimination, not all stories appeal alike. Some stories will seem almost to write themselves. If you will seek to find the reason for this greater ease, you will probably find that it was because the story presented no difficulties, from which it is to be deduced that the way to attain charm is not to seek to commit your story to paper until in your mind you have become so certain of your line of progression and on such intimate terms with your plot and its possi-

bilities that your only labor is the mechanical one of manipulating the typewriter. You do not have to stop to think ahead nor to look back. You know what has gone before and what is to come later because you have mentally arranged and rearranged your thoughts in your mind so that all is clearly and simply provided for.

8. From this the further deduction may be made that the better your technical equipment, the more intimate your knowledge of the various elements of photoplay form and the more advanced your practice in their use, the better qualified you will be to write plays with charm. This is one of the reasons why this book is so insistent upon work as the stepping stone to success. You cannot write a play with charm until you no longer have to stop and consider what will come next and whether to use an insert or a leader to explain a point.

9. Charm may exist upon the screen without reference to the play if the story is so well acted that the personality of the players blinds the spectator for the time being to the faults of the story, but this is a point with which we have no concern, save, perhaps, that we may gain undeserved credit.

10. Distinction is almost the exact opposite of charm. Distinction inspires respect where charm engenders intimacy. The story may in a sense also charm, but it will be the grandeur of the theme rather than the simplicity of thought.

11. Distinction may be slightly awe inspiring or it may merely be a play of dignity and lofty thought, but it cannot be as intimate as the play with charm. It is a play apart from the generality of offerings because of its unusualness. This does not refer to novelty of plot so much as to individuality of the theme.

12. Most readers of Dickens are agreed that of all his novels "David Copperfield" is—up to a certain point—possessed of the greatest charm, just as most are disposed to regard his "Tale of Two Cities" as his work of greatest distinction. In his introduction to "Copperfield" in *Everyman's Library* Gilbert K. Chesterton has thrown an unusually clear light upon charm when he writes:

—for although this is the best of all Dickens' books, it constantly disappoints the critical and intelligent reader. The reason is that Dickens began it under the sudden emotional instinct of telling the whole truth about himself and gradually allowed the whole truth to be diluted, until toward the end of the book we are back in the old pedantic and decorative art of Dickens, an art which we justly admired in its own place and on its own terms, but which we resent when we feel it gradually returning through a tale pitched originally in a more practical and piercing key.

13. In other words "David Copperfield" has charm so long as it has naturalness and fidelity to fact and loses that charm in the exact proportion and degree in which the story teller becomes in the ascendant. The story does not have charm because it is the life of Dickens, but because it is the natural and unaffected story of life

and not the tricky work of one who seeks to improve upon life through recourse to artifice.

14. Charm, then, is the absence of visible and conscious effort. Distinction is that quality in a story that raises it above other stories through its unusualness.

15. You see several persons passing along the street. Here comes an old lady, a lovable old lady. You feel that hers is an interesting, though possibly uneventful life story. Two pass, youthful sweethearts, too young yet to be ashamed to advertise in their happy faces their love for each other. Here surely lies a story of charm. Comes a man, tall, distinguished, soldierly; mustache and imperial white as the thick thatch upon his head. You feel that here is a man who has lived, who has both seen and done great deeds. His air interests you and you feel an unusual curiosity as to his story. He may be a carriage opener, selected because of that very air of distinction, but you would not believe it if you were told. His manner is too impressive. He interests you, but you feel as well a slight awe. His is the most commanding, the most marked presence, but you cannot feel toward him the same attraction that the old lady or the boy and girl inspired. You are impressed, you are interested, but somehow you feel that it would be a task to be his friend, to have to live up to his dignity.

16. It is the same with plays. You are attracted by the charm of some, impressed by others. The rest are like the general run of passers-by, they are there but they do not impress. You can give to some plays charm and to others distinction. These are the ones that you will sell most promptly and to the best advantage. The others you may or may not sell. If the studio needs scripts they may take these others, but your most certain approach to the editorial approval is with a story that has either charm or distinction, that is in one way or the other a thing apart from the generality of plays.

(2.LXII:26-27) (4.XLII:18 XLIV:3) (7.XXIII:35 XLIII:19 XLVI:4) (12.XXXIII:20) (16.LXV:2).

CHAPTER XX

CHOICE OF PLOT

HAVING gained some idea of plot structure and its components, we come to the choice of a plot. Plots fall naturally into two great divisions, drama and comedy. A surprising number of students make the perhaps natural error of starting on comedy work, intending to work over to drama when they shall have gained proficiency. This is the reverse of the proper procedure unless, as occasionally happens, the forte of the student is comedy and nothing

else. There are comparatively few humorists of note in comparison with the number of serious writers, and this holds good in fiction and photoplay alike. Drama makes a more definite and certain appeal and is easier to sell than a comedy of similar grade, since a good story will carry a comparatively poor development, while in comedy action and idea must alike be good. It is best, then, to first essay drama plots, turning to comedy only when proficiency in writing is gained or when it becomes apparent that comedy and not drama is the indicated line of the student.

2. The first requisite of a good plot is producibility. This is explained in detail in Chapter XVII. A story as such is worthless if it cannot be produced or at least made at a cost that will permit the manufacturer to make a profit through an excess of sales over expenses. In your practice work it is hardly to be supposed that you will know that the Blank company can get the loan of a few warships or that the Dash concern is in a position to make railroad stories more cheaply than others. In the purely practice work it does not particularly matter what you use for plot, since it is to be supposed that you will not offer these for sale immediately. At the same time, even in practice work it is best to plan your stories so that they involve a minimum of expense with a maximum of effect.

3. This means the avoidance of one or two scenes employing a mob or the use of sight stuff. It means that interest must arise from your story and not from the extraneous material you put into it. This is all the more important in your early experience because, no matter how rapid or how great your progression may be, your real success will always be founded upon your ability to write plots and not on your skill at using outside matters to give a mechanical and purely perfunctory punch to the idea.

4. You can get just about half way with trick writing and there you will stop. Once you stop retrogression will begin. Learn always to have a plot as a foundation for a story and then you can add the train wrecks and burning oil wells at discretion and still be regarded as an author and not as a faker. For that reason a plot that is a plot and not a peg on which to hang a "sensation" should be your first requisite in making a choice. The fundamental of any good production is a clearly told and well defined plot.

5. Plan to have your stories told by a small cast of principals. This does not mean that you should try to turn out four to six character plays. It does mean that not more than five or six persons should be used to unfold the plot, though you may use an army, if necessary, to back them up. You have already been given your two or three principal characters in the protagonist, the antagonist and the person who is the object of their struggle; in other words, your hero, heroine and villain. These are the essentials to a plot. You may have the parents of the girl, the chum of the man, the assistant to the villain, the maid to the heroine, the valet of the hero, the postman, a telegraph boy and others, but these three should carry the story and do most

of the telling of the plot. You should divide your people into three sets, the leading trio, their supporters and the extra people. There is a tendency on the part of beginners to use many personages in their play in the belief that a large cast will make a story look imposing. As a matter of fact the fewer the number of persons actually engaged in telling the story, the clearer will the plot become. Each of these important characters must be explained for themselves and in their relation to the other characters, and too much time is lost in acquainting the spectator with these various men and women. Few single reel plays should need more than six principals, and the story should give importance to the play; not the number of persons employed.

6. To be avoided are plays with locales in two countries of contrasting color, such as Alaska and Mexico, or for that matter any two countries the exteriors for which may not be made in the same part of the country. Two countries can be used if in one country only interior scenes are used. The aim of the author should be to offer a plot that can be made in one place at one season of the year and not one that will entail travel or delay.

7. Stories with many time jumps are not regarded with editorial favor. Scripts that bristle with "Three Weeks Later," "The Next Day," "After Many Years," and the like are not purchased as often as they are shown on the screen; many of these time leaders shown in finished plays being added as the result of overproduction of negative and consequent cutting. If the spectator is constantly required to adjust his mind to the new period, he will be too busy to follow the story.

8. Another factor in the choice of a plot will be the censorship. This will be more fully taken up in a succeeding chapter, but entirely apart from any question of legal stoppage of a subject, plays that have for their sole reason crime, immorality, unmorality, the vicious or the irreverent are never praiseworthy and are to be avoided.

9. Most persons are clean and decent at heart. If you will go over the list of plays from one to two years old, you will be surprised, if you are normally constituted, to find how few of those you remember are erotic or criminal. At the time these latter types may have appeared to be vivid and thrilling, but they made no deep impression. In the same way it will be found that the real dramatic successes are the clean ones. "Sapho" made large sums of money for its producers for a couple of seasons and "Mrs. Warren's Profession" crowded the theatres for several months, but neither made as much money as did "The Old Homestead." Aim to get the sort of plot that is good both morally and structurally.

10. Aim, too, at the happy ending. You may think it banal and inartistic, but it is essential to the success of the manufacturer that the majority of the stories he turns out shall end in accordance with the desires of his audiences. Now and then you will find a story to which a happy ending is not possible. Do not distort facts to

get a happy ending. Lay the idea aside until you can change the entire plot so that the happy ending is not only possible but the only possible ending that can be had. This does not mean that you change at the end and explain that Dale, the man Jim is supposed to have killed, is not dead at all but merely ran away. That is a forced happy ending that will fool no one and so please no one.

11. It does not matter how well you may write. The public does not want and will not have a succession of stories in which the heroine is drowned in the last fifty feet or where the hero commits suicide in the last ten. You will doubtless see many stories with unhappy and doleful endings on the screen. Some of them will be unusually good, but a majority will show on study that a half-baked author sought to be strong merely by being perverse and running contrary to the desire of his spectators.

12. Only the best and most highly trained writers can make the story with the unhappy ending acceptable. You will see others on the screen, but you will see much else on the screen that should be avoided. At the start, in particular, it is important to your success that you should be able to offer a studio precisely what it wants, and it *wants* the happy ending stories.

13. It is well, at the start, to select themes with but few complications. When you have grown experienced you will have learned to do so anyway, but at the start avoid the temptation to make your story interesting by inventing one or more sub-plots or complications to accompany the main theme. The more complication you offer the more explanation you must give at the start and toward the climax. You are apt to find that you have used all your footage for explanation and have none left for your story. Keep your plot clear and simple and get strength by building up that plot with strength instead of adding lesser plots to make people curious.

14. Avoid stories that will give offense to any race, creed, sect, political party, society or propaganda. Do not touch strongly on religion or politics and keep as far as possible from purely local ideas and developments. The appeal of the film is world-wide. A baseball story may interest Americans, but it will interest the English no more than a story of cricket would appeal to us, and, in spite of world-tours of champion teams, be Greek to the Egyptians and Egyptian to the Greeks. For that matter even here in America an appeal may not be countrywide. A story based on the western dislike for paper money will not be very plain to New Englanders, and local prejudice may be still more hurtful. A story of the southwest showing all villains as Mexicans may appeal to the men of the southwest and not be offensive to the northern parts of the United States, but most assuredly it will not aid the sale of film to South American countries to show the Latin races always in an unpleasant light with the suggestion that they are little more than animals. This may appeal to local prejudice and impress the uninformed as being picturesque, but

the peso rings as attractively as the dollar in the manufacturer's till and he wants that South American business.

15. Avoid the ridicule of personal deformities of mind or body. This is more particularly important in comedy. To you the hare lip may appeal as something excruciatingly funny, but many families are sensitive on this subject because some member of it is so afflicted. Avoid death and the overstrong suggestion of death. In comedy avoid death in any form.

16. In comedy be good-natured. There are two types of comedy: those in which you laugh at persons and those in which you laugh with them. You may see a man slip and fall upon the icy walk. You laugh at his gyrations and because you are keeping your feet. It is an ill-natured and cruel laugh, just as you might laugh if a tramp stole the money from a beggar's hat and then broke his wooden leg as well to prevent pursuit. On the other hand, in the story of the book agent in Chapter XIII, you do not laugh when he is thrown out merely because he is thrown out, but because you share with him the belief in his eventual success. It will be all the sweeter a triumph because of the rebuffs. You laugh *at* the man who falls. You laugh *with* Tim, and like him you say: "Just wait!" After it is over you are not ashamed of having laughed.

17. To recapitulate, your choice of plot should be one that is

Simple and direct.

Not complicated by counter-plot.

Told by few active characters.

Centered directly upon one objective.

Inexpensive in production.

Not calculated to give offense.

Not broken by an excess of time jumps.

Capable of being made in one locality at one time.

Provided with a happy ending.

Later on you may disregard some of these points, but you will find that almost all if not fully all of the really successful plays conform to all of these requirements. Select happy, simple and yet dramatic themes for your dramas and clean and spontaneous ideas for comedy, and the rest is merely a matter of learning to develop them and then locating the best market for your particular product.

(1.L:3) (2.XVII:2) (3.XVII:14) (5.XXIX:3 XXXIII:20) (6.XVII:14) (7.XXXVII:26) (8.LXVII:13) (10.IX:17 L:17) (13.XXIV:9) (14.LVI:28) (15.L:13 LVI:26-30).

CHAPTER XXI

NEW PLOTS AND OLD

TWO things are important in plotting. One is to know what to write. The other is to know what to avoid. Of the two the latter is the more important. Various authorities place the number of fundamental plots at from seven to twenty-nine. Nearly the latter number are released in the United States, alone, each day. Naturally it follows that the stories must have considerable sameness. Unfortunately too many of them have entirely too much sameness. This is because many of these stories are written by staff men or by directors who are under contract to write all the plays they produce. Naturally they take less pains at times than the free lance who must offer good material to find acceptance. It is for this reason that the Editor turns to the outside writer for real novelty and it is this which gives the free lance his opportunity. Also it is the free lance's only excuse. If he cannot do better than the staff man in the matter of novelty he cannot expect to compete with him on technical grounds, so he loses at all points.

2. Notwithstanding this need for sending out only the best, Editors estimate that from one-half of one per cent to not more than two per cent of the outside submissions are generally acceptable or of a grade warranting their submission to any studio. This is because the market is constantly flooded with the scripts of incompetents who seek only the "easy money" that is so alluringly suggested in the advertisements of fake schools and agencies. It is, however, also due to the failure of the more advanced writer to keep in touch with production.

3. Had Adam in the Garden of Eden been possessed of a typewriter his position as an author would have been ideal. He could have written anything with the positive assurance that it was new. Even a story titled "And a Little Child Shall Lead Them," strange as it now may seem, would have been novel and editors over in the Land of Nod would have "eaten up" his output and would have asked for more. But that was many thousand years ago. In the interval a thousand stories have been written with that precise title and thousand upon thousands more have been written that the title would fit.

4. This is because each author feels himself to be in much the same position that Adam was. He has written nothing; therefore there is nothing that he may not write. He writes them all. Probably there never was an author who has not, at some time, written of the little child that brought two loving hearts together or served to keep them from drifting apart. There are certain stories that it would seem the author must write in order to rid his mental system of the dross. By all means write them, but do not be so foolish as to try to sell them.

5. To list all forbidden plots would be to list practically all ideas.

If you would see a fairly complete catalogue they are all to be found in Mrs. L. Case Russell's "Here Lies," a graveyard of antiquated plot suggestions, not one of which cannot be lifted from its last cold home if there is breathed into it the resurrecting spirit of the new twist. The new twist is all that saves the complete list of plots from being prohibited.

6. The new twist is simply the viewing of an old plot from a really new angle. Stories have been told for years of the man who was faithful unto death. In Chapter XVIII are given two workings of the old plot made new through a war coloring. In the same way any old story can be taken and given a new setting and trimmed up so that it looks new, because the work has been skillfully done. Old schoolbooks loved to tell of the little Dutch boy who stopped the leak in the dyke. He froze to death as he held his post, but he saved all Holland. He does not differ materially from the wireless operator who sends out the S O S from the sinking ship, nor do either of them vary greatly from Horatius at the bridge. The basic plot is unchanged. The top structure is new and modern. Paul Revere made a gallant ride, but he differs little from the engineer who rushes his locomotive through the burning forest to rescue the helpless, and presently we shall have aeroplanes performing the same errand of mercy or one better adjusted to the carrying capacity of the winged ship.

7. At one time it was a popular device to do Shakspeare into modern dress. Lear was given a dressing gown in an attic instead of the setting Shakspeare used, but the basic plot was the same that Shakspeare took from "The History of the Kings of Britain." It is all a matter of handling, and unless this is well done the Editor will not see why he should pay top prices for indifferent work.

8. The true story is so dangerous a trap that it will be more fully treated in the next chapter, but it may be said here that it should be avoided. The new story is apt to be old and is not new merely because you never heard it before.

9. To sell a story you must have either a new plot or a new use of an old idea. Since the new idea scarcely seems to exist, you must learn to make old ideas look so new that spectators are convinced that they are new. You must take part of one story and part of another, put a new thought with the two old factors and get something that will not look like either of your sources. It has been shown above that a story that sounds modern and up to date may be traced back until it becomes lost in antiquity. Stories in which a person is persuaded that he is not himself but a potentate as in "The Taming of the Shrew" are generally traced back to the Elizabethan period, but it can be taken further back than that to the story of Hassan the Wag in the "Thousand and One Nights," and most of these Arabian and Indian tales are but a (then) new arrangement of still older legends.

10. Some themes have been so sadly overworked that only the most brilliant and highly original treatment can cause them to appear to

be even remotely new. They are still being done because now and then a story must be put in work at once and some old theme must be used, but they will not be used if offered from the outside; for the Editor knows that in the film vaults are a dozen or more negatives differing little from each other in the treatment of the same theme, and he has only to call one of these up and tell a director to make it over a little better. He will not pay some one on the outside for an idea he already has unless the free lance contributes something so genuinely novel that it will pay to use his suggestion for the old theme.

11. In order to keep posted on production it is necessary to follow the stories of the film, either on the screen or in print. The best plan is to read each week the stories of releases printed in the *Moving Picture World*, since this gives the most complete list of synopses of current releases. It should be one of the early tasks of the novice to read back and see what has been done. Reading back, with care, for six months or a year, will give the student a better idea of what is new and old in photoplay than any book can possibly give. Here only a general survey of the field is possible. In reading the hundreds of actual stories and examining their sources, much more than an understanding of what is old will be gained. Much will be learned as to what to do and what to avoid in the student's own work.

(1.II:7) (6.XVIII:7 XLVIII:9) (7.XXIV:3) (9.XXIV:4) (10.XXIV:12).

CHAPTER XXII

THE TRUE STORY

WRITING on your script "This is a true story" advertises two important facts. It tells the Editor you are not yet a real author and it also tells him that your story very probably is a poor one, not alone because you lack training but because he knows from experience that the true story is seldom, if ever, as good a plot as the imagined idea. It is apt to be old. It is lacking in imaginative quality and it is not interesting or it is a story that overthrows the traditions and experiences of the editorial career. He knows that in his effort to adhere to the story the author is hampered and constricted by his facts. He cannot shake off the shackles of truth for the wings of imagination. This is particularly true when he seeks to put into story form a narrative given him by some relative whom he desires to please.

2. The Editor knows this. He knows that only once in a thousand times is the story designated as true really worth reading. He knows, moreover, that some unscrupulous authors describe as true the story

they have deliberately stolen, hoping by this simple device to disarm criticism and prepare an alibi. It may be accepted as a fact that only fools and knaves describe their stories as being true.

3. For that matter the story the author honestly believes to be true because told him by a friend may be the rankest sort of a steal. There exists a class of persons who desire to appear to be unusually clever. They seek to combine in their persons the functions and knowledge of all trades and professions. They would attempt the cure of a sick horse with the same air of omnipotence as that in which they give the novice writer a "great" idea. It not infrequently happens that they will steal ideas to give away. Some time ago a writer in whom an Editor had become interested suddenly started in to offer stolen ideas; the themes of vaudeville acts, old plays, joke book stories and old newspaper clippings. The Editor frankly wrote the aspirant that it did not pay to steal and it developed that the author had been taking ideas given him by a supposedly clever friend. Had not the Editor taken the trouble to write for an explanation it might have been that the author, who later made good on his own hook, would have been recognized as a thief and barred from every opportunity.

4. But it is not so much this aspect of the matter that this chapter would deal with as the use of true stories given in good faith by the persons to whom the incidents actually happened. As has been said above, the true story hampers imagination and this is fatal. A friend has given you a story. You desire to please him by reciting the incident as it happened. Perhaps you have dressed the idea up a little, but have changed back in response to his grieved protest that the story is nothing like the one he told you. Consciously or otherwise you will hold this objection in mind and guard against it by writing strictly to facts. So well is this understood by old writers that some will not even permit friends to tell them plots. Developing the plot of another's mind is like trying to rear a strange infant. You cannot, no matter how good your intentions, give it the same love and care that you would bestow upon your own offspring.

5. Moreover the story is not new merely because it happened to some person known to you. This writer has personally seen dozens of plots based upon actual happening, in which it is believed that there are burglars in the house when in reality it was merely the cat or dog. More than once a hint that the story was not new has evoked a spirited retort to the effect that the story could not be old because it had happened to Aunt Jane the time Uncle Henry went to Chicago or so on. Having happened to Aunt Jane, the writer seemed to think that it could not possibly have happened to anyone else, and yet Samuel Pepys, writing in his diary under date of July 11, 1664, has the same experience.

6. It is precisely the same with other true happenings. We have been on earth thousands of years. There are millions of people now living. It is inconceivable that the experiences of each should be new.

If Aunt Jane has never read Pepys' "Diary," then it is new to her, but it will not be new to others, perhaps hundreds, who have had a similar experience.

7. There is another angle. It may well be that truth is stranger than fiction, so much stranger, indeed, that the average person will not accept it as even probable. We cannot illustrate this point better than to repeat the example given in the last edition. A minister sent a story to a certain company and was surprised to be told it was too improbable. It related to a medical missionary in Africa who had been seized with appendicitis. Without anesthetic or surgical assistance other than such as he himself could give, the wife performed the operation and he regained his health. The minister seemed to think that his honesty was in question and offered to produce the man who figured in the story. He was assured that the truth of the incident was not in question, but merely its acceptance by an audience. No author would be likely to think so improbable a fact. He would be more likely to evolve from his imagination something more likely to be accepted as fact because more likely to have happened.

8. For all of these reasons it is well to avoid the true story. Your development should come from within. If you would be an author learn to do your own work and not trust to your friends. It is safer and better. Accept plot suggestion, if you will, but use it as material to be worked in combination with other ideas and not as a complete suggestion. Write parts of true stories, but make them so different that even the donors will not recognize them.

9. This is even more true of stories in which you yourself are concerned. To repeat an illustration already used, your own sore thumb is of greater interest to *you* than another man's broken leg. It interests you because you took a prominent part in the happening. It may not interest those who do not know you and who are paying out their money to be entertained. It is to be doubted if such a story would ever get that far, but if it did it would not be as interesting as a story purely imaginative and not hampered by recollections. Some very new authors even go so far as openly to make themselves the hero of the affair and will write "then I" did this or "together we strolled across the lawn." This is positively fatal. No one cares what you did. What did the hero do? If you will analyze you will see that the fact that you are the creator of an idea makes it appear better to you than the idea of others. If you are also the hero, real or imaginative, then you are doubly handicapped. You cannot write about yourself as interestingly as you can of others or of imaginary people. It is not possible. You cannot write of anything that lies too close to yourself and your interests, as well as another can. Be that other in writing your stories. Be a biographer and not an autobiographer and you are more apt to be interesting.

CHAPTER XXIII

HOW TO GET A PLOT

IN previous chapters in this part you have been told what a plot is and what it should not be. If you have mastered these facts you are ready now to take up the actual process of plotting, for you must not alone know what a plot is, but you must be able to originate plots before you can write in action.

2. In the first place let it be understood that the author does not and can not trust to inspiration alone. He does not wait until genius burns. He touches a match to it and fans the flame until it is glowing brightly. He learns to regard writing as an employment as well as a recreation. He knows that to succeed he must gain the habit of plotting and that the way to do this is to write plots until plot writing becomes a habit and not a Mystery.

3. Almost any person can think of one good idea for a play if he or she thinks hard enough. Some can think of a dozen before what may be termed their natural supply of ideas is exhausted. But one plot or one dozen plots will not advance one very far along the road to success. It may even be that the sale of some of these will unfit a student for further work, giving him a feeling of overconfidence. It has often been said, and with entire truth, that the worst luck that possibly could befall the beginner is the sale of one or two plays just at the start. The work seems to be too easy. The aspirant devotes no further time to study and when sales cease decides that editors are stealing the plays and stops writing, disgusted. Solid, lasting success is not built upon the chance sale of one or two plays. It is based upon a close study of photoplay writing followed by careful and intelligent marketing.

4. Do not wait for inspiration. Study the art of plotting as a business and remember that the more you plot the more easy will plotting become until, with full development, the plot almost automatically forms once the suggestion is gained. So expert do some writers become that a mere suggestion received will cause the entire plot to suggest itself in complete form. Take comfort in the thought that the labor of the start will bring a lasting ease that will more than repay the hard work.

5. To the beginner the simplest plan probably will be to sit down and reason a plot out. You think of a man and a woman. What happens to them? Who are they? Are they married or unmarried? Perhaps you decide that they are husband and wife. What then? What is there in their married life that makes it more interesting than the married lives of other men and women? Perhaps you answer this very unoriginally by saying that they are unhappy. Very well, but why? There must be some reason. Does he drink? Is he inconstant? Is he brutal? Perhaps you decide that he drinks. What

are you going to do about it? Are you going to try to free the woman from her bonds or will you require her to stand by and seek to effect a cure? You think that perhaps it will make a better story if she seeks to reform him. Probably it will. How do you intend that this shall be done? Does she argue with him or seek to shock him into a realization of his condition? Does she work alone or do others aid her? Perhaps it will work well if she seeks the aid of a physician. Probably it will help if the physician was the husband's rival before marriage. Shall he be the woman's present lover or not? It will be better and more in accord with her character if their relations are without reproach. You are able now to introduce the element of jealousy. The brutalized husband sees the conference. He can imagine but one reason. Without departing from the point aimed at, a new complication has been added that is not a sub-plot but a part of the main theme, offering large possibilities for dramatic situation. In the same way you pass in mental review the things that might happen, discarding some and adopting others until you have your complete story. Perhaps the husband seeks to be revenged upon his supposed rival. He is intoxicated and lost to all sense of proportion. He goes to the house of the physician. His wife, searching for him, traces him there. You work eventually to this plot:

6. Dave Vroom and Hartley Manley are rivals for the hand of Dora Gladden. Dave wins and, once married, gives way to the intemperate habits he has previously kept hidden from the world. Things go from bad to worse until Dave in one of his spells strikes and so severely injures her that she is forced to seek the services of Hartley. They seek to persuade Dave to enter a cure, but Dave, insanely jealous, believes that they seek to be rid of him merely that they may be free to carry on the liaison. A court order is procured and Dave, evading service, escapes from his home and searches for Hartley. Hartley is out on a case and returns late in the evening. Dave comes through the window of the study and accuses him of trying to railroad him. Hartley tries to explain, but Dave is deaf to reason. He strikes Hartley and, believing that he has killed him, seeks to escape through the hall. He opens the door to a closet instead of the one to the hall. This contains a skeleton mounted upon a stand. The violence with which Dave opens the door causes the stand to fall forward and to Dave's disordered imagination it seems that the skeleton seeks to punish his crime. Hartley recovers and tries to interpose, but Dave, temporarily a maniac, believes him to be his ghost come to the skeleton's aid. He attacks him anew and is strangling him when Dora comes upon them. With her assistance Hartley overpowers Dave. Brain fever follows the excitement and Dave is nursed back to life by Dora and Hartley, the shock having cured him of his desire for drink.

7. This should make a pretty fair story, the scenes with the skeleton supplying the sensation and also the reason why Dave changes. It may be of interest to the reader to know that the story was evolved while paragraph five was being written and that it required less than ten minutes to get the idea and to work it out. In the early stages of plot building it may take a day or two to get the idea in good form,

but with each succeeding plot written will come greater facility. In this instance as soon as the physician was suggested the remainder of the play flashed as a whole.

8. The second method of plotting is to work from a climax instead of a start. In other words, you first invent a big scene and then a reason for that scene. In the plot above you would first have thought of the drink-crazed man wrestling with a skeleton in a physician's office. Then you would have found a reason for his being there and so would have kept on working backward until you reached the start, or could have imagined the climax and then the start before filling in the middle action.

9. Or you may imagine a climax in which a girl, to save her sweetheart from being electricuted until his mother can reach the Governor with a fresh appeal, thrusts her hand into the dynamo that is generating the current that presently will be used to shock to death the man she loves. Here you have a situation that is decidedly dramatic, but you do not know what it is all about.

10. One thing is clear. The man must be innocent of the crime for which he is condemned to death. If he is not innocent, he deserves to die and he is unworthy of the sacrifice the girl makes. This, of course, requires that he shall have been convicted upon perjured evidence. Then it is required that there shall develop some turn that will give to the mother fresh evidence too late to reach the Governor. She cannot appeal to the Warden to delay the execution. The Warden is given a certain latitude, and he has gone to the limit of this time already. That is all he can do. He cannot act as a court of appeal. There is no time to reach the Governor. Here the telephone suggests itself, and some reason must be found why the telephone may not be used. This found, it is necessary to account for the girl and her presence within the prison walls. The natural move would be to make her the daughter of the warden, but generally the warden removes his family from the prison precincts before an execution, provided that they live within the walls. Some other reason must be found. A good one would be that she disguises herself as a man and gets work inside in order to be near her sweetheart even though she may not be with him, and the work must be as helper to the electrician since no one else would be allowed in the dynamo room at such a time.

11. Now you are working on a regular plan. You have your start, your finish and your middle action. Perhaps from the start you devise an even better line of action leading to a wholly different climax and still have the original climax to be used later in another plot. In either of these methods you will find that you are never required to follow any hard and fast development but are at liberty to let the story wander where it will. If you do not like the way it travels you can go back to the point of deviation and pursue the original line, but often the new lead will result in a better story than the one first thought of and leave you with material on your hands that can be used some other time.

12. Imagine a circle with a dot in the centre. The dot represents your start or your ending as the case may be. From that dot you can reach any part in the circumference, each point representing a different ending, and you may go in a straight line or wavy as will best suit your need. At no time are you required to follow the straight line or to strike any particular point in the circumference of climax.

13. Plotting is much like writing figures. The greater the number of factors used, the greater your choice. There are nine digits and a naught. These in combination can be made to express any sum. With a single figure you have but nine variants. With two you have ninety-nine, with three points you have a thousand more. There may be a thousand endings to any start or as many starts to a single ending. It is your task to find a combination that has not been used before.

14. These two forms of plotting are those most commonly used. A third is to take a definite suggestion and see what you can do with it. You tell yourself that you will write about a country parson, a dashing actress, a story of army life or something about an automobile. Then you think of all the things you can do and do that which best pleases your fancy.

15. A fourth way is to work from a press clipping or similar suggestion. This differs from the preceding method only in that you have more material to start with. This other suggestion may even be some other story if only you will be careful to take a suggestion and not the story itself. You are supposed to get a hint but not a complete plot, just as the press item should suggest something else and not itself if you would avoid the risk of writing something that someone else undoubtedly will write and try to sell. There never was a promising press clip that has not been seized upon by some would-be author and merely transferred to paper without translation.

16. Every great catastrophe is immediately followed by a flood of stories more or less accurately relating the incident. If a great ocean liner sinks a thousand stories may be written. This is not an exaggeration. There may be one thousand stories actually written dealing with a disaster such as that of the Titanic. The Editor will not take a single one. Unless he has rushed one into production a few hours after the first extra came out, he will be afraid that some other studio will get one out ahead of him. In no case is there time for the free lance author to write and submit such a story with the slightest chance of acceptance. Anything of a like nature will have the same result in proportionate degree. Authors with no imagination will pounce upon these ready-made stories and send them out, perhaps thinly disguised, in the conviction that the story must sell because it is so timely, oblivious to the fact that others must have done the same and to the counter-fact that it will not be timely six months from now, although the film will still be making the rounds of the smaller theatres then.

17. To get the best results, do not use the clipping for a story but to suggest something else. If an excursion steamer burns to the water

edge, do not have a steamer burning to the water edge. Get something different. To the highly trained imagination a hotel fire in which scores are burned may suggest a comedy over the argument as to which member of the household shall build the morning fire or be the basis for a farce in which the janitor, the heating apparatus, a tip and a tenant are the component parts. Such a story might sell where a blazing hotel would be undesirable. Perhaps, instead, it may be that some individual act of bravery may appeal to the author where the story as a whole may be useless and he will turn this around. Perhaps, for example, the paper tells how Mrs. O'Grady, having little Minnie Roscoe in charge, was faithful to her promise to Minnie's mother and saved the child instead of her own.

18. That does not suggest very strongly the story of Bill Brown, traveling across the desert with his wife and the girl that his chum, Dick Sprague, is to marry when they get to their camp. They lose their way. Bill and his wife deny themselves water to keep alive the girl, less used to desert hardships. At the last moment they find a waterhole surrounded by a gold mine and all ends happily. The story is not much like the story of Mrs. O'Grady, but one incident suggested the other and shows how press clips should be used.

19. It is the same way with other fiction and photoplay stories. Do not repeat them. Let them suggest something else to you. Many writers, when their plotting minds grow dull, read the plots of others—not to get any particular suggestion, but merely to get into the plotting atmosphere. They take nothing of what they have read.

20. But other story plots can do more than this. A single phrase or perhaps a paragraph will suggest a story wholly different from the one the author has written. Perhaps the author has written something that is not true to facts. The second author writes a story that is, not a paraphrase of the other story, but a new one. Perhaps it is a story of the stage, written by one who guesses at his facts. The man who knows gives a snort and writes a story with the proper color just to show how it should be done.

21. To give a concrete example, a well-known writer did a little story of the circus. He knew more about music than he did about "high traps," and he wrote a story of a gymnast and a bass drummer. When the bass drum banged his instrument it was the signal to the flying man to grasp the bar of the swing. Because he hated the gymnast the drummer hit too early one night, the trapeze artist closed his hands too soon, overshot the net and broke his neck.

22. The story was recalled some years later by another writer who knew more about the circus and knew that no high-priced gymnast is going to put his life into the hands of a cheap drummer in a circus band. He knew that the work was all done by counts. He wrote a story in which the green drummer fell in love with the gymnast's wife. The stress the bandmaster had laid upon the banging of the drum as the man was about to grasp the bar led into the same error the first drummer made. He hit the drum too soon, with the only result that

he was fired that same evening. The story was suggested by the first, but they were utterly unlike in plot as well as facts.

23. It is permissible to derive inspiration but not plot from the work of another, as will be more clearly set forth in the chapter on copyrights. To take more than this will be stealing. There may be no copyright prosecution, but the author may be recognized as a "borrower" and his work avoided in future. In this connection it should be remembered that most studios have someone whose business it is to keep in touch with new literature as well as others who know the classics. If a story does by any chance escape scrutiny, there will be many who will write the company advising them of the theft.

24. Old vaudeville acts, the so-called nigger acts, specialties, sketches and similar material of the stage are known to Editors and can be used only with material alteration. They are made but generally they are not purchased, but written by someone in the studio who has a good memory. This is particularly true of comedy.

25. Sometimes inversion works well. It will recall Charles A. Dana's advice to a new reporter whom he told that a story of a dog biting a man was not very newsy, but if the man should bite the dog it would be worth a column. You expect a man to enter through the front door when he comes home. If you can find some reason why he should climb to the roof and drop through the chimney you have a better or at least a more original plot. In the same way if a bridal couple are married and live happily ever after it does not make as good a story as though the man turned from the altar to find that he was not married at all because the bride was a man or because she was already married, and her husband, whom all supposed to have been lost at sea, was waiting at the entrance to the church. Inversion is a decidedly valuable aid, but it should be used only by those who have first learned to write straight plots, since it requires an ample knowledge of plotting to turn plots inside out and make the wrong side look like the right.

26. In the same way combination of ideas or combination with inversion works well when expertly done. Straight combination is the merging of two ideas to obtain a third. To take a magazine story, here is the original plot of one story:

A grain speculator corners wheat, forcing up the price of bread. He is kidnapped and held prisoner. Fabulous prices are charged for bread and water, and he must pay these to eat and drink. When he has disgorged his profits, he is permitted to depart.

This story is perhaps too old to be remembered by many. A second story has been used more than once with slightly different treatment. These are the essential facts.

There is a shipwreck. A financier who has been amusing himself telling the crew of the niceties of high finance is cast ashore. He is too flabby to do hard work. The men salvage much of the cargo, but applying his own laws of supply and demand make him pay fancy prices and are taken off the island comparatively affluent.

From these two, or at least apparently from these two, came a more recent story, which offers some of the points of each in this combination:

Two men are cast away. Previously one has been justifying to the other his action in taking over this other's bankrupt business, reorganizing it and selling out at a profit of \$100,000. He contended that the second man was not businesslike and that since he (the speaker) had revived the dead business he was entitled to the profit on it. The bankrupt makes the shore and takes possession. The other man is stranded on a rock. The bankrupt not only makes him pay rental for coming upon the island, but makes him pay fabulous sums for meals and spring water. When the \$100,000 is gone the bankrupt amuses himself by setting the capitalist to work, sitting in the shade and watching him. He pays in script. The capitalist works overtime. When they are rescued they find that the capitalist not alone has earned his \$100,000 back, but that through careless accounting the bankrupt now owes him an additional \$50,000, proving the point the capitalist had sought to make.

It is possible, even probable, that the writer never saw the other stories, but they offer so excellent an example of combination they are given here for comparison.

27. Facts and themes may also be combined. It is known that the magnetic needle of the compass points approximately to the north. It is known that iron or steel near the compass needle will deflect it. Combination of these two facts have brought many plots along different lines. A locomotive cannot pull a train if the drivers do not grip the track. Lanterns contain signal oil, a composition of lard and oil. The brakeman spills the oil from his lantern on the track and prevents the fast express on the up grade from crashing into the freight.

28. Another form of plotting is to select some suggestive title and work from that. This may sound absurd to the untrained writer, but it is used by many experienced authors with decided success. It is not necessary that the title should be self-explanatory. Take for example the title "Just Around the Corner." Almost anything may be just around the corner, from happiness to a policeman. Later you may think of a better title and retain the original to suggest another plot. Building a plot from a story may seem like building a barrel around a bunghole, but sometimes the scheme will work when no other will. If a suggestive title is used, it should not be retained if it reveals too clearly the idea of the play.

29. These are the methods most generally in use. Another scheme that has been suggested (by a Boston newspaper) is the Idea Machine. This may be a set of packs of cards about fifty each. Part of them are nouns, others adjectives or verbs. Each pack is shuffled and one of each is drawn at random. You will get a meaningless jumble, but often there will be a plot suggestion. Perhaps the draw will show: "Lawyer—counterfeits—woman—runs—automobile." This may suggest to you a story in which a lawyer induces a woman to pose as the

lost heiress to a large estate, using his knowledge of family affairs gained as its counsel to post her on seemingly hidden affairs. The deception is discovered and the lawyer and his accomplice are put to flight, possibly an automobile chase supplying the sensational climax. If you have a better opinion of lawyers, perhaps he is the one who discovers the imposition and puts the woman and her accomplices to flight. The idea will serve merely to assemble some impossible factors which may be combined into an idea. Like writing to titles, it may seem to be absurd, but some established authors report excellent results. The cards should be of varying colors to prevent their becoming mixed. Any stationer can get card index cards in five or more colors, or perhaps the local printer will cut them from stock on hand without much cost.

30. It is well to study to the point of thorough understanding all of these schemes for plotting since one may be useful at a time when none of the others will serve to bring a suggestion. It is never wise to have but a single method of obtaining plots. If this one method temporarily fails you are helpless.

31. It will generally be found that if plotting is dropped for a time especial effort is required to get back into the habit. On the other hand plotting too long continued, without rest, may bring a state of mental inaction that only rest or a change of work will correct.

32. It will be found that there are times when the mind is more plot-active than at others. Plots follow one another in rapid succession, but none of them will work out into complete action at the moment. For this reason it is well to have a plot book.

33. This differs from the idea file already referred to since this is for the storage of plots and not suggestion. For this some form of loose-leaf system is best that the used plots may be removed. This does not mean an investment of several dollars for a book and punched paper. You can use ordinary paper and a paper clip. There is a form of clip that is provided with detachable lever handles that when removed make a neat binding, or there are several forms of spring back binders that do not cost above half a dollar, and which do not require specially punched paper. Elaborate color systems should not be employed as a color for each play classification, as often you can turn your plot from comedy into drama or the reverse.

34. Keep in this file all plots good and bad. Perhaps by combination you can make one good plot from two or more poor ones. It may be that the materials in your story are not harmonious. One story, done by the Edison company, started with a theatrical man in Turkey looking for a harem to use as a comic opera chorus. Somehow it did not seem to work. A life-insurance agent half-plot was taken over and the theatrical man became an insurance agent anxious to offer the Sultan himself wholesale rates if he insured the entire harem. As such the story sold, but the picture was made by a field company working in an old skating rink and the discovery of the skates led to another change. The hero became an agent for roller

skates, he found an old sweetheart in the harem. She was a champion skater. They put the harem on skates and skated away while the harem fell down singly and collectively.

35. As a general thing the best plots are those which come easiest to you and resolve themselves into action with the least effort. This is because you have the plot fully assimilated and can put it down without bothering about details. The story that is built up, scene by scene, may be a better piece of development, but it may convey the unconscious suggestion of labor to the spectator and tire him. It is a good plan not to attempt the final writing of the plot until you have the details perfectly aligned.

36. Professional dancers have a term—elevation—that admirably illustrates this quality. A dancer with good elevation seems to float in the air and touch the floor with his feet, instead of springing from it. You are not permitted to see that their dancing is hard work and so it is far more pleasing than the work of some who deliberately show how hard their work is that they may gain full credit in immediate applause instead of future reputation. It is the same way with photoplay. Apparent absence of effort gives the greatest charm; you should so plot that your story seems to unfold itself. Unless you wait until your plot does develop naturally, your labored development will suggest a soldier in a sentry box trying to do free-hand gymnastics. He is doing his best, but he is cramped.

37. Do not deal with the plot that too intimately concerns yourself or your friends. It may be a great joke to put old Mr. Brown or the erratic Miss Jones in a picture, but it may not make a very good plot, and you want a plot that will interest those who do not know Mr. Brown or Miss Jones. Use them for types, but not for victims. Least of all put yourself into a story or imagine yourself to be the hero of the story you write. This is not plot building but silly day dreaming.

38. It has been said that plotting should depend upon work and not upon inspiration, but this does not mean that you should make a plodding business of it. You are not to ignore inspiration, but to teach it to answer to your call instead of falling back on lack of inspiration as an excuse for loafing. To be a good workman you must train your inspiration through effort and arrive at a point where you can write good comedies, if that is your line, while your heart overflows with grief and good drama when you want to shout for very joy. At first it will be labor alone, but learn to find pleasure and inspiration in your labor or you will always be a laborer and never an artist writer.

(3.LXV:46) (4.VII:5) (5.XLVIII:2) (6.XVI:9) (13.X:11)
 (15.VIII:14) (23.LXVIII:3) (28.XXVII:6 & 19) (33.VIII:10)
 (35.XIX:7) (37.XXII:9).

CHAPTER XXIV

BUILDING UP THE PLOT

NOT all persons can think up plots, but more persons can think plots than can think good plots and more persons can think good plots than can take these plots and, through arrangement, lift them to the highest level of excellence; yet the best possible development of a given plot is the objective of the author, and the quality of this development marks the difference between the 'prentice and the master.

2. Developing the plot means something more than merely adding plot factors to the original theme. That will build up the plot, but something more than this is needed. Development is, first, the recognition of the most available features in a plot suggestion and, secondly, the presentation of these features in the form that will make the strongest and most positive appeal.

3. Shakspeare had this appreciation of plot values in its nicest sense and, even granting that he had the advantage of seeing them first, his art took much from obscure sources and raised the themes to undying fame. Comparatively few persons have read the "Histories of the Kings of Britain." In that quaint old book Lear is not made more conspicuous than Vortiger and far less conspicuous than others, but Shakspeare was quick to perceive the value of the theme of the thankless daughters and he lifted this from its obscuring historical facts and gave us a story that is regarded as one of his best. He made the theme so much his own that now a story based on this is regarded as a steal from the poet and not from the historian. If the volume is accessible in your public library it will make an interesting study in plot suggestion if you will first read the original and then the play and realize the skill with which a genius saw the human side of the historical record. ("Histories of the Kings of Britain," Geoffrey of Monmouth, Book II. Chapters XI, XII.)

4. Shakspeare wrote few, if any, original plots, but he immortalized many obscure sources through his genius for plot recognition and development. It was this that made his fame as much as his elegance of diction and the depth of his philosophy. He had the faculty of seeing the best that was in an old plot and the best possible development for that part of the story he wished to reconstruct. As it was in his day so it is now; the man who makes the most of what he has does better than the man who has more and yet who makes small use of it. The really great author is the man who can make his plots vivid and appealing, not he who gets good ideas and then spoils them through slovenly or incompetent handling.

5. Too often the student, having evolved a plot, rushes it into some sort of shape and submits it to a studio before the ink is fairly dry upon the paper. Then he starts work on another and another; never

taking time to study development, until failure to sell these early efforts brings discouragement and the abandonment of the work. It is safe to say that many who have taken up photoplay writing only to drop it again as worthless might have found success had they only grounded themselves in their work and had written stuff worth buying before they undertook to make sales.

6. The men and women who would make a success of photoplay writing must first ground themselves in plotting until plotting becomes a fixed habit and then work on plot development until it becomes second nature. Without this preliminary work there can be no permanent success. There may be some sales to some studios for a time, because there must be some plots evolved that will possess sufficient merit to warrant purchase, but such sales will be no indication of accomplishment. They will be merely the accidents of chance.

7. More than this, it has happened not infrequently that a studio, liking some story, has asked for more from the same author along the same lines. It is a splendid opening and the author's utter inability to respond with more stories of the sort desired will stamp him an accident and utterly destroy his chances now and in the future with that studio. No Editor will bother with a man who cannot offer a certain percentage of available scripts. It may seem trying and even senseless to write innumerable stories and not try to sell them, but sales should mean something more than an immediate check. They should mean recognition from the studios, and if the recipient is unable to repeat he will be discarded in favor of the man who can write a good story next week as well as this and last week. A few stories may be sold through wide and indiscriminate marketing and a few small checks may be gained, but a golden opportunity may be lost through trying to sell before development is mastered.

8. The thoroughly trained author develops his plots almost unconsciously, not because he is gifted above others, but because he has developed so many other plots, presenting such a variety of combinations, that he has come to know instinctively the lines along which it will be best to develop any given type of story. He will not accept the first development that comes to him unless, after experiment with other methods, he is convinced that this is the best, but in a general way he will know what will be the best development, and examination of this will not only verify or upset his belief, but it may also bring suggestions that will be discarded from this plot yet form the basis of other plots.

9. Development of the plot may be divided into two classes, the expansion of the main theme and the invention of sub-plot or complication. In photoplay, particularly in the shorter lengths, it is best not to have much if any sub-plot because this either involves the excessive use of printed leader or a loss of clearness. In a novel there may be one or more sub-plots running parallel to the main story and coming to a common point at or near the climax as the tracks in a railroad yard all converge on the main line at the limits of the area. In novel

writing this is possible because first one and then another of these complications may be taken up at will without regard for chronological order. But in photoplay this is not possible since events must either be related at the time of their occurrence or visioned in. It is not possible to run along on one action for a time and then turn back and bring another action up to date. This would retard the theme and break the continuity. Since sub-plot is hurtful, it becomes necessary to build up the main plot with action and action that is germane to the plot as was shown in the preceding chapter where the use of a physician provides for dramatic situation without adding a complication.

10. At the start it will be necessary to work almost wholly on paper, but it should be the effort of the author to train himself to do the first plotting mentally since the omission of a plot factor may entail so much recopying that the author will leave out what might help the story greatly. To overcome this difficulty, many writers use slips of paper and write only one factor to a slip, which enables them to add, to take away, or to change without adding to the physical labor of writing. But the mental development is more flexible still since it permits an almost automatic rearrangement of incident through the addition of a factor. If the student will start with slight themes at first—as he should in any event—he will presently find it easier to do the work mentally than on paper, though it is generally necessary before developing the action plot to lay out a sketch or diagram on paper.

11. Take that part of the plot that has suggested itself to you and examine it closely. Perhaps it is the start or the climax of the story or you have a start and climax but are hazy as to the middle action. Suppose that it is the commonplace theme of a woman whose husband is too engrossed in business to give her the attention she demands. She seeks this attention from society and eventually narrows her demand to another man. Almost at the point of peril, she is saved from herself. This is all you have of the story; merely the skeleton of the plot. You cannot even call it a complete skeleton, and your first work is to build to completeness the skeleton that you may clothe it with the tissues of action. You have taken a survey of the plot field and you know that the favorite development is an elopement planned but frustrated by the cry of the woman's child, the sudden illness or injury to the husband or the like happening to the man who has planned the elopement.

12. If you lack invention you will probably follow the lines of least resistance and do what has been done before. You will write the story thus, but you will not sell it, since no man but the coal dealer purchases coal after his cellar is full, and all makers of film are plentifully supplied with negatives, showing various developments of this theme and are unlikely to add to their store. You must get some new departure. Perhaps the wife turns to business instead of to society. This has not been done so much. At once you open a new vista. She

may become such a success that she scorns her husband. She may leave him or she may seek to build up the business until her operations have not only jeopardized her own venture but threaten her husband's success when he, with cool business head, steps in, extricates her from her predicament and she is glad to let him reassume the reins of management.

13. An objection to this would be that this is a business story and that business stories seldom offer much that is dramatic. This particular story would require an elaborate explanation of the fortunes of the business and would be more a commercial report than a series of interesting scenes. It might give a better effect to have her go upon the stage. She wins success and is deaf to her husband's arguments, but in the end realizes that success is hollow without love and abandons her career to become a wife again. She might, as so many other photoplay heroines have done, seek diversion in gambling, becoming involved in financial difficulties from which the villain seeks to save her but from which she is rescued by her husband at an opportune moment.

14. Whatever your choice, remember that there must be considered first the narrative and then the picture value. It must be interesting as a story and it must be told in action that is in itself interesting and attractive. Figure out all your points and then make a test scenario, but please understand that by scenario is meant not a motion picture play as a whole. Photoplay draws its nomenclature from the stage, the photograph gallery and the author's workroom. Scenario is a term once used to designate a photoplay in its completeness, but a play is something more than that, and the term in this connection is passing from use. Scenario is a sketch of the action of a story or play. It is merely a full synopsis. It is best in the first draft to make a slight scenario, listing little more than the plot factors.

15. Suppose that we recall the familiar nursery rhyme of Mary and her lamb. It occurs to us that this can be done into allegory and so into a play. A scenario of the original verse would give:

Mary owns a pet lamb.
 The lamb is devoted to Mary and follows her everywhere.
 One day it follows her into the schoolroom.
 The appearance of the lamb creates such a disturbance that the teacher puts it out.
 Undiscouraged, the lamb waits outside for Mary until school is dismissed and once more they are united.

This, translated into other terms, would read that

Ben and Mary are sweethearts.
 Ben is devoted to Mary, but she, used to his devotion, holds it lightly in esteem.
 Mary tires of the country and wants to go to the city. Ben, to guard her, follows her.

Mary soon finds employment and prospers, but Ben is essentially of the country and cannot adapt himself to city ways. He is forced to return home.

There he waits in the hope that Mary will return to him. Eventually she does.

16. This is the same story done into different words to qualify it as a plot. It is not ample enough. There is the suggestion of struggle and some slight suspense and the plot-question of Ben's desire for Mary is clearly stated, but there is a lack of original plot complication. In the story in the last chapter it was seen that the introduction of the physician as a former rival of the husband gave plot complication. In the same way we must get complication here. There the Villain or antagonist was not the physician but the addiction of the man to drink which was the bar to the happiness of the wife. Here we lack the villain, and hence there is lacking one element of plot. We put in a villain. In the original story the teacher was the villain. Suppose that we get a little melodramatic and call the Junior Partner of the concern for which Mary works the villain. If we do this we need to make the story a trifle more compact. We need to bring Ben, our protagonist; the Junior, the antagonist, and Mary, the object, into closer relationship. We do this by changing the story so that Ben gets a position with the firm employing Mary. Ben is much in the way of the Junior, and so he is dismissed. Later Mary is persuaded to give him up and so he returns home to wait. This would give us a scenario more like this:

17. Mary and Ben are sweethearts.
 Mary does not appreciate Ben's devotion.
 She craves the excitement of city life and goes there to earn her living. Ben follows to protect her.
 They gain positions with the same concern, Mary in the office and Ben in the shipping room.
 The Junior Partner is attracted to Mary.
 He finds Ben in the way.
 He invents a pretext for dismissing Ben.
 He persuades Mary to give him up.
 Disconsolate, Ben returns home.
 Left to herself, Mary trusts to the Junior Partner.
 There is a secret marriage.
 One day Mary finds that the marriage was fictitious and that the Junior Partner is already married.
 Broken-hearted, she returns home and finds the faithful Ben still waiting for her.
 They are married.

18. This is better, but it is not enough. There is not yet sufficient complication to hold interest. It is still too simple and obvious. It works along the lines of least resistance. There is struggle but very little suspense, and there is a lack of crises of marked quality. Suppose we remember that the lamb might have helped along the original verse by following some tardy pupil into the school room again. In the same way we can bring Ben back to the city. This will have

two results. It will give more action and show him in a better light since he no longer calmly accepts his dismissal. He is a fighter and we love a fighter. We might get this development:

19. Left to herself Mary trusts to the Junior Partner.
 To win her confidence he causes her rapid advancement.
 Partly through jealousy and partly through more kindly motive, some girl in the office writes Ben.
 Ben returns to the city.
 He makes a scene in the office, taxing Mary with loose conduct and trying to kill the Junior Partner.
 The Junior Partner declares his intention of marrying Mary.
 Ben can say nothing to this. He again returns home.

20. The remainder would run as before. This is better, because there is more and more spirited action, but it is by no means enough. Change that factor that recites that the girl writes Ben. Make it purely a matter of malice. Then show that Mary, ashamed to return home, seeks other employment. Shame and grief bear her down. She sinks in health and spirit and is no longer able to work. Found starving in her room, she is taken to the hospital. The papers mention the fact in a line. The same girl who wrote before, now with kindly motive, again warns Ben. He comes and takes Mary home, where she recovers her strength and spirits and becomes Ben's wife.

21. Now the change in the motives behind the girl's first letter gives a little touch to the story, but the greater gain has been in straight narrative and plot development. Here there is the suspense that arises from the question as to how Mary will fare or how Ben will learn of her troubles. In our previous outworkings we have always had her go straight home to Ben, the obvious and easiest way out of her troubles. Now she fears to face him and by staying away raises a far more important question of suspense than had she merely returned to Ben to see if he would have her. But all through this we show Ben, who is a decent sort of chap, in a poor light. Always he is staying home waiting for events to shape themselves. We have more admiration for a hero who goes out to shape events for himself. Suppose that we go back and try and put Ben in a better light. We can do it something like this:

22. Ben and Mary get employment in the same factory.
 Mary attracts the attention of the Junior Partner.
 His notice flatters her.
 Ben notices this and remonstrates.
 They quarrel.
 Ben argues with the Junior Partner. He is laughed at.
 That evening he finds the Junior Partner taking Mary to a dance hall of unsavory reputation. He follows them.
 During the evening the Junior Partner seeks to take advantage of Mary's helplessness. Ben interferes.
 There is a fight. The proprietor of the place has Ben arrested.
 The Junior Partner uses his influence to have Ben sentenced to prison.

Ben returns but Mary will have nothing to do with him. To her he is a convict, a belief engendered by the girls in the office and the Junior Partner. Broken hearted, Ben goes home.

23. We will reconstruct the entire scenario and compare it with the original. It should show improvement in heightened dramatic value and pictorial quality.
24. Ben and Mary are sweethearts.
 Mary is too used to Ben's devotion to value it.
 Craving excitement, she seeks to earn her living in the city.
 Ben follows to protect her.
 They obtain employment from the same firm, Ben in the shipping room and Mary in the office.
 Mary attracts the attention of the Junior Partner.
 His notice flatters her.
 Ben sees and resents the growing familiarity. He remonstrates with Mary.
 They quarrel.
 Ben argues with the Junior Partner. He is laughed at.
 That evening the Junior Partner takes Mary to an unsavory dance hall. Ben follows them.
 The Junior Partner seeks to take advantage of Mary's helplessness. He grows familiar. Ben interferes.
 There is a fight. The proprietor has Ben arrested.
 Using his influence, the Junior Partner has Ben sent to prison.
 On his release Mary refuses to have anything to do with him.
 She has been badgered by the girls in the office and worked on by the Junior Partner. She calls Ben a convict and dismisses him.
 Broken-hearted Ben returns home.
 To gain her confidence the Junior Partner rapidly advances Mary.
 Later one of the girls in the office, jealous of this advancement, writes Ben a malicious letter of warning.
 Ben returns to the city. There is a scene in the office in which he denounces Mary for loose conduct and attacks the Junior Partner.
 The Junior Partner declares his intention of marrying Mary. To this Ben is unable to respond. Once more he returns home defeated.
 The Junior Partner urges Mary to consent to a secret marriage. Later she finds that the marriage was not legal.
 She leaves the Junior Partner.
 Too proud to return home, she seeks to support herself.
 Grief and shame soon make it impossible for her to retain steady employment. She obtains underpaid work to be done at home.
 Soon she is unable to do even this. She grows weaker.
 Found starving in her room she is taken to the hospital.
 Again the girl writes Ben. This time with kindly motive. She sends a newspaper clipping.
 Ben comes a third time to the city.
 He thrashes the Junior Partner.
 He takes Mary home with him.
 She regains her health and happiness and marries him.

25. The scenario is the schedule of happenings, but it must be dressed up. It has been repeatedly stated that literary style is not required in writing photoplays. This is true. The most fluently written script would be worthless if it did not tell a story, but there is a style in photoplay, though as yet not one person in a thousand realizes it. As the matter stands producers are but dimly realizing that they can get more help from the author than the bare plot. They do not want to realize it, for this makes them less vitally necessary to the studio than they were when the director was the sole arbiter and made a script well or badly as he chose. Style in photoplay is not the literary grace with which your explanations are phrased. It is the completeness with which you convey to the director the little touches that give individuality to the expression of your story. Bannister Merwin, present Editor of the London Film Company, but once the star writer for the Edison company, puts the matter rather radically when he writes in a recent letter, covering the sample pages reproduced in the appendix, as Examples K.

26. Perhaps you will note that I try to put the emphasis on the psychology of each situation. It seldom seems to me to be necessary to get down to the exact details of the physical "business"—unless such details are essential in making the action clear. In other words, I believe in leaving the actor (wherever possible) free as to his method of expressing the situation. But it does seem to me to be absolutely essential that the actor and the producer should be shown what *must* be expressed.

I am of the opinion that plot is the least important part of a photoplay. As I see it, the proper way of writing a photoplay is to get, first, a general theme, and then develop your characters. Live with these characters until you know them like old friends. Then let your characters develop your theme for you. As an artist in technique, of course, one must see to it that the characters develop the theme in an interesting and convincing way.

Only by this method is it possible to escape from the "groove" stuff which so many companies are now inflicting on a wearied world. And, for that matter, it is the method one follows in writing worth-while fiction and stage plays. Given an understanding of the picture technique, why shouldn't a writer dig down into life by the same method that he would employ in writing a stage play or a novel?

27. We are by no means in agreement with Mr. Merwin as to the lesser value of plot. This we believe to be the first and most vital necessity, but there is an equal necessity that the plot should be told as a page from life and not as a puppet show. You can either give the psychology in business as will be shown in Chapter XXXIII or you can give the psychology as Mr. Merwin does and leave the action to the player and director. Either method will do, but the great point is to give the actor and his director a clear and exact idea of what you are trying to show in action. You write action, but you must either write action that shows the thought behind it or write the thought and let

the actor invent the action. The main point is to preserve an individuality. Charles Dickens and Rudyard Kipling are great authors, but did Mr. Kipling write like Dickens he would be no more than a copyist. Not one released photoplay in a thousand has individuality, and yet individuality of thought and treatment alike are what will save photoplay exhibition from extinction.

28. It may do you little good at present to strive for individuality in that the director and cutting man will rob your script of its individuality, but the time is coming when this quality will be demanded. Cultivate the quality *now* and you will be ahead of the others. Mr. Merwin will always be ahead because he was the first to place this insistence on psychology of the right sort. In this he antedates even Louis Reeves Harrison, who also was writing literature for the screen when the rest of us were writing perfunctory action.

29. Getting back to Mary and Ben, it may be necessary to write a full synopsis until you are used to scenes. Here the loose-leaf scheme outlined in Paragraph 10 will come in handy. Your brief scenario gives you the points in their proper order. Now get the scenes from these points in their proper order and you will have a working scenario.

30. Your first fact is that Ben and Mary are sweethearts. This can be shown in any pretty location. Here, too, you can show the second point, that Mary does not value his devotion. This can be shown in a variety of ways. Perhaps other boys and girls come into the scene. They are going to a picnic and they ask Mary and Ben to come. She is all eagerness. He is reluctant. He would rather be alone with Mary. She dances off with the others, leaving Ben standing on the scene. Now you not only have your fact, but you know how to convey that fact to the spectator in action. The picnic party is not essential; indeed it might be objected to on the grounds of expense. Our purpose could be served as well if Ben and Mary were seen coming down a country road and a friend came along in an auto and offered them a lift. One objection to this might be that some would suppose that the driver and not the auto was the attraction to Mary. This, however, can be avoided by making the driver a girl. We know Ben has eyes only for Mary. Show that he and the girl in the car are on friendly terms and the situation is clear.

31. And here arises another point already referred to in matters of cost. The picnic party would give more life to the scene than a girl in an auto, but would cost money. But presently we are going to send Mary to the city and one scene shows her at the station. The same young people can be used to see her off, since it is necessary to "dress" or fill the station platform. Since they must be used anyway, use them now and get the better effect without additional cost.

32. Since we can have the picnic, we will follow them and leave Ben, since the next point is that Mary wants to go to the city. In the picnic scene one of the girls can show a letter from another who has already gone to town. She writes of her success and it is this that

determines Mary. The girl who has the letter is not interested. Mary begs the letter and this action motives her subsequent departure. If she merely decided to go on the spur of the moment she would seem to want to go for no other reason than to help the story along, but here we see the glowing tale of the other girl and know why Mary wants to follow. Having found the reason, there is a lapse which calls for a time leader, and then we see Mary telling Ben. He seeks to dissuade her without avail. Her mind is made up. Later we see Mary at the station. The boys and girls are there to see her off. The train comes. At the last moment Ben comes in with his satchel. He, too, is going. This will be more dramatic than had Ben announced in the scene with Mary that he would follow her.

33. In similar fashion you develop each point into full action, and if this proves satisfactory you make out the plot of action from this. It is generally an ample scenario such as this that is required when a company announces that it wants a "synopsis only." It does not want a synopsis. It desires a scenario.

34. There is another angle to planning action. It has been shown that in the story of Mary if we make the warning letter first sent by the girl in the office a malicious one, then the second letter gains in effect. Much may be done by looking ahead—or backward—and strengthening one incident with another. Playing off one piece of business against another will not make a marked difference in the apparent action, but it will make a vast difference in the impression made upon the spectator, though the spectator himself will not realize this. He will know only that he likes the story. He cannot tell why. The reason is unimportant.

35. At first this work, if properly done, will seem to be the real drudgery of photoplay. It lacks the dash of plot imagining and the results of writing the finished action, but it is by far the most important part of the writing of the photoplay. The plot is worthless in the rough. It may sell for a few dollars. Well developed it may bring a hundred. You have a ton of steel. You may make it into skates or watchsprings. The labor is what makes the raw material of greater value. Learn, then, to give time and thought to the development of your play, that you may be able to get ounce and not ton prices for your steel.

36. There are some persons so unfortunately constituted that they cannot concentrate. They want to sit down, dash off a play, get a check and repeat the performance. They have not the patience to sit down and work over the development of a plot. Either they write a good plot the first time or it never is a good plot. It is conceivable that now and then such persons will turn out a brilliant play, but they will never gain a real success. It is the man who can take his material and work on it until it is not only good but the best that can be done who will gain the reputation and the bank account that will follow. Rough diamonds are worth little compared to the cut and finished product.

37. But understand, please, that it is almost as bad to work over a single play without interruption. You will get tired of it. You will lose your perspective. Have several plays in various stages of development, and work on these alternately, that you may not get tired of your plot.

38. This leads to what Phil Lang, of the Kalem company, calls "letting it get cold." It was he who first urged upon photoplay writers this excellent advice. If you work with the proper enthusiasm you will turn from your finished product in the belief that it is the best thing you have ever done. A few weeks later, when it comes back from a studio, you will find many places where improvement can be made. To take Mr. Lang's advice do not send out your story immediately. Set it aside for a few weeks. Do other work. Then take it up and see if you are still satisfied with it. If you are not, work it over again and once more set it aside. You cannot sell it until it is in proper form. It is better to let it lie in your own drawer, meanwhile, rather than on editorial desks. Most experienced authors do this. All writers should.

39. Keep at it until you get it right, but do not make the mistake of slaving over one script for months. Do not take a pride in the length of time you have spent over it. Take a pride in doing the best possible work in the best possible time. Give all the time necessary, but seek to make that time relatively short. It is not clever to spend six months on a play. It is clever to spend six days on it and have it as well done as though you had spent six months. Work on it, off and on, for six months if you wish, but do others in the meantime. Keep your plot book filled and keep them turning over and over. Labored and almost painfully slow development will show in the script and communicate your fatigue to the spectator. Have plenty of plots in hand. Select the plot that most appeals to you at the moment. Work on that. Tomorrow you may feel more in the mood for another script. After a time it will be easy to take up any script and work on it, but at first humor your mood a little so that you keep on working.

(4.XXI:9) (5.LXV:2) (6.XXIII:2) (7.LXV:45) (9.IX:21)
 XX:13 XXIII:5 XLII:2 XLIV:6) (12.XXI:10) (14.XLVIII:38
 LVIII:24) (15.XXV:17) (16.IX:25 XXIII:5) (18.IX:8) (21.
 X:11) (25.V:2 XXXIII:25) (27.IX:2 XVI:2 XIX:13) (31.
 XVII:12 XXX:11) (32.X:6) (33XXVIII:18) (39.XIX:4).

CHAPTER XXV

PUTTING IN THE PUNCH

PROBABLY no term used in photoplay writing is more mishandled and less understood than the five-letter word, Punch, and nothing in photoplay is more important than this same punch, for a plot is essential to the photoplay and the punch is essential to the plot. Clearly and thoroughly understand what punch is.

2. Punch is the *idea* back of the narrative. It makes narrative interesting through idea. In this it differs from motivation, which makes for interest through explaining the reason for action.

3. By many punch is regarded as the mechanical effect to which a certain type of plays works up. A story is not interesting if it merely works up to a head-on collision. The smash may be interesting because of its physical features, but the mere fact of collision will not be interesting. It is punch in the plot that includes the wreck that makes the latter of plot interest. If there is no punch to the plot it would be better to offer the railroad effect as a news picture and not as a story. The train wreck, the automobile over the cliff, the leap for life and kindred sensations do not give punch to plot. They seek to excuse the lack. They seek to conceal the lack. They cannot supply the want.

4. Before proceeding to study punch, master this fact. Nothing but punch can be put into plot to make plot interesting. No amount of mechanical sensation can do more than relieve boredom for a moment. If the mechanical effect is used to back up a story with punch and the effect is a part of the story and not an interpolation, then it may make a story more interesting because it is a part of a story, but the interpolated sensation will not become a part of the story and will not give it interest. A handsome though unsafe building may be shored up with timbers. The timbers do not become a part of the building. They do not add beauty or give the building itself strength. They are unsightly and merely serve to prevent the structure from falling completely flat. To make a good building the walls must be strengthened and repaired. Shoring is merely a temporary and disfiguring device.

5. Narrative of a plot is merely the recital of the incidents relating to the plot objective. If the objective is interesting, then the narrative should be interesting. Idea gives interest to the objective. A man falling from an airship may be interesting, but it is not plot. The sight of one man trying to kill another may be exciting, but not of real interest. If we know that the slayer is unwittingly trying to kill his own son, then this *idea* gives interest to the physical action. It is still exciting, but in a greater degree because now our interest also is engaged.

6. Suppose that you are at the railroad station. A train is just pulling out. A fat little man dashes up in an automobile and gives pursuit. You laugh. It is only human to laugh at the small misfortunes of others, and the man himself is rather funny. Anyhow it is amusing to see a fat man trying to catch a railroad train because the train has so great an advantage over him.

7. But suppose that you know the man. Suppose you also knew that he wanted the way train and was chasing the Chicago express. Now you put a punch in the idea. A man trying to catch a train is funny. A man vainly pursuing the wrong train is much more hu-

morous. Now the idea of wasted effort is added to the original. It is doubly funny. You'll laugh when you see him climb aboard his proper train, still puffing and blowing from the result of his chase. If you merely saw him board his train, not having seen the previous chase, you would not even smile. The action would be the same, but there would be no idea back of the action.

8. Your knowledge of what is behind the action is what gives full value to the action. You know the man wanted the suburban train. It is amusing to see him chase the express. You laugh. But if you knew that the man wanted the express; that he was a great physician, hurrying to the bedside of a little child whose life could be saved only by use of the serum which he carries, then the incident becomes tragic. You forget that the action of the man is amusing. You *think* only of the fact that Death grins from the rear platform of the receding train. By the mere knowledge of what lies back of the action you have turned comedy to absolute tragedy.

9. Slightly change the punch. The man loses the train, but calls out a special. This is the train that runs into the other in the head-on collision referred to above. Now the wreck becomes of interest, not as a wreck, but as part of the obstacle. You can get the same punch from having the physician drop the bottle, but you at least excuse the trains when you make them a part of the story; a real factor, and not a chance incident of no real bearing. People will see the smash, but they will think of the dying child. The train has *not* added to the punch, but since it assists in making manifest the obstacle that is made interesting by punch, then there is some excuse for it. Punch is invariably mental. It is one of the rules to which there is no exception.

10. A young girl becomes engaged to an elderly man. We do not approve the match. We want to see her marry the young man in whom our interest is more strongly engaged. Here we derive interest in the story from our interest in the young couple. We dislike the sacrifice of youth to age. We do not approve of the *roué*. The story interests, though the interest is mild.

11. Suppose we know that the old man really is her father. At once the story gains greatly in interest. The action has not changed in the slightest, but idea now makes the action a thing of horror. The girl, unable to bring herself to marry the old man, turns to the boy. It is shown that he is her half-brother, son of her errant mother. Once more the story is strengthened. The action is still unchanged. Idea alone has been added.

12. Punch, then, is not alone idea, but idea which greatly increases the dramatic or comedy value of the plot.

13. Punch is never action, nor does violent action add in the slightest degree to punch. You cannot strengthen a story with a knife fight or a pistol duel any more than you can build it up with a dynamite explosion. The result of the fight or the consequences of the explosion may add to punch through contribution to the idea, but the action

does not affect the story unless it contributes idea to the story. Your story can possess punch only in the degree that physical action is backed by knowledge. Only the mental appeal will give strength to your story.

14. Two men take each a pellet from a pill box. They may be dyspepsia tablets that one unfortunate is inducing the other to try. If you know that one of the tablets is sugar of milk and the other strychnine, then the commonplace situation gains punch. A man at the dinner table rises to carve the turkey. The scene is simple. If you know that he is going to thrust the knife into the breast of his wife and also kill the man who has wrecked his home, then the situation becomes tense with interest. Examples might be multiplied indefinitely. Always it will be found that the thought or the knowledge is what gives interest to the action.

15. Not only does the play as a whole require punch but individual scenes may be made stronger through use of the same device. Each "big" scene should possess its minor punch.

16. There was a time, back around 1910, when punch was not insisted upon. A story was dramatic if a faithless wife was confronted by her husband as she was about to elope. It was dramatic if one man shot up another. Gradually there came a demand for stronger stories. Some authors increased the violence, but the more clever put in the punch. These latter are still writing. And each time a story is made it requires a stronger punch to excuse its repetition. If you feel that a plot lacks punch, dissect it and look at it. Use the paragraphic form shown in Chapter IX, which gives you the best survey of the individual factors in your story.

17. In the story of Mary and Ben in the preceding chapter it has been shown how the punch was built into an originally flat play. We might take the same story and work it over with the punch suggested in paragraph eleven of this chapter. As a premise we make a change in our personages. Ben becomes a young minister, son of a wealthy father, with whom he has quarreled. He comes to take a country charge. He falls in love with Mary, whose light heartedness is supposed to be the result of the evil nature of her mother who went to the city and came back with a little child and no wedding ring. With this premise we work the factors as follows:

Ben, a young minister, has quarreled with his wealthy father because of his wish to enter the ministry.

He takes charge of a country parish.

He falls in love with Mary.

Gossips warn him that she is the natural child of an unknown father.

Despite this, Ben persists.

Mary, hearing this, and knowing that his heart is set upon his career, leaves the town that she may not interfere with his prospects.

Reading in his study Ben comes upon the Parable of the Lost Sheep.

- He accepts it as a message. Resigning his charge, he goes to the city to search for Mary.
- He finds her, but she thinks that by denying her love for him she can send him back to his pulpit.
- To further this scheme she pretends to an interest in the Junior Partner of the firm for which she works. She permits Ben to see her visit dance halls of questionable reputation.
- In one of these places Mary meets a man who is greatly attracted to her. As with the Junior Partner, she accepts his attentions.
- To his horror Ben discovers that his own father is his rival. The father, searching for new sensations and finding piquancy in the situation, proposes marriage as a last resort, intending that the marriage shall be a fictitious one.
- Mary tells Ben she is going to be married.
- Knowing his father's character, Ben seeks to dissuade her, but she is intent on what she supposes to be the salvation of his soul. She will not listen.
- Ben interrupts the false ceremony. There is a fight, during which Mary faints.
- In an endeavor to restore her, her dress is loosened. Around her neck is the locket that proves her to be the natural daughter of the old man and Ben's half sister.
- Shocked, the father suffers an apoplectic stroke.
- With his fortune Ben and Mary spend their lives in good works.

18. Punch in action, as has been shown, is the effect of action heightened by our knowledge of facts. We see a man standing on a cliff. If we know that the cliff has been mined for the purpose of destroying the man standing there, then the scene gains in punch and also in suspense, since we wait for the explosion we know must come. Suspense would not be possible did we not know the cliff to be mined, so in the last reduction it is punch and not suspense or rather punch aided by suspense that makes the scene of greater value than the mere fact of the man on the cliff.

19. Punch in action differs from punch in plot in that it may not so much relate to the plot as to the moment, though of course it must have some relation to the plot or it would not belong in the play. Photoplay differs from fiction in that in fiction facts may be withheld until their telling will create the strongest possible effect. In photoplay the necessity for presenting facts in chronological order or else in vision makes it necessary to give the facts as they occur if we are to avoid lengthy explanation in vision or leader as the play draws to a climax. As a rule it is best to have the audience fully conversant with the facts and to get your interest from the punch in those facts rather than from the later surprise. A surprise will come as a shock and so heighten the effect, but as a rule it is more effective to permit the spectator to derive interest from knowledge of fact.

20. If we see Smith dining with a handsome woman, not too young, whom we know is not his wife, we may chuckle at his indiscretion. If she is known to us to be Smith's mother-in-law, whom he has never

met, we get a continuous laugh, knowing that presently his sins will find him out. In this case surprise will bring one big laugh and some mildly interesting business. With the facts known there will be almost as hearty a laugh when Smith finds out and a lot of amusement in hitherto mildly interesting scenes. In one place we are shocked, along with Smith, at the discovery. In the other the big laugh that we have been waiting for has come. We have been anticipating it all along. It has put punch into the earlier scenes. If the author is skillful he can have both his anticipation and his surprise.

21. Given the story stated above and it is to be supposed that when Mrs. Smith and her mother compare notes things are going to be exceedingly warm for Smith. We see the two women together. We see Smith coming home. He enters the house. He kisses his wife. He turns and sees his companion of the lunch table. He wilts, but the mother remarks that she is glad to meet him at last, gives him the kiss she denied him in the restaurant and casually remarks that Mrs. Smith is looking well, but that she needs some new clothes. When Smith shucks some bills from his bank roll with trembling hands the situation is far more diverting than if he had been chased out of the house with a broom. More punch can be added to the situation if Smith took the strange woman to lunch to forget a row he had had that morning when Mrs. Smith asked for one new dress.

22. It is perfectly possible to write a mystery play so well planned that the spectator is kept in the dark until a couple of scenes and a leader at the close make it all plain. It is possible, but it is difficult. It is generally easier to advise the spectator of facts as they occur and obtain the surprise from a new but easily explained development at the close. An excellent example of surprise punch is found in one of Irvin S. Cobb's stories printed in *The Saturday Evening Post*. An old man appears in a town. Presently a woman comes, attended by two negro servants. Daily she dogs his footsteps, heavily veiled, silent, implacable as Fate herself. The old man explains that she is a woman whom he refused to marry. For years she has followed him from town to town. Years go by and the strain on the old man increases. At last he breaks. He suffers a stroke and death is close at hand. The woman unveils. His spurned love has long since died. It is her negro servant who has taken her place. The effect is almost a shock so suddenly does it come.

23. In the punch is found almost the entire reason for the sale of a play. Novelty of idea, strength of plot or other reason may be advanced, but they all reduce themselves to the fact that the story has a punch. There can be no novelty of idea without punch. There can be no strength of plot. It all resolves itself into an ultimate matter of punch. No matter how perfect the technique of form, no matter what the sensational effects may be, it is punch alone that can make a sale; *a plot with punch told in action with a punch*. Given even the idea alone with a punch and it will be bought, but the play without punch that finds a sale is used only for a stop gap. As a

matter of profit as well as a matter of pride study punch exhaustively. Look for it on the screen, study it in published synopses.

24. To the impatient it may seem that we are slow in coming to what is to them perhaps known as technique of the photoplay, but with this paragraph ends the discussion of the vital technique. The rest is a discussion of form, necessary if the plot is to be exposed to the greatest advantage, but the rest is to a very large extent mechanical and utterly useless unless one is able to evolve plots with punch. Before you pass on to the study of form, *master* plotting, for herein is to be found the secret of success.

(2.X:5 L:4) (3.LIV:12) (8.XXXIX:9) (13.IX:19) (15.XXXIII:
16) (16.IX:10) (17.XXIV:15) (19.XLIV:4 LVI:33)

1. . . .

PART III

PHOTOPLAY FORM

THE plot finds its most complete exposition in photoplay form. Form does not add value to the plot. It does permit the plot to be shown to its greatest advantage through the correct presentation to the director and players of the excellencies of the plot in a form readily understandable. Form makes no addition to plot. It does, however, make possible the selection and distinct indication of the most effective action, the most orderly arrangement of incident and the presentation of the clearest and most explanatory inserted matter. Photoplay form is akin to the alphabet. All persons may master the alphabet and most can form letters into words. It is only when the words, represented by the letters of form, have intelligent meaning that form has become worth while. Too many promising writers make form a fetich and not merely an aid.

CHAPTER XXVI

PHOTOPLAY FORM

PHOTOPLAY FORM is the form *in* (not *on*) which photoplays are best and most understandably expressed, but it is not uncommon for Editors to receive requests for "some photoplay forms" from those who suppose form to mean blank and not manner of arrangement. Nowhere in photoplay writing is there such a variety of choice as in the form in which a play may be written, and yet there is at bottom a fundamental code based upon common sense.

2. In the beginning each studio devised its own form of script. There was no common usage. A form had to be devised and, lacking a common source of information, each pioneer Editor devised his own style of script, not differing materially from the others, but rather an individual expression of a common need. In the course of time transfer from one studio to another has brought about a combination of systems, altering the original forms, but it will be many years before there is a generally accepted standard of form and there never will be one that must be adhered to to the exclusion of all else.

3. In the Appendix are given ten different styles of form for the information of the student. He is at liberty to adopt any one of these or to combine parts of two or more into a new form, if he pleases. Many books have been written giving the form and tradition of a single studio because the author has had experience only in one

particular establishment and preaches as a fixed rule the requirement of but a single Editorial office. If sub-title is employed in that office, the student is told he *must* use sub-title. If an unusual style of paper is used he is told he must use that size.

4. It is not the purpose of this volume to undertake the unification of style. So long as it looks neat and workmanlike and gives the proper suggestion of experience, the physical form of a motion picture play is the least important of all the phases of writing. The author is told that he must not use onion skin paper because no Editor countenances that flimsy stationery. He is told that manuscripts must be typewritten, because no Editor will read scripts in long hand. For the rest the most useful procedure or technical term is suggested, but not required. "Leader," for example, is here given the preference over "sub-title" or similar term, not because it is so much better, but because it is generally understood and easier to write. Neither leader nor sub-title is precisely the right term, but in default of a coined word that shall be exact, it is better to use leader than sub-title because it is one word against a hyphenated word and six letters against eight and a hyphen.

5. Photoplay form is merely the means to an end and not the end. It is of value in permitting you to get your story on paper briefly and in such a fashion that it will be understandable. If you do that, your precise arrangement of indentation and spacing, your choice of terms, the use or non-use of two colors of ink, are immaterial to the story, though the use of red and black ink on a script is regarded by most Editors as the sign of a novice who likes to play with his typewriter and who has not yet reached the point where his ideas keep him too busy to fool with such little things. The most adept use of technical terms will get you nowhere unless you employ form to express a story worth while, so study the fundamentals of form, practice them until practice has brought familiarity, then forget form and again give your attention to plots. Know instinctively what to do in writing and you will be free to write and will not have to interrupt the flow of thought while you decide whether this scene is a bust or a close-up.

6. If you rise in the night in your own bedroom you can walk over to the gas jet in the dark without mishap because you know the geography of your room. There may be a volcanic disturbance in the shape of a tack to create a diversion, but generally speaking you are on your own ground and can move about with confidence. In a strange apartment you must grope your way. It is the same with photoplay. Make form so familiar that it is no longer a problem and your mind is free to write idea. You cannot write literature in an unfamiliar tongue if you have to look up every third word in the dictionary. You may write correct sentences—almost painfully correct sentences—but they will lack vigor and inspiration. Learn thoroughly the language of photoplay form and then you can write with vigor and convincingness.

7. Form consists of a *title*, a *synopsis*, a *cast of characters*, a *scene plot* and the *plot of action*, all of which will be more fully treated as individual topics in succeeding chapters. The *plot of action*, which is more properly termed the scenario than the play as a whole, is supplied with *leaders* and other *inserts*.

8. The paper used is generally a heavy white stock eight and one-half by eleven inches. This is the standard typewriter paper or letter size. Some studios prefer the foolscap sheet, but the number asking this is few and you are never wrong if you use what all practical authors use. There is a size half an inch smaller each way. This is sometimes used, but it seems small—stingy, if you will—beside the other, and does not make so good an impression. A few use paper of standard width and but half the length, but this is not convenient and the oddity may mark you as a faddist. It is a descent from fiction writing where this size paper is supposed to be more easily handled.

9. Photoplays should not be bound either with permanent clips or by pasting or sewing, nor yet by punching the leaves and threading with a ribbon. The sheets should not be punched save where loose leaf binders are to be used, as will be explained presently, and there should be no marginal or other rulings. A single clip, preferably a brass Niagara, should be put on the upper left-hand corner. Nothing more should be used. Editors like to remove the clip and handle the sheets loose.

FARCE COMEDY DRAMA

Interior scenes in settings

Exterior scenes in locations

Scenes in all.

Figure 1. A manuscript backing

10. If desired a backing sheet may be used. This is the usual manuscript cover, which comes in size nine by fifteen inches. It is better to have this cut down to twelve and a half inches, turning over the sheet and the top. If desired, and you are firmly established, you can print up the backing sheets with your address and some such form as Figure 1.

11. Using this form you can get the three classifications as shown or in combination farce-comedy and comedy-drama. These will be all you will ever need. To the left of the lower lines you place the number of interior or exterior scenes and in the space provided tell the number of sets or locations. You add the interiors and exteriors to get the "scenes in all." You may also print your own card below or above, preferably the former. The title goes between the rules. Tell the printer to space so that when you get the line for the title you can keep on turning the carriage of the machine and always come on a line. If the spacing is done to picas this is a simple matter. Twelve point type should be used, as your typewriter is twelve point type.

12. It really is not necessary to incur printing bills. A sheet of regular paper front and back will suffice to preserve the script from soiling. These extra sheets take up the handling and can more easily be replaced when they become soiled. On the face sheet type the title and if wished a brief description such as

June and August

A comedy in 42 scenes, mostly outdoors, requiring
3 sets and 9 exterior locations.

By
John Jones
41144 Broadway
New York City

The title should start about a third of the way down and not at the very top of the sheet. The author's name and address may appear below or in the lower right-hand corner. On all other pages the author's name and address should appear in the upper left-hand corner as is shown in examples B and H or be printed there or in the centre as in examples A, C and D. A rubber stamp may be used.

13. On the synopsis, the first real sheet, there should appear in the upper right-hand corner either the words "Submitted at usual rates" or a price named as "Offered at \$50." This either means that you will take what the company offers or that you will not sell for less than the price named. Usual rates may mean anything from one dollar a reel upward. Generally it will mean from \$5 to \$50. Companies have a very unbusinesslike trick of ignoring the author until the production is started or even made, ignoring the fact that a script is not their property until they make purchase *and* the author has accepted either the offer or the check. If the author declines to accept the check, they loudly exclaim that they are being held up. For this reason it is better to accept whatever is offered on the first script, and if the price is too small to price all further submissions. If the com-

pany sends a small check where you have named a price, point out that you want the price stated.

14. Below the top of the sheet write the title of the story and underline it. This should be about three inches, or eighteen spaces from the top. You can get a neat double underline by slightly shifting the paper carriage. Below this you write the word "Synopsis" and give the synopsis. Sometimes in a short play you can get cast and scene plot on the same page. It is better, however, to move these last to the next page or to take a page each for scene plot and cast.

15. It is neat in effect to centre all title and other lines, such as "Cast," "Synopsis," and "Scene Plot." The simplest way to do this is to count the letters and spaces in between. Subtract these from the number of spaces your machine prints, divide by two and start on the next space. Generally the scale shows 75 spaces. "July and August" runs thirteen letters with two spaces, fifteen in all. This leaves you sixty spaces. Dividing by two gives thirty. You start on space thirty-one.

16. Do not run parts of a scene on two pages unless you have to. Directors like to have all of a scene on one page. Where it has to be done write as in A-5, Scene 27, or C.

17. Some writers and many directors now use loose leaf books for binders and write a scene to a page. This is handy, if you can give the director what he wants, but there is such a diversity in form at present that it is best not to offer your own loose leaf system, but to wait until you are asked to use these and are shown just what is wanted. In Examples I and J are shown two forms of loose leaf scripts.

18. Example I shows a form originated by Augustus Thomas and varied by others, the examples shown being this writer's own adaptation. The sheets in I-1 are cherry paper, merely to set them apart from the action. They are printed with the card and play number, and are used for synopsis, cast, scene and costume plots and any other matter not action or insert. The top figure in I-2 is on green paper and shows the cut-in leader and insert used in the scene shown on the lower sheet. The line is drawn through the word "Straight" to show that this is a cut-in and not a straight leader. The lower sheet is on white paper. The data shows that this setting was last used in scene 124 and will next be used in 131. The director can consult those scenes and learn the relation of the action. This is scene 128 and is played in the setting first used in scene 38. The three persons employed are Conyers, Fui-San and Mimosa, and they are wearing the costumes designated by the numbers in the proper column and explained on the costume plot. Since the scene is a setting, the word "Location" has been crossed off. The sheets are $7\frac{1}{4}$ by $4\frac{1}{2}$. Some pages, the Harrison script for instance, are much larger. The color scheme is used merely to distinguish the pages. Green leader sheets permit these to be picked out from the action sheets and by avoiding the cherry pages the director can turn to the first scene of action.

19. Example J is from Emmett Campbell Hall, a veteran among

playwrights. His differs from others in that he uses a sheet of standard size on which are printed four of these forms, separated by perforating rule that they may be torn apart after writing. This has the very decided advantage of requiring that the sheet and carbon be handled only once to each four pages. Mr. Hall's sheet, it will be seen, provides a space for the leader on the page. As showing the care with which he writes note the instructions that the candles have been burning for twenty minutes.

20. Mr. Hall formerly used a wide variety of colors and his script of "The Beloved Adventurer" is probably the first to be bound into a regular book by a bookbinder. It forms a book several inches thick and employs eight or ten contrasting colors to indicate various things. He has now dropped the color scheme.

21. In any case two sets are made up, one for the director and the other for his assistant. A five reel play of four hundred scenes will eat up more than a thousand sheets of paper, which is another reason why a loose leaf should not be made until it is asked for. *Carbons are always to be made of any script in no matter what fashion it may be prepared.* The studio is apt to ask for one and the author should retain one. If a script is lost in the mails or the studio then the carbon can be copied. In making carbon copies it will sometimes be found that the sheets will not go into the paper carriage of the typewriter without mussing or slipping. Take a sheet of paper and tear it in two. Fold one half of this the long way and slip over the top of the "pack" of paper and carbons and you will have no further trouble. The pack is run through the machine to the point where this paper guide can be removed and then turned back.

22. In this and in the chapter on Tools of the Trade it may seem that the subject is gone into with unnecessary detail. This is because the writer knows how important first impressions are to Editors. The plot is the thing, but the plot that is most attractively prepared will appeal most strongly to the Editor, who cannot help being influenced, if only unconsciously, by the feel of the paper, the neat appearance of the writing, the arrangement of the page, the general air of knowingness. This does not mean that he will be swayed by hand painted covers and the other devices of the very raw novice. He wants the script workmanlike because he will believe that the man who can put out a script in exactly the proper form knows more about the work than the writer who uses the wrong sort of paper, who does fancy ruling, offers too much unessential explanation or who violates any of the rules of experience and good sense. Doing things just right will not only help the sale of a script, but it will help to bring a better price, as well. If for no other reason than this, it will pay the author to take pains.

(4.XXXVII:3 LXIV:1) (5.LXX:15) (6.XXXIII.2) (9.II:6)
(13.LXV:42) (21.V:4) (22.II:6).

CHAPTER XXVII .

TITLES

CLEVER titles do not make plots any better, but they most assuredly help to advertise them. If you were an Editor and in opening the mail came across a story entitled "The True Story of How Lizzie Smith Married Henry Brown," the probabilities are that you would send it back unread. No one who knows how to write a story would employ such a title. You would know that to read the story would merely be to waste your employer's time. On the other hand a snappy title such as "Father Said They Shouldn't" will engage your interest. What was it that father said they should not do, and why did he say it? You will show the same curiosity that presently others will feel if the story is put out.

2. A good title gets the Editor into a receptive frame of mind. A poor title has the reverse effect. More than this, he knows that a good title will help the exhibitor to sell the play to some people who might not visit the performance were the titles unattractive. You have only to stand before the lobby of some downtown picture theatre to watch the people look at the posters and either enter or pass on. Either the titles have attracted or have failed to rouse interest.

3. It follows that the best title you can think of is none too good, so do not rest content with the first one that comes to mind. Think of a dozen or more and select the best one. You may offer a choice of two titles, but good titles are valuable and it will pay to keep them for yourself. Keep a pack of cards and write down all the good titles that come to you. Carry cards in your pocket and jot down ideas whenever they come to you or wherever you may see a suggestion. In no time at all you will have some good titles and a lot of poor ones. Spend your rainy Sundays trying to improve the poor ones. When you have used a title, throw out the card.

4. The essential is that the title should be brief. There are two reasons for this. A long title will not look well on the billboards. It cannot be displayed to the same advantage here or in the newspaper advertising. A second reason is that a short title is more easily remembered. It can be taken in at a glance and almost subconsciously, yet in the evening you will remember that Tricky Tess is at the Bijou and you will want to go down and see it. The Editor knows, and knows that the exhibitor knows, that the short, snappy title will make for business. He knows that it is part of his duty to give the exhibitor something that he can sell to advantage that he may be able to pay his exchange bills. The exchange pays the manufacturer, who pays the Editor, who pays you. Your interest is doubly personal.

5. The title should be applicable to the story. If you lead a patron to expect one thing and give him something else, then you have disappointed him. What you have given him may be better than what you

promised, but that does not help any. If he goes in to see "Her Mother's Sin," he goes in to see a drama. If he finds it is a farce comedy he is apt not to like it, no matter how funny it is. He expected drama. He is disappointed. He is sore. For this and other reasons you should not write your title on your script until you know precisely what the story is. You may start to write a story about a man and a girl and wind up with a story about the man's mother. Wait until you see what you have before you affix a label and then apply the correct label.

6. The title must not be self-explanatory. It must be applicable to the story as stated in the last paragraph, but it must not explain what the story is. "It Ended in a Kiss" might be used for a little story of a lover's quarrel, but it will not interest greatly, because the climax is anticipated. "Their First Quarrel" would offer the same defect. "Both Were Right" would be less revealing and perhaps more interesting, particularly if the denouement showed that both were wrong. Just the moment the spectator knows what the ending will be, he loses interest in the story. There is no more suspense, and so nothing to look forward to but the next story. If you see a story entitled "Baby's Boots" you have only to see the start of the story to know whether it is the one where the child brings its parents or grandparents together or whether it is another workover of "Drifted Apart."

7. A title should rouse curiosity. It should not only suggest a good play, but it should make the reader wonder what it is about to the point where he goes inside to find out. This does not mean a succession of plays from "Why Smith Left Home" to "Who Killed Cock Robin?" There the invitation to become curious is too open and brazen to have a proper effect. It must be a more subtle appeal. "He Married His Daughter" would arouse curiosity, for how can a man marry his daughter? It is simple enough if he happens to be a minister and the daughter is still unmarried. Perhaps he swore that he never would and she and her sweetheart changed clothes and so tricked him.

8. Sentiment may be made the appeal rather than curiosity, if desired, but sentiment should not be the flamboyant three-cheers-for-the-red-white-and-blue type, but something less obvious. One company put out a story with the title of "The Irish Boy" to be released upon St. Patrick's day. One exchange alone bought six extra prints because it had to have first run prints if they were to be timely. It was merely the story of a young Irish emigrant who got ahead. There were no shamrocks or evictions or anything of that sort, but the story pleased and the title made good. The Boucicault plays also served to make money for more than one Seventeenth of March because the titles appealed.

9. A title must be fluent—easily spoken. This does not mean that it must be alliterative. A title twisted to gain alliteration will not appeal—and may be viewed with suspicion. If the title is naturally alliterative, well and good. If it is fluent without being alliterative, it is

sufficient. *Roses for Rosie* is more a play on words than an effort to be alliterative. Henry's *Horrid Honeymoon* very clearly is an effort to get three words commencing with the same letter, for *horrid* is here used in an improper sense.

10. Not all fluent titles are alliterative and some are more pleasing to the ear than the alliterative style. A fluent title is one that comes easily from the tongue. "*As Twilight Falls*" is more fluent than "*As Dark Draws Down*," because "dark" is a harsh word and also because the accent is a succession of descents where the former gives an alternation of the rising and falling accent. Generally an even distribution of rising and falling accent is the best. "*He Fought for His Country*" is hardly fluent. "*On War's Grim Fields*," to the contrary, falls smoothly; more smoothly than "*On Battle's Grim Fields*," for here the accent does not lie as evenly. If you have studied rhetoric you are familiar with these facts. If you have not made this study, any book or chapter dealing with the writing of poetry will suffice or you can look it up in the encyclopedia. If you do not care to go to this trouble, then pronounce your leaders aloud and see how they sound or get some friend to read them to you. You will soon learn to select the ones that sound the best.

11. Trite titles should be avoided. Into this class fall such as "*The Greater Love*," "*And a Little Child Shall Lead Them*," "*'Til Death Doth Part*," "*At the Eleventh Hour*," and similar often used titles. You would do well to avoid any of the old titles whether they have been used much or not. Avoid, too, timeworn parts of titles such as "*The Return of ———*," "*The Reformation of ———*," or "*The Downfall of ———*," as well as their inversions, "*John Smith's Return*," "*James Jones' Reformation*," or "*Henry Brown's Downfall*."

12. In the same classification are "*A Mother's Sacrifice*," "*For Her Sake*," or his or for the sake of the girl or the child or his mother or father or sister or brother or any other relation by blood or marriage tie or mere acquaintance. They have all been done and generally more than once.

13. "*The Story of ———*" and "*The History of ———*" suggest biography and not interest. Also they suggest a woeful lack of common sense and imagination.

14. Titles beginning with the articles, "A," "An" and "The" are taboo by many companies, partly because they aid laziness and partly because they are not suggestive. They can be eliminated. They should be. A title beginning with "The" is seldom as attractive as one that does not. The reason for this is that a smart title is unusual. An article leads to the usual. "*The Dancer*" or "*The Turkish Dancer*" does not have the punch of Walter Mair's "*Little Egypt Malone*." To the articles add also "in," "when," "by," and "for." Fully eighty percent of the uninteresting titles will be found to lie in one of the above classes.

15. Such a sweeping disqualification may seem greatly to limit the list of available titles, but it does not. It merely requires the stu-

dent to get good ones. If you are denied what is apt to lead to triteness you will have to hustle to get live titles, and if you get good ones you are more apt to sell.

16. Avoid the suggestion of preachment or controversy in your titles. Even if you are writing a propaganda story, because you have been asked to, it really is not necessary to advertise the fact. Do not call a story on tuberculosis "The Great White Plague." "When Faith Grew Faint" will suggest an interesting story, but when faith grew faint then the heroine was led to proper treatment and a return of health.

17. Where possible suggest the style of the story in the title, as advised in paragraph five. There is no mistaking "Dough and Dynamite" for a drama, but "Love in Armor" suggests a romantic drama and not a comedian in a suit of tin clothes. Comedy titles should be in themselves humorous, if possible. Get them started on the laugh before the picture shows on the screen and you have that much start. This cannot always be done, but if it can be done without giving the effect of straining for a laugh, it is certain to be of good effect.

18. The use of titles of copyrighted plays should be avoided, not because the copyright protects the title, but because there is common law to be dealt with as well. Lubin produced a farce done from an earlier story called "Will Willie Win?" The staff adapter called it "A Fool There Was." Its use was prohibited and damages collected because this latter title was already in use to designate a drama based upon the Kipling poem. In the same way "The House of a Thousand Scandals" was held to be an attempt to trade upon "The House of a Thousand Candles," and it was ordered to be abandoned. On the other hand "The Victoria Cross" was used as the title of a melodrama presented some years ago with no very great success. When Bannister Merwin used the same title for a war drama it was sought to enjoin the use of the film title, but no injunction issued because it was held that the London Film Company was making no effort to trade on the reputation of the almost forgotten stage play and that the latter property could suffer no injury. It is better not to use any old title, but if you do by chance use a title already employed, you need not concern yourself. Most companies maintain some form of record for released titles. If they do not, it is because they do not care and if they do not care you can spare yourself any mental anguish on their account.

19. As has been shown, a bright and suggestive title may be the start of a play as a whole, which is another reason why you should try to gain proficiency in title writing. Use the card system as suggested, and make title work a daily exercise. Look for titles in street car advertisements, in magazines, in the newspapers, in shop windows and wherever your glance may fall. You never can tell where your title will come from, and you are as apt to find it in the bottom of your cocktail glass as on top of a twenty-story building. Wherever you see it note it down and see what it suggests to you. Read the titles in the

trade papers, not to paraphrase or copy, but to keep in touch with ideas. You may even use the idea machine already spoken of. Now and then a good title can be gained from this where a story may not immediately suggest itself.

(2.XXIII:28) (6.XXIII:28 XLVIII:9) (10.XXXVII:34) (16.LIII:8) (18.LXVIII:28) (19.XXIII:28).

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SYNOPSIS

IF the title is the first chance at the Editor, the synopsis is your second and last chance. Your photoplay does not sell on its merits as a script of action, but on the title and synopsis. If these please, the action is read with a view to purchase. If you cannot get interest with the synopsis, the action will not be read.

2. This may, and probably does, seem unfair to the writer who knows only one side of the business. It may seem idiotic to ask for scripts and then refuse to read them and to let a good plot of action go by because the synopsis does not please, but the practice has good reason. It so seldom happens that the untrained novice can write a good script that it is accepted as fact that if the synopsis does not show merit, the script of action will not. There may be exceptions, but the writer has never met any nor does he know of anyone who has. If a person is not enough of a writer to be able to show in the synopsis that his story has good points, it is almost impossible that the story should show merit in action.

3. It is a confusing business where everything *but* the story seems to be considered in the purchase of a story, yet no more so than the fancy grocery trade where goods are bought on label and packing rather than by sample. Your title is your brand name, the synopsis the descriptive label and the preparation of the script the packing. The Editor is more cautious than the grocery buyer in that, if the label and package please, he opens the package and examines the contents before purchase. Your aim should be to interest him to the point where he will make this examination.

4. When you take up a daily paper you do not start with the first column of the first page and read straight through to the last column of the back page. There will be much in the paper that does not interest you. You know that the matters of the greatest importance are put on the front page. You look the front page over first. You do not read the items but the headlines to get information as to the character of a paragraph. If the headline engages your interest, then you read the smaller type for the full details. If you are not particularly interested, you pass on to the next item with such information about

other paragraphs as the headlines have given you. You can tell at a glance if you want to gain further knowledge of a certain bit of news and you do not waste your time reading through long paragraphs just to see if you should have read them or not. You read the headline and stand or fall on your decision.

5. In precisely the same fashion the Editor or his assistant regards your synopsis. It is the headline of your story. It gives the leading facts. If these facts interest, then the story is read in full for complete details, but an Editor looking for society drama and nothing else would no more think of reading a slapstick farce than you would think of reading the news of the stock market when you wanted the sporting page. The Editor picks up a story. He starts off. "John Smith, a young trapper." He stops reading. He is not interested in your trappers. He wants people in dress clothes. Perhaps another synopsis is more promising. He reads on until he either reaches the end of the paragraph or until he sees clearly that the story has nothing new to offer. He does not waste any more time than he has to, but he will give all the necessary time to a script that gives promise. It is your business to present your story in a few words so attractively that the editor will decide to read the action. You are not telling the story, but merely telling what the story is about. If you make the headline interesting, you will have your story read.

6. There is an unwritten law that a synopsis must not exceed 250 words to the reel. This is merely because some companies copy the synopses so that each director may be supplied with a copy to study, and the overlong synopsis makes too much work for a limited staff of stenographers. Often a story will come well within the limit and it may be that you will not need more than half your allowance. It is generally a good plan to come close to it, however, as these synopses are sometimes sent to the press room for the benefit of the advertising men. More than one story has sold on a synopsis of a line or two, but it is better to run at least two hundred words to the reel. It is not always possible to tell the full story or scenario in this limitation, but if you will only keep in mind the fact that you are not telling the story but telling *about* the story, then you will have little or no trouble.

7. It is almost fatal to tell your story, for if your story is properly written you will increase the narrative value as you progress. The story starts and works up to a climax. The Editor starts to read down. Get him the moment he starts to read. Put your best foot foremost in presenting your most attractive fact. This is one of the tricks of the fiction writer who can present a startling fact and then go back and explain it. You cannot do this in action. You can in your synopsis. Do not start off, for instance, by saying:

Henry Prichard is the only son of wealthy parents—

What if he is? He is not the only one. The Editor has read of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of only sons of wealthy parents. Usually

they get drunk and go to the bad or they marry beneath them. The Editor also knows of men by the regiment who are poor but honest or poor but ambitious. His pulse will not beat faster just because he has found another. He brushes a score of only sons off his desk every morning when he dusts and poor but honest young men are exceeded in number only by their sisters, the poor but virtuous and very beautiful young girls. You must do better than that if you would save the Editor from saying some dreadfully naughty words. Reach out and hit him squarely between the eyes. Use something like this for a boxing glove:

Standing before the open safe, a package of thousand-dollar bills in one hand and a smoking revolver in the other, Henry Prichard cannot explain that the dead woman at his feet is his father's mistress and that his father killed her as she sought to take from him the money that she considered the rightful price of her shame. He knows that should his mother learn of her husband's unfaithfulness, she would suffer a stroke of heart disease which probably would be fatal.

If you will start in with a paragraph like that about a story that will back up this situation, you'll either sell or be told that they are not making that kind of story. You'll not be a nonentity and a nuisance. The Editor may even take the trouble to tell you what he does want. He'll forgive you for not saying that Henry is the son of wealthy parents. They must be or they would not have a safe filled with thousand-dollar bills.

8. To know what the strong point of your story is, you wait until the action is completed and write the synopsis then. Since your action commences on a new page, this is a simple matter. Write your action and then turn back and write the title and synopsis. Now you know just what you actually have in your story and not merely what you planned to have and you can talk intelligently about it.

9. It is to be supposed that you work from a well defined plan, but you do not have to rigidly adhere to that working scenario and so you cannot be certain that you will have this or that incident or even line of action in the finished play. The script that offers a lot in the synopsis that is not in the play will not hold interest.

10. Until you have gained experience and certainty, it is better to make a rough draft of the synopsis on practice paper and work on this until you are certain that it is in form to be copied on your better stock. In doing this you can expand or condense as required. Do not try to follow your story exactly. Do not, for example, start in like this:

Mary, the daughter of Farmer Smith, is first seen coming down the lane driving home the cows. She is joined by Jim Jones, whose father's farm is next to hers. Then we see Smith meet them and drive Jim away, telling him never to let him see him talking to Marv again. So Jim speaks cross to Smith and goes away, leaving Mary crying. She goes home with her father.

This sort of thing might be kept up for many pages and there have been instances wherein the synopsis has been several pages longer than

the plot of action. Naturally no editor will wade through five or six pages of such drivel, yet it is no worse than doing the same thing on a smaller scale. Either instance will suggest inexperience (and therefore incompetence) to the Editor, who cannot spare the time for light reading in office hours, and will consequently pass the script over to the office boy for return. Some persons will not trust a medical graduate until he has grown a beard. The idea is the same.

11. Getting the punch in the opening: the editorial attention is far more apt to be held with a striking statement than with the time-worn announcements that Mary and Jim are neighbors and that her father objects to Jim. Start it off and run on in this fashion:

Swearing that he will never look upon her face again if his daughter marries Jim Jones, Henry Smith is forced to keep his vow because of blindness. The stroke is accepted by him as a punishment of God, but the affliction comes as a message, also, and he seeks the girl and the little grandson whose face he will never see.

The probabilities are that you could sell your story on no more detail than this, because the story is told in these sixty-one words. The big idea is the man who is compelled through blindness to keep his vow. Otherwise the story is little different from scores of others of the same type. But you will need to write more than this for the benefit of the press man, so do the story in detail.

Swearing that he will never look upon his daughter's face again if she marries against his will, blindness forces Ethan Dodge to keep his oath, but convinces him of the error of his ways. Ethan is a quarrelsome old farmer who has a dispute with Joel Pender, his neighbor. Their children, Mary Dodge and Harry Pender, are in love. Ethan discovers the state of affairs and orders Mary never to speak to Harry again. She tries to obey the command, but *love is stronger than filial affection* and Ethan comes upon the two and *with a horrible imprecation* he swears that if she marries Harry he will never look upon her face again. *In spite of the threat* the young people do get married but *Ethan refuses to see Mary* and Harry moves with her to the city. When the baby comes Mary makes an appeal to Ethan for forgiveness but *he writes a letter in which* he reminds her of his vow. *He gives this to the rural carrier and returns to the house.* Entering, he falls, striking his head against a chair. When he recovers consciousness he *discovers that he is blind.* Night has come down and Ethan fears to go in search of aid *in the dark, though all the world is now dark to him, and he sits in the living room with no companion but his thoughts and the clock strikes the hours that seem ages long.* To him comes a knowledge of his actions as they really are, and in the agony of those dark hours his soul is purged of hate. With the dawn Ethan gropes his way to the fence beside the road to ask the help of the first passerby. This happens to be Joel, who carries him to his own home. Later Ethan *goes to the city to ask forgiveness of Mary and Harry and to take into his arms and press against his hungry heart the tiny form of the little grandson he will never see.*

This runs about 80 words over the limit, but if you will delete the words set in italics you will find you are just within the limit. In the last few lines, however, you change the tense of "ask" and "press."

12. In the same way any synopsis can be got down to length by taking out parts or rewriting them to get the same expression in fewer words. Writing to approximate length is something that every newspaper man soon learns. He can give the bare facts or elaborate as the city editor requires, and after this elaboration the story can again be cut down by the copy reader. It requires no especial gift, but is more in the nature of a trick that anyone can master if he will try. It is absurd to say that you cannot get your synopsis down to any set length. You can unless you are too lazy.

13. If you will remember that your story has—or should have—one great essential point that will sell it, and if you will put this one fact forward then the rest does not matter so long as it is well written and informative. All that you require of the synopsis is to induce the Editor to read the full script. If you can make the synopsis attractive and the story is in line with what he wants, he will read the action, and read it carefully, but he cannot read the action of all stories that come in, and a note to the effect that the story is such that it cannot be told in synopsis and that the full action must be read will be worse than neither synopsis nor note. Absence of anything may argue only ignorance. The note shows stupidity. The Editor knows that the story *can* be told in synopsis if there is anything to tell, and a note such as this will merely advertise your incompetence. It is matched by the occasional suggestion that the story needs no synopsis "as the action is so clear." The synopsis is not to explain what the action does not tell. It is to explain what the action does tell.

14. Sometimes it is a good plan to start your synopsis with a claim for novelty and the fact upon which you base this claim as a story that might start in with:

This is a new treatment of an old theme. The hero rescues the daughter of Mammon from a watery grave, but he doesn't marry her. Not a bit of it! To the contrary she offers him her heart and millions and he prefers Mamie Lee.

This would be more apt to attract attention than a story of this in regular synopsis form. The Editor is looking for novelty. Tell him you have it. Prove it to him. The rest is in the lap of the gods.

15. It will be noted that these examples are all in the present tense. He "does" a thing. There is no objection to writing the synopsis in the past tense, but since the action must be written in the present tense, because it is something that is being done at the moment, the adoption of the same tense is to be preferred. To some slight degree it may also make the story appear more up to date. "John did" is less recent than "John does."

16. In the physical appearance of the synopsis there is less diversity of opinion than on other points. It is for this reason that but a single example of synopsis is given in the Appendix at A-1. The only question is one of spacing. Some editors prefer double spacing and others single spacing. Double spacing is more easily read, yet the

majority seem to favor single spacing throughout, and for that reason the example shows single spacing. Where double spacing is asked for, or is preferred by the writer, it is only necessary to adjust the carriage of the typewriter and use a second sheet of paper if necessary.

17. One point to be noted is that while the cast immediately follows the synopsis, the cast should not be looked to for identification of the characters in the synopsis. Say "John Hicks, a farmer," rather than "John," and say "Mary, his daughter," and not merely "Mary." The cast is for the use of the director and his assistant. The Editor is in too much of a hurry to look over the cast.

18. Some companies advertise for "synopsis' only," and it is advised that authors submit multiple reel stories in synopsis form first. In reality "synopsis only" does not mean so much a synopsis as a scenario, but if the latter word should be used, many would suppose that the entire script (wrongly called by that name) was what was wanted. Therefore a synopsis is asked for. Here you are expected to write more fully, for in the synopsis you give all that you tell of the story. Synopses alone are asked for because the company making the request reconstructs all stories and generally works from the synopsis even where the action accompanies the synopsis. As a rule about a third as much is paid for a synopsis as for the full script, the argument being that the rest must go to the staff man who writes the continuity of action. Sometimes only a couple of dollars will be offered, though ten dollars would be little enough to give for the smallest sort of a suggestion that will lead to a story.

19. In the case of four and five reel stories it is better to offer in synopsis form and ask to be permitted to make the continuity yourself, if you are at all well known. It is to be presumed that you know more about the story than anyone else, but the studio staffs take the position that you do not and cannot understand what they want. When their employers disabuse their minds of this idea and insist upon scripts that will give a wider variety of thought in action as well as plot there will be better stories on the screen than now.

20. In the shorter lengths, one and two reels, the synopsis only encourages laziness and insufficient study. The author is not an author at all, but rather a literary tipster and cannot always make a practical plot, for much will seem good on paper that will not work in film. Before attempting to offer synopses, the author should first master actual writing, so that he can back his tips with knowledge. It is not believed that this advice will be heeded by many, but check chasing is not authorship and check chasers do not want to be authors. They want to be plutocrats. You cannot even write a decent synopsis until you learn to write first-class action, and the demand for synopses alone must inevitably give way to a period when plays with personality and individuality will be the sole demand.

(4.XXXVI:19) (5.II:7 I XV:26) (6.II:11 LVIII:24) (7.XLIII:9)
 (14.XLVIII:36) (15.XXXI:17) (16.LVIII:24) (17.XXIX:1)
 (18.XXIV:33) (19.LVIII:25).

CHAPTER XXIX

THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

CASTS of characters perform the double service of telling the director who will be required for your play and who they are. From your cast, if your work is properly done, he will select the players for the parts and know how many persons to add to his individual stock company from the general company. The cast is not unlike that you will find in the program of a theatre except that you are writing it to be seen by the director alone and can add facts about the physical appearance of the players, if you wish, that would be out of place in a program intended for the public. This does not mean that each personage must be minutely described as to physical appearance, but that now and then, as will presently be explained, you add a fact or two for the enlightenment of the person who is assigning players to the parts.

2. Properly the cast is in three parts. These are the leads, or the persons who carry a majority of the action, the secondary personages who appear in a number of scenes and the extra parts and bits. From this triple cast the director can tell at a glance the number of good actors he needs, the number of the fairly good and the extras. For this reason you must list even the letter carrier who brings the mail or the policeman who crosses the stage in a single scene. For the better people the regular company will be used. The other parts will be jobbed.

3. The main cast comprises those who hold up the action. All who have real acting to do are used in this division. It should be written.

CAST

Principals:

Jack Hartley, a young broker.
Henry Newcomb, his partner, an older man.
Jessie, Newcomb's daughter, Jack's sweetheart.
Mrs. Newcomb.
Peter Hines, Jack's rival, another broker.
May, Jessie's chum.

These are the people who carry the story. They are in so many scenes they will be needed constantly during the time the play is being staged. To all practical purposes they are the only real personages. Many of the others are little more important than the safe in Jack's office or the buffet in Newcomb's dining room.

4. The second section of the cast lists these less important players and if they appear in but a few scenes they are marked as appearing only in those scenes as shown here:

Bits:

Maid at Newcomb's.

Butler at same, 10/16/33/52.

Two clerks in office, 19/23.

Policeman in 23.

Two men and two women in 33 (evening dress).

Lawyer in 19.

Bits are unimportant parts, requiring little work, though this work may be important enough to require good acting. The use of scene numbers is to show how the parts may be doubled, if necessary. The director, looking over the list, can see that he can use the two clerks in the office for the two men guests in Scene 33, since this is not the office but the home of the Newcombs'. He will have them change their appearance and they probably will not be recognized.

5. In the third section you list the "mobs," who may be any persons the director can get. These are not important save in the mass. He puts in two or three actors to mingle with the crowd and keep the action going, and the rest can be cheap people. This cast is written in bulk as:

Extras:

About twenty men and women for mob in front of offices in 18/20/24/25.

A few people on at the end of 33 (evening dress).

You should tell "about" the number of persons required to give the director some idea of the number, but in a smaller division, as in bits, you are more definite and state precisely the number you need if the number is in any way important. The cast is written as a whole, but in three divisions, the three words "Principals," "Bits," and "Extras" being underscored. In writing the cast, start the names at the ten space and these three words at the five space. This will give what is known as a reverse indentation, letting the three important terms extend into the margin.

6. If you wish to indicate some physical or other peculiarity that is constant through the play you write this into the cast. You do not say that the heroine is a blonde, five feet four and slender. It does not matter what she is, so long as she can look and play the part. You do give the peculiarities when they are essential to the play. You may write

Jim Brown, a clerk. Walks with a slight limp. Lame in left foot.
 Agatha, an old maid. Has slight mustache and a mole on her chin.
 Betty, a girl about ten or twelve. She should be a blonde if Gladys is dark or dark if Gladys is fair.

John Buston, a prosperous business man. After Scene 23 he is seedy and looks ten years older.

You do not have Brown limp through the play if his limping does not get an effect. You do not put it in merely to make interest. You put it in if the villain disguises himself as Brown. Then you write at the proper scene that "Hawkins enters, disguised as Brown," and the actor who plays Hawkins is told to limp. He can limp on either foot unless he is unmasked because he forgets and limps on his right instead of his left foot. Then in the cast you tell that Brown should limp on his left foot, or he may forget and use the right, also. It is the same with Agatha. The mole is put on that the comedian may touch it and provide the basis for a cut-in flash that reads "I'll press the button, you do the rest," and the mustache gets a laugh when she receives a safety razor from an envious friend. The description is not essential if it is not used for an effect. Otherwise simply say she is an old maid and leave it to the actress who plays the part. It is required that Betty shall be the opposite of Gladys. You do not say that she is dark or fair. Gladys is a more important character and has the choice of complexions. Betty must take the one that is left. In the Appendix will be found a practical application of this cast work in A-1.

7. Permanent mannerisms are described in the cast. Temporary mannerisms and disguises are described in the scenes in which they are used, as when Hawkins is said to appear as Brown in the preceding paragraph. If the disguise is continued the succeeding scenes will show that he is still in disguise by saying "Hawkins on (as Brown)," or "Hawkins enters (in disguise)."

8. If he assumes a disguise not representing some other character, he does not cease to be Hawkins. You do not say that "Tramp enters," if this is the disguise that Hawkins assumes. You say that "Hawkins enters (as tramp)" because he is still Hawkins and not a tramp and the director cannot hire a special assistant to keep track of your vagaries of identification. If your hero is Jack Brown do not call him Jack, John and Brown. Call him any one of the three but hold to just one name for him. If you call him by two or more names you will confuse both the Editor and the director. Make him Jack or John, but not both, even though Jack means John. In the same way in writing of Newcomb, who is Mary's father, do not call him "Newcomb" or "Mr. Newcomb" for half the play and then change to "Father" because he happens to be playing a scene with Mary. He is her father, but you started off by calling him by name. Hold to that identification.

9. In making up your cast be careful in selecting your names. Do not invent fanciful names for your heroines or use names too long or out of keeping. Keep away from Gwendolyn and Yvonne and Juanita and Mercedes. For one thing if you use names like those and have to write them a couple of hundred times in the plot of action you will not care for them yourself. Another reason will be that the Editor will find them less easy to trace and a third reason will be that the audience will find them difficult to remember. You have three good rea-

sons against and only one reason in favor of such identification and that the names sound pretty is no reason whatever.

10. Call your heroines by short but pleasant names as Amy, Bess, Betty, Marie. Get something that suggests intimacy. Not even an Editor can feel on good terms with a heroine who is called Miss Smith all through the script, nor will Tryphosa suggest a lovable, cuddlesome sort of young woman. Get a good name for her and call her by her first name.

11. For your hero, you will need a strong yet musical name. It is general to use a diminutive, if there is one. Jack suggests a dashing young man. John calls to mind an older and more sedate man, the "Jack" grown up. In the same way Jim sounds more youthful than James, and Harry more sprightly than Henry.

12. For your antagonists pick out names that have a slightly harsh sound. For a man it is better to use his last name and pick out an unmusical one. For a woman you are more likely to use the given name, but be certain that it is less musical than that of the heroine.

13. In general we call young people by their first names and their elders and servants by surnames. Servants scarcely need names if they do not figure importantly, but may be designated as the butler, the maid or the cook. Where these names are used in the script, you drop the article and instead of saying that "the butler enters," you use a capital and say: "Butler enters." It is the same way with others who do not figure in many scenes. If a detective is used, you call him a Detective, and not Hawkshaw. If he is one of the leads, however, it is better to use a name. Where one clerk is employed in an office scene, you say he is the clerk. If there are two and you want to differentiate them you call one the bookkeeper and the other the cashier rather than Jones and Smith. This makes it easier to follow the story in the script than if you had a given name and a surname for every character, no matter how slight their importance. Use names only for the few who possess real distinction and who require a really individual tag. Do not talk about Higginson when Higginson is merely the butler who brings on telegrams and wine glasses. No one in the studio will care what his name is and it will not show on the screen.

14. Much can be done with the skillful use of names in the script. Offering a story in which hero and heroine are called Gwendolyn and Pete is like trying to sell a green hat with pink ribbons. You might do it, but the color scheme would not help much. Get the names to match the characters precisely as you match the action to the story. The Editor will appreciate it if no one else does and his is the appreciation that means much to you.

15. But above all other things, please understand that appropriate names does not mean calling a lawyer "Skinnem," a detective "Katchem" or a physician "Killim." It may be tremendously clever, but it is not apt to impress the Editor that way.

16. For preliminary work it may help the student to employ a scheme devised by Lloyd Lonergan, of the Thanhouser Company. He has set

names for the leading characters and they are always the same. For example, if he calls a villain Pete, every time a director sees a character with that name, he knows him for the protagonist. If he sees Jack, he knows he is the hero. The names are changed if they are to be printed on the film, but are not changed until then. The outside author cannot follow this scheme into his submitted story, but it will avoid confusion in the preliminary work.

17. The best way to keep track of the characters is to write the cast as you go along on a slip of paper beside the machine. Then mark each appearance of the lesser cast by scene number and you are ready to write your cast sheet. The cast appears next after the synopsis, but it is written after the action is developed.

18. Make collections of names; lodge lists, a large telephone directory or sectional directory. Never use a complete name if it is at all unusual. For foreign names start a list of your own made up from newspaper clippings and other sources.

(1.V:4 XVI:3 XXVIII:17) (3.XX:5) (6.XVI:5) (7.XVI:3)
(18.XXXVI:13).

CHAPTER XXX

SCENES AND SCENE PLOTS

SCENE has a double meaning in photoplay as on the stage. A scene may be the action of the players in a certain stage setting or location or a scene may be the stage setting in which the scene in the above sense of the term is played. For the purpose of this chapter only the latter sense will be considered; the action scene being dealt with in the chapter following.

2. As has been shown in Chapters III and IV scenes are of two types, those made in the studio or in a broad sense *interior* scenes and those made away from the studio or *exterior* scenes. An interior scene is any scene that is *supposed* to take place in an inclosed space. It may be made out of doors on an open-air stage, but if it is desired that the spectator shall suppose the place shown to be a room, then it is an interior scene, no matter where it may be made. In the same manner the scene supposed to be taken out of doors is an exterior, even though, for reasons of convenience, it may be made under glass or in an electric studio. As a general thing roof and sides are supposed to be essential to an interior scene. A scene under a shed or on a piazza will be an exterior, though one has a roof and perhaps three sides, and the other has a roof. To be more definite, an interior is supposed to take place in a completely inclosed apartment. The author designates his scenes as being either interior or exterior scenes. He does not say that an interior should be made out of doors or that an exterior should be

a studio set. With this he has absolutely nothing to do. His sole duty is to indicate to the director what should be made. How it is to be made is the director's business and not the concern of the author.

3. Interior scenes are generally referred to as sets or settings, because they are to be set or built up. The word is almost as confusing as scene, for the stage hands set the set and in the scene they have set the players act the scene. To set the stage, the flat pieces of scenery are assembled in accordance with the sketch given the stage carpenter. This gives the outline of the floor plan, drawn to rough or exact scale as may be the studio practice. With the flat pieces of scenery the stage hands get this outline, which usually shows two sides of a room. Door and window openings are backed up by scenery to show exteriors for windows, and other apartments for doorways. Sometimes a set will show a vista through two or more rooms.

4. Once the stage is set with the scenery, then it must be dressed. The rug or carpet or painted floor cloth to suggest a marble tile or parquet is put down, furniture is put in place as the diagram directs and pictures and other decorations are placed upon the walls. Before the set is passed upon, the director looks it over and either approves or orders changes made.

5. In the dramatic theatre you are familiar with the waits that occur between the acts. Perhaps there is a printed note that there will be a wait of eight minutes between acts one and two and twelve minutes between the second and third acts. This is because the stage hands and property men know precisely what is wanted. All of the flats for that set are in one place in the scene pack. All of the properties are collected. It is merely a matter of orderly haste to replace one scene with another. When "The Heart of Maryland" was ending its long run at the Herald Square theatre in New York an exhibition was given for the press in which a heavy interior scene was struck or taken down and an elaborate exterior was set up in less than five minutes, but some of the stage hands had been working that same scenery for something more than a year. Before the play was given its first presentation the stage hands were drilled in the set and the stage manager worked over the decorations until everything was just right. There was no speed work then. An elaborate set may take a week to prepare so that it can be erected in five minutes. In the same way each studio set is new to the director and the stage hands. They cannot work with certainty. They must feel their way. A set will take from three hours to a week to build and dress. Only the simplest and crudest set can be built and dressed in less than an hour, at best.

6. This very naturally makes for delay. If possible, the director takes his people out on location and makes some exteriors while he waits, but if there is an excess of interiors, he and his people must wait on the stage hands. It may cost only a few dollars for the salaries of the stage hands, but the delay also wastes the time of a high salaried director and his acting company. It follows that each set is

the cause of a delay. Too many sets will cause wasteful delay. To use too many different sets in a play is to reduce the chances of a sale.

7. This does not mean that interiors are not to be used. To the contrary interior sets are desirable and necessary to give variety, though the handsomest interior set cannot equal in pictorial value the pretty exteriors. You are to employ interior sets and to employ them as needed, but you are not to be wasteful. If you have a scene in dining room or library that can be played in the parlor with no loss of effect, play it in the parlor and save a set unless you know that presently you will use the other apartment for several scenes. In other words, do not call for a set for a single scene if some other existing set will do, but do not force the action into an unsuitable apartment merely to save the building of another set. If you wish to use a parlor just once and no other room will give the same effect, call for the parlor in preference to spoiling your play.

8. There is a constant improvement being made in portable lights, and a growing tendency to use actual interiors in preference to built scenes when these interiors are of an elaborate nature. If the scene is laid in a machine shop, it may be easier and about as cheap to arrange to hire the use of a shop, send over the lights and cut into line supply for current. It will not be cheap, but it will be cheaper than bringing the machinery to the studio and setting it up. It will cost about the same as a usual set, but the effect will be better.

9. There can be established no fixed rule as to the number of interior sets that can be employed. This must depend upon circumstances and the play, but it will be well if the author plans to use not more than six sets in the first reel and not more than four additional ones to each added reel. In a two-reel story ten sets may be used, for example, and all of these ten can be used in the first as well as the second reel. It is supposed that a longer story will need a greater number of sets, and since they must be built they can be used in any part of the story. In serials, however, it often happens that a new set of scenes is used for each part of the story, or that only one or two scenes will be held over for the entire series.

10. Exterior scenes are, or are supposed to be, played out of doors. If they really are played out of doors, they are referred to as locations. Just because it does not cost money to set the scenery it should not be argued that expense does not increase with the number of locations written into the script. Each change of location represents a cost for the time spent in moving to the spot and making the set-up, which means the adjustment of the camera and the laying down the lines of the suppositious stage. All of this takes time, and time is money, but directors are willing to spend the time if they can get a series of pretty pictures, so if you do not move about too much, locations within reasonable limits are permissible. If your outdoor work covers both city and country then you are covering too much ground.

11. Be careful of what you write into your locations. It is as easy

for you to write into the script a lawn party as to show two persons talking on the grass plot, but if the story is made as you have it written, the director must send a car ahead with a tent and rustic benches and a punch bowl and table and food, and then come along later and play the scenes. It may be that he will appreciate the pictorial effect or he may merely object to the extra trouble. It is not possible to lay down any rule for this. Much depends upon the director and more depends upon what you get for the trouble you cause, but a general rule might be that when you put a company to any special trouble or expense, you must repay them with an adequate return in effect, either dramatic or pictorial or preferably both.

12. From what has been written, it should be plain to the student that he must plan his choice of scenes to give a maximum of effect with a minimum of expense and trouble, but it should ever be remembered that economy that is practiced at the expense of the story is wasteful in even greater degree than lavish expenditure without return.

13. The intelligent author will not seek to usurp the functions of the director. He will not attempt to lay out the scenes. He will tell in a general way what it is that he requires, but he will not offer minute details unless these are requested. A few directors will welcome a detail description of a scene, but most will resent this unasked aid. The novice may write a scene description in full, perhaps:

41. Parlor of John's home. This is a typical country parlor with its horsehair sofa and chairs, a large stove, wax flowers under a glass case on the false mantel, crayon portraits on the wall and a picture of Abraham Lincoln. A centre table on which rests the family Bible and the photograph album, a couple of footstools and an ingrain carpet on the floor. Jim and Jess are discovered, looking over the family album.

An experienced writer will credit the director with having sufficient intelligence and artistic instinct to create such a scene from a bare description and will merely write:

41. John's parlor. Typical country stuff. Jim and Jess discovered looking at photograph album.

This will suffice unless it is essential to the theme of the story that the portrait of Lincoln be shown. This may not be used until several scenes later, but since this is the first description of the scene, the director will work from this and the need for the picture will be called to his attention now that it may be on the wall in all the scenes and not added when the need for it becomes apparent. It is probable that the picture will be picked up in its proper scene and added to the description before the plots go to the studio manager, but it is better to make your demand in the proper place and not trust to luck. The proper way is to write:

41. John's parlor. Typical country stuff. Portrait of Lincoln on wall essential.

Now the director will know that the picture is a property that must be on the scene and his assistant will see to it that a print large enough to be visible on the screen will be put in place before the first scene in that set is played.

14. This holds good of any essential property or any particular form of setting you may require. If anything will do, you leave the choice to the director. If it is a "must" you write it in the script. You may require that your people enter the room through one door that leads into the hall and so to the street, and through another door that is supposed to open into the dining room. In such a case you write:

26. Library. Door to hall at rear, door to dining-room on right.

You go on with your action and the director reads, knowing that when the action says that "Bill exits to hall" he leaves the stage by the door at the rear of the setting. You may be even more specific, if necessary, and provide for an effect by writing:

29. Living room. Door to hall in back flat, covered by light curtain. Door to porch at right. Doors should be so arranged that when door to porch is opened in No. 62 that it will blow back curtains over hall door to expose Grace.

Now the scene plot will be drawn so that the hall door will be close to the one leading to the porch. The latter door will be hung to open inward and toward the audience to conceal an electric fan placed just outside the set that will be used to blow away the curtain.

15. Unless you require something of this sort, you do not specify any openings in the set, but leave these to the fancy of the director. He knows more about setting scenes than you are apt to. On the other hand it is important to tell him just what you need, particularly if this is not made clearly apparent in the action. You may give a hint in a very few words, but do not be afraid to suggest such matters as these:

21. Room. Windows open on court.

22. Room. Farmyard window backing.

23. Room. Bedroom shows through open door.

24. Room. Backing shows housetops across street.

Once you have described a scene you do not repeat the description, but refer to it as

32. Room as in No. 21

You always describe the scene as being in the setting *first* used, unless there is a lapse of only an instant, when it is to be supposed that the action has not materially advanced. Then you give it:

32. *Room as in No. 21.* Jack on—Bill enters—Jack sees him—turns—Bill jumps for him—they clinch—wrestle.—Bill draws gun.

33. *Street in front of Jack's*—Man passing—hears shot—looks up—runs to door—pounds on same—admitted—

34. *Back to No. 32.* Jack on floor, dead. Bill with smoking revolver in hand—Mrs. Buck and man from last scene rush in—Man grabs Bill—wrests gun from him.

It is evident that this scene thirty-three interrupts scene thirty-two only for an instant. The action in the room is practically continuous, the interpolation being for the purpose of cutting out the actual shooting. It will probably be played as one complete scene and then cut up. "Back to" is a better reference than "Same as."

16. In Example H will be seen another form of reference. In this example you will note that scene thirty-one is also numbered twenty-five. Later you will see that thirty-five also carries the twenty-five and in the scene is added "& 31." This indicates that scene thirty-one is in the same setting as scene twenty-five. Thirty-five carries on the action in thirty-one just as that carries on the action in scene twenty-seven. This is purely a studio scheme as yet, and until it is more generally adopted it may not be understood by those who are not familiar with Universal procedure, but the example is given here because the idea has such good points in doing away with an excess of words that are of no real use that it may presently come into general use.

17. Where a scene is the same as before, but has been changed since the original number, it is necessary to make a note of the change. The examples here given will explain the idea fully.

- 32. Room as in No. 21, but showing slight changes. (A week later.)
- 42. Room as in No. 18, but changed. (Ten years have elapsed.)
- 53. Room as in No. 40, but showing changes made by fight in No. 42.
- 47. Room as in No. 6. Again in order.

Where the changes are as complete as are suggested in the second example, in which ten years are supposed to have brought many changes, you change your reference number and now the subsequent scenes are "As in No. 42" and are no longer "As in No. 18."

18. In writing exteriors you give the director the same choice. You do not write in an exact description. You tell what you must have, and the director does the best he can. You do not write:

- 27. Farmyard. At the left is the barn, at the right the house. In the foreground are farming implements. Chickens swarm on the scene and at the rear is an old-fashioned well-sweep.

A director, should he be so foolish as to try and carry out the directions of the author, might search for days for such a farmyard. He will not make the search, however, for he will see that all he needs is a farmyard—any farmyard. If there is some essential, you note the fact, the same as in exterior sets, and write:

- 27. Farmyard. Well sweep essential.

Now the director will know that he must have the well sweep. If he cannot find one, he will build one, not in the yard, perhaps, but in some spot with appropriate surroundings and he will change the script so that he can play this part of the scene by the well. Suppose that your action is to show that it is through a request for a glass of water

that Sidney meets Ruth. He will come to the yard and ask for a drink. She will offer him a pitcher and a glass. He will point off. She will nod and they will leave the scene in the direction in which he pointed. In the next scene we see them come to the well, just off the previous scene, though it may be that the well will be ten miles from the farmyard and that the scene will be taken the following day or the next week. But if you merely want to bring about the meeting, you change the demand for the well, since this is not essential if the pitcher and glass will do. If, however, you have a scene where Sidney asks for the water and he and Ruth go to get it, so that later the well can be the trysting place, then you should be careful so to tell the director, writing the scene description to give you:

27. *Farmyard.* No pump or well should show.

Now the director will be careful in setting up not to include the pump if there is one, so that the suggestion that they go to the well and get fresh water will seem a natural one.

19. If you will look over the examples in the Appendix, which offers for your study the work of seven trained studio writers, you will note that not one script gives an elaborate description of a setting. Even Mr. Merwin, who writes with extreme care, merely indicates the scene in a line.

20. Panoramic scenes, or "panorams" as they are called, are too generally known to need involved description. These are of three sorts, the first being a movement from side to side, the second up and down. These are generally known as swings. A "follow" panoram is one where the camera as a whole is moved to follow action and not merely swung. In swinging use is made of special devices in the tripod head. One of these is a cog and crank attachment that revolves the entire top. The other is a rack and cog, the rack being a half circle, that permits the camera to be tilted up or down.

21. If John comes from the house and goes down the walk and up the street, you can play it as a panoram or as two scenes. You can write it:

16. *Front of house.* John enters from house. Goes down walk, through gate and up street. Panoram to follow him out of scene.

Now the camera will be swung so that the eye of the camera—the lens—will follow him as he goes down the walk and up the street. The camera tripod is not moved. But many companies forbid the use of panoramic scenes unless they are very necessary. The operator has to work two cranks, perhaps in opposite directions. The action is apt to be jerky and uneven. Here the use of the device is awkward and unnecessary. A better working of the scene would be to have the camera show John coming from the house. Now the scene stops and a second scene shows him coming down the walk and turning to exit through the gate and up the street. On the other hand you may want

to show Jack trying to get into a second story window. Here you write:

22. *Side of house.* John enters—tries window. Locked. Looks up. An open window. He starts to climb up lightning rod. Swing to follow him up rod and into window.

Another effective use of the panoram would be to show two sides of a location without changing scene. We will suppose that Hans, an arant coward, is hiding behind a tree from Gus, as much of a coward, but who has a louder voice. The scene alternately shows Hans and Gus, without stopping.

42. *Location.* Hans on—sees Gus coming—hides behind tree—swing to follow him. Swing back to pick up Gus—Dick enters—Gus wants to know where Hans is—Dick looks—sees Hans—smiles—swing to get Hans—Hans makes frantic gestures in appeal for silence—swing to Dick and Gus—Dick shakes head—Gus shows gun—talks big—swing to Hans—Hans scared stiff—swing back to Dick and Gus—Dick sends Gus on wrong track—Gus off—Hans comes out—thanks Dick—they exit, opposite.

This is not so rapid and perhaps not so effective as a succession of quick cut-back scenes, but now and then it can be used very effectively.

22. Follow scenes are made with the camera in an automobile either preceding or following a car in which action is taking place, on the front of an engine, or on a flat car coupled ahead of or behind it, in the rear of the automobile in which an action takes place or on a false work in front of the car. Because of the diversity of the effects there is no set term that can be employed to cover the entire series. You describe what you want, and not how it should be done. These examples should suggest about the description to use.

21. Automobile running along the road. Camera in car ahead (or behind as the action may seem to require).
 21. Front of locomotive. Camera on flat car ahead.
 21. Pullman car—train in motion. Country seen through windows.
 21. Road—posse dashing along. Camera in auto.

It is well to use such effects only when they will greatly increase the value of the scene since they are troublesome and frequently expensive.

23. It is well to specify your locations and not merely to say location. "Location" will be sufficient if you wish to tell the director that it does not matter where the scene is played, whether in the woods, on the seashore, beside a brook or along a road, but it is better to say "woods," "fields" or whatever you think will be best. If you use two roads or two field scenes, you add a letter for the purpose of identification. The first field will be "Field A." The third road will be "Road C." Letters are better than Roman or Arabic numerals.

24. In making out your scene plot you group all scenes in one set under one heading. You do *not* write.

1. Road.
2. Farmyard.
3. Road.
4. Farmyard.

If the two roads are the same and the farmyard scenes are alike you write them:

Road A.—1-3
Farmyard—2-4

Your object is to give the director a list of the sets and locations he is to use and the scenes that are to be played in each set or location. Suppose that the first studio set to be made is Grace's bedroom. The director turns to the scene plot and finds:

Grace's bedroom.—21-23-34-55-60.

He knows that those five scenes are to be made in the set and he starts making them. If there is no choice he will make scene twenty-one first, and turn that scene in action. When this has been played, he will turn to the scene plot and cross it off, noting that scene twenty-three is the next, and turning to that. He will go down in regular order unless he notes that in fifty-five Grace is in another costume. Then he will play sixty before he sends the actress off to change to the other costume. He will not work in another set (unless the action interchanges between two scenes) until he has cleaned up that set so it may be taken down and another put in its place. The most orderly arrangement is to give first the interiors and then the exteriors as shown in A-2. rather than to offer them as they come to you in the script.

25. Practice varies in marking in busts and closeups. Some directors prefer to have these all written as one number as shown:

Parlor—1-3-6-7-8-17-22-24-25-26-30-49.

A better plan is to list each separately, but to hold them together, as all are to be made in the one set. That six, seven, and eight are all played in one set will show the director that a closeup or bust breaks a full scene, but the better way to write would be:

Parlor—1-3-6-8-17-22-24-26-30-49.
Bust in same—7.
Close up in same—25.

The former saves space, but the latter is more workmanlike, and gives the director a better idea of what is wanted.

26. The utmost care should be exercised in making out the scene plot, for it is useless if not exact. A rough test is counting the number of sets you have marked and comparing the total with the number of scenes your action shows, but this will merely indicate that you have written down all the numbers; not necessarily in their proper places.

A better plan is to make a test of the scene plot on rough paper. Now check it off by reading the scenes from the action and have someone else check the scene plot.

27. As a matter of fact directors change the scenes about so often that it does not always pay the novice to make out a scene plot since there is so little probability that it will be followed. Many hold that the scene plot is never necessary save when done by some studio writer, but it is a good plan to go to this extra trouble, even when you know that the scene plot will not be used.

28. An excess of scenes will operate against the acceptance of a story, but so will a lack of them. Some photoplay criticism is elementary in the extreme, and a manufacturer may be accused by the public of being too economical if he presents a play in a couple of sets and a few exteriors, no matter how well produced the play may be. There can be no rule given, for each story will present its own problems. In general a play should be varied, showing both interior and exterior scenes not alternately, but, if possible, not holding too long to a run of either interior or exterior action. On the other hand some field companies may require scripts all exterior and some studio companies in the north all interior or mostly interior sets in the winter time. There are comparatively few companies requiring the latter. If you are free lancing and wish to write one or the other, it will be better to write all exteriors, but in these days when most companies go south for the winter, having established studios, it is best to write mixed stories and not seek to supply some special winter demand.

(3.III:6 & 12 V:4) (6.XVII:3) (7.XLVIII:27) (9.LX:16)
 (10.III:8 IV:1) (11.XVII:14 XXIV:31) (15.XXXV:4 XXXIX:
 16) (17.XLVIII:25) (20.XXXII:8) (21.LVI:16) (22.XL:15)
 (24.III:10) (25.XXXV:12 XXXVIII:7).

CHAPTER XXXI

WRITING THE SCENE

ACCORDING to the strictest dramatic usage a scene, in an acting sense, is a passage between two or more persons; or even a monologue, that is not broken by the arrival of new characters or the departure of those already on. Certain editions of Shakspeare will offer a score of scene numbers to one division, the scene changing with every entrance or exit. A more practical and more generally accepted definition is that a scene is all that part of an act played in one set at one time.

2. It would appear to be a simple enough matter to lay down the elemental rule that a photoplay scene is all the action that takes at one time and in one place and without stoppage of the camera. That

does not appear to be difficult of comprehension, but there are certain matters that are apt to confuse the student. He is told that a bust divides a scene into two different scenes but that an insert does not, nor does a cut-in leader. He cannot understand this. To make the matter clear it will be well to explain just what a scene is and why it should be numbered.

3. If the script of action is properly written, in scenes, the director can, without change, make these scenes the author has written, and get therefrom a complete play. As he makes each scene he gives it a number for identification. Later the separate pieces of film are assembled, by means of these numbers, in accordance with a list supplied by the director which shows where each numbered piece of film is to go. He can do this if the scenes are properly written. He cannot do so if he is told that "Then John comes home from college, renewing his friendship with Grace Smith and cutting out Harry Frye." That is not a scene but a statement of a fact that may require a number of scenes to show. That is no more writing a photoplay than telling an artist to paint a Venus would be painting a picture. You must tell each happening, *by itself*, and express this in action.

4. Some beginners suppose that if they number their paragraphs they are writing scenes. They may offer, for example, something like this:

12. John comes out of his house and starts for Maud's. On the way there he meets Harry, who tells him about the accident to Jim.
13. When John gets to Maud's house he tells her about the accident to Jim, and the way she carries on makes him know that she cares more for Jim than she does for him, so he goes home again, sad at heart.

That is not supposed to be amusing. It is an almost exact reproduction of a story that has been offered in all sincerity as a photoplay and the author took the trouble to direct attention to the fact that it was "written in numbered scenes."

5. It would take all of twenty minutes to show this action as it stands, following John about with the camera, and very little of it would be of interest. This is where photoplay has such a great advantage over the spoken drama. Only the most interesting incidents in a play are presented and these swiftly and graphically through the absence of dialogue. We take the important facts and isolate those into scenes.

6. The first scene that shows the facts related above is that John comes from his house. The camera shows the front of a house. The door opens and John comes out. He walks out of the field of the camera. The camera stops, because there is nothing more to be photographed there until the sad-hearted John returns. The scene is over. Presently the camera will start up again and John will walk into the picture and enter the house and shut the door. The camera stops again. There is no more action to record. The scene is done.

The cameraman takes his way to the next location. The scenes in front of the house are made. There have been two scenes because twice the camera has been stopped because there was no more action to take. Each scene is a unit of the finished picture and will be treated as such until all the scenes are assembled into a complete story.

7. The first of these two scenes would have read:

12. *Front of John's*—John enters from house. Looks at watch. Exits up street.

8. The second scene is still more brief. The director is told to make this action:

20. *Front as in No. 12.* John enters scene. Exits into house.

We might have cut out the watch episode in scene twelve, but the director wants to establish John. He looks at his watch. The spectator looks at the man and sees it is John. Had John passed through the scene too quickly, he might not have been recognized.

9. It may seem strange to the beginner that John enters from the house and exits into it. It is a more general practice for persons to enter houses and exit from them. But we are not talking about the house. We are talking about that part of the ground in front of the house that constitutes our stage for the moment. The first time John enters this stage or scene from the house. The second time he enters from up the street and exits into the house. A purist might object that the grammar is bad. It is. It should be "Exit John," and not "John exits," but we are writing photoplay and not Latin grammar and that makes a difference. Exit, however, is not required to be used. It might be said that John enters the house. It would serve as well. Exit is not a word that must be used to take a person off the scene. Any word that will indicate that he leaves the scene will suffice. It might be said that he enters the house or merely written "John into house." Exit is not an essential as many appear to believe. It is merely a convenient word.

10. If a person is on the stage when the scene opens, he is said to be "discovered." It is more simple to say that he is "on," the words "the stage" being supplied. "On" is also used to indicate an entrance in the middle of the scene. In the first sense we get:

23. *Parlor*—John and Mary on.

Using it in the middle of the scene the written action would show this:

23. *Parlor*—Harry and Grace on—talking—Harry proposes—she accepts—father on—sees—comes down—grabs Harry by collar—drags him out of scene—Grace off after them.

We understand the scene without the use of the words "entrance" or "exit," and so long as it is understood the precise word used is not at all essential.

11. But John has been going up the street for some time now. Suppose that we follow. The next thing that happens is that he meets Harry and so learns of the accident to Jim. There is nothing striking or pictorial in the sight of a man walking along the street. The next that is seen of him shows that he meets Harry, who tells about Jim. The last scene was twelve, so this must be thirteen.

13. *Street*—Jim and Harry meet—they chat a moment—Harry says *Cut-in*—“Jim was badly hurt this morning.”

John shows surprise and regret—gets details of accident—they separate—off.

There does not seem to be much to this scene, nor is there. We need a fact. We get it from this scene. The fact is that Jim is hurt and that John hears about it so that he can tell Maud. We tell the director what we have to have and leave the rest to him.

12. It might be possible to write that John enters from the right and Harry from the left, or that John comes on from the left and meets Harry who is coming down the steps from the house, but what difference does it make? All we require is that the spectator shall see that John found out about the accident to Jim so he can tell Maud about it. We tell that and tell it clearly. The rest we leave to the director. It is not so much necessary to tell how a thing is done as to tell what is done. Mr. Merwin (K-1-2) places more reliance in telling how people feel than how they act, since if they feel the scene, they will act it properly. The director knows how to direct action. He requires from you the story that is to be told in action.

13. On the other hand, if you can think up some especially good bit of business, you can put it in and take your time in telling it. The director will be quick to realize the value of effective by-play, if it really is effective.

14. Keep your action as brief as possible, but never keep it down when you really have something to say. The length of description has no bearing upon the length of the action. A scene may be expressed in a few words that may play in a hundred feet. Another scene may take ten times the description and play ten feet or less. You can say, for instance:

53. *Hillside*—Jack enters from side, shooting at posse—they appear below shooting at him—he gets behind rock—siege starts.

Your action here may not only cover this scene, but make the basis of a number of cut-backs in which the line “Fight continues” may cover ten or fifteen feet of action. On the other hand you have an idea for a short scene. You think that playing it just as you write it will be the most effective way. You tell the director. You write:

48. *Den as in No. 23.* Giles on, reading—Ben enters through the window at rear—for a moment Giles does not realize his presence, but slowly he seems to sense the presence of another person—he looks up, but not at the window—it is as though he

feared to turn around—slowly he forces himself to do so—it is evident that he does this only through a violent effort of his will—he turns until he sees Ben—he starts up, throwing back his chair as he does so—Ben comes down to the opposite side of the table—where he stands for a moment without speaking—Giles steps to table—his hands appear to be groping for something—suddenly he whips a revolver out of the drawer—he presents it at Ben's breast—with a sudden lunge, Ben leans across table and grasps Giles' hand—turns weapon against Giles' own breast—a shot—Giles gasps—strangles—sinks slowly to the floor—Ben turns to window to escape—Grace suddenly appears at window—she is silhouetted against the moonlight, standing so that it is seen she has a revolver.

In straight manuscript this is almost fifteen lines. It will play little more than twice as many seconds. The two line scene written above may run as long. This scene could have been written in brief, but the director might not have caught quite the idea from the shorter action. It is interesting to note that this scene in parts suggests the scene shown in Example J, although the first draft of the scene was written some weeks before Mr. Hall sent in his sample page.

15. In the scene examples shown it will be seen that the pronoun is not as often used as in general speech. This is because it is better to be exact than to avoid the frequent repetition of the name of the personage referred to. "John" or "Ben" possesses a distinct meaning. It so often happens that "he" or "him" might be accepted as referring to either one of two persons that it is best not to take chances and to use names in preference to pronouns.

16. Another thing to note is that the dash or hyphen is used to replace a variety of commas, periods, colons and semi-colons. The use of the dash is decried by many, but it not only avoids the use of involved punctuation, but it seems to break the action up into phases and presents to the mind of the reader the action in detail rather than the action as a confused and confusing whole. It works well in actual use and most directors prefer it where they have any preference at all.

17. Action is written in the present tense. It is something that is happening at the moment; not something that has happened or is to happen. We write that "Ben comes down," because as the scene is being realized in action Ben actually is coming down. You are at liberty to elect your tense for the synopsis, but action is always a thing of the present and should be written in the present tense and no other.

18. Dialogue is used in the action only when dialogue will tell more than action will. This does not refer to the cut-in leaders, but to dialogue as a form of description for action. Suppose that you have some such scene as this:

47. Library—lights down—Stanton by safe—Edna enters through door—Stanton springs up—presents pistol—Edna shoots—Stanton drops face down—Edna turns on the lights—kneels beside

Stanton—turns him on back—her horror and grief are overwhelming as she discovers that she has killed her father—her shrieks bring others on the scene, Mrs. Stanton, Mary, Butler and Paul.

Fifteen words are consumed in telling of her overwhelming grief and the picture is by no means graphic. There is nothing there that conveys to the director the intensity of the scene. Try a speech:

47. *Library—lights down*—Stanton by safe—Edna enters through door—"Who's there?"—Stanton springs to his feet—presents pistol—Edna shoots—Stanton drops on face—Edna turns on lights—kneels beside Stanton—turns him on back—"My Father?"—her shrieks bring the others in, Mrs. Stanton, Mary, Butler and Paul.

You save words and at the same time gain effectiveness in presenting the picture to the director. Examples of the use of dialogue in action may also be found in the Appendix E—scene 28. F-2. Scene 17. H. Scenes 34, 38, and 39. K-1. Scenes 32 and 34 and K-2, Scene 69. In each instance it will be seen that it shortens the action or makes it more explanatory with fewer words.

19. But John is still wandering down the street. He should be at Maud's by now. We have shown him in twelve leaving his house and in thirteen he gets the bad news about Jim. In fourteen we show him coming to Maud's as it would not be understandable did we show him leave Harry and walk right into a room. He must first be seen to enter a house, so for scene fourteen we have:

14. *Front of Maud's*—John enters—rings bell—waits—admitted.
 15. *Parlor*—Maud on—Maid ushers John in—they greet—Maid off—John and Maud sit—in sitting John's elbow knocks photo frame off table—he picks up—looks—shakes head sadly—says—*Cut-in*—"Poor old Jim. He may be dying."
 Maud screams—jumps up—demands the story—John tells—Maud becomes hysterical—Maid runs in—John much relieved—tries to speak to Maud—she tells him to go away—Maid looks up—nods—he can be of no use—John gets away—very awkward—out.
 16. *Front as in No. 14*—John comes from house—pauses a moment—shakes head—says to himself:
Cut-in—"It's Jim she loves; not me."
 Keeps on out of scene—strong emotion.

Now we go on with the rest of the story, bringing John home, if it is necessary, otherwise leaving the action as John exits and using a time leader to break to the next development.

20. If John had come into the room, had told Maud about Jim and the rest had followed, then it would have looked as though he had come for no other purpose, though he did not know about the accident when he left home. On the other hand he might have sat through ten very uninteresting minutes before he brought up the subject. By contriving that accident we lead up to the subject of the scene without waste of time and without seeming to force the matter. It is perfectly

reasonable to suppose that Maud might have a framed photograph on the table. It is not unusual for men in love to be awkward. There is a reasonable explanation for the accident and we speed the action along.

21. If you will study the scenes you will see that these could not possibly have been played as one. Each time the camera is stopped, therefore, a new scene commences. The camera is not stopped for the cut-ins because these are placed in position in the joining room. If a picture of the frame with the photograph had been shown, merely the frame and the photograph, or with a hand holding it, this would not have been made while the camera was stopped, for the director would have told his assistant to take the frame to the man who has charge of the leaders and inserts, but if the scene had required that Maud should try to take the frame from John and he had resisted then not only the hands but the dress would have shown, and to get just the proper position the director would have told the players to wait while the camera was brought down to them and the bust made. Since the camera was stopped while it was being brought down and again while it was being taken back, three scenes would have been the result, the two parts of what is shown as scene fifteen and the bust.

22. In writing the scene your chief aim is to make the scene plain to the director. Example D shows a page from a script written by a staff man for his director. Here slang and crudity are used to get effects briefly. It is not offered as a model to be followed in other than the spacing, but it is interesting as showing the difference between working from the inside and the outside. The free lance would not offer a script with such careless phrasing. The staff man did not have to care so long as the idea of the story was amusing.

23. Only one of the examples in the Appendix shows the use of the word "Scene." The number is written in the left hand margin and "scene" is understood. You will save many hours in the course of the year by not writing the words. Some directors like the word scene and the Roman numeral in the centre of the page, but the Arabic numeral in the margin is the almost universal usage.

(2.XXXII:2 XXXV:3 XXXVI:2) (3.V:6) (7.XIV:9) (11.XXXIII:8) (12.XXIV:26 XXXIII:5) (14.XXXIV:7 XXXV:9 XLVII:8) (17.XXVIII:15) (19.XLIV:12) (22.I:16 XXIV:25).

CHAPTER XXXII

NUMBERING THE SCENES

SCENES are numbered merely that they may have some distinguishing mark. The scene number is an identification and nothing more, but since it is an identification, it is essential that the identification should be properly done. It has been shown in the pre-

ceding chapter that the scene number is used to identify the scene in the developing room and joining department. It also serves as a guide to the director in connecting the scene with the scene plot.

2. All of the action made in one set or location at one time is one scene. If the camera is stopped, then the scene stops, though the action of the scene, as it is understood in dramatic work, may be continued. With this the photoplay writer has nothing to do. He is numbering scenes for a certain purpose and must use numbers in accordance with photoplay usage. All of the action of players in a scene or set is a single scene only so long as the camera keeps turning. When the camera is stopped, a few feet of film will be turned down without exposure and this will be marked with the next exposure number. A negative (exposure) number may cover several scenes, but each scene must still have a number, though three scenes may be made as one negative.

3. Leaders that are cut in do not interrupt a scene, as they are cut in after the scene is made and assembled. An insert does not interrupt the action of a scene, because the insert is not made with the taking camera. A bust does end a scene because the bust picture is a scene in itself. A close-up picture does stop a scene because the close-up is a scene in itself. This is because the bust and the close-up are made with the taking camera or with one held in reserve.

4. If a director has two cameramen, he will, when the scene has many interruptions, use one camera for the scene and the other for the small parts, the first camera being kept on its points and the other being moved about. Where there is but one camera, the places on the floor where the points of the tripod rest are marked. The camera is moved away and then moved back to this precise spot that the latter half of a scene split by a bust or close-up may be made from the same viewpoint as the first.

5. Where one scene dissolves into the next, there are two numbers, though the action is continuous. Because you see Jim stare into space while the picture fades into the happy days he is thinking about and then fades back to Jim again, it is not one scene but three. There has been no interruption and no *apparent* stoppage of the camera, but you know that there has been stoppage and so you write three scene numbers. In Example B Dave thinks of the time he gave Mary the engagement ring. We see this incident and come back to Dave. It is apparently one scene, but you will note that there are three scene numbers because the scene is in three parts, each of which must have a separate identity in the film until the whole is assembled. The director will make these three parts precisely as though they were three scenes. Scenes 8-9-10 in F-1 also show a fade vision.

6. Scenes are numbered in consecutive order from the first to the last. If there are two or more reels, the numbering is continuous from scene one of the first reel to the highest number in the last. If two parts each carried the same scene numbers and the picture is made as a whole, confusion will arise.

7. This does not apply to serials which are made in parts, each part being treated as a unit and not as a part of the whole. Here each part starts with number one and runs to the highest number in that part. This is because each part will be treated as a separate script. Where a serial will run perhaps twenty parts of two reels each, it will not pay to wait until the entire forty parts are made. Release is started when four or five parts are ready and each part is prepared by itself.

8. Panoramic scenes in which the action is followed by the camera has but one number so long as there is no interruption. The background is constantly changing, but the scene action is continuous, so there is but a single scene and so but one number. If a long run is made and this is split up through the interpolation of other action, though the scene may be made as a whole, the action is split into sections and each section will be given a scene number because, while the scene is *made* as a whole, it is *shown* in sections. Your script is to show how the play is shown and not how it is made.

9. This is the crux of the entire matter. Your script is not to tell the director how to make a picture, but in what order the scenes that tell the play shall be shown upon the screen. You theoretically have nothing whatever to do with the making. You do not, in theory, recognize that the story must be made. You say in effect: "To get a good play, show upon the screen these pictures in the order indicated." You write the pictures in their order. Your work is done. For the convenience of the director you number these scenes to show their exact order, but you have nothing whatever to do with the manner of making scenes two or more at one time. You are not supposed to know or care about this side of the work. You write the play and the director makes it. You give him, in their regular order, the proper scenes. He does the rest.

(1.V:6 XXX:24 XXXI:3) (2.XXXI:2) (3.XXXV:3 XXXVII:2 XXXVIII:4) (7.LX:15) (8.XXX:20) (9.XXX:24).

CHAPTER XXXIII

ACTION AND BY-PLAY

DEFINING the photoplay, it is said to be a story told in action instead of words. This applies with equal force whether the story is being told on the screen or on paper. The screen shows action. The written play uses words to describe that action and the action so described tells the story, not the words in which the action is told.

2. This is the great difference between writing fiction and photoplay, and it is a difference that the beginner sometimes fails to ap-

preciate. Before you can hope to write photoplay, you must first learn to write action, just as you would first learn the French language before you would undertake to write stories in French. To write in action you must first acquire the ability to think in action and to visualize that action. You think, for example, that Paul kisses Mary. You must, at the same time, with your mental vision, *see* Paul kissing Mary. You must see this so distinctly that you can write the action as you see it and not merely write an action. But while you can see every detail of this action, you do not write down every trifling gesture. You write only that part of it that, told a director, will enable him to see what you have seen; not the precise action, but action that will do as well and may, perhaps, be even better.

3. Phil Lang, of the Kalem Company, has happily called this the "Picture Eye." That is precisely what it is, but the eye is the eye of the mind and not the external organ of vision. The trained writer can see his action so clearly that he gets a good idea of precisely how such action will look and so is able to discard action that lacks in any quality of interest.

4. Without the picture eye it is not possible to write convincingly of your action since you cannot see your action and do not know what it is, but a little practice will enable you to acquire the picture eye if you have the proper imagination. When you write a scene close your eyes and see if you can see this action playing before you. Then reverse and see the action before you write it down and you can write intelligently.

5. The final development is being able to write only that portion of the action that is essential to the story. Some writers never master this trick of condensation. They write so much detail that the important action is lost in the mass of words in general. Study the examples in the Appendix and note how the essential action and that alone is shown unless the by-play, seemingly unimportant, will help the major action.

6. In Chapter XXXI you have been given some examples of writing action in scenes, but it is the purpose of this chapter to treat the matter in greater detail. Let it be supposed that you have a scene in which John meets Edna for the first time. The meeting is accidental. They have not been introduced. Writing the scene as you have visualized it, you may get this action:

6. *Road by a brook in the woods.* The brook is in the foreground and we can see both banks. but we stand on the side Edna comes in from. Edna is seen through the trees in the distance. coming along the path. She is coming toward us. It is summer time and she has on a white dress. Her hat is off and she is carrying it as a basket, filled with wild flowers. She approaches slowly. When she gets close to us she stops and looks at the brook. The stepping stones are slippery and she is afraid that she will fall in and get wet. As she stands there, wondering what she shall do, John comes in from one side and looks with

admiration at Edna. Edna does not hear him because he is walking softly; not on purpose, but because there is sand on the bank. Edna puts her foot on one of the stones. It is wet and slippery. She is afraid. She draws back. John springs forward and offers to carry her across. She shakes her head. She doesn't want him to do that. Then he takes her hand and tells her he will lead her across. Edna is afraid that maybe he will fall in too, but she takes his hand. He walks right into the water. She stops to protest, but he laughs and says it won't hurt him any. They go on and she gets across safely. She thanks him and he asks her for a flower. She gives him one. She is frightened at the way he looks at her and runs off into the woods. John looks at her for a moment, then he turns and comes back. He looks again when he gets on our side of the brook and we can tell from his face that he wants to meet her again. Then he walks out of the picture.

7. Any director can take this and make a pretty scene from it, if he wants to, but he will not want to unless the studio has nothing else he can work on. He will not be willing to waste a day fixing up this script so he can pick out the essential action if he can get as good a story told in such a way that only the narrative action shows. He knows *how* to make a scene in action, but he wants to know *what* to make. He wants the suggestions of the author, but not a complete schedule of every trifling action. A practical writer would give him something more like this:

6. *Path through woods. Brook in foreground.* Edna comes through trees at rear. Carries flowers in hat, using as basket. Sees stepping stones in brook. Wet and slippery. Tests. Afraid. John enters. Sees Edna. Offers to carry her over. She declines. He offers hand. She accepts. John walks in water beside her. She protests. He laughs. Swing camera to follow them across. Edna lands safely. John demands flower. Gets it. Edna alarmed by his expression. Runs off. He looks after her. Comes back. Stands looking. Wants to know her. Off.

This can be improved through splitting up the scene as will be shown in a later chapter. As it stands, it offers the same essentials of action, but it gives these essentials in such a manner that the director can take them without having to study a lot of useless material. It is eight lines in script against nineteen, and the director has been saved the study of eleven useless lines, though he is given the same real action and can supply the minor details himself.

8. In the scene above there is considerable action that must be described to be understood by the director, but many scenes will require little or no descriptive action. The director is given a hint and builds on this as may be most convenient in the location he selects. Suppose that we need a scene in which John and Tom meet and decide to go and see Dick. The action might visualize something like this:

7. A street corner showing a handsome house in the rear with a lawn in front of it. In the distance Jack is seen approaching. He is swinging his cane and carries his gloves in his hand. Just

before he gets to the corner Tom comes from the house. He is putting on his gloves. As he sees Jack he stops. They smile, shake hands and talk a moment, turning so that they face the camera. Then Tom suggests that they go to see Dick. Jack is willing, so they turn and walk out of the scene together.

This is the scene that you see when you imagine this action, but it is not necessary that you tell all of this to the director. In the first place, it does not matter whether you have a street corner or play the scene in the middle of the block. It does not matter whether or not Tom comes from the house. It is not essential that Jack should carry a cane and have a pair of gloves. It is not necessary to have a handsome house for a background. Just because you write that Tom suggests that they go to see Dick it does not make it plain to the man who sees only the picture on the screen that they talk about seeing Dick. They are speaking about something, but the picture cannot tell whether they are talking about Dick or calling the director names. It is seen that they speak. Later when they come to Dick's together we can suppose that this was what Tom suggested. The action does not give that fact. Inference must be used. The scene tells certain things. The first thing it tells is that Jack and Tom meet. We can see that. It is a chance and not a planned meeting. We can guess that, because neither has the appearance of waiting for the other. If Jack was on the scene, evidently waiting for someone and Tom came up and at once they went away together, then we would know that it was a planned and not a chance meeting, but we presume this to be a chance meeting because there was no waiting. The scene also tells us that they agree upon some suggestion that Tom makes. That is all that you can show in this scene as it stands. You can add other action to show more, if you desire, but that is all that shows in the scene as you have it written. Now let us cut out the excess of detail and write the scene so that we tell this to the director—this and nothing more. You will get:

7. *Street*—Jack and Tom meet—greetings—they chat—Tom makes a suggestion. Jack agrees. They exit together.

This is all you need to write so that any director can take your script and give you practically the action that you ask for, not precisely the action you have imagined, but action that tells the story you are trying to tell and in action that will suit the personality of the actors who play the parts better than the action you devised might have done.

9. It is not always possible to write as briefly as this, nor is it necessary. You may have more narrative action to describe, and if you have it is important that you tell it clearly and fully, but when you have a scene that can be told in ten words do not take twenty any more than you would try to tell in ten words an action that requires thirty-five. Take what you need, but no more, lest this excess of words obscure or even hide some essential. You are permitted to suggest detailed action when there is reason to believe that you have de-

vised a bit of business that will be unusually effective, but it is seldom that you are apt to think of better business than the director can devise. Suppose that you think of this, for instance:

43. *Garden—Bench in front of bush*—Jess on—sees Billy coming—jumps up and hides behind bush—Billy enters—disheartened—sits on bench—sighs—Jess looks through branches—half sorry for him—Billy takes photo from pocket—Jess, curious, wants to see—in her eagerness she shakes bush—knocks petals of flowers down on him—a regular shower—she is alarmed—drops on hands and knees as Billy springs up in surprise and looks about him—no wind—no one in sight—he goes behind bench to explore—Jess crawls on hands and knees in front of bench as Billy goes around bush, follows him behind as he comes in front of bush on other side—Billy sits and looks at photo again—Jess gets behind him—smiles—her photo—she crawls to the front again—gets just in front of him—knocks photo from hands and substitutes her own laughing face—Billy starts—catches her face between his hands and covers her face with kisses—with a happy sigh she sinks down at his feet and puts up her finger that he may replace the ring.

This will give the director a suggestion for a pretty scene that would not be represented by the bald action described below:

43. *Garden—Bench in front of bush*—Jess on—sees Billy coming—hides—Bill enters—sits on bench—Jess sees it is her photo—she takes photo from Billy and offers the original—sits at his feet—demands the return of the ring.

In the street scene the director can get as much as you can get out of the scene as written in brief. In this instance it may be that he will not think of the particular piece of business you have suggested. In time experience will show you when to write in detail and when to brief your scenes.

10. If you will look at A-9 in the Appendix you will find that a single page contains seventeen clearly understandable scenes. Any director would get approximately the same action from those scenes as written. To have written more would have been a waste of time. Only four and a half scenes are shown in A-6 because there are some letters and a telegram and because the action is more full.

11. It must be understood that you do not write merely action. All of the action you write must serve to advance the story by making clear some point that carries along the plot. You do not write a scene merely because the background will be pretty or because the action itself might be interesting. You have no footage in which to run a vaudeville show. Stick to your story and make every scene count because it carries forward the plot action. If you think that you need pretty landscapes to save your story or even to help it, you will find that the story is not worth worrying about. Each scene that is not used merely to connect two important scenes should tell a part of the plot.

12. It is better to have only one point to a scene, since to offer too

many points at once will be to confuse the spectator and obscure the plot. You do not advance your facts too rapidly. Just as in the crisis you wait before advancing the next, so do you hold back one fact that the previous one may be assimilated and understood. If you offer too much the spectator will not grasp it all but will remember the most emphatic fact and fail to recall the rest. If the rest is not remembered, it may be that later on some other fact, dependent upon this forgotten incident, will puzzle and confuse the person following the story.

13. You can show in one scene that John kills Henry and have the fact remembered, but if you try to tell in a single scene that John kills Henry because he is the man who wronged Lucy, John's sister, and that Henry is now trying to win from John his sweetheart that he may add another to his list of victims, this will be too much to show in a single scene. It will be better to advance each fact separately and permit it to be accepted before the next is offered. First John finds that Henry is trying to cut him out with Mary. In the next scene he learns that Lucy, his sister, has been wronged. She will not tell the name of her betrayer. A few scenes later on John comes upon the scene as Mary is struggling with Henry. He knocks Henry down, or perhaps thrashes him. Mary confesses that Henry's intentions were dishonorable. Maddened, John goes to get his revolver. Now Lucy learns of his purpose. She loves Henry in spite of what has happened. In her efforts to prevent John from killing Henry she rouses his suspicions. He wrings the truth from her. Now he is more than ever determined and in an early scene his purpose is carried out.

14. Trying to tell all of this in one scene would have resulted in a jumble of facts and leaders that would have confused everyone, possibly including the author himself. Telling them one fact to a scene, the story is shown so clearly that even the slow of wit can get all of the facts. Each scene advances the story one step further toward the killing, but each scene tells only one of the facts that concerns the killing.

15. Each time a statement of fact is made in action the spectator must be permitted to reason out the fact and to apply it to other facts previously related. All of the action in any one scene should have a more or less direct bearing upon the fact in that scene, and the fact should have a direct bearing upon the story. It should either be the establishment of a new fact or the emphasizing of an old fact through repetition. In the example above we twice refer to Lucy's unfortunate condition, or rather first refer to her condition and later tell that Henry is to blame. There is only one scene about Mary and Henry. This is because the better of two reasons that John has for killing Henry is found in the fact that he has wronged Lucy. The fact being more important, it is played up more strongly.

16. At the same time while all of the action in a scene should have a direct bearing upon the scene fact, it is possible and permissible to strengthen the scene through allusion to matters previously explained.

In all of your scenes you can, if you can do so without making it evident that you are dragging the facts in, allude to John's love for Mary, to Lucy's love for Henry, to Henry's desire for Mary or to Lucy's condition. All of these facts are more or less closely knit. You may have, for example, the leader and scene:

Leader—John warns Henry to keep away from Mary.

54. *Fence by road*—John at gate—Henry comes along road—John calls him—Henry approaches—masks his fear by swagger—John speaks—Henry shows relief—he was afraid Lucy had told—manner becomes more truculent—he will do as he pleases—John grows angry—threatens to strike Henry—Lucy appears in background—fearful—John raises his arm to strike—Lucy rushes between the two—John puts her aside gently—Henry snaps his fingers in John's face—swaggers off, with a careless nod to Lucy—John starts to follow—Lucy prevents—John explains—Lucy shows her relief.

Here the scene fact is that John tells Henry to keep away from Mary. This is clearly and strongly told. At the same time we get dramatic value from our previous knowledge of the relations between Lucy and Henry and our fear that here the secret will be let out. This is not announced as a part of the fact, but the previously announced facts are made use of to heighten interest in a scene that otherwise might merely read:

54. *Fence by road*—John at gate—calls Henry, who is passing—tells him to keep away from Mary—Henry says he'll do as he pleases.

Introducing Lucy and Henry's fear that John knows gives a stronger value to the scene without in the least confusing the mind. The fact is told in the leader. The scene as shown in the second version merely illustrates the leader. With the more ample action through the use of other facts we get a vital scene in place of a perfunctory one.

17. Knowing that Henry has wronged Lucy, we can understand his action when John calls him. Also we feel a greater contempt for him because he is content to hide behind her later on. Now if we carry this on by showing that Henry goes from John and Lucy to try and intercept Mary, we get him still more disliked and presently he will be so cordially hated that we feel the killing to be justified by the moral law if not the law of the land.

18. Action, by which is meant the action of the plot and not the acting of the players, tells the direct story. By-play is acted action that while not required in the direct recital of the plot gives the side lights which serve to bring out more clearly the character of the personages and adds value to the story as a whole.

19. Writing a photoplay in action is not merely the recording of such movements as will tell the story. It is the recording of the plot factors in action plus a skillful handling of the by-play. It is seldom that the plain narrative is thoroughly interesting. It has the quality of being made interesting, but it can be given this interest only

through the skillful handling of incident. This does not contradict the previous statement that all action must have a direct bearing upon the plot. It confirms it, for this by-play is as much related to the plot as is the main action. The fabric of the plot may be likened to the piece of linen which is to be decorated by the needleworker. It increases in value in precise ratio to the value of the needlework. The result may be a thing of beauty or merely some spoiled linen.

20. The introduction of this accessory narrative or by-play may not be artificial. It must be made to appear as a natural and required part of the action, for charm will immediately leave the play that is forced, labored and unnatural. The deliberate introduction of a person or action for no other reason than to increase the *momentary* dramatic effect is bungling and inexcusable. You have a cast of characters and a set of reasons governing their actions. Make these characters and these reasons give you your dramatic effect without reference to other persons and happenings, or you are not yet competent to write a play in action. These characters in the regular cast are known to us and liked or disliked according to their deserts. The more compact your cast; the more closely your action is centered upon a few persons, the greater opportunity do you have for winning favor or disfavor for them. Employ this opportunity to the full. Center all the interest on the handful of major people you employ and do not confuse your story and the spectator by bringing in people who appear only on one action or sequence of scenes and are not heard of again. If you do this you will leave your spectators wondering what happened to this person or that.

21. This course will also avoid a great deal of unnecessary explanation. It is natural for Lucy to be in her own yard. You do not have to explain her presence there. If it were some other girl, you would have to tell what she was doing in John's yard or before it. This would probably take the usual form of "she happened to be passing," which is not acceptable. It will be natural for Lucy to see John get his gun. It will be natural for her to follow him after she has made her unintentional confession. John following Henry and Lucy following John, each with a clear and well-defined purpose, is understandable. If John, Henry, Lucy and Mary should come together from the four points of the compass at the exact moment when their appearances will make for the strongest dramatic effect, the mechanism of your action will be too clearly apparent. It might have been more striking, at the moment, to have used in your scene some other girl; another victim of Henry's perfidy. It would have shown him in a still less enviable light, but at the cost of stopping to explain and the further cost of giving the long arm of coincidence another wrench. If you overwork coincidence, you will never get writer's cramp indorsing checks. People cannot merely happen to be where they are most wanted at the moment by a troubled author. They must be there because it is the most natural and logical place for them to be.

22. There must be a reason for the presence of every character in

any scene, but surprise will be sacrificed if providing that reason excites suspicion that plans are being laid. John tracking Henry for a definite and understandable purpose is logical. If he merely "happened" to be out hunting and Mary "happened" to be going through the woods to visit a girl friend and Henry "happened" to be there because he lost his pocket knife the week before, then John's appearance on the scene in which he finds Mary struggling with Henry would be suspicious. We should see John starting out to hunt. We should see Mary explaining to her mother that she was going to visit Lizzie. We would see Henry getting worried about the lost knife. Long before the third of these premises could be established, most spectators would know that we were planning a scene between the three, but if we knew that John and Mary had a trysting place and that Henry knew about it, the appearance of the three would be natural and understandable without explanation.

23. Action must be true to life and coincidence forms but a small part of real life. It may be that a series of coincidences will occur in real life that will combine to make a startling story, but it will not make a good photoplay if it depends upon coincidence, because audiences will not accept as fact what does not impress *them* as fact, no matter whether it happened or not. Death bed confessions *have* been made, but they have been overworked in photoplay. Do not use them. If the play requires it, throw the play into the discard until you can get some other ending. Action must be true to life but not to the unrealities of life.

24. You have been told that in plotting you will find much that will not be accepted though true. This holds good of the action as distinguished from plot. You cannot require a person in your play to perform an unnatural action any more than you can base plot on an unnatural happening. Do not confound unnatural with unusual, however. It would be unusual to show two men fighting with their feet instead of their fists, but it would not be unusual if the scene of your play were to be laid in France where la savate is practiced. We might not accept two Canadian backwoodsmen solemnly poking at each other with their forefingers, but we might understand two Japanese noblemen employing jiu-jitsu. Even at that New York audiences have laughed heartily at a terrific combat performed by the Japanese players.

25. Style cannot be employed to embellish your plot, as style is understood in fiction work. In photoplay your style is to be found in the manner in which you elaborate and strengthen your plot and in the degree of skill with which you make your action support your story. You have a good style if your plot development is good and the action that tells the plot gives the fullest value in dramatic or comedy effects as the circumstances may require. To become known as an author who writes good plays in good action is to establish yourself among the elect. Only by the exercise of the greatest care can you gain this reputation. You must not only write the plot with a punch

to it, but you must tell this plot in a succession of scenes each of which patterns after the plot in that it must possess climax and punch if it is to possess interest. Each scene must have a point at which it aims, if this aim is no more than to take a character across the scene. The more important scenes should also have a punch. Indeed it will be found that it is the punch that makes the scene important.

26. And lastly, remember in writing action that if your action is important and it is necessary that it be clearly conveyed to the audience, it is necessary to play that action on the photographic stage where it may be seen to the best advantage. This must be done without seeming to make an effort to bring the players down front. If for any reason you must play an action well up stage and cannot bring the players down front, create a new stage wherever they may happen to be by writing a close-up of that part of the scene. If the action is a big one, depending upon the action of players in the mass, it does not have to be played upon the photographic stage; but where the expression of the individual player is largely instrumental in conveying the meaning of the action to the spectator it is vital that this expression should be registered by the camera that the spectator may understand what it is about. If you can bring them down front do so. If you cannot, resort to a close-up. It is better to make a little trouble for the company than a great deal for the spectators the world over.

(2.XXVI:6 XLIII:19) (5.XXXI:12) (6.XXXVIII:14) (8.XXXI:11) (9.XXIV:26 XXXI:14) (11.IX:4 L:27 LVI:4) (12.XLIII:28) (15.XIV:16) (16.XXV:15) (20.XIX:12 XX:5) (21.XLV:4) (22.XLV:8) (23.XII:4) (25.XXIV:25) (26.III:8 XXXVIII:3).

CHAPTER XXXIV

FOOTAGE

PROBABLY the question most frequently asked by the student is as to the method by which the probable length of a story may be determined and generally the inquiry takes one of these three forms:

How many scenes make a reel?

How many words make a reel?

How many pages of script will make a reel?

Suppose that these questions be taken up in the order in which they are given above.

2. In the first place a reel is a spool on which film is wound and also a rough standard of measurement. A reel of film is supposed to be a length of one thousand feet, though it may fall as low as eight hundred. When subjects were released exclusively on program and an exchange took releases by days and not by subject and length, it

was necessary to have some clear understanding as to what was to be taken. It was necessary that the exhibitor who booked a three or four reel show should know about how much he was to receive, and the exchange men, who had to pay for film by the foot, should know how many feet they should be called upon to pay for, so the reel of one thousand feet was established, because that was about the length of film that could be contained in a projection machine in those days. With the coming of the feature and the arrival of the open market, this standard was retained as a convenience rather than a business necessity. The man who contracts for a five-reel subject knows that he will get about five thousand feet, and not much under or over. This is what reel means.

3. But you can measure film by the yard, though not action. Film is passed through the camera at the rate of sixteen frames a second. A frame is a single picture on the film. It is one inch wide and three-fourths of an inch high. Naturally there are sixteen frames to the foot. Film is made to be shown at the rate of sixteen frames a second. Unless the operator is in a hurry to get out early to meet the lady of his choice or the manager wants to get rid of one audience to make room for others, the film is passed through the projection machine at the rate of a foot a second. It follows that "foot" and "second" become interchangeable.

4. This is where exact estimate stops. You cannot tell that a given number of scenes will give you a reel of film. You may have a play with one scene or with one hundred and twenty and have a thousand feet. Some scenes have been made so short that you can barely see them, as they pass. The shortest on record was six frames. The longest ran about the length of a full reel, for there have been several plays produced as novelties that have been done in a single scene and even in a single scene with a single person. With a difference of more than nine hundred feet between extremes of length, it is obvious that the length of a film may not be measured by the number of scenes shown. Reference to Example A in the Appendix will show that the first reel runs thirty-one scenes. The second reel gives fifty-one. Both are about the same length in action and may be produced within the thousand foot length.

5. It is not even possible to average up and say "about" so many scenes of average length will make a reel. Some directors work their actors more rapidly than others. Some want swift, sharp action. Others play more deliberately. Two directors working the same script will bring in a footage that may differ by as much as a thousand feet to the reel. For that matter a director making the same script twice, using the same people and sets, may vary three or four hundred feet in the two productions. Very evidently with so wide a variance there can be no average length of scene, so that the scene in no way suggests or indicates the length of the subject.

6. One exception might be made to this. Many directors say that the story with two hundred scenes can be made into a five-reel play.

Note that they do not say that it "will make" but that it "can be made into" five thousand feet. In other words, if you have about forty scenes that are not cut back a director should be able to work your story into a reel, but one author who specialized in writing half-reel comedies for one company almost always sold them to another company for full reels if the first company did not take them.

7. The number of words has nothing to do with the length of the action. "Jack climbs up the ladder," suggests a much longer scene than "Jack falls off the ladder," but the number of words is the same. In A-1 in the Appendix scenes one and nine should take about the same footage. One has more than three times the number of words than the other.

8. Since the number of pages is roughly dependent upon the number of words, this is no more reliable as a guide.

9. In other words there is no way of determining or even approximating the length of action a script will run. Like the housekeeper who takes "a pinch" of this and "about so much" of that, you must come to learn about how much *story* should make a reel subject. Then you try to write that story in action that *should* take about a thousand feet, allowing for the inserts. This done you sell it and turn your head away to hide from your sight the ensuing butchery. This is not intended as a pleasantry. Until stories are permitted to run their natural lengths, there cannot but be a succession of literary abortions. A story that might be charming in fourteen hundred feet may be absolutely bad in a thousand. In the course of time you will come to the point where you will write by instinct a story that will go about a thousand feet to the reel in well played action, but more than this you cannot do. You can tell that this story has plot enough to hold the interest for two thousand feet and that this other should be worth five reels, and you can do your work accordingly, but closer than this you may not come.

10. Some writers profess to be able to time the action with a split second watch. This would be a good plan if all directors used precisely the same business the author did and if all directors always worked at the same speed, but if a director is listless he may let the action drag a little or if he is feeling particularly sprightly he may hurry the action. Usually this will serve only to give a rough idea and the student is apt to give more attention to the watch than to his action.

11. Some studios have tried the experiment of assigning to each scene a predetermined footage. The director and the manager of production, or either, will mark the footage on the scene. This scene is worth ten feet, this eighteen and so on. The total is struck and the footage added to or decreased until it comes to the right length. The scene is rehearsed with a stop watch and cut or amplified until it runs to schedule. In theory the idea is good, but in practice the method is too inflexible.

12. It is customary to allow from one to two hundred feet for in-

serts. It is possible to gauge these more accurately. A leader runs about a foot to the word with not less than three feet used. The single word leader will run three feet. So should the three word leader, though it is usually the custom to average up the words and count two small words as one. "The Curse of Gold," for instance, would be three words and not four and would probably get three feet. The title usually runs ten feet. The tailpiece, which is usually the Board of Review tag, runs ten or fifteen. If there is both a tailpiece and a censor tag allow the fifteen. Letters run from ten to twenty-five feet or even more. Enough time is supposed to be allowed to give the slow reader a chance to get through the text. Written letters stay on the screen longer than those typewritten. Inserts run from five to ten feet, or long enough to permit the matter to be comprehended. Newspaper inserts run long enough for the fact to be grasped, but not always long enough to permit the entire frame to be studied.

13. If you will roughly estimate the footage of all inserted matter you can tell about how much footage you have for your scenes, but it will never be better than a guess. It may be possible to drop some of your leaders, and if a director does not get a scene over a leader may have to be run to explain it. The only safe way as the matter stands is to give a one reel or two or three reel plot and about as much action as you think will be sufficient. More than that even the star writers cannot do.

(2.LVIII:3) (3.XXXVI:23) (4.XXXVIII:7 LVI:24) (5.V:7 XLVIII:24) (7.XXXI:14) (12.XXXVII:33).

CHAPTER XXXV

BUSTS

SELDOM can a story be told in straight pictured action. It must be told in action plus leader plus inserts and busts. Professor Hugo Münsterberg, writing in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, asserts that in the close-up, more properly the bust picture, "we have crossed a great esthetic line of demarkation and have turned to a form of expression which is entirely foreign to the real stage." And later, "we withdraw our attention from all which is unimportant and concentrate it on that one point on which the action is focused." It is scarcely possible to improve upon this definition of the bust picture, which is what the writer clearly means when he speaks of close-up. For that matter, many studios make no distinction between a close-up and the bust. As a matter of exact technique there is so much difference between the bust and the close-up that they seem to require a different term.

2. A bust is a detailed exposure of some *action*, not so large as to take in any considerable portion of the figure. This is what makes the distinction.

3. On the screen we see a full stage picture. A few men are sitting about a table; there are perhaps six. All of them are talking. One man gains the attention of the others. Interest is centered upon this person; the interest of the spectator as well as the interest of the players. Nothing else is noticed. But at this precise moment the real action that carries on the story is that one of these listeners drops into the pocket of a third man the revolver with which a murder has been done, knowing that presently the police will come. All interest is centered upon the man who is speaking. The action will not be noticed. Suddenly the picture changes. Now we see only the coat pocket of the man in the gray suit. As we watch, a hand steals into the picture and drops a pistol into the pocket. Before the hand can be withdrawn, the picture changes back to the full scene again. The speaker is still talking, the men at the table are still listening, but the spectators are all looking at the man in the gray suit and note that the man next him is completing the action of moving his arm away and resuming his natural position. You cannot help but notice what, in the large scene, would have been an action too casual to attract the attention of one person in a hundred. The scene would be written:

14. *Club room*—Jack sitting at right of Gregory. Henderson on his right—three others—Gregory speaks—all intensely interested—Jack most of all—Henderson looks about—takes gun from pocket—leans toward Jack.
15. *Bust*—of Jack's coat pocket—Henderson's hand comes into picture—drops gun into pocket—
16. *Back to No. 14*—Henderson draws away from Jack—Gregory goes on talking.

Now the action goes to the outside of the club with the police closing in, and comes back to the interior. The police burst in. There is a search, and Jack, to his surprise, finds the gun is in his pocket. The bust has made it plain how the weapon got there.

4. The bust may be an even smaller action. We see a man seated at a desk. He completes a paper. He reaches forward. Instead of the entire scene we see merely a very small section of the back of the desk. There is a miniature safe set into the central space, and this is fitted with a combination lock. We see him turn the combination. It is all so clear that the combination can be read. It is 3-9-7. The safe door opens. We go back to the larger scene. The man slips the paper into the safe and throws off the combination. Later on when we see another person go to the desk, we know about the safe and can understand what the man is doing. If the plot makes use of the combination, we know what the combination is, because we saw the safe opened. This would be written:

23. *Library*—Pommard at desk, writing—finishes paper—leans forward—starts to work on combination.
24. *Bust* of back of desk showing safe compartment and combination—Pommard's hand works knob—3-9-7—safe opens.
25. *Back to big scene*—Pommard puts paper in safe—closes—rises—exits.

It will be observed that the first example shows the scene reference as "back to No. 14." This reference says "back to big scene." It does not matter what the precise phrase is. It is enough to show that a return is made to a larger action.

5. Always there should be a return to the larger scene before the action passes elsewhere. The action in a bust is practically never the termination of a scene, and so the scene should be returned to, unless the bust stands alone.

6. Several examples of writing the bust are shown in A-9-10. In D the bust is merely a clock face, which might have been an insert save for the fact that the clock stood in the scene and the mantelpiece on which the clock stood was also shown. Since this made it necessary to use the taking camera, it was written as a bust. It is safer to make it an insert, as a rule, but the script from which this page is taken was written for a certain director. He wanted a bust and it was so written.

7. In the first example in this chapter, the bust is used to give emphasis to an action that otherwise might pass unnoticed. The second example shows the use of the bust to explain what is too small to be seen or understood in the larger scene. There is a third form of bust used to explain a minute action rather than an object. Perhaps Mrs. Smith-Jones has been playing bridge with unfortunate results. She dares not tell her husband. She sells her diamond solitaire and has it replaced with a paste stone. We see her at the jeweler's and at the proper moment the jeweler goes to his bench. We cannot see what he does until a bust makes it clear that he is replacing one stone with another. Then when he hands the ring and some money to the owner we know precisely what has been done without an explanatory leader.

8. Another useful function of the bust is to serve as a cutback and at the same time permit changes to be made. Perhaps the scene shows a rectory. The rector is looking over the old records. From the run of the story we know that he is making a search for the record of the marriage of Sue's mother to the young son of a millionaire. His eyesight is poor and he uses a reading glass. The action runs.

51. *Study*—Rector enters—looks at letter—takes down book—goes to table where the sunlight will give him plenty of illumination. Takes up reading glass—turns over several pages—smiles—nods.
52. *Bust* of page of book—record of marriages—text reads Jan. 12, 1888, Richard Bromley, bachelor, to Susan Page, spinster. Reading glass shows in bust.
53. *Front of Rectory*—George and Sue come to door—ring.
54. *Study*—Rector hears bell—puts down glass near book—rises—exits.
55. *Front of Rectory*—George and Sue waiting—Rector comes to door—speaks.
56. *Study*—Wisp of smoke coming from book—barely seen.
57. *Bust* of book—Glass focused on book—charring page.
58. *Front of Rectory*—Rector invites George and Sue in. All enter.

59. *Study*—book now blazing—Rector, George and Sue enter—Rector points—exclaims—George starts forward—smothers flame—
60. *Bust* of book—pages charred—
61. *Study*—George in despair—Sue cries—Rector picks up reading glass—explains how it happened—George and Sue turn and leave—Rector follows.

It might seem to be rather a long run of action, but some of those busts are but two or three seconds long. Perhaps the scene is being made in an electric studio. It would not be possible to actually set fire to the book through the use of a burning glass. Making the busts, the scene may be tricked. The first time the book is shown as described. The second time a solution of saltpetre will be dropped on the book where the light is focused and dried. Just before the bust is made, this will be touched with a match and the smoldering effect will be obtained. In fifty-nine the page is sprinkled with a powder that will give a yellow and clearly perceptible smoke and in the last bust the charred pages will be shown. The bust not only makes the entire happening clear, but it permits the effect to be handled. In a large scene played continuously the page might catch fire too quickly or too slowly, and it would require a careful placing of the glass.

9. In Chapter XXXI is shown an action in which a man gets a pistol from a desk drawer. There it is written in full action. It would be better to play this as three scenes, interpolating a bust. Take the scene this way:

48. *Den as in No. 23*—Giles on, reading—Ben enters through the window at rear—for a moment Giles does not realize his presence, but slowly he seems to sense the presence of another person—he looks up, but not at the window—it is as though he feared to turn around—slowly he forces himself to do so—it is evident that he does this only through a violent effort of his will—He turns until he sees Ben—he starts up, throwing back his chair as he does so—Ben comes down to the opposite side of the table—where he stands for a moment without speaking—Giles steps to table—his hands appear to be groping for something.
49. *Bust* of table with partly opened drawer—gun showing in drawer—Giles' hands groping for it—he grasps it.
50. *Back to No. 48*—Giles whips out revolver—he presents at Ben's breast—with a sudden lunge Ben leans across table and grasps Giles' hand—turns the weapon against Giles' own breast—a shot—Giles gasps, strangles—sinks slowly to floor—Ben turns to window to escape—Grace suddenly appears at window—she is silhouetted against the moonlight, standing so that it is seen that she has a revolver.

Two objects are accomplished here. The tension of scene is broken through the interpolation of the bust. The scene of the two men facing each other across the table is dramatic only for so long as the strain is not too great. Maintain the pose too long and it may impress the spectators as being humorous. Taking no risk, we break to

the bust and provide a fresh development that makes the former position all the stronger. In addition it prepares the spectator for the presentation of the gun. Unless Giles in the single scene should make such an obvious effort to reach the gun that the spectator wonders why Ben does not see, the action might pass unnoticed and the sudden presentation of the weapon would be so rapid that Giles might be suspected of performing a sleight of hand trick. The sudden presentation of the gun will give surprise. The knowledge that the gun was there will be anticipation realized. Of the two the latter is apt to be more striking.

10. With the bust as with all special devices, a sparing use is to be recommended. These special forms are your little bag of tricks. Do not make them too common lest they lose their value through constant showing. A play that is a succession of special effects is seldom as interesting as one in which the interest is procured through story and heightened through the use of these devices. They will not give great value to the poor story. They will not render it acceptable. They will, however, heighten the effect that they cannot create. An appreciation of this difference should be carried in mind always. If you bang the bassdrum all through the overture, you have nothing left for your climax.

11. It is not always easy to decide whether a picture is a bust, a close-up or an insert. Indeed some studios apply close-up to anything that is not a full scene. In Mr. Lusk's script (G) written in accordance with the Eastern Universal usage, it will be seen that in 146 he designates as close-up what more properly would be termed an insert, while in 148 he calls a true close-up by the same name. Other studios use bust to designate a small scene which may be made against a single flat or in a corner formed by two flats. Such a use is shown in A-3, scenes three to six. This is an ancient usage and is giving place to the more correct term of close-up.

12. The best test is that a bust is a small action showing but a small portion of the body of a person or of two persons, a magnification of some small action or an insert made in the scene with the taking camera because it is necessary to show the surrounding portions of the scene, or because it is necessary to show some precise position. A hand holding a watch to show the time would be made an insert, because any hand could be used to display the watch. If the watch is to be shown against the clothing of the player, then it is best made at the time the scene is taken. It is better, however, to write it as an insert and leave it optional with the director whether he makes it a bust or an insert as suggested in paragraph six of this chapter. It is best to write as an insert any inanimate object and to make a bust of any action however slight.

(1.XXXVIII:2 & 19) (4.XXX:15) (7.XLVIII:34) (9.XXV:19
XXXI:14 XLVII:9) (11.XXXVI:27) (12.XXX:25).

CHAPTER XXXVI

INSERTS

NEXT in pictorial value to the bust comes the insert, which differs from the bust in that it does not picture action. It also differs from the bust in that it is not made in the scene but by a special department, usually known as the title or leader room. This department generally has its own camera and cameraman. Here the titles for the plays are prepared as well as the leaders. Here, too, the other inserts are made. Generally there is a frame into which the camera can be fitted to shoot directly downward. This is used where there is a letter to be written while the film is running, and it is also useful in photographing pages of books and the like.

2. An insert does not split a scene, because, like the cut-in, it is inserted into the scene after the scene schedule is prepared. Generally the negative is marked so that each print of a scene shows a cross mark where the film is to be cut away. There is one where the scene is cut and another where it is resumed. In between is marked the number of the insert and the same number is marked on the insert. With this the author has nothing to do, the information being given here to make understandable the process and the reason why an insert does not break a scene into two parts. *An insert is NOT numbered by the author.* It is numbered by the leader room when it is finally decided how many inserts there are to be and what these consist of.

3. The simplest form of insert is the letter. This is merely a sheet of white paper upon which is written a note, generally in dead black ink. Some companies go to considerable trouble to make their letters seem real. Various kinds of letter paper are used to suit the supposed status of the correspondent and the entire sheet is seen, sometimes being held by a hand. Other companies prepare all letters on a sheet that will completely fill the frame and all persons apparently have the same style of penmanship. One company is so careless in this respect that the reply to a letter will be shown in the identical handwriting. Here, again, the author has nothing to say. He merely provides the text of the letter and asks that it be done in a certain way. He does not provide the letters that are to be photographed. He does not provide the note paper. He merely writes into the scene the text of the letter and leaves the rest to the studio.

4. Letters are useful in establishing facts. They serve the same purpose as the printed leader, but are less of an interruption. Letters require greater footage, but they can carry more than one fact. A personage in the play sits down and dashes off a letter. "Dashes off" is the proper phrase, for most letters are written with undue haste. In proper form the action, as soon as the writer starts, will be replaced by the letter on the screen. Perhaps it reads:

Dear Jack: I'll have to cut out the poker tonight. The rich Miss Peters will be at my sister's, and I'm to meet her. More money than in poker and no risk. When I think of how my creditors are pressing me—
Yours,

CLYDE.

That runs twenty or twenty-five feet, but it tells a lot. In the first place, we now know that the name of the man is Clyde. We know, too, that he is a gambler, that he is in desperate need of money, that he is going to marry for money to escape his creditors, that his proposed victim is Miss Peters and that his sister is helping him. In an early scene the identities and relations of the sister and Miss Peters are made clear, and perhaps in some other scene we know that the man receiving this note is Jack, that he, too, is a gambler and a friend of Clyde.

5. This is a lot of information to get into twenty-five feet, so it is evident that the letter is one of the most useful devices in photoplay. It is precisely because the device is so useful that the author should guard against its too frequent use. It is so handy that some plays by novice writers are little more than a succession of letters joined and in some degree illustrated by action.

6. Perhaps we see a girl in a room. She sits down and writes:

Dear Mabel: I have had such an adventure! I met the most delightful man. He is Henry Smith, son of the rich banker. I am utterly fascinated by him.
Yours,

MARY.

A couple of scenes later the author remembers that he has failed to explain that Mary has a fiancé. He rushes her over to a convenient desk and she writes:

Dear Fanny: I am so sorry for poor George. I love him dearly, but he is not wealthy, and I do not think I could be happy with a poor man. I think I shall marry the rich Henry Smith.
Yours,

MABEL.

In the next scene we see Mary packing a suitcase. We do not know where she is going, but we do not worry. We watch the desk and presently she sits down and turns out this neat epistle:

Dear Susie: I have just remembered that I promised to pay a visit to Aunt Lucy, so I am hurrying off to Joyburg. Henry Smith is visiting friends there.
Yours,

MARY.

This sort of thing keeps up until Mary gets writer's cramp or wins Henry. She is as likely to stop between the bathhouse and the ocean to send a souvenir postal to some girl friend that she is going in bathing with Henry as she is to tarry in the vestibule of the church to send a telegram to some friend advising her that in three minutes she will be Mrs. Smith.

7. This sort of script soon develops into a joke. No woman ever sat down and poured out her soul to her friends, even to oblige an author.

and no woman ever wrote that sort of letter. She might tell some friend in particular some few facts, but these brief bulletins are absurd and will be accepted as a travesty. Letters should be used on the screen only where there exists some legitimate excuse for the writer addressing some absent person. It should be shown or understood that there is a good reason why a letter should be written and then the letter should be the sort of note that such a person would write in real life, not a single postcard fact, but a real letter, only a part of which, showing the essential fact, need be given on the screen. This may be the opening, the close or any part of the middle. Since a woman often puts the real letter in the form of a postscript, only the signature may be shown with the addition. Just what part is to be shown depends upon the fact the author wishes to convey.

8. If it is desired to show that the writer is at home and that the name of the correspondent is Jane, then the essential fact will open the letter, which will run:

Home, Tuesday.

Dear Jane: At last I can pay you that visit, as Daddy and Tom are going south and I shall be left all alone. I shall be with you Tuesday, if this will be convenient to you.

This letter tells the name of the recipient, tells that the writer is in her own home but presently will make a visit, and by inference we gather that she is motherless, since the departure of her father and brother will leave her alone in the house. We know where the two men are going and we can gather that they are wealthy, since to go south argues money for carfare.

9. The best method of marking in the letter is shown in F-1, rather than the examples in A, where it is supposed that the text will show whether the letter is in a masculine or feminine handwriting. Mr. Lang's example is more precise and therefore to be recommended. There may be added further description if required as:

Letter in woman's handwriting—only paragraph is essential.

Letter in man's handwriting, only greeting and part of first paragraph.

Letter in woman's handwriting, signature and postscript.

Typewritten letter.

Letter on printed head as shown.

In writing in the letter, the Lang form may be used ("insert letter") or it may be written as shown in A-6. Here "on screen" is employed in place of "insert." It does not matter which you use. It is generally better to number the scene in the margin and to take the "Insert" or "On screen" out in the margin, too. This permits the inserts to be picked up more readily, though underscoring the line will suffice. The extended line is shown in scene forty-one, Example B.

10. Where the insert is but a portion of a letter, it is customary to write some material to go above and below to carry out the suggestion of a running letter and not an isolated paragraph. In such a case the essential material should be indicated in some manner. Perhaps the

best way is to underscore that portion of the letter that must be used. This shows the best way of writing it in, the matter set in italics being the part to be underscored in writing on the machine:

On screen—letter in woman's handwriting—Essential fact underlined, use only enough of the rest to fill frame.
so I shall say no more about that.

You probably remember Jack Taylor, whom we met in New York. Mazie writes that he is engaged to Helen Graham. I always thought he rather fancied you. That means another present out of my allowance, the third this month. I shall have to speak to Father.

In preparing the letter the short line above will be written, then the essential fact and as much more as may be needed to fill out the frame, which may be two more words or the entire paragraph.

11. Where the character of the handwriting is a part of the local color, the information should be given, though some companies will not use letters that depart from a standard form. They will not, for example, use a letter scrawled in illiterate form. This has already been alluded to in paragraph three, but it is best to indicate what you require for the benefit of the more careful producers, as

Typewritten letter. Portions underscored to be written in ink as correction.

Letter in child's unformed handwriting.

Letter in man's handwriting. Very illiterate.

Letter on scrap of paper, crumpled, and then straightened out.

It is not unlikely that the company will ignore these directions, but your conscience will be clear.

12. In letters with printed business heads, you merely indicate the matter to appear, writing in the copy without more than a rough suggestion of the arrangement. The title room will send the order to its own printer for the heads. You do not offer to supply them nor do you send letterheads of some firm on which the matter may be written. In writing such an insert you word it in this manner:

On screen—letter with business head. Typewritten

Herrick and Brown
Brokers
728 Wall Street
New York City

J. H. Brewster, Jason Apartments, City.

Dear sir: Unless you at once arrange to settle your unpaid account of \$356,792 we shall be compelled to proceed against you.

Respectfully,

HERRICK & BROWN,

F.K./M.S.

Per Samuels.

The letterheads will be printed up and then typed.

13. In selecting names and addresses, do not use the name of any person or firm known to exist or make use of an actual address. If

you need a street number take that belonging to some church or public building or a number higher than is known to exist. There is no 728 Wall Street in New York, so no landlord can enter a "strike" suit. This is even more important where a residential address is used.

14. Next to the letter the telegram is most useful; perhaps it is even more useful, *when it can properly be employed*, because of the brevity with which it is written, but a telegram must not be used merely because it is brief, but because the situation seems to require a telegram instead of a letter.

15. In writing in the telegram you tell whether it is a straight message, a night or a day letter, and write the message accordingly. You do not give the check marks, but you do give the point of transmission, the date, the address of the recipient, the message and the signature. The company will supply the rest.

16. As a general thing it is better to show the letter or other written message at the time of its preparation and not at the time of its receipt. This is because there is a certain curiosity on the part of the spectator as to what the message is, and if he is permitted to remain, in darkness as to the contents he will divide his thought between the story and the insert. If more than one letter is used, or if the letter is shown again some time after its writing, it is better to show it again, not at length but as a flash as will be explained presently. (Paragraph 24.)

17. Wills, mortgages, bonds, deeds and similar instruments may be shown in section or in indorsement. If it is merely the purpose of the author to show that a paper is a will and not a deed it is sufficient to show the back of the paper on which is written the indorsement. You do not write that the will is shown but say:

On screen—folded paper marked

Last Will
and
Testament
of
Jared Jackson

This is all you have to do with the matter. The title room will get one of the law blanks ready printed for that purpose and fill this in properly. It is the same way with all other legal documents. They may be had ready printed, merely requiring to be filled in. In the same way most studios will have the bond books of some defunct company or some old bonds which can be altered to suit the circumstances.

18. If you wish to show the body of the instrument it will be necessary to indicate just what you want. For this purpose some book on legal forms intended for lay use such as might be comprehended under some such title as *Law at a Glance* will be useful in showing you what to write. If you prefer you can get a form from your local stationer and copy this. You do not send the blank with the script.

19. Newspaper clippings are also useful and have the added merit

of legibility. Horace Grayson comes to the breakfast table and picks up the paper. He lets his coffee grow cold while he reads that the Third National Bank has had to close its doors. It is not required that you show the entire article. In so important an item of news the headline will give a complete resume of facts, and it is necessary only to read the headline, or part of it, to get all of the facts that the story requires. The mere announcement of the run may be sufficient, but it will be necessary to show on the screen enough of the heading to fill the frame. You get a copy of the morning paper, study the heads, select the one most suitable and pattern after this. It should be remembered that the importance of the item will govern the display made of the facts. Heads run all the way from a single line covering two or three lines of print to headlines that cross the paper and tell of some fact of nation-wide importance. You do not put a one-line head on an important story merely because it is easier to write. You proportion your head to the story. The foregoing item would have at least a two-column head, though it might run only one column. If the latter, you pick out an important looking one-column headline and write one like it. Then you write your scene thus:

16. *Dining room—table set for breakfast—Horace enters—sits—Butler brings paper—Horace reads a moment—startled—pushes back from table.*

On screen—One column newspaper head.

THIRD NATIONAL
CLOSES DOORS

Financial Enterprise Unable to Withstand Big Run

Bank Examiner in Charge

President Howell announces that bank should pay depositors in full within three years.

Horace rises—greatly agitated—calls for hat and coat—Butler brings—

Horace exits—Butler looks at paper—shakes head—a bad business.

It is possible that not all of the heading may be gotten on the screen, for a single column, four bank head is longer than it is wide and the frame is the reverse. A two column head would work better in the space if we have reason to believe that the item will be worth two columns as a news item. In writing the two column heading it is necessary to allow for the shrinkage in proportions and to give a little matter that rises at the top of each column, working in this manner:

On screen—Two column newspaper heading.
 Third National Closes Doors
 Following Sensational Run

Bank Examiner Belding Declares Institution Insolvent

Officials, denying reports of mismanagement, state that the bank will pay depositors in full within three years.

Meeting of stockholders this morning.

Yesterday's sensation in financial circles was the run on the Third National Bank that resulted in the appearance of Bank Examiner Belding on the scene.	denied emphatically that there was any foundation for these reports and declared that suits for criminal libel would be brought could the source of these reports be learned.
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In setting all this type it will not be expected that all will be read, but since the timing of the insert gives sufficient footage (time) for the slow readers to get the sense of the main facts, the rest is given that the rapid reader may keep on until the insert is replaced by action. There must be the suggestion of a complete clipping and not merely the essential line. Since this is a two column story, parts of the top of the first and second columns are given. If the script clearly shows that only the fact that the bank has closed its doors is required to be conveyed to the spectator, not more than ten feet will be allowed, but the entire frame must be filled with proper text.

20. Lesser items may be shown, with a one or two line head or merely a paragraph from the body of the article or a paragraph in a column of paragraphs. Anything that can be printed in a paper can be shown on the screen, but the text must be prepared in newspaper style.

21. Books can also be shown, either titles or selections from the pages of a real or imaginary book. If you want to show the cover of an imaginary book, one supposed to have been written by some person in the play, perhaps, you merely write:

On screen—Book (closed) showing title "She loved too well" by Gerald Cox.

The title room will call on the property room for a book with this titling. The property man will take any novel that happens to be on hand, paint over the cover and letter on the new title. If you wish to quote from the book, you write in the passage and this may be printed and photographed, or an entire page may be set up and pasted into some other book should this be necessary. As the former is more convenient, you ask for that unless you require that the page shall show.

22. Music should not be used. A bar of a song may be shown if it is desired to present the words, but the melody will not be realized by all and should not be given alone. Where music is called for it should be a part of a song to be had anywhere or else should be manuscript music, though at least one company has gone to the expense of having a page of music set up.

23. All printed or written inserts should be brief. This is not alone on account of the saving in footage. There is another and perhaps more valid reason for brevity. As has been explained, the length of time an insert remains on the screen is determined by the length of time it will probably take a person not used to rapid reading to decipher it. An insert that remains on the screen twenty-five feet (seconds) will be read by many in ten seconds. For fifteen more these nimble minded persons must sit and stare at the screen while others more laboriously spell out the words. Fifteen seconds of inaction on the screen may be interminably long. Take an insert requiring fifty feet and the quick reader has a full half minute wait. And precisely because the spectator is quick of thought he will chafe most at the delay.

24. Inserts should be read but once. They are written into the script but once. If they are required to be shown again, either to freshen the memory or to show what particular document is being handled if there are two or more, the second and succeeding times the insert is "flashed." This means that it is shown on the screen only two or three seconds; not long enough to delay the action, but merely to identify. To recall such an insert you write:

47. *Library*—Jackson and Philip on—Jackson opens drawer and takes out a letter file—selects a paper and hands to Philip, who reads.

On screen—Flash of letter from No. 28.

Philip nods—puts letter in pocket book—rises—farewell—exits.

It is not necessary here to repeat the letter. It is shown in full in scene twenty-eight. If it is again flashed in a later scene, the reference is still to twenty-eight and not to forty-seven. Just as a single name only is used for any character, so a letter has but a single identity.

25. Should it happen that there is any change in the insert, then this change must be explained. This change may affect the paper or the writing, but a description will suffice and it does not require the making of a second insert. The original is photographed and then treated as the directions require. A few examples will serve to show the mode of explanation.

On screen—Letter as in No. 26, but now folded and worn on the creases through having been carried in Ben's pocket book.

On screen—Letter as in No. 26, but now carrying an indorsement in a man's handwriting "I found this in Helen's desk May 8, 1912."

On screen—Map as in No. 29, but now burned on one corner so as to hide the location of the mine.

On screen—Will as in No. 17, but all dirty through having been in the ash barrel.

On screen—Note as in No. 38, but now torn into bits and pasted on another sheet of paper.

All of these will be made from the original insert so it is still the insert "as in" the original number with the "but" added to indicate the change.

26. Anything that may be written or printed may be used as a statement insert. The handbill pasted to a blank wall may be shown as an insert that it may be read, the card in a window, the sign above the door or the blotting pad from the desk held before a mirror may all be inserts. It should be remembered, however, that these inserts will all have to be translated into many tongues as the film travels. The London selling agencies may make new leaders and inserts in ten or fifteen languages. French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian leaders are almost certain to be required; other languages and dialects may also be used. The translation of slang and catchwords sometimes gives rise to strange errors, while the re-making of a book or signboard insert may a dozen times materially reduce the profits of a sale.

27. In a second class of inserts come the objects, closely akin to bust pictures, but differing from them in that they do not possess action. As explained in the preceding chapter, the question of the ability of the title room to make the insert determines its classification.

28. An object insert is anything that may be shown, such as a locket, photograph, revolver, knife or anything you need to show in detail. The knife may be shown in the enlarged view because it is blood-stained, because it has the hero's initials or because we saw the villain using the same knife several scenes previously. Anything that is too small to show in the big scene is made an insert just as any *action* too small to show is made a bust.

29. Inserts must be clearly but not too minutely described. If any six-shooter will do, you do not ask that it be pearl handled, but you do say that it must have six marks or nicks on the butt. That is what you are showing it for. You do not say that a locket is heart-shaped and about two by two and a half inches when any locket will serve. The property man may make the "locket" by putting an old oval frame around an enlarged portrait of the persons shown instead of reducing the portrait to fit a locket, or perhaps a clay frame will be modeled around an eight by ten portrait reproducing the locket the hero or heroine is seen to wear. You tell in a general way what the object should be and specify just what you must have. The locket is perhaps unimportant. You say "a locket." It is important that it shall be diamond shaped and you call for a diamond-shaped locket.

30. About the only objects that cannot be made into inserts are products of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and the United States Mints. This applies with equal force to money, medals or

revenue or other stamps. It makes no difference that you do not imagine that a photographic reproduction of a dollar bill less than half an inch long will be of service to counterfeiters. The law says that no reproduction may be made and the law is enforced. There would probably be no objection made to the passing of real money in a scene, but you can not have the detectives mark a bill that is to be used to trap a blackmailer and then show the marking. One old subject showed a porter being tipped by an old woman. He looks at the coin and holds it up. It is a one-cent piece. The insert showed the coin held between the fingers. The insert had to be replaced by a leader. A box of cigars or a cigar box must have the revenue stamp removed or be shown so that the stamp is not photographed.

31. It is permissible and sometimes effective to dissolve inserts. Here the dissolve is written as a part of the insert. It is not made a separate insert. For example:

37. *Den*—Harry on—lost in thought—rouses—takes frame from desk—looks at it.
On screen—Frame with Ethel's picture—it dissolves into the face of a vampire.
 Harry throws the picture from him in disgust—turns and pours out another drink.

With such an insert the director will photograph the player of Ethel in a pretty pose and then photograph her as the vampire in the same pose. When he has made the scene, he will send the frame and the two photographs to the title room and the dissolve will be made there.

32. If you call for something very unusual and a thing that may not be duplicated by the property man, and if you have some such object in your possession, you do not send it with the script, but if you have reason to believe that the property cannot be obtained and its lack will perhaps prevent the sale of your script, you may, if you wish, add a note, after the scene, and not after the insert, stating that you have such an object and are willing to lend it on request. Then send it only if you are asked and not merely because a company has purchased the script. Apart from this there is no use in offering to loan object inserts, and to offer to do so is merely to betray your ignorance.

33. Inserts are valuable in evading the excessive use of leader. But you must also avoid an excess of inserts. You can not and must not raise every small object to an insert any more than you should raise every small action to a bust. Show objects in detail only when it is absolutely necessary to the understanding of your story. The use of a letter may avoid an overlong leader and make the presentation of fact more acceptable, but this holds good only when there is not an excess of letters. It is always better to show a fact in action than in a letter or other insert, and often this can be done.

34. Suppose you have a comedy based on the superstition that

Friday the thirteenth is doubly unlucky. Your first impulse may be to have your hero take his pen in hand and indite some such letter as this:

Friday the 13th.

Dear Henry: This is double-hoodoo day. I wonder what will happen to me before the day is over. I thought I would drop you a line and ask how you are. Yours,
BILL.

This is clumsy as well as stupid. No one is going to become interested in a story that starts off like that, the Editor least of all. Put as much as you can into a leader. Write it:

1. *Office*—Bill and Tom on—working—Bill upsets ink well—yells—uses blotter—Tom laughs—points to wall.

On screen—Day to a page calendar showing Friday the 13th.

Bill looks—looks at desk—no wonder he spilled the ink—knocks book off desk accidentally—Tom laughs—Bill throws the book at him—Tom dodges—it hits the Boss, who is just entering.

That takes the spectator into the spirit of the play. It starts him right, and now he is in a mood for what follows. You have sounded a keynote. All you have to do is to hold to the key. It may require a little more study to plan that sort of action, but the extra study is what will bring the checks.

35. Do not make your inserts help you out of tight places. Do not let your story get you into tight places and then you can make the natural and effective use of leaders, displaying your skill and not your stupidity.

(2.XXXI:2) (4.XXXVII:7) (13.XXIX:18) (16.XLIV:5)
(23.XXXIV:3) (24.XXXIX:2) (26.XXXVII:40) (27.XXXV:11).

CHAPTER XXXVII

LEADERS AND CUT-INS

LEADER is the frankest form of explanatory matter. It is something that cannot be conveyed to the audience in any of the more subtle methods, but must be announced through the printed placard. In a minor way it is also used as the act drop. It is the printed matter that you see upon the screen. Sometimes it comes between two scenes. In this form it is known as a straight leader. Generally this is used for the conveyance of some fact that is supposed to occur between the previous and the succeeding scene. This may be, and generally is, a statement of fact announced and not spoken. If it relates some fact about the characters, it is termed a fact leader. If it relates to the passage of time, it is a time leader. If it is used to make definite the end of one development of action and the commencement of a second or to serve to interrupt a scene for any reason, then it is

called a break leader, but always it is written merely leader and not with the class description.

2. If the leader is placed directly in a scene, generally as the spoken words of some character, then it is termed a cut-in leader, and is written "cut-in." It is still a leader, but it is termed a cut-in because the joining girl takes a pair of scissors and cuts the scene to permit its insertion. Cut-in leaders are generally employed where possible, for the double reason that they are less intrusive than the straight leader and because they permit the fact advanced to be withheld until the proper moment.

3. Leader has other names, for each studio has its own practice. Leader is the more general form, but sub-title is also used, as is caption. It was at one time proposed to call it "interscription," but so far as is known only one man—the inventor—ever used the term.

4. It is admitted that none of the terms employed to designate this device is accurate. A leader is not a leader, nor is it a sub-title. Until the correct designation is presented it serves well enough to call it leader since all Editors and directors know what is meant by the term. Mr. Lang seems to have achieved the proper term for the cut-in. Reference to scene ten in F-1 will show the designation "spoken insert." This is precisely what it is, but until usage becomes more general, it is probable that they will continue to be called cut-ins.

5. The Kalem company, which is extraordinarily exact in all of the technique of the insert, uses italics for the spoken leader and no frame, while straight leaders are given a border and are printed in Roman. They show the other inserts as they appear on the screen. If a letter in the scene is folded twice, when it is seen in insert that, also, is folded twice.

6. The play without a leader is the ideal play, because here there is no interruption to the action. But there is seldom found a subject so adaptable to this idea that a leader is not required. And please note that when you proudly present a studio with a "leaderless" script, and the Editor sees that several leaders are needed but absent, you are not credited with cleverness but the reverse. The leaderless script is not one that has no leaders, but one which does not require the slightest explanation. The difference is marked. The object to be aimed at is not the leaderless script, but one containing as few leaders as possible, yet one which contains every leader that is necessary to a perfect understanding of the play. The leaderless script would be ideal, but it is seldom, if ever, achieved.

7. The objection to the leader is to be found in the fact that it is an interruption to the play. The action is running along when suddenly the picture is replaced by words. You must stop thinking about the picture and read the words. Then you must apply the fact obtained to the story before you can resume interest in the unfolding of the narrative. Each time a leader flashes you must adjust your mind to the fact and readjust it to the story. This mental operation may require from one to three seconds, depending

upon the quickness of perception in the individual and the clearness and the importance of the fact advanced.

8. The cut-in is less interrupting than the straight fact leader because it is supposed to be the speech of one of the characters. It is more natural and therefore less disturbing.

9. There is one other objection to the leader in that a fact presented in words is never so striking as one presented in action. This is the reason that the motion picture has taken so important a part in educational work, though only a beginning has been made in this direction.

10. It is never good form to begin a play with a leader. In the first place the audience expects to see a picture follow a title. Another reason is that some operators "thread up" or start the picture on the first pictured action and the leader is still more completely lost. In spite of this you will see many pictures that start with a leader, just as you will see most of the fundamental rules of technique violated constantly on the screen.

11. Some companies introduce their characters by means of leader. The title may be followed by a leader which says:

John Jones and his sister, Susie.

John and Susie strut across the scene. Then a leader comes:

John's sweetheart, Nellie Brown, and her father, Farmer Brown.

We take a look at them and then we are introduced to

Bill Bradley, a mechanic, John's rival.

We look with interest upon Mr. Bradley and he gives place to someone else, and so on until the characters have all been dragged in. Then the play starts.

12. This is wasteful of footage and an insult to the intelligent patron of the photoplay. Let the action suggest the relationship and use the leader to give names where names must be known to the spectator to the understanding of the story. If you cannot write a five-foot scene that will show that John and Nellie are sweethearts and that he is a farmer and she a farmer's daughter, it will be well to stop writing plays until you have learned to do so.

13. A second form of introduction was devised by Horace G. Plimpton for the Edison company at a time when the use of programs was less common and when identities were just becoming known. This was the sectional program. There was no parade across the stage, but when a new character was to be introduced a leader was thrown to read:

John.....Horace Brown
 Laura, his sweetheart.....Nettie Green.

At the time, the advertisement of the names was acceptable because it was the only form in which this information could be obtained.

Today it is almost always possible to identify the player of the part, and the cast name is unimportant. These two forms of leader are treated here, not that they may be adopted, but that their use may be decried.

14. The use of either form will waste from fifty to two hundred feet of film or even more, for which absolutely no return in effect is gained. It is that much footage thrown away: not always a serious matter in an under-developed multiple-part story, but wasteful if it represents one-fourth of the total footage.

15. Instead of a catalogue, get leaders that will tell without seeming to be for any other purpose. A leader that reads:

John tells Nellie of his intended trip to the city.

tells the names and adds a plot fact. We know now that the man and woman are John and Nellie and that John is going to the city. We can see from the way she acts that she does not want him to go.

16. The legitimate and only logical reason for a leader is that it can tell in the smallest footage a fact that cannot be conveyed in action. You can show in action that John and Nellie are sweethearts. You cannot show in action *in that scene* that he is going away. You need the fact in that scene to make the action clear. It is given as a leader. It is better to say:

John tells Nellie he fears the taint of insanity in his family.

than to have him look serious and fade in fifty feet of vision showing that most of the family in previous generations died in madhouses. The fact is not only shorter but it is more emphatic, hence the leader is to be preferred. You save forty-two feet and a possible misunderstanding.

17. In the beginning the straight leader was the only form employed, and those who early saw the value of the cut-in leader were regarded as being too radical. Now it is not only recognized, but is used by everyone. It is cut into the scene as any other insert is placed in position as described in the last chapter, and is written with quotation marks to show that it is a speech. Others than Kalem use a different style of type for the cut-in, generally some form of italic or else a lighter line letter than is used for the straight leaders.

18. The Hall leader, invented by Emmett Campbell Hall, and introduced by the Lubin company in 1915, consists of a white letter leader superimposed upon the action of the scene. Instead of the action vanishing to give place to the printed word, the words came upon the screen as the action continued. It was found that the action was apt to prove of more interest than the leader, though the action was largely obscured. In theory the superimposing of the leader was less of a shock than the withdrawal of the action, but the idea was dropped after its first use, though it may be revived at any time.

19. The entire effort of the student of photoplay is to avoid the

shock of interruption as much as possible, and it has been found that the speech of someone in the play will be less intrusive, because it seems to be a part of the scene, than the straight or before-the-scene leader. It has, however, an additional advantage. The straight leader applying to a scene generally exposes that scene in advance and deprives the action of any suspense. Perhaps a leader will announce that

Smith declares that his daughter shall never marry a Jones.

Now the scene is known in advance. Jim is going to come in and ask Smith for Maud's hand and Smith is going to throw him out. There is no speculation save as to the precise manner in which Jones is thrown out. The interest is mild. All we have to do is to wait for the expected to happen. We know it is going to happen, so we want to get it over with.

20. By cutting in the leader we hold back the fact until the moment when it will produce the most effect. The scene opens and we are in doubt. We have seen Jim and Maud plight their troth. We can see that Jim is nervous. Now we come to a scene in the Smith library. Old man Smith is sitting there. Maud pushes Jim into the room and stands by the door, ready to open it in a hurry if she has to. Jim advances to Smith. He speaks. The old man starts up, raves a moment, turns on Jim and for the first time we learn there is a feud between the Smiths and the Joneses. Now it really is a surprise and comes at the point where the surprise will have its greatest value. The scene would be written.

31. *Library*—Smith on—door opens—Maud pushes Jim through—Jim scared—she gives him a push toward Smith—Jim goes up to him—speaks—Smith jumps up—raves—turns to Jim—says

Cut-in—"My daughter shall never marry a Jones."

Maud cries—Jim tries to argue—Smith grabs him by neck—
 • pushes him to door—kicks him through—Maud starts to follow—Smith grabs her—tries to prevent—she pushes him over—exits after Jim.

This gives seven words against ten. It does much more than that, however. It preserves the suspense and avoids interruption. Just as the letter seems to be a part of the action and not an interruption, so does it seem natural to see what Smith says.

21. Properly the cut-in replaces the speech. It is what Smith says at the time we are reading his words, and it is crude and inartistic to offer both the speech in action and the speech in words, but there are many directors who still persist in having the player mouth the speech and then printing it on the screen. The presumption is that the speech is important and the player can get good expression, but in practice it is much akin to listening to the interpretation of a speech pronounced in a foreign tongue with which we are familiar. We get both the original and the translation.

22. In an earlier edition of this work and some later books on the subject, it was advised that the words "Back to scene" follow the cut-in. This was done merely because it was done. No better reason can be advanced. It is only common sense to argue that if the action immediately following the use of a speech or other insert relates to the same scene that the action must return to that scene. A scene should never stop on a cut-in leader or on any insert. There should always be a return to that scene if only for a moment. Some studios even omit the prefatory "cut-in" because the form of the leader so clearly shows it to be such. Instead of the cut-in, the speech is written and set apart from the action by being taken toward the left hand margin or else the spacing is trusted to set apart the scene from the action. Single spacing is generally used for the action. A blank line above and below an insert is used to throw it into relief.

23. Sometimes the dialogue leader is used. This is two or more speeches cut into a scene at the same time. They do not follow each other, but both appear at once, generally with the name or the description of the speaker prefacing the speech. In the former we get:

Cut-in—Jones—I want to marry your daughter.

Smith—My daughter shall not marry a Jones!

Here it will be noted that there are no quotation marks used. This is because it is generally understood in writing dialogue that the matter is to be spoken. It is not now a quoted speech, but one that is assigned to the character whose name is prefixed. Using the description, we would get the same speeches in this form:

Young man—I want to marry your daughter.

Old man—My daughter shall never marry a Jones!

Unless the two speeches follow each other and both are really important it is better to quote but one at a time. If both are important but not consecutive, then give one, show some action and follow with the other. The dialogue leader makes for verboseness. Instead of striving to get a single speech that shall suggest both question and reply, the author writes in two or three speeches at a time and blesses the device.

24. It is seldom good form to use more than two cut-in leaders to a scene and one is greatly to be preferred in a majority of instances. If more than two must be used, it is better to cut the scene and come back to it for the third speech.

25. The time leader serves to mark the passage of time. It also helps to make definite the fact that an interval has elapsed. A lapse in time, or a "jump" as it is often called, requires a dropping of the run of action which is picked up at some later date. When a leader says that "Three weeks pass," the interruption adds to the effect of the statement. It has been pointed out above that a leader always interrupts thought. Here this function serves a useful end. A sequence of action comes to a close. A new period of developments is to start.

The leader serves to separate the two with an appreciable pause. An effort has been made to use the blank screen for this purpose. The scene fades out. There is nothing shown for a few seconds. Then another picture fades up and we know that it is the next day, the next hour or some other unstated period of time. The idea could be applied with greater success were it not for the fact that it looks too much like a badly joined fade vision. Where both are used the spectator is often at a loss to decide which is which. With the proper time leader there is both a definite stop and a statement as to the elapsed time.

26. Time jumps are hurtful to a play, particularly if there are many. The ideal play would not alone be leaderless, but it would be consecutive. It would be capable of being told without lapse of time. Few stories can be given this desirable feature and retain their interest because they must happen within a portion of a day if there are to be no intervals in the time, and such stories are apt to be too slight in plot because enough cannot happen in an afternoon to hold the interest. This does not always apply, but the exceptions are comparatively few. It is necessary to have some intervals, but these should be few and not too long. A play that abounds in statements to the effect that it is now five or ten years later cannot be interesting, as a rule, because too much ground is to be covered.

27. Each time a leader is used to indicate the passage of time, there is a certain suggestion of things that have happened meanwhile. The longer the period the greater the change and number of changes. It is best in planning your action to have not more than one important lapse of time, though there can be little objection offered to a few minor lapses. A photoplay that runs an hour cannot cover the events that extend over a lifetime and be convincing.

28. Generally the time leader should definitely state the lapse of time. For several years some studios had leader made up by the mile with the one word, "Later" imprinted. This was used for all time jumps. It was a most irritating device. It is better to say how much later it is, as "An Hour Later," "The Next Day," "A Week Later," "Ten Years Later," or whatever the time might be. This is definite and informative and not irritating save when used to excess. Careful writers study to obtain phrases that shall say the same thing but avoid the bald statement of fact. "After Many Years," or "Long Years Go By," would do as well as "Ten Years Later," unless it was necessary to tell that it was ten and not nine or eleven years later. In like manner "With the Next Day's Sun," "The Dawn Has Come Again," or some such phrase can replace the more hackneyed "The Next Day," in drama, or a humorous phrase be invented for comedies.

29. It sometimes makes for fluency to combine a time and a fact leader even where the fact may be unnecessary, as "The Next Day. Jim Starts for Town." We see him start for town, and need only to be told that it is the next day and not a month later, but the combination of the two gives a smoother reading.

30. Break leaders are used in place of time leaders when it is necessary to advance the period but not necessary to tell the time that has elapsed. We see a man arrive in the mountains. He gets interested in the girl and the men are interested in his occupation. Now nothing can happen until they have found out that he is a revenue officer as they suspected. It does not matter whether it takes them a month or six weeks, so instead of a time leader we break the continuity with a fact leader and say "The moonshiners have discovered that Hal is a Revenue man." That brings the action to a full stop and permits it to start again with a new fact. It is not necessary to tell how they made the discovery. That part is not essential to the story. We cut all that action out with a few words and go on with the story at the point where the action again becomes important. Before the invention of the cut-back it was customary to use the break leader to interrupt a scene that could not well be continued, and to evade the showing of prohibited action, but these slight lapses are better cared for through cutting back and the break leader is reserved for a more definite and lengthy stoppage. It implies rather than states the passage of time.

31. In both instances it might be effective first to fade down, then run the leader and fade up, but in effects such as this it is well to wait until it is adopted.

32. To give additional examples of break leaders in which the passage of time is implied, these are offered:

In the new home.
 Bess arrives in the city.
 The Fall session opens.
 Jim makes a new start.
 Harry is convalescent.

These might cover, in their order, removal to a new country, a railroad journey, the resumption of school after the summer recess, a journey and a new employment and a long illness. In each case the single leader replaces some extended but not essential action. The same device is used when the footage is to be cut down. An entire run of action is replaced by an explanatory break leader.

33. Because the leader is a necessary intrusion it does not follow that it should be suffered in its crudest form. It should be made as attractive as possible for the very reason that it has no business being there and yet is a necessity. The first rule is that a leader should be as brief as possible. The second rule is that it should not be so brief as to be awkward. More and more attention is being paid to the leader and most studios now employ a person whose duty it is to edit the leaders and to delete or add to them as occasion may require. It is not always possible to write the necessary leaders in advance. The scene you may not have written so clearly as to require no leader may have been changed so that the leader is no longer necessary. On the other hand the scene that you have written clearly may not be gotten over by the director and a leader may be

required. The leader writer is employed to write new titles and to rewrite such of the author's leaders as may be faulty. At the same time it should be a matter of pride with the author to turn in his script in such a shape that his leaders require no change. The leader is the sole part of the script in which the literary ability of the author may really be shown. Letters must be such as the persons in the play would write. They cannot be literary effusions. On the other hand the leader should be fluent and pleasing, though not grandiloquent.

34. Most writers know that certain combinations of sounds are more pleasing to the ear than others. In a previous chapter it has been suggested that this is because of the rhythmic accent and the harsh and mellow quality of certain sounds. There the idea was applied to the necessarily brief title. Here the writer has a more ample opportunity. In drama the poetical quality of the leaders is a distinct asset. The romantic drama, in particular, gains through the use of smooth spoken leaders. Such a leader as

Jane goes to the city to get a job.

does not commend itself. It is harsh and commonplace. Turned into

To gain her bread, she seeks the marts of trade.

gives one a much better impression of Jane's quest. In the same way you can smooth over other leaders. These pairs of leaders will give you sufficient suggestion.

John comes to kill Henry.

Revenge at last within his grasp.

Paul gets out of jail.

Outside the walls he stands at last.

Jim and Harry fight about Mary.

For lady fair they break a lance.

These are rather extreme examples, but they are purposely written so for the sake of contrast. The essentials are a smooth movement to the accent and an avoidance of a succession of harsh sounds or sequence of rising or (not and) falling accents. It should be understood that there are times when the purposely harsh leader will serve to harmonize with and prepare for the coming scene better than a soft and fluent leader.

35. It is seldom a good plan to quote poetry unless in making an adaptation or free translation of a song or poem couplets are used to replace the customary leaders. Fluent verse can serve as models, but not as material.

36. It is obvious that the cut-in leaders are written without attention to their sound. They should be everyday speech or they will sound absurd. People of today do not speak in blank verse.

37. In comedy it should be possible to help along the humor of the action with leaders that are, in themselves, humorous. Much may be

done with cut-in leaders, and perhaps even fact leaders may be humorously expressed.

38. It has been explained above that the leader as written may not be used because it is not required. There is another phase to this. It is possible that you may question the value of a leader and yet wish to suggest one in case the director requires one. In such a case it is better to write in the leader and to query the director by writing it in this form:

Leader (optional)—The last meeting.

In effect you suggest a leader but ask the director if he wishes to use it. This should be done only when you have good reason to believe that a leader might be required, and in this connection it should be said that a leader is not required about every so often, but only when it is needed to explain a scene, to separate two sequences of action or to represent a speech. Too many students suppose that a leader is put in every little while much as a book is divided into chapters.

39. Leaders are prepared in various ways. They may be painted or printed from type or they may be made by laying white letters on a black ground or the reverse. A strip of negative may be made to be printed from or a single lantern slide may serve as a negative. They are generally thrown on the screen in white letters on a black-ground because this is less trying on the eyes and because a white ground will more quickly show the scratches that result from the passages of the film through the machine. These scratches will fill with dirt and make the familiar "rain" that shows more plainly when the field of the screen is light.

40. As explained in the preceding chapter, films sent abroad require that the leaders be translated into the languages of the countries to which they are sent, this work generally being done by the London selling agent of the American manufacturer. From five to fifteen sets of translations may be required, and it sometimes happens, as in Cairo, for example, that a single translation does not suffice. In Cairo the Arabic translation is thrown on a side screen while the leader runs on the picture screen. Even in the United States, in the larger cities, there are houses where a translator is employed to stand beside the screen to translate into the mother tongue of the quarter the leaders as they are thrown in English.

41. For this reason, if for no other, slang and colloquial terms should be avoided. Even in England phraseology differs. In the United States a "bug hunter" is generally accepted as a collector of rare insects. England knows but one bug and they are not hunted in the open fields. Bug is colorful but colloquial. Even this would not be as bad as the phrase "Nobody home," understood to mean that the house of the mind is untenanted. A Frenchman or German, doing the translation, would be apt to get something quite different, for "The family is absent" bears slight relation to the original phrase and yet would be a correct translation.

42. In some scripts put out as samples it will be noted that the number of words to each leader is given and perhaps there is a recapitulation as a total of twenty-eight leaders using one hundred and thirteen words. This is all very unnecessary. The author cannot state with any degree of positiveness how many leaders will eventually be used nor how many words shall be used in the leaders finally decided upon. This and all similar fads should be avoided. It is not necessary to tell the number of leaders nor the number of words of leader. Use as few as may be necessary and word them briefly. You will have done your part.

(7.XLIV:5) (16.XXXVIII:16) (17.XXXII:3 XXXVI:2) (19.LVI:22) (20.XLVIII:23) (25.XLIV:9 XLVIII:15) (26.XX:7) (30.XXXVIII:18 XXXIX:3-5) (32.V:7) (33.XXXIV:12) (34.XXVII:10) (36.LXI:4) (37.LVI:19-20) (40.XXXVI:26).

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE CLOSE-UP

CLOSE-UP PICTURES are self-explanatory. They are scenes made with the players close to the camera. It might be better to reverse the definition and to say that they are made with the camera close to the players. That would give a better idea of the device, for in the large scenes the players are supposed to come as close to the camera as they may. It is only when they cannot come close that the camera is taken to them for a close-up.

2. The close-up has several distinct advantages. It may be used to break scenes that run too long and yet cannot well be cut into by other scenes or it may be used to emphasize some action that might be lost in the full scene. In this latter capacity its use is precisely similar to the use of the bust, the sole difference being that the close-up takes in the greater portion of the figure or figures where the bust makes a still greater enlargement and shows only a portion of the figure. As has been shown, the bust may be written as a close-up or close-up used to designate a bust, but the clearest technique makes a distinction that really is a difference. A third and equally important advantage is that the close-up creates a feeling of intimacy between the spectator and the players. You go into a public ballroom. There are hundreds of persons present, perhaps. In the mass they are a part of the spectacle. Then you locate some friends. They become detached from the mass. They assume individuality. Now the ballroom with its crowds is but the background for that small part in which your friends are gathered.

3. In photography the height of the image is rapidly reduced as the distance from the camera increases. In photoplay much of the

story is or should be told in facial expression. This may be seen to advantage only when the image of the player is large and distinct. Where possible, the players are brought to the front of their stage. Where this is not possible without the use of action that suggests a deliberate approach, it is best to establish a new stage by approaching the players. Surely this is a simple proposition. It is, but because of this simplicity it is apt to be abused. An effort should first be made to alter the action without impairing its value so as to get the players to the front. When this cannot be done, then the close-up is indicated. The best of judgment should be used in the selection of close-ups and judgment is developed only through experiment and practice.

4. With three or four players in a small room it is easily possible to contrive action that shall play them to the front as they are required and to send them up stage to give place to others. In a large room, particularly where the requirement of the action necessitates their being seated, it is better to move the camera. You may have a restaurant scene. In a restaurant persons do not wander about. They sit and eat or drink. You may have several groups of players at their respective tables. You cannot get them all so close to the camera that their expressions are clearly registered. You move the camera about, returning now and then to the big scene to preserve the atmosphere. It is precisely as though you built up the large sets out of several smaller sets.

5. Take this for the argument of such a scene:

Paula has left her husband, Gecko, a musician, and has allied herself with Pompton, an adventurer, who heads a gang of which Castle is also a member. They plan to fleece Richard Travers, a young man of fortune. Richard has at one time befriended Gecko, who has come in search of Paula. He gets him a position as leader of the gypsy orchestra at his favorite restaurant. To this restaurant he now brings Paula to dine. Pompton and Castle, from a neighboring table, watch the progress of events. Gecko knows that Richard is being fleeced, but is unaware of the identity of the woman and her partners. Now, for the first time since she left him, Gecko sees his wife and knows her to be the adventuress. To warn her, he plays the march he wrote for their wedding day, bringing to Paula recollection of those other times. In an excess of emotion she suffers an attack of heart failure and dies.

This is not the story of the entire play, but the premise and the story of this scene.

6. Naturally this will call for a large set. In a large set it will not be possible to show in detail all of the action. Gecko, for instance, is at the rear and somewhat above the diners. In the full scene he can be observed, but his facial expression cannot be seen with a clearness that will record his emotion. Played with a vision as three scenes, in straight action we would get this:

43. *Interior of restaurant. Music balcony at the rear with four or five piece string band. Guests at tables, waiters serving them. Down front a reserved sign decorates a vacant table. Nearby Pompton and Castle are idling over their coffee. Castle points off—Pompton nods and looks. Head waiter bustles down, ushering Dick and Paula—seats them at the reserved table—removes sign—waiter captain comes to take order—Pompton and Castle watch—Gecko starts—music stops—musicians alarmed—Gecko pulls himself together—resumes playing—Dick and Paula chat—Dick clearly fascinated—Pompton and Castle watch with approval—Pompton and Paula exchange signals—Gecko watching, sees signal—starts as he recognizes Pompton—understands now that it was Pompton with whom Paula ran away—motions the others to end the piece they are playing—starts to play a solo—Paula starts—does not look at Gecko, but straight ahead—FADE.*
44. *Fade in part of scene six where Paula dances to Gecko's playing. FADE.*
45. *Fade up to No. 43. Paula rises unsteadily to her feet—Dick springs up and catches her—Pompton and Castle alarmed—Pompton would go to her, but Castle prevents—Paula turns—her glance meets Gecko's—covers her eyes with her hands—turns back to camera—shrieks—drops forward on table—dead—all confusion—in the balcony Gecko throws his violin from him—kneels at rail, praying for the dead.*

To the novice this would seem to be a scene of unusual dramatic intensity. It would be were it possible to get in the screened picture all that has been written down, but there are two reasons why it will not work well in action. For one thing we barely see Gecko. We cannot connect his action with the action in the front. For another objection we have the fact that attention will not be centered upon the proper person at all times. The spectator may be watching Paula when he should be observing Gecko or looking at Pompton and Castle while Paula is carrying the story. More than this, the scene will run too long. It surely will make a hundred and fifty feet, if not more, and the scene that runs for that length of time in one place, no matter how vivid or varied the action, seems interminable.

7. To reduce the *apparent* length of the scene and to centre the attention of the spectator upon the proper action is the function of the cut-back. The reconstructor will take that scene and split it into its various factors. First he will give the big scene. This is merely atmosphere. It does not advance the story, but it shows the scene, the relation of the smaller stages to each other and gets the spectator in the proper frame of mind, just as the orchestral prelude is supposed to prepare the auditor for the play. Then he starts in to pick the action apart and assign each important action to its respective stage. He will get a greater number of scenes and perhaps a slight addition to the footage, but he will have something that will give full value to every action of importance. His reconstruction will look like this:

43. *Interior of restaurant. Large set. Music balcony at rear with small orchestra. Gecko leading. String band. Guests at tables eating and drinking. Waiters scurrying about. All bustle and gaiety. Down front a vacant table is marked reserved. Close by Pompton and Castle are seated at a table. They have finished dinner and are dawdling over their coffee and cognac.*
44. *Close-up of Pompton and Castle talking—Castle looks up toward rear—speaks—Pompton looks and nods—both smile—gratification and contempt are mingled. Paula has Dick hooked. For this they are glad, but they feel a contempt for him.*
45. *Big scene—Head Waiter ushers Paula and Dick to vacant table—removes sign with a flourish—starts to seat Paula—Dick anticipates him—seats her—takes seat himself. Captain comes with bill of fare—both he and head waiter make much of Dick, who is evidently a valued patron—Paula looks about her curiously.*
46. *Close-up of music balcony—Gecko playing, turning around as he does so—starts—stops playing—looks intently.*
47. *Close-up of Paula—just a flash.*
48. *Close-up of balcony—Gecko is holding on to railing of balcony to support himself—staring toward Paula—musicians surprised—one of them comes to Gecko to see what the matter is.*
49. *Big scene—Diners curiously looking toward rear to see why music stopped—Paula chatting with Dick—she has not seen Gecko—Pompton and Castle looking with the rest—*
50. *Close-up of Pompton and Castle—Pompton grabs Castle's arm—speaks hurriedly—evident fear—points toward Gecko—points toward Paula—FADE.*
51. *Fade-up scene fourteen, where Pompton and Paula take the train. FADE.*
52. *Fade in close-up of Pompton and Castle—Castle nods understandingly—quick look about—slips Pompton his revolver—Pompton seems to feel more safe.*
53. *Close-up of balcony—Gecko still upset—Manager hurries in—speaks to Gecko—Gecko nods—takes up violin—gives signal—playing starts.*
54. *Big scene—All going well again—waiter brings and opens wine for Dick—he toasts Paula—Paula sips wine—holding glass—Dick turns to waiter—Paula toasts Pompton and Castle.*
55. *Close-up of balcony—Gecko playing—watching Paula—he starts—follows the direction of her glance—*
56. *Close-up of Pompton and Castle—they are gayly toasting Paula with their cognac glasses.*
57. *Close-up of balcony—Gecko playing, spiritedly, but mechanically—face contorted with rage as he alternately watches Pompton and Paula—turns—ends music—starts to play a solo.*

58. *Big scene*—Dick pouring wine for Paula—she drinks—chokes—puts hand to heart—Dick seeks to take glass from her—she shakes head—eagerly drains glass—suddenly starts—grows rigid—Dick alarmed—Pompton and Castle interested—glance from her to Gecko.
59. *Close-up of balcony*—Gecko playing—impassioned.
60. *Big scene*—Paula drops glass—becomes rigid again—slowly rises—tense—Dick springs up—places hand on her arm—she pushes him away—other diners alarmed—Pompton springs up.
61. *Close-up of Pompton*—Castle draws him down on chair—tells him to keep out of the mess—Pompton almost in collapse.
62. *Big scene*—Paula standing with hands over ears as though to shut out the sound of the music—
63. *Close-up of balcony*—Gecko playing—more impassioned than ever—his men watch him wonderingly.
64. *Big scene*—Paula standing there—hands to ears—Dick vainly trying to get her to sit down—head waiter there ready to be of assistance—FADE.
65. *Fade up*—Part of scene six showing Paula dancing to Gecko's playing. FADE.
66. *Fade in big scene*—Paula shudders—turns to face balcony—puts out arms—
67. *Close-up of balcony*—Gecko playing—he leans forward, watching Paula.
68. *Close-up of Paula*—she turns away, putting hands over eyes as though to shut out sight of Gecko—draws them down—places over heart—shrieks—falls forward on table—
69. *Big scene*—All crowd in—Paula dead—great excitement—Dick distracted.
70. *Close-up of balcony*—Gecko has stopped playing—leaning over rail watching tensely—throws violin and bow from him—kneels at rail in prayer.

This is an extreme example of the use of the close-up, but each scene now has its own value as well as contributing to the general effect. This situation is supposed to be the big moment in the story. The seemingly excessive use of close-up is permissible if a greater effect is gained.

8. Suppose that we dissect this sequence of scenes. It will be found that there is a reason for each change. Forty-three is merely an atmospheric scene. There is no plot action here. It has been said that each scene *must* advance the action, but here the scene really runs from forty-three to seventy, and much is done to advance the action. In the opening scene, however, nothing is advanced. We

merely show the restaurant and its people. It is a large set, both wide and deep. The musicians' balcony stands a little above the floor, perhaps three feet. This will enable us to perceive the figures of the players. It will not be easy to distinguish their features. Forty-four brings us to a close-up of Pompton and Castle. We have seen them in the large set, but this scene shows them more clearly. They are through with their meal, but they linger. Why? In a moment Castle sees Paula coming. The reason for their delay is explained a moment later as we see Paula and Dick approach in forty-five. They have been waiting to watch Paula and her victim. The table has been engaged by Dick. They have taken seats as close to it as they can get. Dick does not know them, so there is no danger.

9. In forty-six we get our first glimpse of Gecko. Probably we know he is the leader here and that Dick, with the influence of a profitable patron, obtained him the position. We do not need to come close to Gecko to see that he is there. We know that. We do not need to come close to see that he recognizes someone. The flash of Paula in forty-seven reveals the identity of the person in whom he is interested. We could guess this, knowing what has gone before, but the flash makes it clear that it is Paula and not Pompton whom Gecko sees. In forty-eight we get a glimpse of his surprise. We see how the recognition affects him. Practically all of this would be lost were the camera held on the front line. Forty-eight shows the excitement created. As Paula is not interested, it is clear that she does not know that Gecko is present. In the next scene (fifty) we see that Pompton, for the first time, becomes aware of Gecko's presence. He tells Castle, who does not know, of his elopement with Paula. We are familiar with the story. It is necessary to show only one vision scene to recall the rest. The departure is the most definite of these scenes, so this is selected. Castle reassures Pompton and passes him a revolver.

10. Something must be done to terminate this period and start the next. The manager tells Gecko to play. Gecko resumes the music, watching Paula. It is through watching her that Gecko is made aware of the presence of Pompton. As in forty-seven we used a flash of Paula to tell that it was she and not Pompton whom Gecko saw, now in fifty-six we show Pompton toasting Paula. This completes the action of the toast while it also shows that Gecko sees Pompton. In a flash it becomes clear to Gecko that Paula went away with Pompton. In an earlier scene he was led to believe that she went by herself. Note here the chain of events. Gecko watches for Dick, his benefactor. Watching him he sees Paula and watching her he is made aware of Pompton's presence. One event naturally leads to the next.

11. In fifty-eight we show that Paula is not feeling well. Dick seeks to take the wine from her, but she drinks it. This prepares for the later scene. It is not so much recollection or conscience as it is excitement aggravating an existing blood pressure which causes her

death. Gecko plays the music he wrote for their wedding. The vision of scene six recalls this to us and tells what it is that he is playing.

12. The excitement kills her. She falls across the table, dead. We show the scene, but close on the picture of Gecko in the balcony praying for the soul of the woman he loved, because this is really more dramatic than the death. With the dissolution we get the end of that episode. Gecko is now more dramatic than the dead Paula.

13. It would be possible to continue this scene and show Dick's grief, Pompton's fear and Gecko's despair, but it will be better to use a break leader and go on to the next development of action. We have gotten about all that we can from the scene. More would be in the nature of an anti-climax.

14. For a scene of less importance it would be better not to cut back so much. Take the development of action in Chapter XXXIII, in which John and Edna meet. Here close-ups will not improve the dramatic effect, but we can very greatly improve the playing action by using a close-up and changing the placement of the camera. Suppose that the scene be split up in this fashion:

6. *Road through woods. Brook in foreground*—Edna approaches from rear—carries hat as basket—filled with wild flowers—comes to front—sees stepping stones—dismayed—John enters from side—unperceived—watches.
7. *Close-up* of Edna—she puts foot on first stone—too slippery—she nearly falls—shakes head.
8. *Big scene*—John springs forward—offers to carry her over—she declines—he offers hand—will lead her over—she takes hand—John starts to walk beside her in the water—she stops—expostulates—John shakes head—laughs—won't hurt him any—they go on.
9. *Opposite bank*—John and Edna coming to camera—Edna on stones—John in water—they come to bank—Edna thanks him—he asks for flower—she gives it—John raises to lips—bashful, Edna runs off scene—John looks after her—sighs—turns back.

The close-up in seven adds a pretty touch. Also it brings us close to Edna for the moment, which might not have been possible in a scene large enough to include John. Scene nine is not a close-up because we are not working within the field of scene six, but it gives the close-up effect, just the same, and had we retained the setting as in the original of the scene, it might properly have been called a close-up in that. Making a new scene has the double advantage of avoiding a panoramic swing and getting a more advantageous viewpoint. As John and Edna move away from the camera they turn their backs. In this arrangement as soon as they have taken a few steps, the point of view changes and they are now approaching the camera; practically walking into a close-up. This permits a shortening of the scene if the stream is too wide, for now we do not have to

take the entire crossing. At the same time we do not have to wait until John wades back again before he can get close enough to the camera to show expression, and the gift of the flower (wholly lost before) is now shown in large figure.

15. In these two examples is comprehended about all that can be said of the close-up, but the use of the device is wide. Darby and Joan are sitting by the fire. The apartment is large and comfortable. The fireplace is at some distance from the camera to get full effect. Moving in we show them in close-up and move back to end the scene.

16. By the use of the close-up we also avoid leaders to some extent. In the restaurant we might have run a leader to the effect that Gecko plays his wedding march. In the preceding chapter it has been shown that a leader is better than an indefinite vision or a succession of vision scenes. Here it will be seen that the vision is short and more to the point than a leader would have been. Instead of a bare statement we get the picture illustrating this statement and at the same time we get the added value that contrast between the scene of the innocent Paula and Paula the adventuress will give. It is purely a matter of good judgment and not of fixed rule. Use whichever will bring the greater effect. In general the use of the vision may be suggested if it is short and very much to the point.

17. While the form of the close-up has already been exposed, there is still another function performed by it. This is the shortening of a scene when the action must be held to the scene. In the restaurant we slightly extended the action. It is as possible to use the same device to gain brevity as it is to extend the scene. Hamilton Belding, the leader of the reform movement and its candidate for Mayor, is invited to address a club meeting. He needs the support of the women and this seems to be his chance to get it. With his impassioned pleas for good government he wins their approval and largely through their efforts the tide of battle is turned. Played as a single straight scene, we might get this:

35. *Parlor*—Club assembled—Belding brought in by Mrs. Brown—introduced—mild applause—he begins to speak—slowly the women grow interested—more applause—before the conclusion of the speech he has them all enthusiasm—as he stops they surge forward and surround him.

In a scene like this it is to be supposed that the speech can not possibly be shorter than ten minutes. With the introduction and conclusion it will run all of twelve minutes, or about three-quarters of a reel. The scene is not worth the footage. Two courses present themselves. Either the scene can be cut back or it can be cut into with close-up scenes used for the same purpose, but with this difference, that where it is desired to gain strength through contrast the cut-back is the better device, while by using the close-up as an interruption the interest is held to the scene. In the following chapter the cut-back for this scene will be shown. Here the use of the close-up is given in the following action:

35. *Parlor*—Club assembled—Mrs. Brown brings Belding in—introduces him—mild applause—Belding starts to speak.
36. *Close-up* of Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Green on sofa—they listen coldly—rather sneeringly.
37. *Close-up* of Belding—he is warming to his work—driving home his points.
38. *Close-up* of Muriel—she is intensely interested—sits well forward in her chair.
39. *Close-up* of Belding—he makes a telling point—pauses—looks about.
40. *Big scene*—Women show more interest—more applause.
41. *Close-up* of corner—Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Green have lost their sneers.
42. *Close-up* of Muriel—she is listening intently—gives a little jump as Belding drives home a point—applauds frantically.
43. *Close-up* of sofa—Mrs. Smith and Mrs. Green applauding wildly.
44. *Big scene*—Belding concludes—women applaud—spring up and close in about him—all exit from scene—still with Belding in the centre.

It is possible for a novelist to describe a large scene and at the same time tell the thoughts of various persons in the scene. With the close-up the photoplay author has practically the same opportunity, if not the same space.

18. It might have been possible to have broken the scene with a leader. It was customary at one time. The scene would show Belding starting to speak. Then the leader would come. "Belding wins the support of the club." Then we would see him bowing and it would be over. It is now regarded as better practice to play around a scene in close-ups where possible and use the break leader to point the termination of a full period of action.

19. One other use of the close-up will suggest itself. This is the purely mechanical aspect of the device used to heighten the effect of a scene through emphasis on some component part of the scene. The large scene shows the hero tied to a chair with an infernal machine below. To come close in is to isolate this from the remainder of the scene and so to obtain a greater effect through the greater emphasis placed upon the perilous position of the hero.

20. In making the close-up the action of the scene and the turning of the camera is stopped while the camera is brought down to the new position. This necessitates a new scene number, as shown in the examples given here and elsewhere.

21. One other form of close-up may be mentioned here, though it is but seldom used except in trick work. This is the form of close-up in which the change from full stage to the close view is a gradual enlargement of a part of the field. There is no stoppage of the camera or the action, but it appears as though the scene approaches the

spectator or recedes from him. This is accomplished through mounting the camera and its operator on a truck which is pushed into the scene for a close-up and drawn back to obtain the wider angle of field. This is a useful effect, but it is so seldom employed and so few of the studios now have trucks that it will be inadvisable to require this effect until its use becomes more general and even then it will be better to write in the straight close-up and permit the director to change to the truck if he so desires.

22. In writing close-up scenes it is a mistake to seek to indicate too exactly just what is to be included. Ask for a close-up, but do not specify that it shall be taken with the camera northeast by east, one point east of John's right ear. The director is looking into the actual scene. He can best place the camera. Tell him about the close-up, but give no compass bearings.

(2.XXXV:1 & 11) (3.III:8 XXXIII:26) (7.XXX:25) (11.XLVI:4) (12.L:6) (13.XXXVII:30) (14.XXX:21 XXXIII:6) (16.XXXVII:16) (17.XXXIX:3-5) (18.XXXVII:30) (19:XXXV:1).

CHAPTER XXXIX

CUT-BACKS AND FLASHES

THE cut-back is a device used to bridge awkward gaps in the action, to heighten the effect of a situation through contrasting action or to raise suspense through delaying the crisis or climax. Generally the cut-back, particularly in the second and third capacities, is merely a flash.

2. Strictly speaking a flash, as its name suggests, is a very brief scene; properly about three seconds. In actual practice a flash may be much longer or much shorter. About the shortest flash is a scene flash of six frames, the duration of the scene on the screen being three-eighths of one second. This is a monstrosity rather than a flash, but no more of a monstrosity than permitting a flashed letter to remain upon the screen ten or fifteen seconds.

3. Originally the cut-back was designed to break the action or to cover a break in the action, since it works both ways. It replaces the break leader when it is desired to take the middle action out of a scene and covers this lapse where to remain in the scene would be impossible. It is also used to shorten the action in a long scene if a contrast scene will work more effectively than a close-up in the same set.

4. In the former connection, perhaps the scene shows the dressing room of an actress. The play is done and she comes to the dressing room to change to her street attire. Manifestly the action cannot continue in that set, and yet nothing further can occur to the advancement of the story until she emerges from the stage door to be confronted by

her former sweetheart. Something must be done. If there is no reason why we should conceal the fact of the sweetheart's presence, we cut back to him, in this manner:

44. *Back stage*—Elinore comes from stage—stops—returns—comes back with bouquet—all smiles—goes to dressing room.
45. *Dressing room*—Maid on—Elinore enters—Maid springs up—takes flowers—lays aside—starts to remove Elinore's dress.
46. *Stage door*—Nestor walking up and down—woman comes through door—Nestor looks into her face—not the one—draws back—woman tosses head indignantly—exits—Nestor resumes walk.
47. *Dressing room as in No. 45*—Elinore now dressed for street—says good night to maid—exits.
48. *Back stage as in No. 44*—Gerald waiting—Elinore comes from dressing room—takes his arm—they exit.
49. *Stage door as in No. 46*—Nestor waiting—Elinore and Gerald come from theatre—Nestor springs forward—takes Elinore's hand—she shrinks back—Gerald gives him a push that throws him to sidewalk—he and Elinore exit—Nestor rises—follows slowly—slight limp.

Here the cutting back to Nestor not only gets us out of the dressing room (where we do not belong), but now our knowledge of the fact that he is waiting points up the situation. When we see Elinore leave the room we mentally brace ourselves. When we see that Gerald is going with her, the situation becomes more interesting still. Probably anticipation will make for more dramatic effect than surprise. If you have reason to believe that surprise is more to be desired than anticipation, then you use a form of cut-back that will withhold the information. It might be done through the employment of Gerald, in this manner:

44. *Back stage*—Elinore and Gerald come off stage into scene—go back for curtain bow—return—Elinore now has bouquet—gives Gerald one flower—runs into dressing room—Gerald exits.
45. *Dressing room*—Maid on—springs up as Elinore enters—takes flowers—lays aside—starts to remove Elinore's dress.
46. *Back stage as in No. 44*—Stage hands moving scenery—
47. *Gerald's dressing room*—Gerald ready for street—exits.
48. *Back stage as in No. 44*—Gerald enters—knocks on Elinore's door—Maid answers—nods—Elinore enters—takes Gerald's arm—they exit.

Now the next scene will show the meeting with Nestor and it will come as a surprise. This being the case, we must play the scene up more strongly, because now we must establish Nestor, something that was previously done by showing him in forty-six. We must wait until the audience realizes that it is Nestor and not some stage door lounge

before we can get any dramatic effect from the scene. This will be somewhat the manner of playing:

49. *Stage door*—Gerald and Elinore enter from theatre—Nestor steps out of shadows—confronts her—she steps back—he looks at her—she recognizes him—clings to Gerald—Gerald shoves Nestor out of the way—he falls to sidewalk—Gerald and Elinore exit—Nestor rises slowly—follows—limps slightly.

Delaying the action a trifle, we get the full value of the scene.

5. In the last chapter we showed how the use of the close-up served to break the action of a scene that ran too long. Instead of using the close-ups or leader as suggested there, we use a cut-back to get around the long speech. Naturally the most effective contrast will be a showing of the other political headquarters, so we write:

35. *Parlor*—Club assembled—Mrs. Brown enters with Belding—introduces him—mild enthusiasm—slight applause—he starts to speak.
36. *Opposition headquarters as in No. 6*—Dugan, Luigi and Carter on—talking—Jake brings in Bill—they speak—Bill given package of money—Bill turns to exit—Dugan asks him to have a drink—Bill turns back, wiping mouth with the back of his hand.
37. *Back to No. 35*—Belding concludes speech—all now enthusiasm—women crowd about him—promise their support—all exit, still surrounding Belding, who walks with Muriel.

In this particular scene it will be noted that the contrast is not as effective as the close-up, but this depends upon the nature of the scene and does not form a rule.

6. Sometimes a leader will be too intrusive when used to break and a cut-back will be preferable. This is particularly the case when the action is tense and the interruption of a leader will break a tension that it is desired to maintain. Suppose that a street scene shows a fight between John and Henry. You are afraid that the fight will be so vivid as to engross the attention of the censors and result in the prohibition of the scene. Here you cut back to break the scene, not to some contrasting, but if possible to some related action. Suppose you try something in this line:

14. *Street*—John and Henry meet—they quarrel—John raises cane to strike Henry.
15. *Street close to above*—A few people running toward fight.
16. *Street as in No. 14*—Henry lies on sidewalk—John stands over him with cane—people run in and grab John—Policeman enters—arrests John—takes him out of scene—others help Henry.

There is less objection offered to the suggestion of a fight than to the actual physical action. Cutting back may save the scene. If you can not use a crowd, perhaps you can cut to some single person who over-

looks the crime and later tells the story. If it is important that no one should know, then you cut to some contrast, either the victim's wife and family, or some similar situation.

7. Probably the strongest contrast would be a scene that shows the uselessness of the sacrifice of life. Suppose that John kills Henry because both want the same girl, Jess. The act will be more dramatic if it can be shown that the girl is not worth the deed. Then the uselessness of the deed will give strength to a scene that is now merely a murder. Both of the men have been seen to be in receipt of Jess' favors. They meet in the woods.

14. *Woods*—John and Henry meet—quarrel—struggle.

15. *Location*—Daisy flirting with Ben. Reproduce as closely as possible scene six.

16. *Back to No. 14*—Henry now lies dead on ground—John realizes what he has done—seeks to call Henry back to life—in vain—throws weapon away—dashes out of scene like a madman.

To show that the sacrifice is needless is dramatic, but the scene which demonstrates this will be more effective still if it reproduces a scene we remember in which John went through the same experience. The scene need not be wanton. It is sufficient to show that the girl is flirtatious. She need not be shown as of an immoral character. In writing the scene in which John figures you are practically giving directions for scene fifteen as well, so you write six:

6. *Location*—Jess on—looks up with a smile as John enters—makes room for him beside her on the bench—he begs a flower—she gives him one—he crushes her in his arms and covers her face with kisses—she wrenches herself loose—not angry, merely tantalizing—dodges around bench—runs off. NOTE—This action is also used in No. 16 with Ben.

Now it does not matter what scene the director plays first. Six refers to fifteen and fifteen refers him even more pointedly to six.

8. Where a more extended use of the cut-back may be needed to reduce to a minimum a violent scene it is more general to invent some action that will suggest progression. There is a terrific combat in a room. The police are called and come with the patrol wagon. The run of the wagon through the streets, alternating with the fight, will give the suggestion of a long-continued struggle and perhaps show less than twenty feet, where to stay in the scene would require fifty to one hundred feet. Taking this rather antique situation for an example, we would get:

43. *Shop*—Jim and Bill quarreling—Bill throws a hammer at Jim—he picks up an axe and comes toward Bill—Bill seizes a sledge—they circle about, warily.

44. *Exterior of shop*—Man passing by stops—looks in window—exits on run.

45. *Back to No. 43*—Flash of fight.
46. *Street*—Man running.
47. *Back to No. 45*—Flash of fight.
48. *Police station*—Man runs in—runs into station.
49. *Back to No. 47*—Flash of fight.
50. *Back to No. 48*—Man runs out with police—all run out of scene.
51. *Back to No. 49*—Flash of fight.
52. *Street as in No. 46*—Man and police run through.
53. *Back to No. 51*—Flash of fight.
54. *Door to shop as in No. 18*—Police run in and enter shop—Man stays outside.
55. *Back to No. 53*—Still fighting—Police run in—grab Bill and Jim—both in bad shape—lead them out.

Here are twenty feet of fight stuff used to suggest a battle that may have been raging half an hour and the entire sequence of scenes will run well within a minute.

9. The cut-back may be used to strengthen the scene through the information it conveys. Take the scene in Chapter XXV in which the fat little physician runs to catch the train. You know this is funny and you smile, forgetting for the moment that he is trying to save a life. But before you can develop the smile into a laugh there flashes a scene in the sickroom. At once you appreciate to the full the intensity of the scene. The reminding cut-in deprives the scene of the suggestion of humor. This is one of the most useful functions of the cut-back when it is intelligently and sparingly employed.

10. Almost invariably the cut-back will add to the suspense whether it is used for this purpose or not. In the beginning the cut-back was made merely to reduce the length of some scenes. The director would take a long strip of film and cut it up, then join in bits of another scene, working back and forth. He found that he gained suspense and smartened the action. Many, indeed most, directors still follow the same scheme of making long scenes and cutting them up, for it is not easy for the players to get into full swing for a five or ten second scene, but with this the author has nothing to do. He writes in the cut-backs as they should fall. If the director prefers more or less, he makes fewer cuts. For this reason it is best not to make an excessive use of cut-back, but to cut back as good sense suggests and leave it to the director to go to extremes if he wishes.

11. Cut-backs make for suspense through delaying the climax or crisis and also through the cunningly contrived suggestion of victory and defeat in alternation. Perhaps the best example of this is a story that one company used to write about once a year. In this a druggist dispenses a corrosive medicine in mistake for a harmless drug. He discovers the mistake and instead of going to the tele-

phone he pursues the messenger. There follows a chase through the streets with the messenger now having the advantage and now showing the clerk gaining, until the boy is stopped at the door of the patient's home. Suspense was about all there was to that sort of story, but suspense alone generally held the interest for a reel, because considerable skill was shown in inventing aids and overcoming advantage. If the boy boarded a car about the time the clerk borrowed an automobile then the auto would break down or the driver be arrested for speeding and the clerk would have to depend upon his legs again. Then the boy would be put off the car because he had no money or the wrong transfer and the clerk would find some other automobile friend.

12. If we see the Indians tie the captured hero to the stake and set fire to the wood piled around him we are sorry for our hero, but we do not see much that we can do for him. It is only a matter of waiting for the end and expressing our dislike for unhappy ending stories. If we know that a party of his fellow-cowpunchers are riding to his rescue then suspense is brought in. It is now a question as to whether the fire will burn before the rescuers will arrive. There is no suspense in the single scene, merely the wait for the inevitable. By suggesting the rescue we can get three scenes and a brief suspense. This would show:

44. *Camp*—Ben tied to stake—the Indians are piling wood around him—Little Fawn pleads with the Chief for Ben's life—Chief pushes her away—the Medicine Man comes with a brand from the camp fire.
45. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride into scene—see tracks—dash off.
46. *Camp*—Brushwood burning—sudden alarm—Cowboys dash in—shooting—Indians retreat—Little Fawn kicks the brush away—releases Ben—he clasps her in his arms—Boys come back and congratulate Ben.

Here is suspense, but it is short lived. Ben will be burned. No. The boys are searching for him. No. The pyre is aflame. He must die. No. Here come the boys. It is all over. We have not had time to get really interested. We hope the rescue will be effected. We are afraid they will come too late. They are in time. But to plan the action to get a succession of scenes in which hope and fear alternate will rouse us to the highest point of suspense unless we are carried beyond suspense.

13. In the last sentence is exposed one of the great truths of photoplay writing. Suspense is effective only when it is not carried too far. If overplayed, reaction comes. Suspense may be likened to a rubber band which may be stretched until tension becomes greater than the cohesion of the particles and the band breaks. Stretch your situation all it will stand, but do not extend it past the point where the material will become so attenuated as to snap. To continue the simile, were it possible to add rubber to the band as it is stretched, then the

additional material will enable a greater resistance to be made. It is not possible to add material to a rubber band while it is being stretched. It is possible to add material to a sequence of scenes, so that the tension may be maintained without breaking through the presentation of new factors. So long as you can add to suspense through cutting back and at the same time can prevent attenuation by adding to the situation fresh plot-incident, so long can you continue the process and no longer.

14. To illustrate, suppose that we take the above situation and stretch it until it breaks. We start:

44. *Camp*—Indians have Ben tied to stake—piling wood about him.
45. *Brow of hill*—Cowboys ride in—look off—see—lash their horses—out.
46. *Camp*—Little Fawn pleading with her father, the Chief.
47. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through.
48. *Camp*—Chief refuses Little Fawn's request.
49. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through.
50. *Camp*—Little Fawn in despair.
51. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through.
52. *Camp*—Little Fawn appeals to Medicine Man.
53. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through.
54. *Camp*—Medicine Man pushes Little Fawn aside.
55. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through.
56. *Camp*—Medicine Man goes to camp fire—Little Fawn weeps.
57. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through.
58. *Camp*—Medicine Man comes with firebrand.
59. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through.
60. *Camp*—Medicine Man throws firebrand on wood.
61. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through.
62. *Camp*—Wood begins to burn.
63. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through.
64. *Camp*—Indians dancing about stake—sudden alarm.
65. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride through—shooting.
66. *Camp*—Indians running away—Cowboys ride through—shooting—Little Fawn releases Ben—he kisses her.

By this time a majority in any audience of adults will be laughing heartily. You have stretched incident to the point where it is too thin to hold together. There is nothing more than was told in the shorter form, but the ride has been extended until it becomes first tiresome and then almost painful. The only interest the spectator now has is speculation as to how long he must suffer.

15. But adding plot in the form of incident relating to the plot will give us a scene of about the same length, but there will be more body to the scenes, more variety to the incident, and so the interest will be maintained. What we have above is little more than a peg on which incident may be hung if we have it. Compare this development with the above:

44. *Camp*—Ben tied to stake—Indians piling brush around him—Big Eagle and Medicine Man down front—Little Fawn steals from tent—sees—runs to Ben, thrusting Indians aside—throws arms about his neck—Big Eagle drags her away—brings her down front.
 45. *Old camp, as in No. 31*—Cowboys ride in—look about—one swings in saddle and picks up old hat—it is Ben's—there is a bullethole in the crown—Cowboy pokes his finger through hole and shows—all shake heads—look about—find the trail the Indians took—ride out.
 46. *Back to No. 44—Close-up* of Little Fawn pleading with Big Eagle—Medicine Man urging Big Eagle to refuse—Little Fawn eyes him with hatred—Big Eagle calls—two squaws come up—grab Little Fawn—start to drag her away.
 47. *Near No. 45*—Boys come in—see that the trail divides—some dismount—look about them—decide that the Indians took the northerly trail—mount and ride out of scene down trail.
 48. *Camp*—Old squaws and Little Fawn nearly to tepees in background—Little Fawn breaks away from them—rushes back to Ben—clings to him—squaws come down—drag her off again and into tent. Medicine Man and Big Eagle approach stake—other Indians give way.
 49. *Close-up* of Ben, Big Eagle and Medicine Man—Medicine Man strikes him in face—Ben yells in impotent rage—Medicine Man sneers—other Indians stolidly watch the scene.
 50. *Prairie*—Cowboys ride into scene—one of them dismounts to tighten saddle girth—tells them to ride on—he will overtake them.
 51. *Back to No. 49*—Medicine Man draws knife—makes as though to stab Ben—Ben tries to taunt him into it—Medicine Man smiles grimly—shakes head—says—
- Cut-in*—"Knife quick. Fire slow. You wait. Burn."
- Medicine Man and Big Eagle step back—motion others to pile up the wood.
52. *Trail as in No. 33*—Cowboys ride in—see where the party split up in No. 33—debate—decide on the *wrong* trail—dash off.
 53. *Back to No. 51, but big scene*—Medicine Man and Big Eagle watching work of building pyre—Medicine Man goes to campfire in rear—
 54. *Close-up of campfire*—Medicine Man coming up to fire—with his foot he stirs the sticks to make them burn more briskly.

55. *Trail as in No. 33*—Cowboy left behind in No. 50 rides in—looks at both trails—about to follow the boys—pauses—turns and rides down other trail—makes running pick up of object a short distance away—swings and comes back—Ben's handkerchief—he shoots into air twice.
56. *Back to No. 54*—Medicine Man by fire—picks up brand—starts out of scene.
57. *Camp, but closer to stake*—Medicine Man comes in with brand—about to toss on wood—Little Fawn rushes in—pursued by squaws—dashes brand from his hand—stamps it out—attacks Medicine Man like a tigress—others try to pull her off.
58. *Back to No. 56*—Rider waiting—others come down the wrong trail—he shows handkerchief—points—all ride out of scene on right trail.
59. *Back to No. 57*—Fight continued between Little Fawn and Medicine Man—she is dragged away—an Indian offers another firebrand—Medicine Man takes—all start to dance about pyre—
60. *Prairie*—Boys ride through—
61. *Camp—big scene*—Medicine Man throws brand on pyre—Indians dance about—smoke rises.
62. *Close-up of Little Fawn by tepees*—held by squaws—struggling to free herself.
63. *Prairie*—Boys ride in—point—ride out lashing horses.
64. *Camp*—General alarm.
65. *Prairie*—Boys tearing along—a couple shoot.
66. *Camp*—Indians run to tepees and reappear with guns—retreat slowly—shooting—turn and run—boys ride through scene—Medicine Man approaches pyre—Little Fawn springs on him—takes knife from his belt—stabs him—with knife cuts Ben free—he springs out—beats fire off clothes—takes her in his arms.

This is the same number of scenes, but a better handling of incident preserves the suspense. The boys do not simply ride through, as in the other example, but they are thrown upon the wrong track and recalled, and even after they drive the Indians off there is the suggestion that Ben will be killed by the Medicine Man until Little Fawn comes to his aid. It is all uncertain up to the last few feet and therefore should hold the interest. The loosing of the saddlegirth is a seemingly unimportant bit of business, but it has its result and the attack of Little Fawn is more varied and persistent. She makes more of an effort to win and so she is more thoroughly deserving of success. At the same time, one more appearance might have been fatal.

16. It will be noticed that in both foregoing examples the scene reference is not in exact accordance with the rules set forth in Chapter XXX. This is because these rules are made for general practice and are not rigidly to be followed. If there is but one camp and every

other scene is shown in this location, then it is sufficient to use any wording that will show this. In the example in paragraph fourteen "Camp" is shorter and as explanatory as "Back to—" and the scene number. In the same way the various prairie scenes are not lettered because each is to be used but once. It is all prairie, and, since no scene will be returned to, it is not necessary to give it a more definite designation. The rules are all good practice, but in cutting back, where a scene is returned to repeatedly and the intent of the author is clear, it is permissible to use any form desired. No script will be rejected because you say "Same as" instead of "Back to."

17. Returning to the subject of the breaking tension, it sometimes happens that the tension rises too high and too fast through the growing intensity of the scene. Here the tension may be reduced through the interpolation of some natural touch. In one play already cited, the suspense was held but the tension lowered by the action of a messenger boy who placed his cigarette stub on a polished table while he went in to deliver a message. It got a laugh, not so much because it was humorous as because it was human. Little touches of this sort are a better reliance than the more direct "comedy relief," which has no place in a tense situation.

18. The possibilities of the cut-back are almost without end. The pursuit of one man by another may be brought to a state of high dramatic tension if the author handles his incident well. Another effective use is cutting from a person unknowingly approaching destruction to the person who seeks to bring about the catastrophe. The engineer's daughter approaching the mill with her father's lunch, not knowing that his fireman has suddenly become insane and is waiting to brain her with a spanner, having tied his chief to a saw log, is dramatic because the position of the girl seems so utterly without hope. Each step or cut-back brings her closer to her inevitable fate, and we cannot see how she can escape it. Of course, before the tension becomes too strong, there must be something invented that will avert disaster.

19. The triple cut-back in which three sequences of action are handled simultaneously is worked precisely the same, the author going from one to another of the groups of action as the circumstances suggest, but avoiding as a rule a straight one, two, three and repeat. The situation in the last paragraph can be worked to triple action if the lunatic is not the fireman but has escaped from a nearby asylum. Now the three factors are the lunatic, the girl and the searching party, and the question that arises is whether the girl or the guards will first come upon the lunatic.

20. Cutting back is generally regarded as a dramatic device, but it possesses equal value as a comedy aid and there is no reason why it should not be freely employed where there is a situation that warrants it. Here contrast rather than suspense is sought, though both may be had. Cutting-back scenes will also aid comedy in giving briefer action.

21. The argument of the story may be that Bill and Jim are room-mates. Bill is engaged to a charming but slightly jealous young woman, and the more sportive Jim is enamored of a lady of the chorus. Both send their dress clothes to the tailors to be pressed as they have engagements for the evening. Jim gets home first. So does Bill's dress suit. As they are both about the same size, Jim puts on Bill's clothes and leaves a note telling him to wear the other suit. When Bill gets home, there is no suit; merely a letter from the tailor saying that the clothes were stolen and offering to make a new suit if Jim will come to be measured.

22. Now we have a triangular cut-back; Bill at home cursing fate, the girl at home, getting more and more jealous, and Jim having a very good time. This changes to the girl going to look for Bill, Bill going to look for Jim and Jim still enjoying himself. All through this sequence of scenes the contrast between Jim's happiness and the distress of the others will make for heightened effect. When we see Jim and his chorus lady we think of the others. When we see Bill or the girl, we think of Jim and laugh. We get something like this action:

37. *Parlor as in No. 8*—Grace watching the clock—mother enters with a cloak and hat—offers Grace—she throws them on the floor—points to clock—what is the use of a hat and cloak when Bill is not coming.

38. *Room as in No. 1*—Bill looks at watch—shakes head—gets sore—reads tailor's note again—puts it on table—pounds it with fist—reads again—fresh display of wrath.

39. *Restaurant as in No. 17*—Jim and Daisy talking and laughing—she makes a large gesture—still holding ice cream spoon—some of it flies off on Jim's coat—Daisy apologetic—Jim laughs—says

Cut-in—"It doesn't matter. It isn't mine."

Daisy wants to know—Jim explains—she laughs—deliberately smears another spoonful on—Jim fatuously thinks it's a great joke.

40. *Parlor as in No. 8*—Grace walking up and down—now has hat and coat on—looks at the clock—her mother enters—tries to calm her—Grace snatches up dog whip from table—dog collar attached to explains whip—Grace flourishes whip—says

Cut-in—"And if I catch him with another woman——."

Grace illustrates—catches Mother—apologetic—goes out with fire in her eye.

41. *Room as in No. 1*—Bill puts on coat and hat—starts out.

42. *Street*—Grace coming along—snaps whip—almost hits old man passing.

43. *Front of house as in No. 3*—Bill comes out of house—turns to right.

44. *Restaurant as in No. 17*—Jim orders another small bottle—royal good time.

45. *Front of house as in No. 3*—Grace enters from left—rings bell—practices with whip—door opens—landlady appears—barely escapes being hit—closes door—Grace kicks on door—landlady opens again—Grace asks Landlady, says—
- Cut-in*—"Maybe he's at the Trocadero with his friend."
Landlady points—Grace thanks—exits—Landlady sorry for Bill if she catches him.
46. *Front of restaurant as in No. 15*—Bill comes in—looks through window—angry—enters—
47. *Restaurant*—Jim and Daisy very happy—Bill enters—comes down to table—stands there looking accusingly at Jim—it never feazes him—he pulls Bill down into a chair and introduces him to Daisy—tells about the suit—shows letter Bill gives him—laughs—Daisy helps coax Bill into good humor.
48. *Street*—Grace passes through—snapping whip—angry all the way through.
49. *Back to No. 47*—Boy paging the room—Jim calls him—telephone message—he excuses himself—Bill will take care of Daisy—exits.
50. *Corner of bar (small set)*—Jim comes in and goes to phone—starts to talk.
51. *Front of restaurant as in No. 15*—Grace comes in—looks in window—starts back—looks again.
52. *Restaurant as in No. 17*—Daisy talking and laughing with Bill—Bill enjoying it.
53. *Back to No. 51*—Grace enters restaurant.
54. *Back to No. 52*—Grace coming toward Bill, who has his back turned—waiter tries to stop her—she pushes him against table—he falls—upsets table—Grace comes down—lashes Bill—lashes Daisy—Daisy crawls under table—Grace turns on Bill again—half a dozen waiters rush up and grab her—hold her—Jim comes up—Bill turns on him—Jim explains—gets Grace laughing as he tells the story—shows tailor's note—puts her down at table—slams Bill into seat next her—lifts up table cloth and tells Daisy it's all right—she comes up—Jim orders another bottle.

Here cutting back very materially helps the action. Grace walking through scene forty-eight is not funny as a scene, but when we see her coming and remember that she will catch Bill alone with Daisy it becomes a strong laugh through the connection. We know, or think we know, what is coming next. A laugh in anticipation is as good as a laugh won. If we can get another laugh because the action takes a new turn, then there are two laughs where before there had been but one laugh in two sections.

23. In cutting back each section of the action should gain in contrast with the other half. Do not write action that merely tells your story by advancing the plot. Plan to have your scenes help each other as well. The individual scene is like one of the bricks of which

a house is built. It takes the mortar of inter-relationship to hold them together. You must make each brick perfect in itself and then seek to make the bricks a concrete mass through their combination of interests. It is partly for this reason that cutting back possesses such a marked value. It brings the scenes into more intimate relationship through the closeness of contact. No part of the action is left alone long enough to be forgotten, however slightly. It is well to remember, however, that not all plays may be cut back and that where cutting is done without reason the play may be spoiled through the use of the very device that so often aids a story.

24. In the Appendix A-8-9-10 gives an example of the double and later the triple cut-back. Here the gradual approach of Ruth and Bill adds to the uncertainty of the duel. We know that something is going to happen. We do not know what will happen. Interest is sustained.

(2.XXXVI:24) (3.XXXVII:30 XXXVIII:17) (4.XLV:6) (5.VI:2 XXXVIII:17) (6.LXVII:12) (7.L:6) (9.XXV:8) (10.V:6 LVI:25) (11.XIII:13) (12.XIII:10) (13.XLIII:13 L:11) (15.XLIII:10) (16.XXX:15) (17.XVIII:13) (19.XLVIII:31) (22.XXV:19 LVI:33).

CHAPTER XL

TRICK AND LIGHT EFFECTS

TRICK EFFECTS fall into two broad classes: those produced by the manipulation of the camera and those obtained by the use of lights or scenery or both. Before you read further in this or the two chapters following, please understand that the information is given that you may better understand the effects. These chapters are not written that you may, in your scripts, seek to undertake the education of the director or his cameraman. You call for an effect. You do not tell how it is to be done. Perhaps the cameraman knows just a little more about it than you do, so do not seek to air your limited knowledge.

2. It is the unfailling sign of the amateur to load the script down with technical terms, suggestions and "shop" stuff. It does not look knowing and professional, as the novice fondly believes. It looks foolish. Because it is more or less essential that you should have some general knowledge of trick effects, that you may write with an eye to economy and practicability, you are told, but it is hoped that you will keep this information to yourself and not seek to spread it, second hand, through the studios. If you will look over the examples in the Appendix you will perhaps note the freedom of these scripts from technical terms. Mr. Lang, for example (F-1), in scene nine directs that a vision be held at vignette. This is because the Kalem company supplies its directors with complete working scripts. It is

the only example in two pages of script that smacks in any way of shop stuff and it is used merely because it best explains the effect he desires. Had Mr. Lang not been the head of the script staff at the time this was written; had he been writing from the outside, he might have omitted even this. Mr. Hall (J) writes that the wind causes the candles to flicker, but he does not tell in the scene that an electric fan is employed to gain this effect. In his special space he calls for the properties, but unless you are asked to provide a property plot you do not do so, and unless you specify the properties used you do not say that the candles flicker in the wind from an electric fan. Tell what happens and leave the means to the director.

3. Light effects are the development of recent years. Little was done along these lines until about 1910, when the spotlight was brought into use. Then lighting was so little understood that it was not uncommon for the spot to completely efface the player's expression, leaving on the screen only a luminous patch. Now the lighting is under better control and light effects frequently enhance the value of a scene. The most common effects are persons sitting by the fire; the illumination supposedly coming from the blazing wood, and moonlight streaming through an open window. These are obtained by keeping down the banks of lights and using stronger illumination through the window or fireplace opening. This has somewhat the effect of the close-up because it throws into relief some particular part of the scene, perhaps the dead body on the floor that is thrown into prominence when the window opens or it may be the pair beside the fire. This is an effect easy to obtain if not complicated by other effects.

4. Another common effect is the electric hand flash used by burglars and others. The small circle of light is thrown about the room, perhaps to rest upon the safe or other object of attack. The scene is played upon the darkened stage, and the illumination, instead of coming from the hand-lamp, is thrown from a spotlight outside the lines, for of course the two or three candle lamp cannot provide a proper illumination.

5. Color is sometimes used to enhance the light effect, not through the use of several colors but a single tint. Moonlight is suggested by film colored blue, yellow is supposed to suggest artificial illumination of an interior, red is employed for fire scenes and sometimes a green is used to suggest the supernatural. Now and then you will find a film done in a soft photographic brown instead of the usual black and white. This does not suggest anything in particular. It tells the experienced man that the film was of such poor photographic quality that the blacks were a sickly gray. Changing the color makes the subject more acceptable and sometimes even artistic.

6. These colorings are obtained by one of two processes. The first, tinting or staining, is merely the dyeing of the gelatine emulsion by immersion in a tank of aniline dye. All parts of the film take up the color, but it shows more strongly in the clear parts. The other process, known as toning, is more intricate. In this there is a chemical change

in the nature of the silver deposit. Here the high lights are clear, or nearly so, and the parts formerly black are now of the color desired. Toning is more expensive than tinting, and is less seldom used.

7. Where a light effect merely consists in staining the film, the memorandum merely states the tint or the fact. You do not say that you wish the film tinted for moonlight. You write "moonlight" and the director will know. The directions most generally used are:

Garden (Night).
Lawn (Moonlight).
Parlor (Lamplight).
Den (Firelight).
Bedroom (red) Flame and smoke seen outside window.

Sometimes but half of the scene is firelight or lamplight. In such a case the film is cut through and the two halves are separately handled. Perhaps a lamp is brought into a room previously flooded with moonlight. Here the first part of the film will be stained blue and the remainder yellow.

8. Where effects are more intricate there is necessity for a more explicit direction, though even here the effect required *and not the means of obtaining that effect* should be given. They may be written along these lines:

21. *Parlor as in No. 10*—Lights down—George enters—gropes his way to switch—lights on—&c.
44. *Kitchen*—Lights down—Jen enters with candle—lights on—&c.
36. *Library*—Body of Boardman on floor—Agnes enters—goes to window—throws open—moonlight streams in—illuminates Boardman's body—&c.
36. *Dressing room*—Bess puts on hat and coat—gives a last look around—puts out light—(*lights down*)
36. *Dressing room*—Bess puts on hat—looks about—puts out light—(*lights down*) goes to door—opens—she starts back—figure of Hicks outlined against the light outside.
55. *Library*—Mary sitting by fire which illuminates her figure—rest of room dark—Jim enters—goes to Mary—kneels beside her—&c.
29. *Dining room*—Circle of light seen in hall outside—Spike enters—stands in doorway—throws beam of light about room—it falls on loving cup on sideboard—he goes to it—&c.

With these scenes as a guide you should be able to describe any light effect simply and understandably. With the exception of the second dressing room scene these are all simple and may be obtained without any very great trouble.

9. Trick effects through the use of scenery are varied. Perhaps the most familiar is the breakaway. This is the scene built to be broken down during the action of the play. It may be that the action shows the interior of a warehouse during a military engagement. A

shell hits the wall and comes through, leaving a jagged opening. The scene is built with this jagged opening. Then the opening is filled in with wood or cloth bricks. At the proper moment these bricks are pushed into the scene while the shell is thrown in. The latter is a special form of fireworks that gives out a dense yellow powder. Some loose plaster and lycopodium dust will complete the effect. This sounds intricate, and it is, but you merely write:

48. *Warehouse—(breakaway set)*—Jack comes in—revolver in hand—shooting at his pursuers—shell bursts through wall—bricks fall upon Jack—&c.

If the breakaway effect is not employed the first time the setting is used you write there that it is a breakaway and write the effect in the scene in which it occurs. The director's assistant will note at the proper point that the scene is to break away, then he will follow down the scenes until he comes to the one describing the effect. A breakaway window is one with the frame partly sawed away that it may be smashed in easily. A breakaway balcony or gallery is so set that the removal of a prop will cause it to collapse and a breakaway staircase is one that is made to fall apart. But a staircase in which the steps collapse to form a chute down which the comedy characters slide is not a breakaway, but a "slippery day stairs."

10. Properties that break away are said to be "tricked." A tricked chair is one partly cut through or one put together without glue. A tricked barrel is one held together without nails. A table is tricked if the usual top is replaced by a board so thin that it will break when a weight is placed upon it. You may, if you desire, call attention to the tricking of an article of furniture, but it is not customary. The scene is self-explanatory. If you tell a director that Jim smashes Henry over the head with a chair and escapes, the director is not going to use a regular chair; particularly if the actor who is to play Henry has anything to say about it. Sometimes the cut-back can be used to heighten the effect. Jim may be seen sitting in the chair—he and Henry get into an argument. Jim rises. There is a cut-back to some other place and an almost immediate return. The scene appears to be the same, but now the chair in which Jim has been sitting is replaced by a duplicate so tricked that it will fall apart when Henry is hit.

11. In camera manipulation the field of trick work is much larger. The simplest means of tricking a scene lies in the speed at which the crank of the camera is turned. It has been shown that pictures are displayed in the theatre at the speed of sixteen to the second. Normally they are taken at the same speed. If the camera is turned at a speed that will pass twenty frames through the camera in a second, and this film is shown at the rate of sixteen frames a second, the action shown in that second will be the normal action of only four-fifths of a second. In other words the action will be only four-fifths as rapid as normal action. If thirty-two frames are made each second

the action will be only half as fast. On the other hand, if twelve instead of sixteen pictures are made, then when sixteen of these frames are shown in one second we get crowded into that second the action that really took a second and a third. Slow turning is generally used to accelerate the speed of horses, trains and boats. In comedy, it is sometimes used to get a peculiar floating effect by cutting still further down.

12. A related effect, used in comedy, is the one-in-four turning. In this the exposures are made at normal speed, but only once in each four exposures is there a record on the film, the film showing the first, fifth, ninth and thirteenth exposures only. This not only makes the action four times as rapid, but since the three frame intervals permit a rapid advancement of action, it gives a peculiar jerky movement. This is the last resort of a director who is afraid that his picture will be poor. He resorts to "intermittent turning," as it is called, and there are always a few who will laugh and fool the exhibiting manager. You call for the use of intermittent action only when you can provide some new effect, and if you can invent new effects you will have to push a few importunate film manufacturers off the step each time you want to go out to mail a manuscript. They'll never let you get as far as the letter box.

13. Back turning is about the earliest of the trick effects. Back turning means that you start from the end of the film and work to the first frame while the action starts with the opening of the scene and works to the end. Naturally everything is done backward. If a man dives off the pier, he seems to jump from the water to the pier; if he goes up a ladder he seems to be going down. Film is fed past the opening of the lens from the top to the bottom of the camera. The top film box or "retort" is loaded with unexposed film which is subject to the action of light through the lens and then stored in the lower box. If the unexposed film is placed in the lower retort and fed upward, the reverse effect is obtained. Most cameras are built so that changing a belt and turning the crank the wrong way will give this reverse effect.

14. This has been so sadly overworked in comedy that the reverse scene is seldom or never used, and it is a poor advertisement for your play that you are required to resort to such time honored expedients. On the other hand, back or reverse turning has a definite and valuable use in dramatic work where it is not shown to be reverse action. If the hero is required to make a jump that is beyond his powers; as to a high wall, he stands on the wall, drops to the ground and runs backward out of the scene. On the screen he seems to run in, leap to the top of the wall without an effort and a moment later we see him drop down on the other side.

15. A more valuable use is to safeguard the players. You have this sequence of scenes, perhaps:

52. *Track A*—Agnes lying insensible across rails.

53. *Engine—camera on car ahead*—Ben on running board—climbs to cowcatcher.
54. *Track A*—Agnes on track—train comes in—Ben on cowcatcher—leans forward and picks Agnes from track—train on out of scene.
55. *Track B*—Train coming in—slows down—stops—Ben gets off cowcatcher with Agnes in his arms—conductor and passengers run in—praise Ben.

In making this series, the director will perhaps make fifty-five first. When it is done, he will have Ben get aboard the cowcatcher again with Agnes in his arms. The train will back slowly into fifty-four, the camera being turned in reverse and at reduced speed. At the proper point Ben will lay Agnes down on the track, trying to make it appear as though he were catching her up. The train keeps on out of the picture with Ben preparing to catch Agnes up. The moment is so tense that few will notice that the smoke is going down the stack. Agnes lies there until fifty-two has been made and then they will make fifty-three or another scene as may be most convenient.

16. Stop-camera work will be more fully explained in a succeeding chapter. It is merely the stoppage of the camera for the introduction or removal of some person or object. The last of the effects to be obtained through turning and stop camera is the one-turn-one-picture attachment. This makes but a single exposure each time the crank is turned. It is the basis of much small trick work and can be used in dramatic work generally only where the supernatural is suggested. Bruce takes the marriage certificate of his step-mother and tears it up, throwing the pieces on the table, intending to put them into the fire. The destruction of the certificate will rob her of her rights and give the estate to him. To his horror he seems to see the certificate become whole again. In a fit of superstitious terror he takes the torn certificate to the rightful owner. The scenes run:

43. *Library*—Bruce sitting at desk—takes paper from drawer—regards it with anger.
- On screen*—Marriage certificate as in No. 22.
Half fearfully he regards the paper, then, in a sudden rage, he tears the paper up and throws the pieces on the desk—smiles triumphantly—starts—stares at bits of paper.
44. *Top of desk*—Bits of paper move about until they become united into a perfect certificate again.
45. *Back to No. 43*—Bruce stares at paper on desk—breaks the spell—starts forward—paper still in pieces—he is terror-stricken—comes to sudden determination—gathers up the pieces and rushes from the room.

In forty-three Bruce is handling a paper the same size as the certificate. The certificate is shown as an insert. On the return to the scene Bruce tears up the duplicate. Now forty-five is played and then the camera is brought down to include the desk only, the certificate is placed on the desk smoothed out. A foot or two will be turned in

reverse and then the one-turn attachment will be brought into play. The certificate will be torn apart and carefully placed so that it seems almost whole. One picture is made and then each individual piece is moved slightly away from the common centre. Another picture is made and again the position of each piece is changed. This is continued until the various bits seem to be in much the same position as were the bits in the other scene. Since the scene is made in reverse and shown in the natural run, it will seem as though the torn paper became whole again through invisible means. Forty-three and forty-five will play in no more time than the action requires. Forty-four may require several hours to make but a few seconds only to show.

17. Another use for this movement may be represented by the scene shown here:

26. *Studio*—Angelo turns from the wet clay in disgust—he cannot realize his ideal—with a general air of extreme weariness, he throws himself into a chair beside the modeling stand—he sleeps—slowly the clay changes into a perfect model of his ideal—he smiles in his sleep—springs up—approaches the clay—it is the same that he left—extreme dejection.

This is more properly a vision, but it is also a trick. When Angelo sleeps the camera is stopped. The clay is replaced by another mass precisely similar. Now the one-turn device is brought into play and after each turn a sculptor steps into the scene, makes a few deft improvements and steps back while another picture is made, continuing until the statue is complete. Then the other clay replaces the complete statue at the proper moment and the action goes on. A simpler plan is sometimes employed of playing the dream in reverse and gradually battering down a completed statue.

18. Turning is not the only resource of the cameraman. Much may be done with the lens. The chief classes are the manipulation of the diaphragm and iris.

19. Most persons are familiar with the regular photographic cameras, most of which are provided with iris diaphragms, by the opening or closing of which the amount of light permitted to enter the camera may be regulated at will. These diaphragms may be opened from nothing to the full opening of the lens. When completely closed, no light is admitted to act upon the sensitive film and no record is made. When just enough light is admitted, there is perfect photography. If only half enough light is passed through the lens the picture is underexposed and the print will be dark and indistinct. Where a scene is written calling for half-lights on the stage, the electric lights are turned on full, because these must burn a few moments before they yield their full illumination. They cannot be turned on and off like an incandescent lamp. To cut down part of this illumination to suggest the half-lighted stage, the lamps are not interfered with, but the cameraman stops down or partly closes his diaphragm to cut out part of the illumination. When Jen enters the kitchen in the scene in paragraph eight the lights are full on, but the diaphragm is partly

closed. As she enters, the diaphragm is opened to the proper point and it looks as though the candle had lighted up the scene. In the first of the two dressing room scenes, when Bess puts out the lights, the mercury lights still burn, but the diaphragm is closed, getting the effect of darkness. In the second version, in which there is a light on the mimic stage against which the figure of Hicks is silhouetted, it is not possible to diaphragm down without cutting down this light as well. In this case it will be necessary to rearrange the lighting circuits so that a single switch may cut out all of the lights except a pair that are just outside of the door and hidden by the scenery. Now at the proper moment the cameraman does not touch his diaphragm, but the electrician throws the switch and the lights die out. Since this rearrangement may give trouble, you must see to it that the effect will repay the labor.

20. Irising also employs some form of iris diaphragm, but this time the iris is in front of the lens and not between the combinations. This cuts down the area of picture on the screen, but not the amount of illumination on the part of the picture shown. A slight closing will merely cut off the corners of the picture. This can be increased at will. On the screen the effect is generally seen as a full frame vanishing to a mere dot or, in reverse, a dot enlarging to full frame. It is purely an ornamental effect, not possessed of any particular significance and its use should be left to the director's judgment. It may some day be used entirely in place of the fade vision, and since its use slightly vignettes or softens the edges of the picture it would be particularly appropriate for such use. It is not yet used so much for visions as for the purpose of giving a relief from the usual oblong frame.

21. Double exposure refers to the exposure of the same film more than once. This may be done by passing it through the camera twice or by passing it through the printing machine more than once, changing the negative each time. This is double printing. In the camera, half of the film may be exposed the first time and the other half on the second trip through, or the entire film may be acted upon each time. If the diaphragm is opened or closed as the exposures are made, then it is known as a dissolve, which will be explained more fully presently. It may be used to permit a player to enact two roles. Sometimes the second exposure will be of a single figure. In this work a "cave" of black cloth is used against which the player works. A black velvet curtain is sometimes used, but even dead black velvet will reflect some light and the cave alone will give absolute blackness. It is merely a huge box frame lined with black cloth on top, bottom, sides and back.

22. Where the film is passed through the printer twice it is more usual to call this double printing than double exposure. To show the use of double printing, perhaps it is desired to have an interior set through the window of which is seen a particular landscape. Either the scenery must be taken to this point, a stage built and a scene

erected, or the landscape will be taken. The interior will be made with a mask that will cut out the window. In the printing room the negative of the interior will be printed with a similar mask, and the landscape will later be printed with a mask that cuts out all but the window.

23. A mask is a piece of metal placed in front of the film. It may be cut to a particular shape as a keyhole, a figure eight (to represent a scene viewed through a pair of field glasses,) a circle (spyglass) or any other appropriate shape. When used as indicated in the preceding paragraph, they are very carefully matched in pairs, each cutting out what the other reveals. It is sometimes called a mat, as is shown in scene thirty-three in H, where it is used.

24. Double exposure, with or without masks, is the explanation of many of the seemingly impossible things seen on the screen. But because things are possible it does not follow that the author should seek to tax the technical skill of cameraman and director to the utmost merely to procure novelty effects. It is not the effects but the plot that will sell the story, and the plot that can be made without lavish outlay will find the most ready welcome.

25. Where effects are used, they should be described and not explained. It will be noted in the railroad example in paragraph fifteen the scene is written with no reference to reverse turning or slow turning. What happens is told. The director is supposed to know enough to keep out of the Coroner's Court by making the picture the safe way and not taking chances on straight action. You may imagine that you are helping the sale of a story by telling how an effect may be obtained. You may fear that the director may not know how to do it and so will return your script. You tell him. If he does not know, he will not read your explanation and if he does know—and probably he does—he will resent your suggestion of his ignorance.

(3.III:3) (11.XXXIV:3) (20. Scene 9. F-1. Appendix) (21. XLII:1).

CHAPTER XLI

VISIONS

VISIONS in photoplay serve a variety of purposes according to the method of their introduction and general handling. Their principal use is to recall some past action or to explain some action of the past not already shown. They may also be employed to picture the thoughts of some person present, whether these thoughts refer to the past or to a dream of the future. Used as the means of recalling some unrelated incident of the past, it is the pictorial equivalent of such literary expressions as "and in the meantime—," or "lis-

ten and I will tell you the sad story—" They are even more awkward; which is saying not a little.

2. Theoretically the photoplay should move in chronological order, beginning with the earliest action and continuing in logical sequence to the last action recorded. Theoretically this should always be done. In practice it should be done wherever possible. Where it cannot be done and it is necessary to go back and pick up some thread of the story, possibly because it has been held back in order to obtain a surprise, then the vision must be resorted to. The ideal play is as free from visions as from leaders, but unfortunately there are few ideal plays. If it can be made a matter of choice then the vision is selected as being the less intrusive of the two because it is in action and not in words. This is particularly true of the vision within the frame or the true vision. The fade vision is more of an intrusion, but still less of an interruption than an explanatory leader. The true vision had the advantage of being a part of the running scene. It possessed another advantage in that it was more difficult to handle and therefore was less frequently used. The ease with which the fade vision is made seems to encourage its more frequent use.

3. The straight vision, or vision within the frame, was produced by double exposure or double printing; generally the former. On the screen it formed a part of the running scene and was not a scene by itself. Generally it was shown in the upper left-hand corner, because a majority of the masks so were made for this effect. The scene perhaps showed the false sweetheart about to make a marriage for money. He thinks of the little girl back home whom he still loves. He looks up into the corner of the picture and strikes a pose he can hold without great fatigue. In the corner we see the picture of the girl he loves, perhaps in a pose we remember from the early action. The vision fades out and the man resumes his action. We do not have to be told in a leader that John remembers Nellie. We can see that he does.

4. This effect is obtained by slipping into the camera a mask which cuts off this corner of the scene. The man holds his pose while the crank of the camera is given a certain number of turns. Then he resumes his action, the turns of the camera crank still being counted. At the end of the scene the film is turned back the proper number of counts, the masks are changed so that now only the corner is exposed to the film. Once more the film is turned down until the portion is reached where the vision is to appear. Now the camera is set up on the vision and this is made. When the film is developed, the vision appears as a part of the scene.

5. Such a vision would have been written into the script as a part of the scene and not as a special scene, appearing:

36. *John's room*—John dressing for the wedding—pauses—picks up a photograph from the bureau—looks at it—*VISION* of John and Bess as in scene nine—fades—John sighs—rises—calls Valet—gets into coat—exits.

The vision serves to remind us of his lost love, and to show that he regrets her; which makes his present action still more despicable. The sight of the girl was more appealing than would have been the mere mention of her name.

6. These scenes were artistic and effective, but as production increased they were found objectionable because the film had to be carried in the camera until the vision could be made. The use of the masks also made for delay. Some director, needing a larger space, dissolved his scene into the vision and back again. Someone else seized upon the idea and simply faded down his scene and faded up his vision. Eliminating even the dissolve, the vision could be made without reference to the scene in which it was to be employed. Instead of the scene as shown in paragraph five, we get three scenes as shown below:

36. *John's room*—John getting dressed for the wedding—goes to bureau—sees picture—picks it up—lets it drop—thinks—FADE.
37. *Fade in*—part of scene nine—FADE.
38. *Fade up to No. 36*—John shakes his head—pulls himself together—calls Valet—puts on hat and coat—exits.

With this form of vision scene nine would be made twice, once as a straight scene and once with a fade at each end. It may be taken the same day or before or after the scenes in John's room are made, because it will not be connected with those scenes until it is spliced into place in the joining room. Until then it has a separate entity the same as any other scene.

7. In a vision of several scenes, as when a long story is to be told, it is good form to dissolve each scene into the next, but it is better commercial practice to fade down to the first vision scene than to run to the last vision scene and fade into the scene in which the vision is seen.

8. It is always necessary to return to this scene in order to show that the vision is ended. The return may be only for a few feet, but the vision must end where it started.

9. Visions are better if they are dissolved into each other, but this eats up footage so alarmingly that it is the more common practice to use only the start and end fade. Between, the scenes are not faded but are run as any straight action would be.

10. To illustrate the writing of these visions, let us suppose a scene in which Fred, our hero, asks Mr. Bancroft for the hand of his daughter, Grace. Bancroft tells him that Grace is not his daughter, but a foundling whom they adopted. The action should run as shown here:

Leader—Fred asks permission to marry Grace.

32. *Library*—Bancroft on—Grace leads Fred in—both nervous—she gives Fred a little push toward Bancroft, who looks up—regards them kindly—rises—tweaks Grace's ear—she hides face and runs from room—Fred speaks—Bancroft grows grave—motions to chair—both sit—Bancroft starts to speak—FADE.

33. *Fade in*—Front of Bancroft's—night—Bancroft approaches from street—sees basket on steps—picks up—looks—surprised—enters house.
34. *Library*—Mrs. Bancroft on—Bancroft enters with basket—she springs up—screams—takes baby from basket—admires—they examine child's clothes—find a paper—they read—
On screen—sheet of paper—woman's handwriting.
 Her name is Grace
 Be good to her.
 Mrs. Bancroft cuddles child—Bancroft exits.
35. *Front*—Bancroft comes to door—looks up and down street—beckons—Policeman enters—Bancroft explains—Policeman nods—they enter house together.
36. *Library*—Mrs. Bancroft fondling child—looks up as Bancroft and policeman enter—hugs child closer—Bancroft looks at policeman, who crosses and tries to take child—Mrs. Bancroft will not let go—pleads with Bancroft—he nods—tells policeman he can see how it is—Policeman exits.
37. *Magistrate's court*—Bancrofts sign papers of adoption.
38. *Library*—Grace as a little girl—Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft watch her with pleasure—FADE.
39. *Fade up to No. 32*—Bancroft rises—goes to desk—gets papers—offers to Fred—he pushes them aside—Grace enters timidly—Fred turns—holds out his arms—she rushes into his embrace—Fred kisses her—over her shoulder he motions to Bancroft to put the papers away.

In this vision it will be noted that there is not an exact continuity. This is because Bancroft is not telling the entire story of Grace's life, but is telling such parts as have a bearing upon the adoption. It is a story, told in fragments, and as such it may be shown in fragments and to better effect than the carefully connected history. If, for any reason, it is necessary to preserve a rigid continuity in the story, then there will be used a fade each time the period changes. In the above it would then be necessary to fade after thirty-six, thirty-seven and of course after thirty-eight.

11. Where Bancroft tells facts new to the audience, they should be told in reasonably full detail. If the scenes in the above vision had already been shown the spectator as a part of the running action, then so long a vision would have been a superfluity. A single scene, preferably the scene of adoption, would have been ample to have told the spectator that Bancroft was telling Fred all about Grace. If the court scene is objected to as not possessing much pictorial value, then thirty-six might be selected instead. Either would have recalled to the mind of the spectator the previous story and would have suggested that this was all being told Fred, though only a single scene is used.

12. In the above vision it is supposed that the audience, like Fred, is not aware of the fact that Grace is a foundling, and so the story is told for the benefit of the spectator, though given apparently for the benefit of Fred. It is always a question as to whether the surprise will be greater in effect gained than a previous knowledge on the part

of the spectator. Greater interest might have been gained for the courtship had it been known to the spectator that Grace was not Bancroft's child. Then speculation as to the outcome might have increased the interest in the progress of the love affair. This is a matter that must be decided for each story. Generally it will be found that knowledge on the part of the spectator will make for the greater effect.

13. In fade vision as elsewhere, if reference is made to a previous scene, it is not necessary to repeat the action. This will be identical with the action of the original scene. It is good practice to note on this original scene that the action is also to be used in a fade vision. Then the director can make the fades at the proper time. The way to write this is the same as is shown in Chapter XXXIX. This is merely a note following the action of the scene, but here the wording should be:

17. *Woods*—Mary and Tom enter—stop for a moment—he picks a flower and gives her—looks into her face—sees there the answer to his unspoken question—clasps her to his heart. NOTE—The portion of the scene following the giving of the flower is also used as a Fade vision scene 46.

Scene forty-six will appear in the scene plot as being in the same location as seventeen, but it is better to make a note on the scene itself. If there is a fade only at the beginning or end of the scene and not both, then state that fact. Visions repeating previous scenes merely recall the action and need not be as long nor as complete as the original scene since the mind of the spectator will supply the remainder.

14. Narrative visions which supply facts not previously known to the spectator must be given in greater detail. Here the use of the fade vision, which permits the use of the full stage, is a benefit since it permits large actions to be more clearly shown. This is about the only artistic advantage the fade vision possesses. It is useful where a story is to be told. It is not so good as the within the frame vision to portray the thought of the person in the scene.

15. Using the vision within the frame, not more than one should be shown to the scene. In the fade vision the alternation of vision and scene is no more marked than any other sequence of scenes. To illustrate, a scene from a Lubin release is given. A physician seeks a nurse for an insane patient. He tells the applicant the conditions. The fade visions show the processes of reasoning:

3. *Street—Auto at Curb*—Bill and Clarke enter—Bill starts to climb into car—Clarke says
Cut-in—"My patient is as crazy as she is rich."
 Bill stops—seems to see things—FADE.
4. *Fade in*—Room—Crazy woman chasing Bill around with a whip—knife in her mouth. FADE.
5. *Back to No. 3*—Bill shakes head—doesn't want the job—starts to go—Clarke grabs him—says—
Cut-in—"But she is harmless if she is humored."

Bill thinks again—FADE.

6. *Fade in*—Room—Bill jumping through hoop—crazy woman approves—pats him on head—FADE.
7. *Back to No. 5*—Bill looks at Clarke—smiles—it's foolish to ask him to take a job like that—Clarke casually adds—*Cut-in*—"She thinks she is Cleopatra. You must be her Antony." Bill straightens up—sees things—FADE.
8. *Fade in*—Oriental room—Beautiful girl as Cleopatra—fondles Bill as Antony—FADE.
9. *Back to No. 7*—Bill all smiles—sure he'll take the job—jumps into the car—tries to hurry Clarke in—car out of scene.

Here the succession of small visions and short scenes gives the complete exposition of the play within sixty feet of action and twenty feet of leader. In the vision within the frame it would not be possible to get over clearly the first and second visions, since there would scarcely be sufficient room.

16. On the other hand the device does not work out as well as the frame vision where a small effect is desired. Suppose that Mary is engaged to Malcolm, a wealthy but elderly man. She loves Jack, but may not marry him. She and Jack are in the garden. She thinks of marriage with Jack. Here the small action would look better as a frame vision, as shown:

26. *Garden*—Mary and John on bench—he looks at her—she turns face away—his glance is too ardent—she looks up—VISION of Mary and John at altar—vision fades—Mary looks down at ring on finger—sighs.

Here the small vision is to be preferred to one which will fill the full stage with a church scene and yet the current practice would give:

26. *Garden*—Mary and John on bench—he looks at her—she turns face away—his glance is too ardent—she looks down—FADE.
27. *Fade in*—Chancel—Mary and John being married—FADE.
28. *Back to No. 26*—Mary looks at ring on finger—sighs.

Now to dress the stage a number of persons must be employed. This may be reduced by using a close-up, but the picture will still be too important for the fact. It is probable that when the golden days of the film come that the vision will be selected to fit the scene and not merely the convenience of the director.

17. The vision is useful, but its use is most sadly abused. Perhaps no single element of the photoplay suffers more. It is much easier to write in a vision than to rewrite the play and put in a fact forgotten. The careless author forgets to put a fact in its proper place. He has Tom tell Harry about it in a vision. He strikes a fact that requires some explanation. It should have been explained in the early action, but he had not thought of it then. No matter. A vision will serve as well. Even professional writers are not slow to avail themselves of this privilege. Some go even further. They argue that if a vision is effective a number will be still more effective and they write in so many that not only do the visions lose their novelty but

the spectator spends all of his time taking post-dated facts and trying to put them in their proper places in the plot. He has no time for appreciation of the action or enjoyment of the story. He must perform a mental card cataloguing act. Reminiscences are all very well in a home for the aged, but they should have comparatively small place on the photoplay screen.

18. There is still another angle to this abuse of effects. The effort of the author is, or should be, to suggest life—real life, and not a story *about* life. It should be his object to make it all seem real and convincing, to which end he should not break too frequently into the straight screen stage. A play that is made up of a mass of trick effects, of masked scenes, of vignettes, of busts and inserts held together by a few scenes of natural action cannot interest as strongly as will the straightforward, natural story in which effects are sparingly used and then introduced in so natural a manner that they supply their own excuse. They belong. Unless they very evidently *do* belong, leave them alone.

(2.XXIV:9 XXXVII:6 XLIV:3) (4.XL:23) (5.XXXVIII:16)
(6.XL:20 XLII:3 & 6) (12.XXV:19) (13.XXXIX:7).

CHAPTER XLII

DISSOLVES AND STOP-CAMERA

SINCE dissolving is merely a form of double exposure, it should be understood that in this chapter double exposure refers only to those forms in which all of the film is twice exposed to the action of light and not merely one part of the film at a time. In the same way stop-camera in this chapter does not refer to all forms of picture in which the camera is stopped, but only to that form in which the camera is stopped to introduce or remove a person or object. Other forms of trick work obtained through stoppage of the camera have been described in Chapter XL. The dissolve and stop-camera, in combination, form the apparition or vision in the scene as opposed to the vision in the frame but apart from the scene.

2. It has already been explained that by means of the iris diaphragm placed between the combinations of the lens, an operator is able to regulate the amount of light admitted through the lens to act upon the sensitized emulsion. The opening may be diminished to nothing or increased to the diameter of the lens mount. The larger the opening, naturally the greater amount of light admitted. We will presume that the light necessary to give a correctly timed exposure is represented by one hundred per cent. It follows that if the light is reduced by half through the closing of the diaphragm, the picture will receive but one-half of its proper quantity of light. If the diaphragm were completely closed, there would be no light whatever.

3. Should the director be making one of the fade visions written in

the last chapter, he will, at the end of the scene, call for a fade. The players continue their action, but the camera operator closes his diaphragm to nothing. Although this is rather generous, it will be easier to argue that the fade will run fifty frames. The first frame will receive one hundred per cent illumination, the second ninety-eight, the third ninety-six and so until the fiftieth frame is not acted upon by the light at all. Each frame has lost two per cent of the illumination, a gradual and even change that does not shock the spectator. It is precisely as though you turned down the gas in a little more than three seconds. This is the straight fade-down. The fade-up is the reverse. The action starts with the lens closed and the diaphragm is gradually opened until the full illumination is reached, when the real scene action starts.

4. But suppose that, having faded down a scene in three feet, the cameraman reverses the movement and takes the three feet of film back into the top box. Now he fades up the next scene on this same film. It has been shown that the first frame has been illuminated one hundred per cent in the first scene. It now receives no illumination from the second scene. But the second frame is now also one hundred per cent exposed, being acted upon by ninety-eight per cent of light from the first scene and two per cent of light from the second. The next frame is fully illuminated in the proportions of ninety-six to four and so until the forty-ninth frame shows ninety-eight per cent of the coming scene and but two per cent of the old. In the fiftieth frame the light comes wholly from the new scene. One picture has been dissolved into the other, the replacement being so gradual that at first it is scarcely realized.

5. The dissolve is two fades superimposed on the film. The fade is reduction from light to blackness or growth from blackness to light. The fade is made without reference to the succeeding scene. The dissolve must be made on the same piece of film before it is removed from the camera. As a matter of fact, through double printing, the straight fade may be worked into a dissolve by passing the film through the printing machines, but dissolves by printing require more care and the result is seldom as satisfactory.

6. Where a dissolve is desired and you have reason to hope or believe that the extra work will be undertaken for the sake of the increased effect, you slightly alter the scene terminals. You do not tell the director to fade down or up but ask that he dissolve to the next scene, writing the script in this manner:

42. *Attic*—Nettie and Grandma on—looking over an old trunk—Nettie picks up an old dress—starts to try it on by holding before her—with a cry Grandma starts up and almost snatches it from her—Nettie startled and hurt—Grandma sees—draws Nettie to her—starts to speak—*dissolve to*—
42. *Church*—Crowd in old fashioned costumes—Grandma, as a young girl, wearing the dress shown above, is standing at the rail with Grandpa—benediction is pronounced—they turn from the rail—friends crowd about them with good wishes—*dissolve to*

44. *Attic*—Grandma stops talking—Nettie looks up and smiles—reverently folds dress and restores to trunk.

This is practically no more than a fade vision without the period of darkness that marks the down and up fade. The screen retains its full illumination, but the scene changes. Instead of a single dissolve vision, an entire story may be told; each scene dissolving into the next, or a lengthy vision may run without a break and with a great improvement to the effect as well as increase in the cost.

7. These effects are gained solely through the use of the diaphragm and the counting of the turns of the crank. The apparition is done with the double exposure, counting and stop-camera.

8. According to the dictionary an apparition is a ghost. It also is an appearance. In general the word is supposed to connote the supernatural or preternatural. In photoplay the apparition may be something merely thought of and having no relation to the other world.

9. Tom's better but quarrelsome half has just stormed out of the room. Tom married for money and did not even get that. He drops the book he has been trying to read and thinks of the girl he might and should have married. She seems almost to be standing beside him, so real are his thoughts to him. He is almost convinced that she is there. He springs up, but clasps only thin air. The script should read:

51. *Library*—Tom and Betty on—quarreling—in an excess of rage Betty grabs Tom by the hair—pounds his head against the chair back—bursts into tears and rushes from the room—Tom picks up a book—looks at it—wants to read—doesn't want to read—lets it drop into his lap—stares into the fire—slowly the figure of Mary appears before him as he remembers her—the image grows stronger until she seems very real—he springs up to grasp her—she vanishes—Tom clasps only the air—he sinks back into the chair, more miserable than ever.

In line with previous warnings, please note that nothing is said here about a dissolve, an apparition, stop-camera or anything else. You merely tell what happens. The director will understand. He will start the scene and when Tom starts to stare into the fire, he will call a fade. Tom becomes rigid and the cameraman will slowly close the diaphragm, counting the turns of the crank. When he is finished he will reverse the movement and turn back into the upper retort just as much film as he has turned down on the fade. Now Mary will walk into the scene and take her place before Tom. The camera starts and the diaphragm is opened in just as many turns as it took to close it. At the end of the dissolve Mary is fully in the scene, though at first she was merely a shadowy suggestion of an outline through which the room could be seen. Now Tom springs up, the director cries "Hold," and Tom stops where he is, trying not to move his body in the slightest while Mary walks off the scene. Nothing is done with the diaphragm. Now the action is started again and Tom completes the gesture with which he sought to embrace Mary, but now there is no

one there. He goes back to his chair and the scene ends. When the film is developed there will be a small piece, perhaps a foot or so, that shows Tom merely standing still and Mary walking off. In the joining room this piece will be taken out and the rest so cleverly matched that you will never realize that Tom stopped moving for a time.

10. But suppose the scene does not call for this effort to grasp her. Perhaps Mary merely fades out again, or dissolves out. In this case the process is reversed. The diaphragm is gradually closed with Mary on the stage and then while she walks out is turned back again. Once more it is run down while the diaphragm is opened. In each case Tom remains in the scene without movement and is exposed one hundred per cent on each frame. So is the scene itself. At each end of the dissolve the scene receives illumination in the proportion of ninety-eight and two per cent and in the middle it gets half the illumination at one exposure and the remainder on the next. Only Mary is given a graduated exposure that first brings her to full flesh and then reduces her to nothingness.

11. Advance in the manufacture of cameras has resulted in the material reduction of the labor involved, but there is still required both time and care. Much more simple is the straight stop-camera apparition. This is done merely by stopping the camera. Its use is indicated when the appearance of the person is to be something of a shock. Suppose that in a fit of jealousy Ben has killed Bess, his wife, because of his unjust suspicions. We wish to show the agony of his remorse. We write:

44. *Cell*—Ben sitting on bench—head in hands—Bess appears on bench beside him—he sees—shrieks—rushes to window—Bess appears in front of window—Ben turns to the door—she is there—he rushes to the corner—she is waiting for him—he picks up the bench and strikes at her—the bench shatters against the wall—Bess has disappeared—with a leering smile Ben turns from the corner—Bess confronts him—Ben staggers back—gathers himself for a spring—jumps at Bess—she vanishes—Ben falls forward—half rises—looks about—does not see her—looks to right—she is standing there—quickly he averts his glance—looking to the left—she appears there—Ben springs up—rushes to door—beats on it madly with his fists—sinks down—Bess appears in centre—Ben rises—drags himself up to her—about to strike—she smiles—Ben clasps hands to head—falls down—dead. Bess fades from the picture.

This will be a troublesome scene to handle, but it looks as though it would give a return in effect, and it is more simple than it seems. As Ben sits on the bench, Bess walks in and sits beside him while the camera is stopped. The camera turns and Ben sees her. He rushes to the window. As he starts up, the camera stops and Bess walks out of the scene. Ben goes to the window. Just before he gets there the camera stops again. Bess walks over to the window and faces Ben. The camera starts and turns until Ben turns and starts for the door. Now it stops and again Bess gets out of the scene. Ben starts

for the door. He is almost there when he is stopped and once more Bess comes into the scene. So it goes. When Ben springs at her, just before the leap there is a stop and Bess comes out of the scene. Ben jumps. It is the same when he raises the bench. As he almost strikes he holds the action until Bess gets out of the way. Each apparition will mean a stop and a patched film, but the result will be as smooth and even as though the action was continuous.

12. Stop-camera work has many other uses. Faust, in his laboratory, summons Mephisto. There is a puff of smoke through which the Devil steps. The pact is made. Mephisto sinks through the floor, presumably going some distance down, and leaves behind only a puff of smoke. It is all rather simple. Faust performs the incantation. At the proper moment he holds his position. Mephisto takes his place in the scene and a small smoke bomb is touched off. When it explodes, Mephisto steps through the smoke. In the joining room the film is matched up. When the time comes for the exit Mephisto merely crouches down. Then he stands up again and walks out of the scene. A smoke bomb is placed where he stood. When it explodes, Faust resumes his suspended animation. The film is cut as Mephisto crouches and before he goes very far. Imagination does the rest. The smoke bomb is not essential. It is merely a little touch. It is sufficient that Mephisto crouches.

13. Had he desired to vanish in thin air he would merely have stood still, or he could have jumped into the air. The film would have been cut before he came down and therefore imagination would suggest that he melted into nothing. Walking up the drop would suggest a passage through the brick wall, or coming from there an entrance through solid masonry.

14. Objects are worked in the same way. If the dagger with which a murder was done is to be presented before the villain's eyes, the camera is stopped while the director enters the scene and places the knife on the table. Later he may take it away again. In the same way an object can be dissolved in and out. This dissolving is generally done when the object of the introduction is to remind rather than startle.

15. With this explanation of the various factors of the photoplay and the methods of accomplishing effects it should be possible for the student to write in action the elements of form that he has mastered.

(1.XL:21 XLI:3) (2.XL:19) (3.XLI:6) (6.XLI:6) (9.XL:25).

PART IV

WRITING IN FORM

HAVING gained a knowledge of what photoplay form consists it next becomes necessary to learn to apply this knowledge through practicing writing in form. It should be the aim of the student to possess so thorough a knowledge of form and to be so familiar with writing in form that form becomes a habit and writing in form instinctive. Then *and not until then* will it be possible to concentrate upon development to give the plot the finest and best exemplification in dramatic or comedy action. Until you know each factor of plotting and form you are no more justified in calling yourself an author than is a person who can merely pick at the keys of a machine entitled to call himself a typewriter. You must become so familiar with the theory and its application that when you come to write a story these do not bother you and you are able to give your entire and undivided attention to the story in hand.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE PLOT OF ACTION

ALTHOUGH the plot of action is the last part of a script to be read by the Editor, it is the first part of the script, as it is sent out, to be written by the author. The synopsis, cast and scene plot are all determined by the exact form of the final draft of the plotted action. They are made from the action and not the action from them. Even where a company announces its preference for the synopsis only, it is well to draw at least a rough plot of the action in order to be certain that the story you offer can be told in action.

2. In the studio the Editor will read the synopsis of a script. If this pleases, he will examine the cast and scene plot to see what the play will require and last of all he will turn and read the detail of the action. He comes to this last of all, but if you are an author and not merely a literary tout, it is on the script of action that you will stand or fall. Your idea may be good and yet the action be so poor that it would require too much time and labor to reconstruct. A good idea may be purchased without reference to the action, but poor action will suggest that the idea is not capable of being done into better form.

3. In your synopsis you write: "Peter Darnton becomes a woman

hater through the falseness of Mary Crouch." That is as easy as to write that Peter is a fashionable young bachelor, but it is not as easy to put into action. To show that Peter is a bachelor it is only necessary to show him in his apartment to get an idea of his state of single blessedness and by his apartment show him to be a mean of means. But to show the other fact in action may require several scenes. As this is merely a premise and not a plot factor, the plot proper having to do with the manner in which Nanette Fairfax wins him back to his belief in love, not much space may be given the establishment since space is given in proportion to the importance of the fact to the plot. If you blunder in opening the action by holding too long to this fact, you will lose interest, and nothing that comes in the later parts of the play can save the awkward opening, for the action will not be read beyond this incompetent start. If you labor along through several hundred feet to show that Mary and Peter were engaged and that she married another man or ran off with a circus rider, then you will get the spectator interested in Mary and you'll have to keep on telling about her instead of Nanette. The Editor will know this, if you do not, and he will decide that an author who does not know how to stick to his story and who apparently does not know what his real story is is not worth following through yards of needless action.

4. It follows, then, that the first necessity in the plot of action is to establish *as briefly as possible* the story premises. The premise of your story is the collection of facts on which your story is based. In this plot, for example, your story is that Nanette wins Peter back to faith. This is the plot and the various portions of the plot are its factors, but the premise is that Peter is a woman hater because of the falsity of Mary. Your story of Nanette would not be possible had not Mary made Peter lose his faith in women. You must know of the state of Peter's mind before the story can interest, but the reason for Peter's belief is also a story and you must be careful not to get your spectator interested in this story instead.

5. To this end you must aim to establish your premises in such a fashion that they seem a part of this story of Nanette and not a part of the story of Mary. You do not first show a succession of scenes between Mary and Peter. You make the premise seem as casual as possible, though you have brought to bear all of your skill in making the statement as strong and as emphatic as you know how. Your first scene, then, should show Peter in the act of hating women. You can not have him come tearing down the street pushing women into the gutter or throwing them down and trampling on them. That would tend to show insanity. You must do it more cleverly than that. Get some one detail of action that will show clearly Peter's mental attitude. You are going to use Nanette. Bring her in. Suppose we make it this:

1. *Street*—Peter coming to camera—Nanette and Grace enter—speak to Peter, who is barely civil—Nanette carries some flowers—she gives Peter one with a smile—puts it in his coat—the girls pass

on—Peter takes the flower from his coat—throws to ground—stamps on it—snorts—comes out of scene.

This scene, alone, will show no more than that Peter dislikes Nanette. It must be amplified to show that he dislikes all women. We follow him down the street and see—

2. *Street*—Peter coming to camera—pretty Mrs. Brown stops him—Peter annoyed, but tries to be polite—she speaks—lays hand on his arm—emphasizes fact—passes on—Peter brushes coat sleeve where she touched it—comes out of scene.

Now we can gather that it is the sex and not Nanette that Peter dislikes. Later, but not much later, we must give the reason. Perhaps this scene could be—

5. *Peter's rooms*—Peter on in lounging jacket—Paul bursts in—all smiles—insists on being congratulated—shows engagement ring—Peter sneers—Paul hurt—Peter softens—takes from drawer a photograph—shows Paul.

On screen—Portrait of Mary. Fashions of 1905.

Paul looks—gives back—inquiring glance—Peter says

Cut-in—"She ran away on the wedding eve. They're all alike."

Paul abashed—puts ring in pocket—awkwardly pats Peter's shoulder in sympathy—exits.

In three scenes we have not only built up the premise, but we have already had a chance to show that Nanette is interested in Peter. Part of the premise has been disguised as plot action and not premise action.

6. Where the story does not require the presentation of a premise, it should start with the first scene that shows vital action. This is where literally hundreds of stories are spoiled in the writing. The author does not know just where to begin and so he wastes half a dozen scenes in useless action. Perhaps your hero is a rich young bachelor. You do not first show a series of scenes to demonstrate that he is rich, that he is young, that he is a bachelor. You can tell this by inference. This is not the first essential fact. The first essential fact may be that the hero gets a letter from his father telling him that he must marry a certain young woman. He receives the letter in his rooms. The room suggests that he is wealthy and the decoration shows that he is a bachelor; this being substantiated by the contents of the letter. We can see that he is young. But now we are told that he must marry a certain young woman. *That* is the first essential fact.

7. To take up an old and overworked plot, suppose that Paul has written his uncle that he is married and needs a larger allowance. He gets it. Now the Uncle is coming to visit him, a development that Paul never anticipated. He has no wife. He must borrow one. Seemingly this story starts when Paul writes his Uncle and seemingly this development is required:

1. *Paul's den*—Paul on—knock at door—"Come in"—Bill Collector enters—presents bill—Paul shakes head—takes out pocket book—just one banknote in it—he shows collector—Collector threatening—Paul worried—has an idea—sits at table—writes—

On screen—Letter—

Dear Uncle: At last I am to be married. It is too bad that you cannot be here to meet my dear Alice, but perhaps some day you will be on our side of the continent. You have always been so good to me that I hate to ask, but—it—it takes a lot of money to get married and your last check is all gone. Affectionately,
PAUL.

Paul shows letter to Collector, who laughs—says he will wait—exits more cheerfully.

Leader—A few weeks later.

2. *Den as in No. 1*—Paul on—letter brought—Paul eagerly opens—letter and check—Paul kisses the check—reads letter.

On screen—letter—

Dear Nephew: Glad you are to be married at last. Inclosed find my check for \$10,000. My blessings on you both. Have increased your allowance to \$12,000 a year.
UNCLE JIM.

Bill collector enters—wants to know—Paul shows check—laughingly throws bill collector out—gets hat and coat—starts to exit—Bill Collector returns—they go out together.

Leader—A year later.

3. *Paul's den as in No. 1 with minor changes*—Paul on—Jack enters—greetings—valet enters with mail—Paul takes letter—looks at postmark—throws a kiss to it—opens—collapses—Jack reads—

On screen—letter. Same handwriting as in No. 2.

Dear Nephew: Inclosed is check for quarterly allowance and \$5,000 for the boy. Call him after me, bless his small heart. I should see him very soon as I am leaving at once for the east—an unexpected call. Love to Alice and little Jim.
UNCLE JIM.

Jack roars with laughter—Paul gets angry—says—

Cut-in—"When he finds I've neither wife nor child, he'll cut me off flat."

Jack grows serious—they sit down to plan it out.

Here we have three scenes, two time leaders and seventy-five feet of letters to get over a fact that is fully explained in the third scene alone. Of course the director can see this and will start with scene three and not with scene one, but the Editor will judge the merit of the entire script by the value of the opening scenes and he will believe that an author who cannot realize what his action should be will not be capable of writing the proper sort of action.

8. If you will take pains to understand the plot yourself, then you will be able to determine what the opening action should be. This is *not* the story of the ruse by which Paul induced his rich Uncle to increase his allowance. It is the story of what follows as the consequence of that ruse. You establish the premise (the ruse) in the letter in scene three, which you now make your scene one, and then go on to tell the story in which you seek to engage the interest. By putting your plot in the form of a question you can state your question as the opening of the action. Here the question is not as to how Paul increased his allowance, but what happened as a result of that trick.

9. Some commentators urge that the first scene be made unusually striking that the interest may be immediately engaged. This is not unlike the fiction device of starting off with a strong first paragraph and

then dropping back to explain. In photoplay it is not always easy to plan this delayed explanation to follow a striking scene and still maintain the interest. The device will serve at times, but as William Lord Wright has pointed out, the striking first scene is a promise to the spectator that must be kept. If you promise a big play, through a tremendous opening scene, you must keep your promise by pitching your play in that key, though it is permissible to drop back for explanation. If you sound too strong a note in the opening it is not generally possible to hold to the key.

10. Having begun your story the tendency of the action should be to increase as the story advances. In a properly devised plot, the addition of each new factor should make for greater strength in the play as a whole. Each addition to the story, by increasing the suspense, should gain greater interest. The capture of Jim by the Indians and his rescue from the stake may be interesting in itself. If the Chief's daughter falls in love with him and seeks to effect either his release or his escape, then the entire story gains in interest. If the Medicine Man of the tribe loves the daughter of the Chief and seeks to get Jim out of the way, then still more interest is aroused through the presentation of additional factors of struggle. If the escape is effected without great effort, then the story falls because there is no obstacle of real consequence and because, on this account, there is no very great suspense. There can be no interest in opposition if this is merely technical. It must be played up through suspense. If Jim escapes and is recaptured, then there is greater interest than if the girl merely sought to effect his escape. Our hopes are raised by the escape and dashed by the recapture. The practical evidence of the girl's interest now makes the Medicine Man more than ever determined to get so formidable a rival out of the way. If the cowboys come to his rescue, then there is more suspense. If the girl seeks to delay the setting fire to the pyre this helps the suspense, though it is clear that she is not acting in concert with the rescue party. It will be noted that all of these factors have a direct and distinct bearing upon Jim and his chances of life. Even the love of the Medicine Man for the girl bears on the direct and not on a sub-plot.

11. The diagram of a plot action should show a series of increasingly important crises separated by a momentary dropping back for an approach to the next crisis as explained in Chapter XIV. The smashes should not come too close together or they will lose much of their effect. In the prize ring the successful pugilist does not rush in and try to obtain an immediate knockout unless his opponent is woefully inferior in strength and skill. He plays a waiting game. He plants a telling blow and retreats, then he plants another and again waits. He does not try to land three or four at once. He lets his opponent barely recover from the first blow before he administers the second in order that he may receive the full effect of the second smash. If he is still dazed from the effect of the first blow, the second lacks much of the moral and some of the physical effect. But as the fight nears its end

the blows come more rapidly and are harder, for now it is the cumulative physical effect that the fighter seeks and not the more deliberate moral effect. In the parlance of the ring, he has him going and must hurry to finish him off. It is the same way in photoplay; you do not wear the spectator out too rapidly at first. You start slowly and stand back for the effect of each crisis to be felt, but as you progress the crises come closer together as the situation becomes more acute until near the climax you administer the knockout in a series of telling blows.

12. It is best to make a diagram of your crises before you start to write your plot of action. Study these and ascertain their relative strength and frequency. First decide mentally how your play is to run and then make a sketch of the developments in the form recommended. Then make certain that the crises are properly placed. The crisis increases both in frequency and strength as the play progresses. In an orchestral composition the composer sounds the keynote, then he works out his theme. If he works too quickly to his climax he exhausts his resources too rapidly. If he is skilled, he makes increasing use of brass and wood wind until at the climax he calls upon the percussion instruments to give the effect that brass no longer yields. Oscar Hammerstein voiced this neatly the night he presented *Creators* to the patrons of his theatre. Before the middle of the first selection the drums and cymbals were lavishly used. He turned to his companion with the comment, "He is big; but he is wasteful. His drums are gone. For his climax he must kill a musician with the music rack."

13. If you find that you are getting ahead too rapidly, you must reduce your tension. The best way is to go back and develop your action properly. The alternative is to invent some incident that will reduce the tension through contrast. In a story already referred to, a messenger boy's solicitous care for his cigarette created a diversion that permitted a scene of intensity to continue.

14. Imagine, if you will, a Roman legion battering the walls of a beleaguered city. They bring up the ram and beat against the stones. They do not use short, quick strokes. They swing the boom well back and drive it against the wall, and with each swing they gain greater impetus through momentum until the wall is responding to the vibrations and presently begins to crumble. Now is the time for the shorter and quicker strokes, but at first the long swing and the slow impact are the better to establish the vibrations.

15. And when the wall has been broken down it is foolish to continue the effort. The object is accomplished and the blows stop. It is the same in photoplay. When your climax arrives; when you have attained your objective, to seek more crisis is to drive the ram against thin air without effect. The climax, if possible, should be the conclusion of the story. Once the objective point of the story is reached, there is little more that can interest us. It may be necessary to run on in falling action properly to conclude the story, but it cannot interest us much, for now there can be neither struggle nor suspense. These

have been resolved; the rest is merely the old "and so they were married and lived happily ever after," or some equivalent of this time honored phrase.

16. Of course it may be that they did not live happily ever after. They may have quarreled continually, winding up in the divorce court, but that has nothing whatever to do with the story we have been writing and so we leave it alone. It is important to start your story with the first point of real interest. It is still more important to end your story when the narrative stops and not to run one more scene than is necessary to the plot that you have advanced.

17. Because the story must move rapidly to its close, it is important that you establish and identify your characters in the early scenes. You can present a policeman who arrests the villain for bigamy, forgery or other crime, for the policeman is self-explanatory, but you cannot pause and explain that the man with the side whiskers who has been supposed to be Percy's Aunt's first cousin is really a clever detective and not a silly ass. You are robbed of the surprise of the "Who are you?" "Hawkshaw, the detective!" type, but surprise is without value if it otherwise spoils your story. In a single reel it is best practice to use not more than a third of the reel for explanatory matter mingled with the action. In a three reel not more than half a reel should be used, and in a five part story not more than the first reel should be so employed.

18. This does not mean that you cannot, in later action, make a casual introduction of a single person. The detective in the last paragraph may be shown in the middle of the play in his office when he is engaged to enter the case. He does not require identification in some early scene merely to show that he is a detective, when he does not enter the plot until many scenes later, but he should be explained well before the conclusion and the last third of a one reel and the last three quarters of a five should be kept as free as possible from introductions, leaders or explanation of any sort that are not purely the resolution of the problem.

19. Action cannot easily be written until you have become thoroughly familiar with the work. If you have to stop and think what the next scene is to be or pause and debate the relative value of a leader and a telegram, you cannot possibly write in free and unrestricted action. You must first know your material before you can use it. You did not learn to write in longhand by merely sitting down and writing. You practiced the pothooks and ovals first and then progressed to the formation of letters, then words and so to sentences with proper punctuation. You cannot write action until you know just how to use the components of action.

20. You must practice the writing of action as you practiced the writing with a pen, that you may give your entire mind to the story you are putting on paper. Possibly you have essayed the childish performance of patting your head and rubbing your stomach at the same time. Add to this pastime the practice of making perfect squares with

your foot and you will have a combination of differing actions comparable to typewriting, planning action and punctuating with leader and insert. Make the machine work mechanical and the use of leader and insert instinctive and you may then center your conscious thought on the story itself.

21. The plot of action is your complete play. In it must be shown each leader or other insert, each bust or close-up, such light and other effects as may be imperatively demanded and all of the action that tells your story. It should be so complete in each detail and so perfect in its every part that any director making your action, employing your leaders and inserts *and nothing else* can get a perfect and interesting play. Nothing short of this will suffice if you would merit the title of author. And bear always in mind that the plot of action, no matter how perfect it may appear to the eye, is worthless and irritating if it is not used to expose a well-planned and gripping story. Editors are not in search of examples of well-written technical form. They seek stories; not model scripts, and perfection of form is of avail only when it makes more clear and understandable the underlying plot. The plot of action is your advertisement of knowledge, it announces your proficiency, but if you seek to make the form conceal the lack of idea, then your advertisement is misleading and your misbranded goods will be more than ever despised.

(1.XLVIII:36-37) (2.LXV:26) (3.XVI:3) (8.IX:16) (9.XIV:15 XXVIII:7 XLI:2) (10.IX:8 XIII:7 XXIV:9 XXXIX:12-15) (11.XIV:15-16 L:32 LVII:10) (12.IX:10 XIV:18 XIX:7) (13.XVIII:13 XXXIX:13) (15.XIV:5) (18.XLV:5) (19.XIX:7 XXXIII:2).

CHAPTER XLIV

CONTINUITY

CONTINUITY of action is the easy and orderly progress of that action. Employed as a noun as "a continuity of action" or merely as "a" or "the" continuity, it refers to the written plot of action, which is presupposed to possess continuity.

2. Some times in reading a fiction story you will find the action so changeable that in your effort to follow the author through his plot you suffer a perceptible fatigue. In others the story is narrated with such a directness that the absence of such phrases as "In the meantime—" "It must be remembered that—" "But before this—" is pleasantly noticed and the lack appreciated. Such stories seem fairly to flow along. This is continuity.

3. Continuity in a photoplay is even more essential. The flow of a screen story should be like the current of a river; a steady and constant progression to the objective point. Rivers may have falls and

rapids, deep pools and shallow backwaters, but always the flow is toward the confluence. Stories may be retarded by falling action, or accelerated by approaching crises, but always the trend of the story should be forward and not backward. And just as the river is constantly augmented in volume through contributory streams, so should the story be augmented by the addition of plot factors and gain in volume through the new developments. This is the first and most important continuity and upon its smoothness will depend in large degree the appeal of the story. It is for this reason that constant visioning back is regarded with disfavor, since visioning back is no more untrue to reality than a river flowing toward its source or a cataract that runs up hill.

4. The retarding action of a vision may not always be apparent, even when you strive to note the effect. Even the close observer may be unaware that it is recourse to visioning that makes one story seem to be less pleasing than another, but it is a rule never traversed that an interrupted continuity cannot be as pleasing to the mind as a story of equal plot value that without interruption or seeming effort moves directly to its ordained end.

5. Each person, according to his mental capacity, is capable of a certain effort of thought, just as a steam engine is capable of developing no more than a certain horse power with a given head of steam. Most persons will recall the river steamer that had to stop when it whistled, and there are many persons whose mental equipment is such that they cannot devote their thought both to the story and its interruptions just as those who do possess greater mental capacity cannot give their full capacity to the enjoyment of the story in action if they must divert some of this mental energy to the reception and classification of plot interruptions. Most persons in a photoplay audience are so constituted mentally that they can assimilate both a story and its interruptions, but their capacity for pleasure is lessened in precisely the same degree that their attention is diverted from the plot. Each time a fact or time leader or fact vision is used, the attention must be given this and again brought back to the main issue before interest in the main issue can continue, and the story with the most perfect continuity is more apt to please than a plot more interesting in itself but told in a series of interrupted actions and not in one continuous movement.

6. The proper story moves forward in chronological order. Each scene advances the story one point toward the climax, each has a direct and logical bearing on the story and each is in its proper place in the film. As has already been said, in the ideal continuity there is no interruption whatever from leader or any form of insert. It moves absolutely without a break. This is so seldom possible that it is sufficient to endeavor to avoid as much interruption as possible.

7. It would be manifestly absurd to show a man boarding a train after he has arrived at his journey's end, but this is precisely what visioning is. For some reason you may wish to hold back the inci-

dent of his embarkation. Perhaps you merely forget to put it in its proper place, so after his arrival he tells all about the start. The mind must leave the plot for a moment to place this fact of embarkation in its proper place before the arrival, again recall the arrival and then go on with the story. The continuity is interrupted. This is not an argument against all visions. It assuredly is a plea for a temperate and modest use of visions only where visioning will be of such material benefit to a story that the advantage of the presentation of fact at this point overcomes the disadvantage of the interruption caused.

8. In the second aspect of continuity scenes must be placed in their proper order. In this connection we refer to the scene as such and not to the fact the scene may convey. The action that occurs at ten minutes past one must be shown before the occurrence of a quarter before two, though from a plot viewpoint it may not matter which of these two facts is first presented. When the action jumps forward an appreciable period, the audience must be acquainted with the fact either by inference or statement. By inference a break leader may suggest the passage of an indeterminate but readily approximated period. We see a certain sequence of action. It seems to terminate. Perhaps the heroine seeks engagement with a theatrical company, the run of action terminating with her success in obtaining employment. It is not necessary to say that after rehearsals lasting six weeks and three days Janet makes her debut. Instead "The night of her debut" will suggest some undetermined interval for rehearsal and preparation. The exact length of time is not essential. It is merely suggested that a certain period has elapsed. On the other hand, if it is desired to suggest the passage of a considerable time it is better to say "Five years later. Janet is a star," than to use only the latter half, which may suggest that as a result of this very recent engagement our heroine has at once leaped into the stellar position on the mimic stage.

9. Time leaders may be required for very brief periods. We see Tom and Nancy in the library. They are much interested in each other. Suddenly they are whisked out of the scene as though by magic, Nancy's father is as miraculously placed at the desk and Silas Sprague is ushered in to tell that unless Nancy marries him he will foreclose the mortgage on the mill. This is not understandable unless we are advised that it is "That afternoon," "The next day," or whatever it may be. Then we can understand why Tom and Nancy are no longer sitting there and the leader serves also as an act drop. It brings one action to a definite close before opening the next. This is particularly desirable when both actions are placed in the same setting, for the room will present the same appearance and the change of characters will present a transformation effect that is disturbing, to say the least.

10. If the lapse of time is comparatively unimportant, then the two scenes in the same set may be divided by showing some other action. Perhaps we see Tom and Nancy leave the scene. Now we see Silas

coming down the street. When we come back to the library the father is there, Silas is ushered in and the rest follows.

11. No infallible rule can be offered, but the best practice is to break with some other scene if time and fact are not important, to use a fact in preference to time or to use both if necessary. Thus in the scene above we can break with a scene in which Silas is seen on the street, with a leader in which we state that he demands Mary in marriage, with the fact that it is the next day or the announcement that it is the next day and that Silas demands Mary's hand if he refrains from foreclosing. The scene will give the smoothest continuity, but the facts may make for clearness in the plot.

12. Another phase of continuity is continuity of the character. Much of this phase of faulty continuity seen upon the screen is less often due to the faults of the author than to the work in the cutting room, where entire sequences of action may be replaced with a leader to aid the condensation of a play to a specified length. It is no uncommon thing to see a hero stroll out of a drawing room and at once appear in his own rooms, no longer in afternoon but in evening dress. This might awaken admiration in a quick change act, but photoplay is not supposed to be a protean sketch.

13. Watch well this continuity. It is the height of absurdity to show John and Harry locked in deadly combat at the end of scene fifty and show Harry in a bath robe and slippers in fifty-one, while fifty-two shows John, now in evening clothes, telling May all about it. Something must be done to cover the lapse of time. A leader saying that it is evening and that John tells of his victory will explain the change of clothing and also reveal the result of the struggle.

14. In the early days continuity was frequently carried to excess. If May went to call upon Bess, she was first shown in her own home, then leaving her house, coming along the street, ringing the bell at Bess' door, being admitted and finally she came into the reception room. When she went home again the elaborate procession of scenes was reversed. Today this is no longer practiced, to the material betterment of the picture, but it is necessary to preserve the continuity of character to avoid shock. In a previous paragraph it was shown that playing two scenes in one setting without a break brought about a trick effect. In the same way there have been shown plays in which the same character was seen at the end of one scene and the opening of the next in so much the same position that it seemed as though one set had been substituted for another in the twinkling of an eye.

15. For the preservation of continuity these suggestions may be offered as a general guide and not as infallible rules.

16. Two scenes in the same setting, without interruption, though occurring at different times or using different characters or the same characters in different costumes, will appear on the screen as one scene. A cut-back or leader should be employed.

17. If a person is seen to leave one room and is immediately seen to enter another, the rooms are supposed to be adjoining. If a character is seen to enter a second room after a break but without having been seen to leave the house, the two rooms as a rule are supposed to be under the same roof and on the same floor. If the rooms are on different floors, the character should be shown ascending or descending a stairway. Two hall scenes will suggest an ascent or descent of two flights.

18. A character needed on a scene at the opening should not be left standing in the scene immediately preceding.

19. A character leaving one scene and entering another should be shown entering the second scene and not already on.

20. If a character leaves one scene to enter another at a distance, he should not be seen immediately to approach the distant scene. A leader or some intervening scene should be used to suggest the lapse of time covered by the travel.

21. Scenes showing travel are supposed by their number to suggest roughly the distance traversed.

22. Where a character is seen in a change of costume the intervening action should suggest a lapse of time sufficient to permit the change.

23. Where alternating scenes show two points widely distant, the distance must first have been established by leader or action.

24. If a lapse of time is unimportant to the plot it may be suggested by or inferred from a fact leader or interpolated action. Where it is definite a time leader must be used.

25. The appearance of a person in a spot other than his own precincts must be explained either by leader or pre-establishment of fact.

26. The best general rule is that action must either be absolutely continuous or must be interrupted by leaders or other actions to cover the breaks in the continuity.

(2.XIX:4 XX:7) (3.XLI:2) (5.LVI:35-37) (6.XXIV:9
XXXVII:26) (8.XXXVII:30) (9.XXXVII:25) (12.XXXI:19)
(17.XLVIII:16).

CHAPTER XLV

ESTABLISHMENT

NEXT to the preservation of continuity the establishment of fact and character is perhaps the most important point in writing the play. This applies to matters both great and small. You must know that the stout man with the side whiskers is Dawkins, the millionaire mill owner, and that it is in the fight

in the millyard during the strike that Harvey sustains the blow on the head that later makes him insane and causes him to kill Dawkins. If you cannot identify Dawkins when you see him then you spend time which might better be devoted to following the play in wondering who he is. If you see him first at the office in the mill, the others all deferring to him, the fact that he is the mill owner has been established. It may not be necessary to show that his name is Dawkins, or this may be established later in a leader that says that "The men come to demand a raise from Dawkins." This not only starts the strike but it establishes the fact that Dawkins is the name of the man who owns the mill.

2. But it is not always necessary to resort to the familiar but sometimes clumsy expedient of establishing each character by writing in a succession of non-essential scenes. The play may be well advanced before you even show Dawkins. If there has been talk about a strike at the mills and you see the man with the whiskers in front of a handsome house, you can guess this must be the owner. You do not first show him at the mill any more than you would first show a rural hero milking the cow or guiding the plow. If it is apparent that he is a farmer, then you have established the fact through his dress. If you have met Tom, the protagonist, and now see an elderly lady kiss him, you can guess that it is his mother and not his wife or sweetheart. If it is his wife, whom he married for money, you may have to use a leader to establish this relationship, but if the scene explains itself do not insult the intelligence of the spectator by telling him a fact he should be able to arrive at unassisted.

3. If the hero is seen with a younger woman let the action show the relationship. A wife, a sister or a sweetheart generally have different attitudes, and it is simple to invent some action that will show the precise relationship. If you see a man and woman at the breakfast table alone you presume them to be man and wife. Two men of different age probably are father and son. If they are Uncle and Nephew you can make that fact plain in a leader, but if the relationship is obvious, do not bore your spectator.

4. This applies to all persons of consequence in your story. You cannot have mysterious characters prowling through your plot to strip off crepe whiskers at the last moment and proclaim their identities. Even where the identity can be explained without great delay you have detracted from your plot through the speculation you have roused. Suppose that as your play is rushing to its climax a leader announces that "The Detective denounces Maltravers." The scene opens. Three men are shown on the stage. The spectator does not follow the plot until he decides which one of these can be the detective. Plot and interest in the plot are sacrificed to curiosity. Perhaps none of the men present is the detective; an entirely new character enters and proves to be the officer. The scene, up to that point, has been ruined, and not alone that scene, but the whole play

has been hurt through this inattention. Perhaps this man has been seen before and more than once. Then we were mildly curious. Now we go back over those scenes and see how the casual action all had a bearing on the arrest. By the time we get back to our interest in the play the villain is in jail and perhaps the story is done, but the detective had to be assigned his place in the story before interest in the story could proceed.

5. It will be better to establish the detective at the proper time—which is when he enters the story. A leader flashes and the scene is played in this manner.

Leader—Bessie engages a detective to clear Clem.

47. *Office*—Watkins on—Bessie enters—speaks to him—he calls—Bell enters—listens to Bessie—makes brief notes—nods—exits—Bessie offers Watkins pay—he tells her to wait—she exits.

After this when we see Bell we know that he is busy on the case. He may suggest no definite result, but if he does not he does not greatly disturb us, but all is plain when we come to the climax and instead of a leader that kills the scene we have no leader but this clear action.

63. *Library as in No. 7*—Bayard, Bess, Jack, Tom and Clem on—Maltravers enters with plainclothes man—points to Clem—Officer shows his badge—starts to put handcuffs on Clem—Bessie clings to him—he comforts her—Bell appears in doorway with policeman—points to Maltravers—goes to plainclothes man—shows paper.

On screen—Police circular—Wanted for Burglary, John Taylor, alias Griggs, alias Maltravers—description of man playing Maltravers.

Plainclothes man looks uncertain—nods—officers exit with Maltravers—Bessie thanks Bell—introduces to Clem, who also thanks him—Bell and others off—Clem clasps Bessie in his arms.

Establishment of the detective makes clear the later action without further explanation and we are able to give our entire attention to the action of the moment.

6. Establishment of persons in a scene is as important at times as the establishment of their relationship to the plot. In the first paragraph we sketched a plot in which Harvey, a mill worker, is injured during a strike at the mills. Later the blow results in insanity which leads him to kill the mill owner. Harvey is not a leader in the strike. He is just one of the mob. He is shown and identified, but he does not take a position in the play so prominent as to make him one of the persons looked for in a scene showing a mob. He does not become important to the plot until the insanity develops. It is quite probable that in the mob scenes his presence may be overlooked. By the use of the close-up we single him out and call especial attention to him. At the time it merely suggests that this detail is shown to vary the effect. In reality we make his presence known and his injury apparent. When the proper time comes

and he becomes an important figure in the plot, we do not then have to waste time explaining all about it.

7. Written as a single scene, the riot would give us this action

53. *Mill yard*—Strikers, including Harvey, Joyce, Briggs and Camp rush in—Joyce leads the mob—they yell for Dawkins—he appears—Deputies at his back—someone throws a stone—Dawkins gives an order—the deputies charge the crowd, clubbing them and driving them from the yard—all fighting desperately—Harvey clubbed over head.

In this scene Harvey is no more important than anyone else. A director following this scene would try to show Harvey close to the camera, but he is more likely to work in the close-up and get this effect.

53. *Mill yard*—Joyce leads men in—all excitement—an old man falls—is trampled on—Harvey drops out of crowd—others rush on—Harvey picks old man up—he is not much hurt—Harvey tells him he had better go—old man limps off.
54. *Yard, but closer to the office*—Harvey comes up—Dawkins speaking to the men—someone throws a stone—Dawkins turns and gives an order—deputies start to clear the yard, clubbing the men—desperate fighting—
55. *Close-up of fight*—Harvey fighting—beaten down by deputy with club—others turn on deputy—Harvey raised and led off.
56. *Back to big scene*—Fighting ad lib—strikers driven out of scene—

The first close-up seems merely to be a little touch of sentiment and the second merely a detail of the big fight, but by establishing Harvey in the first of these and establishing the blow in the second there is no longer any uncertainty as to how the blow was delivered that is responsible for the insanity.

8. Like preparation, establishment should be planned to seem as casual as possible. The advantage of this is shown in an example in Chapter XXXIX, in which one development shows a scene in which a man is established and a later one in which he is used, the first being a cut-back of no seeming importance. In the later development he must first be established and then used, which makes for some delay in the action. The first requirement is that establishment be made, but it is almost equally important that this establishment should not be given undue importance or made to appear too palpably an effort to identify the character.

9. It may be argued that the casual introduction of Harvey is not unlike the casual action of the detective mentioned in paragraph four, but there is this difference: The casual establishment of fact or person will immediately connect itself with the later development where with the detective it was necessary to go back and remember what he did to detect. With Harvey we know what he did; now we see the result. The detective was not established; he merely happened to be in the scene and now, knowing what he is, we reason back to remember what he did.

(1.LVI:18) (2.XIV:16) (4.XLIII:17) (5.XLIII:18) (6.XXXI:8 XXXIX:4 XLVI:1) (8.XXXIII:22 XXXIX:4 XLVI:4).

CHAPTER XLVI

PREPARATION FOR THE EVENT

PREPARATION for the event is not unlike establishment save that establishment is direct and preparation is indirect. In the preceding chapter we show that Harvey is rendered insane through a blow on the head. This is not alone establishment but preparation for the event as well. The blow makes clear and understandable the insanity when it develops and also makes clear the reason for killing Dawkins. The blow was the preparation for these two events, and it was made clear and understandable through establishment. When Bessie hires the detective we prepare for the event in the later scene by establishing the fact that Bell is a detective. On the other hand, in the scene in Chapter XXXIX in which Elinore's former sweetheart awaits her outside the stage door, the first scene of the first development establishes the man, but it does not prepare for any event. We know that it is he and so we can get into action more quickly in the later scene, but preparation for the event does not merely mean establishment; it means providing in advance an explanation for what comes later and perhaps at a time when it is not possible to delay the action.

2. We prepare for Harvey's insanity by showing that he was struck a blow upon the head. Had the insanity been latent, had there been a hereditary taint that is brought to activity through the excitement of the strike, we would have prepared for the event in a different manner. Then we could not show in action the predisposing causes. He may perform some peculiar action in the early part of the play. Some character taps his own head with a meaning smile and remarks in a leader that the whole family is as crazy as loons. Now when reason is unseated we have been prepared for something of the sort and accept it unhesitatingly.

3. Toward the end of the play a character gives a gasp and dies. It is necessary to get the death over with quickly. Heart disease is a tried friend of the author. But if there has been no preparation for this event we cannot understand nor accept the fact. It is not necessary to show the man previously purchasing nitrate of amyl by the quart, but there should be some sort of action to prepare us, to warn the spectator that there is heart disease present. Perhaps the first time we see the character some friend comes up and slaps him on the back. He gasps and clutches at his heart. In some other scene something falls. He jumps up, his hand to his heart. It all seems very casual, merely a bit of the byplay, but now it is remembered and without mental effort we accept the heart disease.

4. Too much stress cannot be placed upon this need for making the action to appear casual. It must be something that is well marked, but it must not be intrusive. You must not appear to say:

"Watch and see how Jones acts. He has heart disease. You must remember this because pretty soon I am going to kill him off that way." If you advertise the action you either anticipate the climax or you lead the spectator to wonder what will be the outcome of this stressed scene. It must either be some part of the plot-action that has a value at the moment, or it may be a bit of by-play that is seemingly put in merely to round out an action.

5. Novice writers are prone to err one way or the other. If the heroine is caught in the woods under a fallen tree and it looks as though a wrecking crew and a derrick would be required, it is unbelievable when Andrew comes in and raises the tree. We have had no hint of his enormous strength. We are not prepared for the demonstration. On the other hand if the preparation has been too carefully and too openly made, we are not in the least worried when Gwendolyn is struck down by the monarch of the forest. We just sit still and wait for Andrew to come along. Every few scenes we have seen him putting trolley cars back on the tracks or catching the safe that has fallen from a seventh story window and we know now that he has been brought into the play for no other reason than to save Gwendolyn. There is no suspense, no surprise. We can see the ending as clearly as the author can. On the other hand if a gymnasium scene showed Andrew putting up the bar bell that the villain could not lift and the villain became angry, we would suppose that the scene was written in to provoke the villain and so establish a reason for his enmity. The incident has been forgotten for the moment, and it is not until Andrew comes upon the scene that we remember the incident in the gymnasium and feel sure that he can lift the tree.

6. Sometimes the barest hint will suffice. Perhaps once or twice we have seen Frank pick a pin from the floor and put it in the lapel of his coat. Perhaps once someone made fun of the habit. It looks like a bit of character drawing. But when there is a hunt for the heroine and Frank finds the clew in a button from her dress that has dropped in the grass it does not wrench coincidence, for we remember the pins.

7. Preparation for the event might be called motivation of the event as distinguished from the motivation of the action. In Chapter XVI it was shown that we cannot accept the action of a man in withdrawing from an elopement at the thought of a crying child unless it was previously shown that a passionate fondness for children was his one vulnerable point. In the same way any trait of character can be used to prepare for an event. You cannot show Gertrude as an innocent and unsophisticated girl and then suddenly have her throw Henry over to marry a rich old roue. You must draw her character through the play to prepare us for the change in fiances and finances. All through the play she must be shown as a girl with an ambition for riches and power. She must be selfish and a trifle greedy. If her character is properly drawn, that

will prepare us for the events that only serve to expose that character. You cannot paint her as a strong-minded, self-willed girl and then suggest that she marries the old man because her parents force her to. Character, incident and personality may all be used to prepare for the event. It does not matter which is used so that some explanation may be given in advance without undue emphasis to the end that through some small event a larger may be prepared for.

8. In its last analysis, preparation for the event is no more than anticipating that event and providing a plausible and acceptable explanation at a time when there is footage available against the coming of the happening that this may have the fullest effect through the immediate and unhesitating acceptance of the fact, as such, without doubt or argument. To this end carefully prepare for your climax, but do more than this. Make certain that your personages do nothing that is not in harmony with the characters you give them or that is not in harmony with facts already stated and established. You do not necessarily have to have your personages act in harmony with their previously drawn characters. If a major action is of greater effect than the minor incident, use it, BUT alter the minor matters to accord with the major action.

(1.XXXIX:4 XLV:5-6) (2.XXXVII:16) (3.XVI:3) (4.XXXVIII:11 XLV:8) (7.XVI:5 & 11) (8.XII:1 XLVIII:13).

CHAPTER XLVII

VALUES AND EMPHASIS

VALUE, in photoplay, has two aspects—the value of the scene as a moment of dramatic intensity and the value of the scene in its relation to the story as a whole. A scene may be dramatically effective and yet not greatly advance the story, or it may be of little dramatic value and yet have a bearing upon the story that later is responsible for strong and gripping effects.

2. There is no very great dramatic value in a scene in which a physician merely prescribes a remedy for a friend. Howard Kingdon comes to his friend and potential rival, Doctor Belding, for a remedy for headache. He gets it, thanks him and leaves. The scene runs:

7. *Belding's office*—Belding on—Howard ushered in—they greet—Howard sits—tells of a headache—Belding examines tongue—feels pulse—goes to cabinet—gets medicine—gives Howard—Howard thanks him—exits.

Such a scene is too commonplace to interest. It seems to be designed merely to show that, though rivals, the two men are friends. Later it develops that the scene is of the utmost importance because the tablets that Belding gave Howard were not intended to cure his

headache but to establish a craving for a narcotic drug that Belding hopes will put him out of the way as a rival for the love of Grace Benton. He gives Howard his further supply of the drug only on condition that he keep away from Grace and when Grace, who really loves him, reproaches him for his neglect, he realizes his slavery and in his half maddened condition seeks to kill Belding but is prevented by Grace, who aids him to overcome his devotion to the drug. The entire play hinges upon this single scene, and yet the scene itself has little or no value. It cannot be given too much prominence without getting it out of proportion to the play, but much can be done toward building it up.

3. Belding's action is deliberate and premeditated, but it is so quietly done that it is scarcely noticed at the time. We must do what we can to make it appear important, just as in fiction we would call especial attention to the action. In fiction we might write, "and little did Howard Kingdon realize as he went out of the office that in the tiny box he clutched in his hand lay untold misery and even the shadow of Death." With a sentence like that we should take particular notice of the incident and be watchful for the consequences. With pictured action we cannot do as much in this direction. We can spoil it all by a lengthy and disturbing leader or we can give some emphasis to the scene that will add to its value and make it better remembered. It may be written in this manner:

7. *Belding's office*—Belding on—Howard ushered in—they greet—Howard tells of his headache—Belding sympathetic—reaches in desk and takes out hypodermic syringe—Howard stops him—says—

Cut-in—"I'm afraid of morphine, Doctor."

Belding laughs—returns syringe to case and puts on desk—rises and goes to medicine cabinet—looks back at Howard—face malignant with hate—takes down a bottle—looks—shakes head—puts back—reaches for another—takes this and fills small box—comes down—gives Howard—gives directions—Howard thanks him and exits—Belding looks after him—face shows his hatred of the other—picks up syringe case—smiles—looks at door through which Howard left—tosses syringe on desk again—laughs.

Played in this fashion the scene will have a greater value through emphasis and will be remembered in detail. It will be recalled that Howard refused a sub-cutaneous injection and told that he feared drugs and that Belding deliberately gave him a narcotic that he might become a victim to the drug and laughed at the thought. Additional value could be given did Howard proffer and Belding accept a fee for the visit.

4. Belding is the antagonist in this story, not the usual curses-on-him villain, but the villain none the less, since his actions all tend to interpose obstacle to the hero's objective, and it is our design to make him as thoroughly disliked as possible. To accept a fee from his victim, to take pay for a betrayal, will give additional

cause for dislike. No opportunity should be lost for increasing this dislike through adroit by-play, though too much emphasis must not be given any action. You must not appear to be coaxing the spectator to dislike the villain; you must make it appear that his character is so unpleasant that no person of decent sentiment can possibly like him.

5. A nice sense of values is necessary to the author who would be successful. He must know what is worth while and what is over-emphasized. He must make full use of his opportunities, but not lose through overplaying. To a large extent audiences have been trained to certain conventions, most of which are based on general usage. They are taught to expect certain effects from certain causes. Two men engage in a fist fight in which one comes off victorious. Nothing comes of it. The author has merely introduced the fight to show that his hero is a man of physical courage and prowess. This done, he goes on with the story and forgets the incident. The spectator will not. He has been taught that an action of such prominence must have a result in proportion to the importance of the happening. In other words, the fight must lead to something to pay for that footage. Does the beaten man lend his aid to the villain, does he attempt an independent revenge, or what does result from the fight? All through the play the spectator will be watching for the development that he has been taught to expect from a scene given such emphasis. If there is nothing gained from the fight the play in that one point, at least, will seem incomplete, and it is but reasonable to suppose that an author with so poor a sense of values will offend in other respects as well.

6. This is in line with the pronouncement already made that no action may be introduced that does not have a direct and positive bearing upon the plot. You have an action." It has a certain value to the plot. If this value is not made apparent you can give it greater emphasis and so build it up, but you must not give emphasis in excess of its actual value. You build up the scene in Belding's office because this is the key to the entire story, but if your plot had to deal with another matter and Belding merely prescribed for the headache the scene would have no value at all unless the fact that Howard was in Belding's office or that he had a headache might be connected with other plot factors. To emphasize an action is to give an implied promise that this action will yield a result in proportion to its prominence. If you do not keep this promise there will be resentment.

7. Nothing may be done without motive. A man takes a gun and discharges it. You are interested. When you see that he aimed at nothing you are no longer interested but irritated. He is wasting his time and yours. He might at least have shot at a paper or set up a tin can; then you could have seen whether he hit or missed the target. Each action must have an aim and a result or it is without interest. You can have minor action to show minor causes and if

these are not overemphasized they do not irritate, but if the author gets his spectator all excitement over some striking incident and then yells "April fool" and goes on to some other incident nothing he can do will be of further interest because the spectator has lost faith in his ability to entertain or interest. He comes to the theatre to be entertained; not to be made the victim of a practical joke.

8. It has been seen that emphasis may be gained by adding to the action and making it seem more important, but this is only one of many methods. You may slow down the action at a certain point that the action may be more completely grasped. An example of this will be found in Chapter XXXI, in the scene in which the two men meet in the library. Giles becomes aware of the presence of another person and he is afraid to look up. If he sprang up immediately there would be small chance of his fear being noticed by the audience, but for a moment he hesitates and that hesitation, that slowness of movement, gives marked emphasis to the scene. He can be afraid and spring up immediately, but if he does this fear will not show. We deliberately hold the action until the spectator has a chance to grasp the idea and then we go on to the next development, but the entire scene is a succession of slowly played incidents separated by flashes of quickened action which, in themselves, add emphasis through contrast with the slowness of the rest of the scene. In making a speech you speak more slowly and deliberately when you seek to make a telling point. In photoplay deliberation of movement gives the same effect. If you speak too rapidly or act too quickly, you do not give the auditor or spectator time to grasp the idea.

9. Emphasis may be given through the use of the bust or close-up. In the foregoing example it will be seen that the employment of a bust calls particular attention to the groping for the revolver. The presentation of the revolver is dramatic in either aspect, but it is more dramatic when for a moment we are held in suspense while we watch Giles reaching for it. Now when it is presented, the effect is immediate. Had not our attention been particularly directed to the movement, half a second or more might have elapsed before we realized the move and how it was accomplished. The bust and close-up are purely mechanical emphasis marks, but they are effective in the extreme when properly employed.

10. The placement of a scene may give emphasis. Going back to the first illustration in this chapter, we will suppose that in the later development we have two scenes. One of these shows Grace trying to quiet Howard in one of his deliriums while he is fighting the drug. Then we see Belding in his office. This scene is not essential, but it not only serves to increase our dislike for Belding but to engage our interest still more strongly in the fight that Howard is making. We want him to win because we are interested in him. We now have a further interest in the fight because of our increased dislike for Belding. Each scene helps to give emphasis to the other. It is not always a cut-back that is used, but generally it is best to use the

strengthening scene as a cut-back, returning to the first action to get the fullest possible effect.

11. Leader has some slight value in giving emphasis since it may relate a fact that cannot be told in action, but if the leader has previously been used in some other action it is generally better to cut back to that other action. An example of emphasis through leader alone would be the scenes in *Monte Cristo* where Dantes tells off his victims.

12. Players as well as action possess value. The maid who takes her mistress' cloak or brings her hat has not the value of the maid who acts as messenger and aids in the elopement. She is not of the same value and so she should not be given the same emphasis. If she is merely a maid she is used as such. If she is one of those having to do with the real advancement of the plot, action should be written for her in the early scenes to emphasize the relations between mistress and maid that, in the scenes where she really serves an important purpose, her use for this purpose may be accepted without question.

13. Characters are important to the play in proportion to their connection with the plot and not in accordance with their presumed social status. The maid who helps the lovers may be more important to the play than the father who forbids the union. In comedy the cook may be the heroine of the play in which her master and mistress are merely in the secondary cast though the butcher boy is the hero. They must be treated and their parts developed in accordance with their value to the play, but never in such a manner that a maid ceases to act like a maid, a cook like a cook or an employer as such.

14. In laying out your test scenario determine from this the value of each scene and the value of each personage and give to them an importance commensurate with their value *and no more*. Do not overplay the maid who is of slight importance nor overwrite the scene that may be pretty but which is of little value to the plot. Nicely proportion your emphasis to your values and your play will please because it is well balanced. Give false values and presently your play will be all out of proportion, a veritable cripple.

(5.IX:13) (7.X:2) (8.XXXI:14) (9.XXXV:9 XXXVIII:19)
(10.XXXIX:9) (11.XLVIII:27).

CHAPTER XLVIII

WRITING A PLAY

HAVING gained a knowledge of the elements of plotting and form, it may interest the student to overlook the actual writing of a play. In Appendix A are found reproductions of the ten pages that constitute the script of a two-part photoplay, "The

Narrow Paths of Fate." This starts as a drama, but in the latter part of the second reel is more melodramatic. It will be the purpose of this chapter to follow the process by which this plot was conceived and developed.

2. The real start or inception of this story was a request for some two-reel western subjects. In seeking a theme, trial by ordeal suggested itself, largely because this had occurred in a book of chivalry recently read. Trial by ordeal required some real or imagined offense which called for the test. This cannot be something contrary to criminal law, for crime must be punished by due process of law and not by the individual. It must be something that man settles with man and not through the courts. The next question to be decided, and it must be decided before the previous question is answered, is as to the guilt or innocence of the man. Was the offense real or imaginary? Decision is made in favor of innocence. If the man is guilty, he must be punished. It is generally required by the dramatic conventions that guilt must be punished. If the man is wrongfully accused he may emerge from the test triumphant or he may become an innocent victim. Either will be more dramatic than the punishment of guilt. If the man is guilty he is punished by succumbing to the test and the arm of coincidence is sprained once more. Innocence seems to be best from every angle, and so is decided upon.

3. This decided, at once the previous question comes back. The man is innocent, but of what was he accused? Evidently this must be a breach of trust not criminal in its aspect. Violation of the home is generally the simplest and most interesting form of breach of trust. If a man steals your money he can be sent to prison. If he steals your wife you can sue him, if you wish, and he may be fined, but seldom will be imprisoned. Naturally this makes for a tendency to take the law into one's own hands. But a breach of home may cover an offense against the other's wife, sister or daughter. Naturally elopement with the wife will be more striking, and so it is decided that the wife is the chief figure. As the offense was imagined and not real there must be some grounds for the belief. We view a number of suggestions and decide upon the development that the wife elopes with one man and plans to divert suspicion to the other.

4. This will require considerable planning. If the woman elopes with one man and blames it on another, all three must disappear, else the suspected man will be left behind. They must all three get out of the reach of the husband, there must be a logical reason for the disappearance of the innocent man and a logical reason for causing the husband to suspect him and so to overlook the disappearance of the other man. When the elopement is accomplished the status of the story must be such that the husband accepts unquestioningly the statement that his wife has gone with the suspected friend and not with the other.

5. This is done by inventing some long journey for the suspect. He must be given a destination that is vague and yet definite enough to suggest his inaccessibility. The polar regions, Central Africa and the central parts of South America are the three places where a man most easily may be lost to pursuit. With a woman along, the man would not be going in the direction of the Arctic. He is not apt to take her to the African wilds. There remains only South America.

6. The plot is now fairly clear. The woman loves one man. To divert suspicion from him she pretends to love another. This man is going to South America. She causes it to appear that she goes with him and goes away with the other man, reasonably safe from pursuit. Eventually the husband locates the suspected friend and confronts him. Ordeal is suggested and the man is cleared.

7. There remains the nature of the test. The duel in the dark, in which two men shoot at random, is old. So is the one-sided duel with one glass of poisoned liquor. Being a western story, something smacking of the west should be employed, perhaps a Gila monster. But the Gila monster is not well known and some authorities deny its poisonous bite. Everyone knows the rattlesnake. It is almost a synonym for a swift and painful death.

8. How is the test planned? Naturally a bag, but a bag is too sure. The snake is almost certain to strike. A box seems to be the alternative; a box from which a knot may be knocked. The man puts his hands about the hole. When the snake comes out, if it strikes guilt is proven and death is the penalty. But the snake is almost certain to strike and the man does not deserve death. If the death is brought about, our hero is morally guilty of murder. We have one hole in the box. It is simple to create another or perhaps a depression in the ground on which the box rests. But they would see the snake escaping. They must be blindfolded. But why? Because both men share the test. Four hands surround the hole. The snake may strike one or the other. It strikes neither. The test is clear.

9. There remains now the fate of the woman. She must be punished. We show that she has sunk low. The man with whom she eloped has sunk still lower. She leaves him for a better provider. The man follows and shoots them down. The suggestion comes that we take them near the camp where the husband and his friend are; perhaps over the same trail. We might bring them to the place of the test and have the woman, through her confession, completely clear the man whom she has wronged by unjust accusation. We might, but this would be the obvious and expected ending. Instead they come close to the camp, but the man never knows of his wife's death. Here we get a suggestion for our title. "The Narrow Paths of Fate." This will suggest that the narrow paths lead to the same end. It will still further add to the surprise when it is found that they do not. They are so close together that the shots which kill the woman and her new companion break the tension of the test.

10. Now we have the idea pretty well laid out and proceed to draw up a sketch of the action. This will show:

1. Jack Radford is married to Ruth, who does not love him.
2. Ruth seeks diversion in a flirtation with Ned Flanders, a man about town.
3. Jim Cort, an old friend of Jack's, pays them a visit.
4. To divert the mild suspicion Jack feels, Ruth pretends to flirt with Cort. Cort does not respond, but she manages to be caught by Jack in a seemingly compromising position.
5. Jack is suspicious, but Cort's frankness disarms him of his fears.
6. Jack is suddenly called from town. He leaves Ruth in Cort's care.
7. Ruth at once plans to elope with Flanders.
8. Cort interrupts them, saying that he is called to South America.
9. Flanders destroys the note Cort has left for Jack and causes Ruth to write another in which she tells Jack she has gone with Cort.
10. On his return, Jack receives the note, believes and vows to be revenged.
11. In the course of time he learns that Cort has returned to America. His South American venture has failed and he is prospecting in the west, determined not to come east until he has made good.
12. Jack goes west to find Cort and kill him.
13. Ruth and Flanders are in the mining town near Cort's camp. Flanders has become a sot and Ruth is befriended by a miner, Bill.
14. Jack arrives in town and is recognized by Flanders, but does not recognize Flanders.
15. In his terror Flanders drinks more heavily than usual.
16. Jack takes horses and goes in search of Cort.
17. Ruth, frightened at Jack's presence and disgusted with Flanders, begs Bill to take her away. He does so. Flanders follows.
18. Jack finds Cort, but seems unable to shoot him in cold blood. Cort suggests the duel with fate and Jack accepts.
19. Flanders overtakes Ruth and Bill and shoots both.
20. The sound of the shot rouses Jack and Cort. They accept the dictum of fate and renew their old friendship.
21. Flanders kills himself.

11. We are ready now to work on the action. The first requirement is a decision as to where to break the reel. This is not very difficult, for there is a natural break. The story is already in two

parts, broken by a lapse of two years. The first reel should end with factor ten.

12. The first proposition is that Ruth does not love Jack. This is properly a premise though it is also a plot factor. This is very simply shown in scene one, where she wipes Jack's kiss from her lips. From Jack's attitude toward her we can gather that he is the sort of man a right thinking woman would love. Had we desired to show that this lack of love was based upon good reason, we should have shown Jack at the table as quarrelsome and brutal. Since it is not shown, it is caprice and not Jack's qualities that make Ruth seek change. She goes to the phone to call up the man in whom she is interested and Jack goes to the office and learns of Cort's intended visit.

13. In passing, note the letter from Cort. It serves a double purpose. It announces and identifies Cort, but it performs a greater service in that it prepares us for the later departure of Cort. Here the letter seems merely to announce the visit, but in reality it prepares for scene twenty-seven. There we accept unquestioningly his abrupt departure.

14. The incident of the letter also serves another turn. It brings Jack home earlier than usual, and so he surprises Flanders, who, it is to be supposed, would be well out of the way before Jack's usual hour for returning.

15. Scene seven terminates the first period of consecutive action. Ruth has told Flanders to come to her, but we cannot expect to see him immediately walk into the parlor. Either some other action must be shown or a time leader used. There is practically no action here that would pay for its footage, so the time leader is used, backed by a fact leader. This last takes the crudeness of the time leader away and also suggests that the affair is not very far advanced. It also emphasizes her discontent and shows that she is not yet contemplating an elopement.

16. Flanders comes. We cannot linger in the library until something happens. This is apparently the first meeting and they are still under some restraint. To give them time we go over to Jack's office and then come back to the library. Jack has started for home and follows us in, but, while we come direct to the library, Jack must be seen at the front door to show that this is not the same building in which we last saw him. We show him at the door and the sound of the key in the lock warns Ruth and Flanders. Flanders, the more experienced of the two in such matters, pulls himself together and quiets Ruth, who by her agitation betrays herself, but not so markedly as to arouse definite distrust. It is more a suspicion of Ruth than a belief that there is anything between her and Flanders.

17. We do not tell in detail what Ruth and Flanders do. We explain what the scene should show and leave it to the director to call for the business that will be best suited to the temperaments of the players of these parts. In thirteen we are more definite than in nine

or eleven because here we wish certain actions to be played to establish certain facts that have a bearing on the plot. In the earlier scenes almost any action will suffice that will show an incipient flirtation that promises to become an affair. That is all we need and all we ask. In thirteen the action must be reasonably exact if we are to show just what the mental attitudes of the trio are.

18. Scene thirteen ends the second period of consecutive action. The plot advances to the next day and so we use a time leader and once more we add a fact. "Old friends meet again," has been suggested by the letter in seven, but we wish to drive home the fact that Cort and Jack are old friends and that they have not met recently. Much hinges on these facts in the later action, for it explains why Jack leaves Ruth in Cort's care, it tells that Cort does not know of Ruth's character. It permits him to become a member of the household, because he is a guest, and the fact that he is from out of town makes it easier to divert suspicion to him in the elopement. He is gone. No one knows where. If suspicion had been fastened upon some local friend, sooner or later there would be news of him, probably at an early date. With Cort it is perfectly natural that he should drop from sight and remain unaccounted for. None of this as yet appears in the plot, but these requirements have been foreseen and anticipated.

19. Having brought Cort and Jack together we slip over to the house to see that Flanders is again a caller. Now when we start Jack and Cort for home there is the anticipation that there will be some development. There is. This call rouses a more definite suspicion in Jack's mind, for social calls are not a matter of daily occurrence. Flanders recognizes this and on the spur of the moment invents the borrowed book, but suspicion is not wholly averted. This leads to Ruth's effort to divert suspicion to Cort and this in turn leads to the writing of the letter in a later scene. This is all a part of the running action and yet it is also part of the motivation and preparation for later events.

20. This suspicion is not made too definite. We want Jack to be suspicious of Flanders that Ruth may have a reason for seeming to flirt with Cort, but we do not want suspicion to be definite to the point where it rests more on Flanders than it does on Ruth, or Jack would ignore Cort because he is watching Flanders and not Ruth.

21. To make Ruth's motive clear, we run a leader to explain her action, but we do not build up Jack's suspicions. Cort's prompt disclaimer restores Jack to immediate confidence, but it plants the seeds of suspicion that later on help to explain Jack's ready acceptance of Ruth's letter. We are using this incident more to prepare for event than for any immediate result, so we at once clear it away or Jack would not leave Ruth in Cort's care when he is called out of town. But later Jack's spoken insert in which he leaves Ruth in Cort's care is accepted by Cort as a reference to this scene, and he feels no hesitancy in answering the call to the expedition without word to

Jack. He does not know about Flanders and Ruth and so he is not guilty of any breach of faith in leaving immediately.

22. As soon as Jack goes we speed up the action. We are coming to the end of the reel and must get up a momentum that will carry us over into the second part. Ruth sends word to Flanders. He comes. They are interrupted by Cort. His departure gives Flanders an idea. Now that she is going away Ruth no longer worries about Jack. Flanders does. It will be better for his peace of mind to have Jack suppose that Ruth is on the ocean with Cort, so he has her write the letter and then go, taking the maid with them. We must get her out of Jack's way or he might force her to confession. The Butler can remain, because he knows nothing, and we need him in the last scene of the reel.

23. In this last scene the value of the cut-in leader is shown. The Butler, like the spectator, is led to suppose that Jack intends to shoot himself and seeks to prevent. The use of a straight leader before the scene would have prevented this mistake. The scene would all be patent in advance. As it stands we get the cut-in-leader that gives a punch and then close on a tableau. That threat will take the interest over to the next part.

24. The last scene in this reel is thirty-one. It has been said that from forty to sixty is the average number of scenes to the reel. It has also been said that the length of the action and the footage of inserts and leaders must be considered. Here we have one twenty-five-foot letter and one of twenty feet. There are four short notes or telegrams and a flash. Allow about fifteen feet for the notes and wires and five for the flash. In leaders there are about forty feet. There is a ten or fifteen foot title and a ten foot tailpiece that reads to the effect that the second part will follow. We have less than eight hundred feet for the picture and some of the scenes will run rather long. Our footage should be just about right if played in normal action.

25. Now we are ready for the second reel. The first closed with the threat. A leader tells that it is two years later. In writing the scene we also call attention to this fact that the setting may be changed. Jack has the same office, but he has not the same calendar on the wall, the furniture may be rearranged and the papers on his desk moved about if not replaced. There are some explanations to be offered the spectator, as well. Two years have passed and Jack has not found Cort. Why? When Cort left the letter for Jack in twenty-nine he suggested that he might be lost even to the address given there. This prepares us for the letter which tells that Cort is in California.

26. We cannot well have him in South America. This would make a lot of trouble and some expense for which there would be no return in effect. It would be necessary to hire the use of a steamer for a half day to show Jack on his way down, and it would be necessary to search for tropical settings. More than this, it would

be unlikely that we should find Ruth and Flanders there, and if we did we should have to offer an elaborate explanation. It is quite natural that Cort, dissatisfied in his plans, should come up the west coast and turn prospector. The letter is about all that is needed to pick up the thread of action and serves better than would a dozen leaders. Jack looks at his gun, we are reminded of his vow, and the story is underway.

27. Now that Cort and Jack are accounted for, it is necessary to find Ruth and Flanders. Jack has started out west, so we leave him and show Flanders a gambler. We preface this with a leader to emphasize the fact. Here the leader gives emphasis by pointing out the fact that we are particularly to observe. It also serves to establish Flanders, since he has changed his appearance in his downward course. He has grown seedy and coarse. We show him both a gambler and a drunkard. This is done in an interior set used but this once. In general practice it is better to avoid calling for special interiors for single scenes, but here we get a better effect than if Flanders was seen gambling on a bench outside of the saloon, and this is only the sixth set we have asked for. Flanders' appearance proclaims his downfall. Ruth, with a woman's pride, has sought to preserve her looks and to dress as well as possible. Her change is more clearly shown in her willingness to take money from other men. This prepares for the later elopement. Now we show Cort's camp. We come back to Jack, who is just leaving the house for the train. In five scenes we have placed the spectator in full possession of the facts and are ready to go on with the story.

28. But nothing of importance can happen until Jack gets west. To close the period of action and start another we use the familiar "later." In one scene we bring Jack to the mining town, show that Flanders recognizes him, show that he does not recognize Flanders and show that Ruth is told. It has been advised that not more than one important fact shall be shown to the scene if they are to be assimilated, but these facts are so closely related that they form a natural combination.

29. Fear drives Flanders to the bottle, thus preparing for Ruth's elopement, and a leader tells that Jack starts for Cort's. This is the first intimation we have of Cort's proximity to the town. We have seen his camp, but there has been nothing to show where it is other than the statement in the letter that it is "about twenty miles south of here." Now we can get the suggestion that it is not far from town because Jack is starting without a pack. It is no great distance.

30. We give some further suggestion of distance by leaving him to ride on while we stay in the town and show the preparations for the elopement and pursuit. When we pick him up again in fifty-three we feel that he must have been riding for some time, judging from what has happened meanwhile.

31. Now we work over to a triple development between Jack, Ruth and Bill and Flanders. We see Jack ride through a scene. Later

Ruth and Bill go through and later still Flanders follows, but he seems to be gaining on his quarry because these intervals become shorter.

32. We are close to the climax now. In fifty-seven Jack and Cort meet. Jack seems unable to shoot, and this leads to the natural introduction of the snake. Jack thinks it is a ruse on Cort's part to get an opportunity to jump in and wrest the gun from him. The audience shares the belief for a moment. The spectator does not realize that the situation has been planned to fit the snake. It seems that the snake has been brought in merely to build up the situation. We have the snake and the box is already there. We do not make Cort say: "Let us find a snake. Ah! Here is one. Are we not fortunate in finding one so quickly! Now we must have a box. Look by yonder bush. Again, how fortunate!" That sort of thing has no place in the properly written play. The box is there, apparently, not because we want it but because Cort brought it out from town to sit on. We saw him sitting on it back in thirty-four. The box and the snake appear to be used because they are there. It is not made apparent that they are there because they are to be used. In the same way, when the test is ready the men blindfold themselves, apparently that they may avoid flinching when the snake comes out, but in reality to permit the snake to make its escape unperceived.

33. Cutting back to the trail breaks the monotony of the wait and serves as well to increase speculation as to what will happen when Ruth comes up. Many in any audience will have decided by now that in the end Ruth will come, and will clear Cort, then Flanders will show up and kill Ruth, to be killed, in turn, by Jack. They have it all arranged. Now they are waiting for the end to come. The ending will be the more exciting because it is so different from the expected.

34. Busts are used in place of explanatory leaders because they explain much in detail without words. The splintered corner of the box tells how the snake got out. We do not show the snake escaping, for to do so and then leave the men sitting by the empty box would have made the situation grotesque. The intense moments in drama and the high lights of comedy lie perilously close together. We permit it to be supposed to the end of the action that the snake is there. Then it is shown that a certain means of escape was used. The snake took the easiest exit just as no man will climb out of a house by way of the roof when the front door is open.

35. There are almost twice as many scenes in this part as in the first act, but most of the scenes are short and there is only one letter and about twenty-five feet of leader. There is room for more action, and since the scenes are mostly flashes more of them must be used.

36. From the finished continuity the synopsis is written. It is not equally divided between the two parts. Less space is taken for the first reel than the second because this part may be told in fewer

words and a third paragraph is added to call attention to the novel finish. Each part is paragraphed to show where the break comes. Under a strict ruling, five hundred words could have been used. The complete synopsis is about three hundred and fifty words.

37. The cast and scene plot are now made up. The cast calls attention to the changes in some of the characters. It is the same with the single scene where change must be shown. It will be noted that most of the interior scenes are in the first part and the exterior settings are mostly in the western country. This facilitates production. The two eastern exteriors called for may be had in any place near which the rest of the exteriors may be played. The interiors are not grouped in the first half because the first act should consist of interior scenes, but because the interior scenes make it possible to produce the story in the west and yet not require locations in two sections of the country.

38. In writing the story it will be seen that it was first necessary to know what the action was to be before the scenes are written that the scenes may be written in their proper relation to each other. This knowledge enables us to prepare for what is coming to the end that the least possible explanation shall be required. The letter prepares for Cort's departure, another scene makes plausible the ready acceptance by Jack of Ruth's supposed confession. At no time do we have to stop the action to prepare a labored explanation of an act. It all shows clearly.

39. Advance knowledge is also necessary if the action is to be held to the story. Writing a continuity without a definite knowledge of what is to be done will generally result in a loosely constructed and overwritten script. There can be little or no extraneous action. Each scene must have a direct bearing on the plot and a definite relation to other scenes which it supports or from which it derives support.

40. Determine exactly the run of action before you write the final draft. If for any reason you change the action, make certain that all that has gone before and all that will come after is wholly in accord with this new factor or else change until all are in agreement. Perhaps you have seen a great railroad terminal with its miles of trackage and its interlocking switches. If one switch is thrown and another is not the train will run off the track. Throw all of the switches that give a clear and unbroken track and the journey is safely made from the terminal to the main line. It is the same with your plot of action. Do not change an action without making certain that you have altered all of the other action affected, or you will find yourself in difficulties. It is told of one director who undertook to change his story as he went along that he developed so many unexpected kinks that in the end he had five reels of action, showing three distinct plots, not one of which was complete or usable. A little preparation is better than much revision.

(2.X:6 XIII:5 XXIII:5) (9.XXI:6 XXVII:6) (10.XIV:18)

(11.LVIII:14) (12.XVI:3) (13.XLVI:8) (15.XXXVII:25) (16.XLIV:17) (17.XXXI:12) (19.XLVI:8) (23.XXXVII:20) (24.XXXIV:5) (25.XXX:17) (26.XVII:3) (27.XXX:7 XLVII:11) (28.XXXIII:12) (30.XLIV:21) (36.XXVIII:14) (37.XVII:15) (40.X:11).

CHAPTER XLIX

ADAPTATION AND RECONSTRUCTION

LITERALLY hundreds of persons who are unable to imagine plots or who, at least, are unable to imagine plots worth while, turn to adaptations that they may become participants in the wealth that is supposed to be gained through photoplay work. They are not authors: they are unable to conceive a plot, yet they seek to gain a reputation as writers on the strength of the imagination of others. In a word, lacking creative ability, they seek to become dealers in second-hand material.

2. It is conceivable that a person may be a good adaptor and yet be unable to devise an original theme. There are not lacking on the speaking stage examples of this fact, men expert in stagecraft who must devote their abilities to elaborating the work of the more imaginative. There are such, but they are few as compared with the real authors, and against this lack of creative imagination they offer an almost uncanny knowledge of the tricks of the trade.

3. But photoplay is not the speaking stage and methods differ. Few theatres save the Jargon houses maintain stock dramatists. In the studio there is always a staff of writers who must be able to write or reconstruct. It is not necessary to maintain a staff of persons who can adapt with unusual skill. In a word there is not likely to be a demand for adaptors, save for those exceptional persons who can do this work with unusual skill. The preference is for persons who can write or adapt as occasion demands.

4. The only hope of the free lance who cannot write original material is to get in touch with the few studios that give out their adaptations. It is possible to get an order now and then if the adaptor is in the same city as the studio, but the opportunities are so limited and the pay is so small that it will not pay the unimaginative to study adaptation alone.

5. An understanding of the difference between the free lance and the staff writer will help in appraising the situation. The staff man is employed by the studio. He knows what the studio has in the way of scenery and natural locations, he knows what the studio will be willing to do in the way of building new sets or sending a field company out, he knows the stars whom it is desired to feature and

precisely the type of plays in which they appear to the best advantage and he knows the supporting players and their capabilities. He knows the style of story preferred by each director and the style of story that is preferred by the business heads. In a word he has the advantage of being able to give the studio precisely what it wants, working from knowledge and not from guesswork or deduction. If he has a costume play he may change the period of that play to suit costumes on hand or easily obtainable. If the company is going to Cuba or Nova Scotia he can write or change stories to fit the new location.

6. From this it would appear that the free lance writer has but small chance to sell his stories. He would have, were it not for the fact that no one man or small body of men can supply sufficient variety within the production limits. Each man has his own peculiar mannerisms of thought. He is apt to write stories of a general type, no matter how he seeks to vary the idea. To obtain variety the free lance writers are invited to submit. The best of the work offered is purchased to give change from the studio-produced scripts just as a coffee may be blended or real whiskey may be added to a synthetic product to improve the flavor. The staff cannot think of all the good ideas nor of a sufficiently wide variety of ideas. They are there to insure a supply of scripts for the directors, no matter what may be the supply from the outside, but they are also there to get into practical shape the stories that come in from the outside; good in idea but impossible in form. Naturally they must be both writers and reconstruction men. It is hardly possible that room will be found for a man who cannot write his own stories in an emergency, and the editor knows that the man who cannot think of stories for himself lacks the proper imagination to grasp the stories of others.

7. Most staff writers are selected from the ranks of the men who can do the best average work on the outside, whose submitted ideas are seldom below a certain standard.

8. Adaptations are another matter. There is absolutely nothing to be gained by purchasing adaptations from the free lances. The staff man can write to suit the studio more exactly than can the outsider. If an adaptation is to be made he is told precisely how it is to be made and he turns in precisely that sort of a script. If the story is taken from American history, the studio has several copies. It would be foolish to let a staff man lie idle and give some outsider twenty-five or fifty dollars for the story of how Washington crossed the Delaware. If it is standard fiction the studio probably knows of it. Some manufacturers even have men who watch for the expiration of copyright on desirable books that they may use them at the first possible moment that it can be done without cost. If it is copyrighted material, the company prefers to deal directly with the holder of the rights and not through some outside author who may have

purchased a faulty assignment or who may have avoided it through failure to make registration within the proper time.

9. This chapter, then, does not take up adaptation as a subject to be pursued as a separate study, but aims to give some hints on adaptation to the author who may be called upon to do this as a part of his more creative work. Adaptation is the making of a novel, short story or play into photoplay form. Reconstruction is the rearrangement into good form of a faulty play.

10. The first step in adaptation is to get thoroughly acquainted with the story, its people and the author's mode of thought. Not only must the author's language be read, but the characters must be realized. You must note how they act in the conditions shown that you may make their thought and action correct in the scenes not shown as action in the book, but which must be done into action for the screen. The adaptor must form a clean-cut and vivid image of each character, its modes of thought, appearance and character. He must know thus intimately each of the characters and not merely those who take the leading parts. In a book the author casually writes that Mary feels under obligation to Jim because he saved her life at the beach last summer. This is not told in photoplay in a leader. It is shown as a part of the story, and unless you know just how Jim would act in the role of lifesaver you may make him a strutting fool instead of a modest hero or the reverse.

11. The next step is to become thoroughly familiar with the plot. There will be a main plot and probably a lot of side material that is permissible in a story but which will clog the main plot in photoplay. You must isolate these from the main plot and then consider their value in relation to the main theme. If the matter must go in, you must seek to make it a part of the main plot and not complication. Often much of this material may be dropped with decidedly good results. An example of this is offered in the story of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," in which the dramatist generally discards the story of Cassie and Legree for want of space.

12. Dissect the narrative from the plot as you would the flesh from the bone. With the plot bared, select only that which will form a direct and complete story, remembering that the more story you have to tell, the less footage you will be permitted for action. If you so form your plot that you require two reels of explanation for a third reel of action the proportion is too great. Much of the plot you may discover to be in almost casual allusion, but capable of yielding rich action. With the discarding of some of the minor plot you may be able to eliminate minor characters, as well, without detriment to the story.

13. Having decided what you will retain, arrange the material in chronological order. It is seldom, if ever, that the plot will run in exact continuity in a book and seldom in a play. The heroine snuggles against the hero's manly shoulder and sighs: "Ah, Reginald, how the soft, warm air with its tang of the sea reminds one of that

glorious night we met in Venice." "In Venice!" cries the startled Reginald. "Then you are——?" "The veiled lady," she confirms, as she burrows a little deeper into his collar bone. This is the first you have heard of the matter. This story is supposed to have started only six months before and it develops that this all happened some time previously when Reginald drove off a horde of beggars that were pestering the American Signorina, but this must presently be used to explain the advent of the haughty Venetian nobleman who met the girl while she was there, and so the story starts in Venice a couple of years before the author starts to tell about happenings. You must arrange all these events in the order of their occurrence, even though you may plan to make some of them fact visions. It is better not to use visions, but even if you do, start with the fact in its proper place in the chronology.

14. The fiction author is free of the fetters of time. Sometimes fact gains in importance through temporary suppression. It is easy, when this is recalled, to have some character tell it all in the form of a narrative. The author is telling his entire story in words. He can waste a few to orient the time. The adaptor must be economical of his leaders if his action is to be something more than a few illustrations of quotations from the book. To take a compact example, let us consider the address of Spartacus to the Gladiators, familiar to most schoolboys. The author first draws a picture of night in the Coliseum. In their dens the wild beasts lie in uneasy slumber. In the apartments of the gladiators Spartacus steps forth to address the men whom he captains. One of his first speeches is to the effect that they do well to call him chief who for many years has met in the arena men and beasts and remains unconquered. This single speech takes us from the moment over a vista of years. Almost immediately he brings us back with "Today, in the arena." He tells of his killing his boyhood friend and appeals to his fellows to follow his lead in a dash for freedom from a condition little better than the beasts in the dens.

15. To sketch the action as it runs we would get something like this:

1. It is night in the quarters of the gladiators.
2. Spartacus, their chief, addresses them.
3. He tells how he has gained his leadership through his many victories.
4. He speaks of the display of that afternoon.
5. He slew his opponent, only to discover the friend of his boyhood days.
6. He tells of that boyhood.
7. Of his friendship with the other.
8. Of his growth to manhood.
9. Of his capture.
10. He reverts to the events of the afternoon.
11. He pleads with his followers to revolt, offering to lead them to freedom.

This is the order in which the events are recited, but the adaptor, placing them in chronological order, will obtain this arrangement: 6-7-8-9-3-4-5-1-2-10-11. Here factor ten must be a vision, because it tells of something already recalled that must be shown. The rest is direct action.

16. The diagram reveals something else. This is a narration of events, but it is not a plot, because it has no end. Spartacus pleads with them to follow his leadership in a revolt, but he stops there. This is simple enough. He leads them in the revolt and wins. Supplying this omission and slightly changing the facts to suggest more strongly the story that the speech intimates rather than conveys, we would get more of a plot diagram and yet the same facts, as—

1. Spartacus, a young shepherd, has a friend of his own age with whom he grows up. They are inseparable friends.
2. Spartacus is captured by the Romans and carried to the Capital.
3. Here he is pitted in the arena against the gladiators, survivors of similar combats.
4. He defeats his opponent and his life is spared.
5. He becomes one of the body of gladiators retained to do battle with the captives.
6. By his prowess he not only escapes defeat but becomes chief of the gladiators.
7. In the course of years he meets an opponent whom he slays.
8. Raising his visor he finds it to be his boyhood friend.
9. His grief is intense. He is awakened to a sense of better things.
10. He longs to return to his own land.
11. That night, in the quarters, the gladiator makes an appeal to his fellows to join him in revolt.
12. They agree and overthrow the guards.
13. They fight their way through the city to freedom.

From this arrangement it is a simple matter to build in incident and plot to make the story.

17. In adapting for the screen some such fragment it is necessary to seize upon the plot suggestion of every word. In a novel it is necessary to hold rigidly to the facts as given in the book if the adaptation is to be satisfactory to those who have read the book and who now come to see their ideals realized in action, but in adapting a poem or speech we must get suggestion rather than plot facts. Much can be done to build this up. Perhaps a love story may be injected. There is a girl they both loved. Now the friend with his dying breath charges Spartacus to go to her. Here we have a more interesting motive for his action than as given in nine. It is not his better nature alone, but this nature, roused by awakened love, that gives him determination. Other detail may be added. Perhaps the friend knows of Spartacus and seeks to get word to him. His jailor, an enemy to Spartacus, does not bring the message, but comes to gloat when the butchery has been done. The revolt is started by the killing of the jailor. Here an ability to plot is as desirable as in creative work, for imagination must be used to supply the bare facts.

18. On the other hand it is better not to alter the author's plot in visualizing dramas and novels. Even a seemingly unimportant change may precipitate a succession of other changes that will completely alter the play. It should be the aim of the adaptor to preserve in the highest possible degree whatever originality of thought the author may have shown. It is unfortunate that many adaptors are so lacking in imagination that they cannot perceive this originality and reduce all adaptations to the dead level of their own mediocrity. They cannot understand subtlety of motive. They lack the quality themselves; they cannot perceive it in the work of another. They make all scripts alike whether these are original or adaptations.

19. This holds with equal force in reconstruction. It is to be presumed that the outside script has been purchased to gain variety in the releases. If the reconstructor throws away the continuity which has been found faulty and works entirely with the synopsis, he produces a story in which the plot is slightly different but in which the style, the manner of developing the action, is precisely like the original work of the reconstructor. The continuity should be studied. The development may be poor, but if the story is at all worth while it is most certain that there are some good points in the action that should find their way to the screen. The reconstructor should aim to make the required changes with the least alteration of the original author's ideas that newness of treatment may also serve to give variety.

20. Adaptation and reconstruction are not simple merely because the idea is already furnished. To the contrary it is a most difficult work if the task is to be acceptably performed, for the idea must be built up without changing it, and this requires an adaptability of thought that permits the adaptor to view the work from the angle of the author and not from his original point of view. If the work of the adaptors is studied it will be found that the men who are most successful are those who are themselves authors of consequence, for these are most likely to have the mental capacity that permits them to respect the work of another. There are vandals who would tint the flesh of marble statues and color the draperies to improve their appearance, reducing them to the artistic level of the nearly extinct cigar store Indian. There are adaptors who believe that the true science of the art is found in substituting their own for the author's ideas. They take a part of his plot, add some ideas of their own and develop the whole in a mechanical and rather stupid way. The true reconstructor is like the photographer who takes the underdeveloped plate and intensifies it. He adds nothing. He merely brings out more clearly what already was there. The true adaptor simply transfers the idea from the printed page to the screen. He does not change the drawing nor alter the coloring. His is purely the mechanical act of transference, but he does it with the loving care of the artisan and not the mere laborer.

(5.I:15) (6.II:13) (8.LXVIII:21) (11.XVIII:15) (13.XLIV:6)
(18.XLVIII:40) (19.II:12).

PART V

CLASSIFICATION OF PHOTOPAYS

EXTRME accuracy of classification of photoplays is not essential, nor is it always possible, since the various forms of drama blend one into another. A play may be partly a drama and partly a melodrama, or it may be a mixture of comedy and farce. It is not required that a play shall be announced as a drama, farce or comedy, for what it is will plainly show in the script, but where any designation is employed the three terms just given will be amply descriptive, though any other may be used if desired. The minute subdivision of class employed by some Editors is often misleading and never exact. A comedy is a comedy and "parlor" or "polite" comedies are none the less comedy. In general practice it is best to write to one type and not to blend, but drama may be given greater strength through a touch of melodrama at the climax and farcical action may give zest to the finish of a comedy. Whatever the combination made, do not seek or invent a title to fit. Send the play in unclassified and let the Editor classify it for himself. He is guided by the story and not by the fact that a play is called a drama or society drama.

CHAPTER L

DRAMA

DRAMA in its broadest sense is a term applying to anything written for the stage, and covers the entire range of plays from tragedy to slapstick. Used in this sense it is referred to as "the" drama, just as the term the silent drama covers all forms of photoplay. More strictly, drama is a play of serious purpose making its appeal to the noble emotions. It is less elevated than tragedy, but tragedy scarcely forms one of the photoplay classifications, and to all intents the first classification in photoplay is the dramatic story.

2. Tragedy assuredly can be done into photoplay, but seldom with success. Tragedy is a dramatic story wherein the inevitable outcome is defeat. Tragedy, by its very nature, cannot be terminated satisfactorily in the happy ending. This in itself militates against the employment of tragedy, but there is another and perhaps better reason. Tragedy in its true form is a play of lofty sentiment, largely dealing with character rather than action and relying for no small

part of its charm upon the dialogue. Dialogue and blank verse have no place in photoplay, and so tragedy may be dismissed with the recommendation that it be avoided. Most tragedy done into photoplay will be reduced to drama in the process.

3. Drama is a story of life cunningly planned to appeal to the emotions, and has for its theme one of the chief emotions as love, hate, sacrifice, patriotism, desire for revenge or the rewarding of goodness. Because it makes its appeal to these higher emotions, it is apt to make a more lasting impression than a humorous play which pleases for the moment and then is forgotten in the more serious affairs of life. It is easier to make an impression with a reasonably good drama than with a comedy of the same degree of merit, and for this reason it will be advisable for the student to master drama before essaying comedy. In drama the interest of the story carries the action. In comedy, action is often of greater importance than the plot.

4. Drama must possess a strong and gripping appeal *through idea*. This fact cannot be too strongly impressed upon the mind of the student. Action, no matter how strenuous, cannot replace idea, for action without idea is purely mechanical. If your drama seems to lack strength, you cannot add a railroad wreck or a falling aeroplane and make the drama any better. You improve the visual appeal, but you do not strengthen your story. Drama derives its strength from the idea and not from the action in which the idea is exposed. Action is of importance only as giving the most complete exposition to the idea. There must be some striking thought or there must be created in the mind of the spectator a desire to see a certain outcome of the struggle. This is purely mental.

5. Perhaps the most common error is the belief that death is, of itself, dramatic. This is not true. You cannot improve a weak story by killing a man each time the action sags. The introduction of death does not affect the value of a plot and give it strength. A strong story may be written having death for incident, but it is not a strong story because it is written about a murder, and plot and not merely action must be derived from the murder if strength is to be gained.

6. Death is dramatic only when the aftermath of death is dramatic; when the consequences vitally affect your protagonist. Smith, the hero of your story, kills Jones. The best we can do for Jones is to send flowers for the funeral. He is dead and we are done with him. He interests us no longer. What now interests us is the effect of the killing upon the life of Smith. Smith may have been a pillar of the church, a captain of industry or a great statesman. By a single act he has set himself apart from other men. If the action can be traced to him he must become either a victim of or a fugitive from Justice. If he is not suspected, he may walk abroad with head as high as ever, but he will never again be the man he was. Always there will be with him the thought of his act. Mere killing will

not bring interest. The killing is not the vital act, but the consequences of the killing. The story of Eugene Aram is vastly more dramatic than the history of Jesse James because the single killing produced a stronger effect upon Aram than did his more numerous exploits affect James, who came to regard shooting men more or less as a detail of his business.

7. It is no uncommon thing for the novice writer to drag death into a story merely to bolster up a period of inaction. Along in the middle of his play he has Jack and Jessie quarrel. Lacking invention he cannot devise a clever reconciliation. He has Jack's Mother die, then Jessie comes and at the bier they are reunited. The poor old lady has been slaughtered for no better reason than to give Jack a chance to weep and rave and to bring his sweetheart back to him. The author feels that he is making his story intensely interesting through the introduction of the death scenes, when he is merely exposing the limitations of his mind.

8. It frequently occurs that the threat of death is more dramatic than the event, for danger brings the suspense that is the second element of all well-told stories. Death terminates the suspense of that period of action since it is the termination of the action. It may, however, give rise to a new period of suspense if the death places the protagonist in jeopardy. To enlarge upon an illustration employed in the second edition of this book, two men enter a shack. One is the hero; the other the villain. Both are known to be armed. A single puff of smoke floats out of the window or through the doorway. What has happened? Has the hero been killed, or has the villain suffered his just deserts? Until we know what has taken place the situation is rich in suspense and the exterior of the shack with its uncertainty is better dramatic material than is the interior. Once inside we know what has happened. The period of suspense has been terminated.

9. Somewhat similar is the situation in the script used as Example A, in the Appendix, where Cort and Jack are waiting for the snake to strike. Here the interest rises from our interest in the men and not from the fact of death. We do not wish Cort to be killed because we know him to be innocent. There is no reason why Jack should die since he seeks to avenge his ruined home. Given these two men, both of whom must live, and the suggestion that one must inevitably die, we get a scene of far greater suspense than would have arisen from a development in which Jack at once shot and killed the other.

10. Danger is more potent in its appeal than injury or death. A battle scene is impressive and dramatic in its suggestion, but it may have no bearing upon the story being told, and so offer no addition in dramatic value to the story. If, however, the hero of the story is called upon to lead a desperate charge or to perform some other action that will make it probable that he will be killed in the battle, then the battle scene becomes a part of the story and contributes to the dramatic effect because it is through the battle that the life

of the hero is endangered. The battle episode, as such, is not important to the story, but gains importance when it becomes a menace to the hero.

11. It must be remembered, however, that suspense too long continued ceases to be dramatic, through nervous reaction, and will bring a laugh. Suppose that the villain comes to the hero's home to kill him. Stealing in upon him, he stands covering the intended victim, who is not aware of his presence. For a short time this situation will be dramatic through its menace, but too long continued the tension will break. But if the hero hears him and springs up, facing his enemy, we get a new phase of suspense which, like the other, should not be too long continued. A third phase might be the sudden presentation of the hero's gun and then there must come some definite termination of the situation. Suspense may be likened to a rubber band which being drawn out too far snaps. The tension may not pass the breaking point. Very often the prolongation of suspense is the fault of the director rather than of the author, since it is he who determines the footage of the action, but to some extent he can be held back through writing a series of crises of suspense, as shown above, instead of a single moment.

12. Life is more dramatic than death. The man who lives with his nagging wife for the sake of their child or who sacrifices the joys of life to attendance upon an invalid spouse is more dramatic than he who kills himself to escape the scolding of the one or the sight of the sufferings of the other. Get your effects from life and not from death.

13. There is one other aspect to the use of death. The theatre is supposed to be a place of recreation. To many there is a seemingly real pleasure in having the emotions torn, like the matinee girl who derived great enjoyment from the play that enabled her to wet two handkerchiefs with her tears, but most persons prefer a more healthy appeal to the emotions. Many, too, dislike to be reminded of their own more or less recent bereavements, and death scenes too vividly recall the past. It is a noteworthy fact that as the art of photoplay has progressed the use of death-bed scenes has steadily diminished. This is because with the advancement of the art the cruder forms of appeal have been replaced by more subtle touches and even the occasional use of death is more deftly handled.

14. In almost equal favor with death in the estimation of the novice is the crime play. Here, too, the novice is wrong. Crime, of itself, is no more dramatic than death. It may be used as the motive behind a play, but the mere history of a crime has its place in court reports and not on the screen. The use of crime plots is generally a confession of weakness. The clever and experienced writers do not have to resort to the use of crime themes in order to give strength to their plays. The practiced author can make crime stories interesting; not so much through the commission of crime as through other related phases. Note, for an example, the Sherlock

Holmes stories. Here the crimes are not the objectives of the stories, but serve merely as the base from which starts the story of the detection of the criminals. The plots so erected gain their charm not through their connection with crime but through the cleverness with which the detective operates. On the other hand stories of the Raffles type gain interest not through the commission of crimes but from the cleverness with which these offenses are planned. In passing, it is worth noting that already the Sherlock Holmes stories have proven more lasting than the Raffles series.

15. An aggravation of the offense is found when crimes are committed by criminals of the lower grades. Police reporters and settlement workers know that there is nothing picturesque about the underworld. Most of its denizens are stupid and ignorant with few, if any, redeeming traits. It is not possible to invest such persons with the halo of seeming romance. Some stories of the "Salvation Nell" and "Kindlings" type are interesting, if unreal, but they do not make the same appeal that a cleaner environment would give.

16. Drama should be the presentation of the more interesting and attractive phases of life, but of life and not of distorted images of life. A play appeals only when it seems real and convincing. It may be unusual, but it should not be unreal. Your personages should seem to be real people and not fictitious characters. This is more important in photoplay than in fiction work, since real people will play the parts and must be permitted to act as real people would and not be required to perform the antics of the clown in the serious play. You must create upon the screen the suggestion of reality, and it is for this reason that many incidents are barred, not because they could not have happened, but because they are so unusual as to seem unreal.

17. Stories with sombre themes should be avoided. All writers have to go through the early stage of development wherein they write of disappointed love, of brides dead on their wedding days or of men who go through life with broken hearts. This stage is as much a part of the study period as the later development wherein we write of the man whose wife thinks him too much engrossed in business to love her, or of the man who saves his rival for his wife's affections. It must be done, so do it, but remember that stories of the he-never-smiled-again type are salable only when they are most cleverly done and then only in limited degree. There are enough shadows in real life, and the sodden, gloomy story merely adds to the burden. There are some stories to which happy endings would be unconvincing as well as inartistic. It would not pay to distort these to the happy ending type. It will, however, pay to write other stories *instead* and leave the black bordered script to others. Only the most experienced and adroit can efface tears with laughter and the story that is all tears is in small demand. Play upon the heartstrings as skillfully as you may, but use a plectrum and not a club, remembering that if you would be affluent you must first be cheerful.

18. Turning from the prohibited to the permissible, it should be

well understood that while all the world may love a lover, it does not follow that stories of the love of a man for a woman always possess the strongest appeal. Love stories will be standard always, and they will be plentiful, as well, for to the practiced man it is a simple matter to take the triangle and grind out a love story. Where the novice writes of crime because that comes easiest, the more experienced man writes of sex-love. All that is necessary is to take a man and two women or two women and a man, mix them up, straighten them out again and mail the manuscript. There are degrees of skill shown in the telling, but it is a love story still; merely one of many. The Editor is always assured a supply of love stories and so, feeling certain, he is more keenly on the lookout for stories with less hackneyed themes.

19. Write love stories, but avoid the stock themes, such as the lovers' quarrel, the woman who does not love her husband, the little child who makes two loving hearts one, and the rest of the catalogue, but try to get away from the straight love story. If you can, you will find a more ready market.

20. Of all themes that of mother-love probably makes the strongest appeal to the emotions. This does not mean that *any* tale of the love of a mother for her child will be acceptable. To the contrary, because this is the strongest appeal it follows that you must not take liberties with the subject. The story that is clearly an effort to trade on this idea will excite only irritation and disgust. It is something too fine, too exalted, to be prostituted to the devices of the clumsy writer. The true lover of music merely smiles when the gutter band butchers ragtime melodies. It is a fitting fate for a cheap song. But to reduce the classics of song to barber's shop chords is irritating. The story of mother-love must not only be well told, but it must ring true. It must suggest that you have selected the theme because you venerate it and that your plot is not a commercial venture but homage to the beautiful attribute. You must seem to write because you have a message and not merely because you have been told that mother-love is what the vaudeville actors call "sure-fire stuff."

21. And even where mother-love is incidental to and not the basis of your story you must treat it with respect. You cannot show the scheming society mother seeking to sell her daughter to the highest bidder and then, later in the play, descant upon her mother-love. This will not be accepted as belonging and will be resented as an untruthful picture of life. You cannot make a maudlin appeal to cheap sentiment with a theme of so great an importance.

22. In the same way love of country is something that should not be abused because it lies so close to the heart. In the theatre you may have risen to your feet because the national air was being played even while you cursed the cheap musical director or incompetent vaudeville performer who resorted to its use. The man who gives up his life for his country is truly a heroic figure, but the man who gives up his life for his country merely that his uninventive author may

seek to gain applause is not a hero but a literary error. The story may gain some temporary result, but unless it is convincing and sincere its use is more apt to be resented.

23. Self-sacrifice forms a powerful basis for a play if the story be well and interestingly told. If it is merely a cheap bid for tearful emotion the story will fall. The motive for the act must be clearly set forth if appeal is to be made. The elder sister who resigns her sweetheart to the younger must have good reason for the sacrifice, else the resignation is absurd.

24. This theme will illustrate what has just been said about the misuse of other factors. The fact of the resignation is beautiful in itself, but it is to be presumed that the motive is proper. If the elder sister gives way for no good reason it is clear that the act is performed merely to provide a plot. In such a case she is a fool and not a heroine. Suppose that she knows her sister's love for the man, but knows that the man does not love the younger girl. Shall she sacrifice her own happiness and that of the man merely to make the third person temporarily happy? If it can clearly be shown that the elder feels a responsibility for the younger and that the younger girl's life is wholly dependent upon her union with the object of her affections, then she places her sister's life above her own happiness and the sacrifice is warranted and noble. If, however, she gives up her sweetheart for the purpose of satisfying her sister's chance whim, then the lack of proper reason causes the sacrifice to appear absurd.

25. At no time can you place your protagonist in a position where he or she will appear absurd and still retain the interest of the spectator. This is a rule of the drama to which there are few, if any, exceptions. The leading character may never be permitted to lose interest for a moment. We cannot feel interest in a character who is a fool nor sympathize with persons who suffer from their own acts of gross stupidity.

26. We can be sorry for the girl who has loved unwisely, but we cannot take the same interest in her that we feel for the woman who suffers through no error of her own. We can, perhaps, take interest in a person who commits a murder, but not the same interest that we feel for those who have not taken human life. Suffering due to one's own acts never commands the same sympathy as the sufferings resulting from the actions of another and reacting upon the innocent; as the mother of the girl who went wrong or the family of the murderer.

27. In this centralization of interest and the holding of that interest once it is aroused lies much of the success of a drama. Your protagonist cannot be too closely studied. You must both love and respect this character that you may win love and respect for him from others. You must clearly know the identity of your protagonist before you begin your development, else you may shift the interest from one character or perhaps even share the interest between several characters. This cannot give the best result. All that happens in a

drama should happen because it intimately concerns the protagonist. In an example in this chapter it was stated that a battle scene should be used only as a background for the hero. That same suggestion holds good throughout. For the purpose of your drama the world was created simply to serve as a background and place of residence for your chief character, and no action that does not have a direct bearing upon his fortunes or interests should be permitted to intrude.

28. Even a single seemingly unimportant lapse may ruin your play by taking interest from the hero. Yearly scores of plays are rendered worthless through some little incident written in the action or interpolated by the director. You must study each action and the probable results of that action. In one play, for example, a dog ran into the scene, wagging his tail and making the hero welcome. The incident was not planned, and as the quickest way out of the trouble the leading man kicked the dog to make him go away. It cost him the favor of most persons who saw the story released, for the scene was kept in instead of a retake being ordered. This was the fault of the director, but the author may write and the director overlook some trifling piece of business that will have the same effect.

29. Another thing to be avoided is the improper objective. If the struggle is devoted to the achievement of some unlawful or immoral end, the play must have an unhappy ending. It will be better to change the protagonist and gain the happy ending through the defeat of this object by making that defeat the objective. The very essence of drama is that we wish a thing to happen because we are interested in the person who desires this result. If the desire is unlawful we cannot take an interest in the person who has such a desire and we cannot become interested in a play wherein the achievement of an object will be distasteful to us. We will be interested in John's courtship of Mary, but could not take the same interest if his object was not marriage but merely the unlicensed gratification of desire. In the same way we cannot be interested in the success of a bank burglar. We can become interested in a detective who seeks to apprehend the thief.

30. It has been said at the opening of this chapter that the drama story to a considerable extent will carry the action. This is true, but it must be qualified by the provision that while the story will carry the action, the story must be capable of being told in clear and vivid action. The more striking and dramatic the visual action, the greater will be the interest in the story since the chief appeal to the brain is made through the medium of sight. Do not tell your story in leaders and illustrate it with action. Have the action tell the story and tell it in the most strikingly dramatic manner possible. It is seldom that but a single course of action is available in the recital of a story. There may be two or more developments to each scene. Study to get the best.

31. Take as an example a woman who is planning to elope. As she and her companion are leaving the house the husband, approach-

ing, sees them. They run and he gives pursuit, overtaking them and compelling the wife to return to their home. This would not be dramatic because it would strongly suggest comedy. Instead, play the scene in the parlor. The pair are about to leave the room when the husband enters. Here is a more dramatic approach to the moment, and a slight pause will raise a suspense until we see whether the husband will shoot or sue. We get the same general effect, but one action is humorous, where the other is dramatic. Naturally the latter is more helpful to the story as a whole.

32. You must plan your story to give a succession of blows, but between the blows you must permit time for recovery. If you make dramatic a scene that does not lend itself to the dramatic, you will fail of your effect, just as you will fail if your punches come too close together or are too evenly matched. If you fire a sixteen-inch gun twenty-one times, the last shot is far less effective than the first. On the other hand, if you begin with a cap pistol, follow with a revolver shot, a gun shot, a small field piece, and so gradually come to the big gun, you will gain in effect with each shot, since each will exceed the previous ones in force. Plan your drama to get a gradual rise to the climax. Plan your story so that all interest lies in the chief character. Offer a clearly marked struggle and suspense that rises naturally from the telling of the story and does not depend upon trickery. Give a new plot or an old plot with a new twist and you will have a drama that will be acceptable.

(3.XX:1 LV:3) (4.IX:12 XXV:2) (6.XXXVIII:12 XXXIX:7) (8.XIV:4-5) (11.IX:9 XIII:10 XXXV:9 XXXIX:13) (13.LVI:26) (16.XII:4) (17.XX:10) (18.XVIII:1) (20.XVIII:4) (22.XVIII:5) (26.XVIII:11) (27.IX:15 XXXIII:11) (29.IX:17) (30.LIV:10) (32.XIV:8 XLIII:11).

CHAPTER LI

HISTORICAL AND COSTUME PLAYS

PRACTICALLY all historical plays are costume plays, but not all costume plays are historical. Historical plays are those based on the recital of historical events and which either follow history closely or at the least do not offer facts contradictory to the history they purport to represent. Costume plays are those of any period other than the present; plays of the present but of a people whose mode of dress is unlike our own, or plays of mythical lands either past or present. In the purest sense, however, by costume play is understood a play of some other period presenting a romance not in the guise of history. In the studio a more comprehensive single classification groups as costume plays any play for which the costumes must be supplied by the management.

2. Generally speaking, it does not pay the free lance writer to offer for sale stories based upon historical events. Manuscript departments have libraries and generally one or more readers who search for good material in history and standard fiction. If it is desired to produce such a play, the order is given a staff man, who adds to his technical equipment a knowledge of the studio such as the outside writer cannot obtain.

3. Occasionally a story with a historical foundation but carrying a greater proportion of original matter will be purchased. In such plays the author virtually invents an original romance and then seeks to give it greater importance by connecting it with history. The story of Paul Revere and his famous ride has been done. Perhaps a story may concern some of those who responded to Revere's call. Here we will have the semblance of history, though it is the creative romance that really makes for plot. Such stories are not infrequently purchased, but only where it happens that a company is desirous of making a costume play because none has been made for some time, or because the costumes called for are already owned by the studio or will not cost too much to rent. Costumes not owned by a studio may be rented for a day or a week from a theatrical costumer. If the costumes wanted are in storage either in the studio or the costumer's shop, then the production is not a matter of largely increased cost, but if they must be made for the production, then the greater proportion of the first cost will be charged against that picture. The up-to-date studio may stock a variety of costumes, but it may not have the particular costumes that the script calls for.

4. There is another and better reason for the greater proportion of plays of today. It has been found that the average photoplay theatre patron prefers the drama of today and here. Even back in 1896, when the pictures were just becoming a recognized exhibition proposition, it was found that the picture that showed some local spot was preferred to the finest of foreign scenes, and the Lumiere Cinematograph was dropped by one important vaudeville circuit merely because it could not give a sufficient supply of local views. Much the same condition holds good today. The average man wants to see average men and only at times will he appreciate costume plays as a relief from the sameness of modern dress.

5. It is to be supposed that quaint costuming and odd coloring should heighten the pictorial effect. It does, but it has not been found that it adds to the interest, and the picture that might be about his nextdoor neighbor interests the average spectator more than would a story of Colonial times. If the subject is studied the reason is easily found. The play of today is in the common mode of thought. It requires no mental readjustment. Human nature is the same in all ages, but custom has differed widely and the average man is most keenly in sympathy with the play that he can best understand, and this, naturally, is the play that reproduces his own times.

6. It may be argued that the man who pays fifteen cents for his amusement is as well fitted to understand a story of ancient Rome as he is to understand the life and modes of thought of the men and women who hire an opera box by the season and who pay forty cents for a ham sandwich plus the environment of a fashionable hotel. This argument sounds reasonable, but the daily paper has made the milkman and the millionaire backdoor neighbors and the milkman thinks he understands the millionaire, which to him is quite sufficient.

7. Where costume stuff is written it will generally be found that the play of a mythical land will be better appreciated than one with a definite place and period. Here the author creates his own manners and customs and the spectator is not required to adjust himself to custom as to adjust custom to himself. The King of Bolo-Bolo may act much as the actor who plays the part will behave in real life, and so he seems real and of today, though the locale of the play may be any part of the globe so long as it is no part in particular.

8. One thing to be remembered in writing costume plays is that a play that may be done at one of the producing centres is more apt to be taken for use than a play that might be given exact locations with a brief travel. Cuba is nearer than Zululand, but it is easier to get the Zulu coloring in Florida than to go to Cuba for convincing exteriors. A few palm trees and some grass huts will be African enough, but you cannot find in Florida convincing examples of Cuban architecture. Southern California will provide satisfactory substitutes for the South Sea Islands, the Arabian desert or India, but it has no Indian temples or Arabian mosques, and these must be built if they are to be used.

9. It should be remembered when the pictures on the screen are studied that it is necessary to go back of the picture itself to find a reason for production. One director knew of a hotel built in the pure Arabian style. He did not wait for Arabian stories to come in. He had the place photographed from several angles and sent these to an author with a request for three plays to fit these settings. When the stories were completed the photographs were returned, and by a system of markings each scene was written to fit the whole or some part of the places shown in the photographs. These happened to be made in St. Augustine. When the pictures were released and Arabian stories began to pour into the studio releasing them, the director was in California and all the stories were returned.

10. Directors frequently make use of chance locations in this way, getting their pictures cheaply and with a maximum of effect. Others will make stories regardless of expense if the idea pleases them. The best form of costume story is one in which the settings are simply written and yet which are capable of being given as lavish a production as the director may desire. The author gives the story.

The director spends as much money as he can coax from the company on its production. The story may call for a handful of soldiers in a skirmish and yet be so framed that a mighty battle can be fought on the same script. This is the most certain means of commending your story to the director if you are writing from the outside.

11. Plays of this type should depend upon the general appeal of the story. They cannot successfully base their appeal on manners and customs not generally known. The ease with which a Muslim may put aside his wife is a matter of general knowledge. The finality of a third divorce or of a triple divorce is less well known and might require so elaborate an explanation that a story based on the triple divorce and the efforts of the repentant husband to regain his spouse without the usual penalty may be wholly lost. The niceties of Hindu caste will not be understood. The marrying into a lower caste will. Deal broadly with little known customs and let the heart or love interest carry the story.

12. For the beginner it is by far the better plan not to seek the sale of costume plays until he has become so proficient in his plotting that he can sell on plot in spite of the handicap. It is fatal to suppose that pretty costumes and strange settings will make a play seem more interesting. The reverse is true. Novelty of dressing and setting can never atone for lack of plot. Plot, on the other hand, may atone for added production cost through its excellence. You must make a company so eager to produce a plot that they are willing to go to added cost and to take a chance on the change in period not detracting from the story. And when you have a plot as good as that it will be more profitable to modernize it and dress it in the clothes of today. If it really is a plot of that sort it can be done.

(1.III:9) (2.XLIX:8) (8.IV:2) (9.XVII:4).

CHAPTER LII

PROBLEM PLAYS

PROBLEM plays are not so much a dramatic form as a form of drama. The problem play is a drama first; but a drama presenting some problem of life with or without a suggested solution. Generally it deals with a problem as a whole through some definite and individual case arising from the more general phase. If a solution is suggested, it is more applicable to the specific instance presented than to the proposition at large. In this it differs from the propaganda play, which urges its solution on the spectator. In problem plays it is more generally the practice to present

the problem in dramatic action and permit the individual to draw his own inferences.

2. Problem plays should not be controversial. They may present problems and suggest the solution in some one particular case, they may even offer a condition and argue that this condition is right or wrong, but it is better to present a play offering a subject for discussion, but not adding to the discussion. The true problem play is not a preachment against existing conditions. It is a play presenting interestingly some phase of the condition; an analysis rather than an arraignment of the condition. In other words, to be interesting it must first be a drama and then a non-partisan presentation of a condition. Were this borne in mind there would be fewer plays of this type rejected as being likely to give offense.

3. The problem play should not state its proposition too palpably. It does not ask "Should the woman pay?" and then proceed to argue that she should or that she should not. It should not seem to state a problem. In action it should present the problem in the form of an interesting story. It should show what has happened to one woman and permit the spectator to make his own deductions and not force him to accept the conclusions of the author. It shows the woman's transgression and the results so clearly that the justice or injustice of her treatment is so evident that the spectator realizes the problem though no formal statement of the proposition has been made. You show that it is not possible for a woman to sin and ever wholly to retrieve her good name. You show that the man who has shared her sin can rehabilitate his reputation, if, indeed, it has suffered any injury. The contrast between the man's smug self-righteousness and the woman's gradual descent in spite of her efforts to retrieve her error gives a picture that is in itself a better argument than an arrayal of logical facts.

4. Perhaps this selection of subject is unfortunate since it may add to the existing belief that the sex problem is the only one that is susceptible of interesting treatment. This not only is not true, but the almost universal resort to sex for problem matter serves to emphasize the need for some other subject if the author would escape the inevitable "theme used before."

5. Any play that deals with a defiance of convention or that runs contrary in its action to accepted belief is a problem play, and many subjects can be found more vitally interesting and more generally acceptable than the threadbare triangle of the man, the woman and Mrs. Grundy. The question as to whether it is the duty of the physician to preserve the vital spark in his suffering patient to the last agonized moment, if intelligently treated, is more sensational and more gripping than a vain effort to view the repentant Magdalene from a new angle. The physician offers another problem in the theory that the confidences of his patients should be held as sacred as the secrets of the confessional.

6. Notice, please, that "physician" and not "Catholic priest" is

written. Hundreds of stories dealing with the confessional of the Church have been turned down as being likely to give some offense to the members of that communion. Here the problem attacked is that of a sect. Precisely the same problem exists in the medical profession, but here it is a question of ethics and not of religion. A priest may not reveal the secrets of the confessional without being forsworn. A physician commits a lesser offense in doing the same thing and a physician may be a Christian, an atheist or a Muslim. Here, too, the love interest may be introduced freely and without offense.

7. Conceive a situation in which a woman is accused of a murder. Her sweetheart is a physician. He is called upon to treat another woman for a bullet wound; the bullet being of the same calibre that inflicted the death wound and circumstances make it probable that this woman was shot with her own weapon while struggling with her victim. His Hippocratic oath requires silence. His heart and his sense of justice require him to give the facts to the authorities. Here we have a true problem play and one that cannot give offense even to physicians themselves. Catholics will resent any attack upon the institutions of their Church, and very properly. Physicians will welcome an intelligent discussion of a condition that many of them feel to be wrong.

8. To be popular, the problem play must follow the general trend of thought or else combat accepted belief so strikingly that the matter is seen in an entirely new light. Since only the greatest thinkers are apt to hit upon a truth greater than that arrived at by the world as a whole, it is better to travel with rather than against the current. Follow accepted belief rather than seek to combat it, but if you can inject an "if" or a "but," so much the better.

9. Next to the danger of selecting a theme dangerous in that it will antagonize the members of a sect or religious belief, the thing most to be feared is making the personages in your play of secondary importance to the problem it presents. This is a very common but none the less a grave error. A problem can possess only an academic interest. It must be made human by the personages whose adventures present the problem. In the presentation of your play you must first write your drama and then through our interest in these personages of the drama interest your spectators in the problem that their adventures present, but hold always to the problem.

10. In the physician quoted in the foregoing the interest does not come from the question of right or wrong, but from the application of the principle to the person in whom we have become interested. If the physician himself is the chief character, then the application of the principle to himself is the source of interest. If the woman whom he loves or the woman who is shot is the protagonist, then it is the effect of the problem upon her that gives it interest. The question should not be put "*shall* he free the woman he loves," or "*shall* he hide his patient from justice," but "*will* he?" This will give the

story interest and in the end the problem is the same, though differently stated. "Will" still presents a question of the propriety of the action, but it gives the question a more direct and personal interest.

11. It is highly important that the author should not attempt to deal with the presentation of problems with which he is not thoroughly acquainted. An awkward and uninformed handling of the question must inevitably betray its falseness even to those lesser informed. To the more intelligent it will be irritating and ridiculous. On the other hand, the attitude of the author should be strictly impersonal. If he writes of a subject too close to his heart he is apt to be biased in his arrangement and presentation of facts. The play will be too one-sided to hold the interest.

12. The mental attitude of the writer of problem plays should be that of the surgeon in the dissecting room rather than that of the surgeon in the clinic. He should be the analyst rather than the healer. The subject that lies close to the heart cannot be treated properly any more than the surgeon will trust himself to operate upon one of his immediate family. Problem plays are interesting only when they are judicial and are impartial presentations of the subject matter. The facts must be stated and the decision left to those who listen to the facts. This is the great and essential difference between the problem and the propaganda play.

(9.L:27) (10.IX:16) (11.XI:8 XX:14).

CHAPTER LIII

PURPOSE AND PROPAGANDA PLAYS

AS suggested in the last chapter, the propaganda play differs from the problem play in that it urges upon the spectator the acceptance of a solution rather than the study of a problem. It seems to invite discussion, but instead seeks to make converts to the theory propounded. Purpose plays differ from propaganda plays in that they merely point out conditions known to exist in such a manner as to emphasize the wrongfulness of the condition.

2. Take for example some of the plays put out by the Society for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis. One may be a propaganda play, in that it seeks to spread the propaganda that the only correct treatment for consumption is rest, nourishment and fresh air. Some of its plays deal strongly with this aspect and have done untold good. James Oppenheim's "Hope," for example, tells the story of a girl who knows herself to be the victim of the disease. Her father laughs at the idea. She leaves home to seek the proper treat-

ment, and when she is discovered to her family she is convalescent. This is designed to spread the propaganda of proper treatment and taking the disease in time. On the other hand, its "The Price of Human Lives" is not propaganda but a purpose play in that it tells of the evil done by the charlatans who fatten on the rich profits accruing from the sale of alleged cures for tuberculosis. This does not advance a propaganda, but seeks to support the propaganda by pointing out the evils of a condition, just as The Red Cross Seal revealed the necessity for inducing sanitary conditions.

3. Plays of either type are generally done by arrangement between the society interested in the movement and some manufacturer of photoplays. Practically all of these plays are written on order by persons who are told the points to be covered and who read up on the subject that there may be no technical errors. The author is principally concerned with the story, but every fact presented must be correct to the minutest detail. One play, for instance, having to do with a subject of interest to medical men was spoiled for practical use because the actor playing the physician shook down the mercury in a clinical thermometer before taking a reading. The lapse was very slight and was not shown in the script, but the directions in the script in such a matter should have stated that the physician first took the reading and then shook down the indicator and cleansed the instrument before returning it to its case.

4. The author who undertakes such a commission must make himself thoroughly familiar with his subject, both through reading and through conversation with those well posted on the topic that he may be certain that he has made the proper deductions from his reading. At the same time he must be careful to absorb facts rather than enthusiasm, or here again bias will defeat the real object of the propaganda play—which is that the interesting presentation of facts will make facts more acceptable and more easily understood than they would be on the printed page. The appeal through action is immeasurably stronger than appeal to sense by the printed text, and it must be one of the duties of the author to preserve interest in the narrative, through which interest in the personages is gained, while he presents the facts clearly and succinctly. Bias, even in a propaganda play, may not be carried to excess.

5. A preachment against the liquor traffic may be forcible and interesting, but if the characters are overdrawn the play will lack conviction. A play in which all of the factors for good are represented as cousins to the angelic hosts and all forces for evil are shown as drunken brutes will appeal only to the fanatics, and these are already converts. The propaganda play is expected to make converts among those not now opposed to the sale of liquor and many of these will know that the proportion of non-drinkers is greater among bar-keepers than in almost any other class. They will argue that if

known facts are so woefully misstated the arguments are based on facts no more reliable and the story will fail of effect.

6. There is a strong temptation to please the persons giving the order by overdrawing, but this will react against the author when the story is found to be of no avail in actual use. It may please a fanatic to show that all saloon properties are owned by hypocritical pillars of the churches, that all saloonkeepers are mercenary and merciless and that all teetotalers are models of righteousness, but a reputation for skill as a propaganda writer cannot be based on such stories and the author must fight if necessary to avoid highly colored facts and seek to show by more convincing argument the truth of his statements.

7. In its more effective form, the propaganda story first enlists the interest of the spectator in the chief character and then shows the effect of the vice upon this person. If you would preach against the liquor traffic and in favor of prohibition, show your protagonist in a situation where he cannot conveniently encounter temptation. He moves to a "wet" state to better his income, meets and succumbs to temptation and the home is wrecked. Constant iteration of the fact is not argument. First gain interest for your prospective victim, cause him to become a victim and leave the inference to be drawn by the persons who become interested in his career.

8. Titles should be most carefully chosen. They should not advertise their nature. You may use "The Curse of Drink" for a story that is not a preachment, but if you write a propaganda you select a title that will disarm rather than excite suspicion. A story designed to further interest in the subject of lip-reading study for the hard of hearing was called "With the Eyes of Love." It suggested anything rather than an argument in favor of a special study. "The Curse of Drink" will never bring a drunkard to the theatre. It may even keep him away, but "With Barriers Down" may appeal to him as a title and be germane to the subject without advertising the preachment. It must not suggest that it is *not* a propaganda, for then the breaking of the implied promise will be resented by all. It is sufficient that the story does not suggest that it *is* a propaganda.

9. The tuberculosis stories already referred to have done incalculable good because these have been most intelligently handled by the society, but propaganda plays are of equal value in any other line of work, and as the business grows it is only reasonable to suppose that their use will become more and more popular, though it is probable that their use on a general program will be replaced by their presentation in lecture rooms, schools and churches. There is at present no demand for free lance offerings on propaganda subjects, but there is every evidence that it will pay to give thought and study to this line of work. It may be that in time a market for free lance contributions will be created.

CHAPTER LIV

MELODRAMA

NEXT to drama, in the descending scale, comes melodrama. This may roughly be defined as a form of drama in which the visual effect is of greater importance than strict probability. Exact truth may be strained to some degree in order to obtain an excuse for some striking action that shall add its effect to the more purely mental phase of the drama. In drama the hero threatens the villain and defies him to do his worst. In melodrama he knocks him down. In drama the villain may seek the love of the heroine in vain. In melodrama he may abduct her if he thinks the Board of Review will permit him. Thought still gives force to the action, but the action that presents the thought is more violent and it is permissible to strain slightly after effect.

2. Melodrama is favored above drama by a majority of play patrons because of this greater vividness of action. This is particularly true of the higher forms of melodrama in which the distortion of fact is so slight as not to insult the intelligence, though a greater effect is gained.

3. In melodrama it still remains necessary to present the idea back of the action, but we can torture the idea a little. It must still give the punch to the play, but it must be supplemented by the physical punch, the real left hook to the actual chin as well as the mental blow on the senses of the spectator. In drama the villain seldom hires assassins to do away with the hero. In melodrama this is permissible if there is a fairly logical excuse for their use and presence. We can make use of realities that are slightly improbable as applied to general life.

4. It is seldom that a silk-hatted villain is attended by a gang of cloth-capped thugs, but it is by no means uncommon in real life for the gangsters to have as protectors if not chiefs men of apparent standing in the community who exchange their political pull for political asset as represented by the gangster voters. The condition is so unusual that it is not applicable to the lives of the generality of men, but since it does exist and since the gang will give heightened effect to melodrama the use of the gang is permissible.

5. This is a general example of the latitude to be employed and approved in melodrama. It must not be too radical to find acceptance, but on the other hand it need not be so generally understood as to be acceptable as fact. It's a good story. The incident *may* be true. Anyhow, it's a good story. The incident is true enough, at any rate. This may mislead the beginner into an abuse of this license, for excess will inevitably turn a melodrama into a travesty or burlesque of drama.

6. Nothing can point the exact limits, for the lines between drama,

melodrama and travesty are not well marked. Melodrama may be no more than a slightly stressed drama, and travesty may be melodrama but slightly exaggerated.

7. To illustrate this it might be told that a melodrama that enjoyed a long run both in London and New York was planned as a travesty by certain melodramatic authors. They wove into a single plot a majority of the "sure-fire" melodramatic situations, slightly burlesqued. It made so good a melodrama that they were required to remove the slight touch of travesty and offer it as a serious play.

8. A play may be a combination of drama and melodrama, starting as a straight drama and turning to melodrama for the climax, or it may be no more than a melodrama from the start, opening on a frankly melodramatic premise.

9. In its best form it has the appearance of drama with touches of melodrama where it is desired to increase or heighten the effect toward the close. Starting as straight melodrama, the premise opens with a situation which, for intensity, should be approximately that existing at the end of four hundred feet in a one reel play or the end of the first reel in a four or five reel play. Since the tension should increase with the progress of the play, it follows that to work to a melodramatic climax will require the presentation of much more strenuous situation and action in that situation. At the same time, in the desire to gain this intensity, the argument of the story may not become too fantastic or unbelievable.

10. Melodrama is a play of deeds rather than words, and as such it more readily lends itself to screen production, but this does not mean that action is to be carried to excess. To the contrary the story with the action pitched in too high a key will either be confusing or amusing as circumstances may decree. A scene in which one man, presumably the hero, overcomes his antagonist by sheer force of superior will power is dramatic. If he beats him up with his bare fists, then it becomes melodrama. In drama the hero is temporarily overcome by appearances and circumstance. In melodrama he yields to superior physical force.

11. On the screen, melodrama is tempered largely by the censorship. In guarding against an excess of violence, the rules are apt to be made too drastic and all scenes of violence are prohibited instead of merely scenes of brutal violence. Melodrama, therefore, has to be kept down, if not to the tempo of drama at least to a degree below that of the uncensored speaking stage. Through the adroit use of the cut-back it is possible to show much that in entire action would be prohibited and so the atmosphere of melodrama may be more successfully maintained than would be possible where straight scenes are played. This should be carried in mind when writing the script of action and particularly in doing the leaders. These may be so framed as to emphasize the violence and so become offensive to the censors or may be so written as to slightly detract from the mental suggestion and so excuse the physical action. For instance, you may

write that "To further his evil ends, Jared abducts Eva." This may be a statement of fact, but there is no use egging the censors on to eliminate the story. Abduction is something that is frowned upon. Evil ends are prohibited in photoplay. But you say "Jared moves," and the situation may pass. This may seem absurd to the unpracticed reader, but it is no more foolish than other things about local censorships.

12. Melodrama may depend more strongly than drama upon mechanical punch. From the days of "Blue Jeans," with its real buzz saw, the speaking stage has abounded in realistic effects. These are interesting in a slight way. They do not add to the interest in the plot, and it is a plot that is supreme in melodrama as well as in the more dignified form, but the introduction of some spectacular effect will be a good talking point for the press agent, and in photoplay many things can be done with effect that would look absurd on the stage of the theatre. There is more thrill in the actual explosion of dynamite that sinks a ship than a canvas boat sinking into canvas waves, and the automobile that shoots over a forty-foot cliff will prove more stirring than a profile car on clearly discernible wires.

13. It should be remembered, however, that the dynamited boat and the diving auto have been overworked as effects. What the Editor and director seek is something new. Strive to get new and practicable effects and then surround them with a story in which the effect is a natural and logical part. You may write your play around the effect, but to hold the interest write it so that the suggestion is given that the play suggested the effect and not vice versa. You must use the plot to give interest to the effect and not use the effect to make a poor plot good.

14. Next to the heart interest story, a good melodrama is about the best selling script in dramatic form. It must be good, however, if it is to find a ready market. It must be well-planned and well-written. It must be fairly logical, plausible and with a plot that can be followed by those incapable of depth of thought and yet sufficiently intelligent to interest those of a higher order of intelligence. It must be vivid in action without being vicious.

15. Most important of all, it must not seek to draw its strength from crime, though it may relate to crime.

(1.LV:4) (3.XII:4) (9.LVIII:12) (10.L:30) (12.XXV:3)
(15.L:14).

CHAPTER LV

COMEDY DRAMA

COMEDY DRAMA is the result of the union of drama or melodrama with comedy. Generally it is melodrama, since the departure from straight dramatic form is apt to result in the predominance of the melodramatic feature. This is so frequently the case that it would be proper to define comedy drama as melodrama in which the intensity of the situations is lightened or relieved by the injection of humorous material. By many it is preferred to drama or melodrama because it provides both thrills and laughter.

2. The drama of the stage often offers what is technically known as the comedy relief, generally a pair of young lovers, a comedy servant or an eccentric character, the office of these persons being to lighten the tension and keep back the rising action until the proper time. Photoplay is so brief and so direct that the employment of a comedy relief as a regular factor of the drama is avoided or replaced where necessary by some single touch. In comedy drama the purpose of the comedy is not so much to hold back the tension as to avoid it. The entire action is in a lighter key. Comedy drama is more apt to suggest a comedy with dramatic touches than the reverse. It is largely a matter of proportion, but the altering of proportion gives a marked difference in the form.

3. For the purpose of comparison, let us take a story based on lip reading. This is to be used as a basis for a play. Perhaps a drama of this topic might read:

Mary Harding is wealthy, but she is not good looking and is further afflicted with a hardness of hearing which she seeks to conceal through her skill in lip reading. This she does so successfully that only a few of her most intimate friends are aware of her deficiency. She meets Jack Barrows, a handsome young scapegrace, who promptly makes violent love to her and who succeeds in persuading her that he loves her for herself and not because of her fortune. Like most deaf persons, Mary lives largely within herself and to this first and great love she gives her heart and soul. Next to her love for Jack comes her love for her half-sister, Ruth, daughter of her father by a second wife. Mary's fortune has been inherited from her own mother and to this Ruth has no claim. Her father died poor. She is intensely happy in her love until one day she oversees Jack and Ruth. Jack does not know of her skill as a lip reader and Ruth forgets. They are talking of their love and Jack is explaining that he is marrying Mary for her money alone and that he loves only Ruth. The girl tries to persuade him to give up Mary and face poverty with her. To this Jack will not consent, declaring that he cannot economize and be happy. Mary secretly draws from her fortune a sum sufficient to give her a modest income. The rest she wills to Ruth and then arranges a fictitious suicide which is accepted without question. Jack and Ruth marry, while Mary, in her new life, finds easement for her sorrow in making lighter the burdens of others.

This is the straight drama form in which the idea rather than the action gains the effect. Another story suggests itself, which has already been referred to in Chapter LIII. In this the secretary of a wealthy man is a lip reader. Her employer is killed and suspicion falls upon his son, with whom the secretary is in love. The real murderers come to watch the trial and by reading their lips the secretary is enabled to free her sweetheart and serve the ends of justice.

4. This is slightly more melodramatic than the other, but is not true melodrama. This might be represented by this plot:

Jack Hardy is a detective who has studied lip reading because his sweetheart is deaf and practices lip reading. She has persuaded him to take up the study, arguing that it will help him in his profession. They are to be married when Jack, who has recently quitted the police force to become a private detective, is able to open his own office. Meanwhile he is an operative for a private agency. Jack is called in by a bank to explain a constantly growing deficit in the cash reserve. An examination of the books has shown no alteration and suspicion can be directed against none of the clerks. Jack, with his knowledge of police matters, searches the slums for men who might know something about the job, for he feels that this is the work of outsiders. For the sake of revenging themselves upon him for work done while on the force, the members of a gang abduct him and carry him off. He is bound to a chair while they consult as to his fate and speculate as to whether or not he suspects the existence of a tunnel through which they can enter the bank vaults in such a manner that the point of their entrance does not show. The entire plot is exposed. The gang departs, determined to kill Jack that night. He makes his way to the window and presently his sweetheart comes in search of him, guessing that he is in trouble. He enunciates the story of the plot and tells that the men have gone to the bank. They are captured in the vaults while Jack is rescued. There is a large reward, partnership in the agency and a wedding in immediate prospect.

This is straight melodrama with all the accessories of abduction, secret panels and the like. It moves more rapidly than the synopsis indicates and is vivid in action.

5. In comedy drama the tendency would be to elaborate on the lip reading and the mistakes made by those not aware of the uncanny faculty. A plot might run something like this:

Aunt Louisa is rich and she is also a pest in general, and her almost total deafness does not make her any more welcome when she makes the rounds of her relatives on her semi-annual visits. Among those she visits are the Buddens, a family consisting of the father, mother and three daughters. Two of the girls are proud and greedy. The third, Maude, is the direct opposite. Aunt Louisa in the course of time makes her appearance with her huge tin ear trumpet. She is flattered by the parents and elder sisters, who find some relief for their exasperation by calling her names and then shouting flatteries into the trumpet when she asks them to repeat the remark. Maude alone serves her ungrudgingly and reproves the others for their cruel remarks. In the end Aunt Louisa explains that since her last visit she has studied lip reading and is making the rounds with the trumpet again for no other purpose than that of unmasking the treat-

ment she has felt. Maude is adopted as her heiress and taken from her drudgery to live with the aunt.

Here it will be seen that the story is properly a comedy with a dramatic touch. With slight changes it could be made into a direct comedy, but these dramatic touches give a certain value to the plot. At each break the spectator laughs at the contrast between what is said and what they say they say. If he knows about Aunt Louisa, the situation is even more amusing.

6. All of these stories are based in lip reading. In the drama it precipitates the catastrophe or event leading to the climax. In the melodrama it is used merely to extricate the hero from his troubles. In the comedy drama it is used to gain laughs as well as to precipitate the catastrophe. It is dramatic in that it brings about the climax, but it also makes for comedy through the laughs it gains.

7. This is perhaps the best means of determining the classification of comedy, comedy drama and comedy. If the basis of the plot aims at a serious effect, it is drama. If it aims solely at humorous effect, it is comedy, but if it combines humorous with dramatic effect, then it is comedy drama or a mixture of comedy and drama.

8. The exact and definite classification of these three forms is seldom necessary. They group under the general head of drama when they are described, but it is seldom necessary to describe them at all. Send your play in without a label. The difference is explained here merely for the convenience of the author should a studio announce that it is in the market only for certain types of plays and not to aid the writer in building up an elaborate system of classification.

(2.XLIII:13) (3.L:3 LIII:8) (4.LIV:1) (7.LVI:3).

CHAPTER LVI

COMEDY

COMEDY bears the same relation to farce and slapstick that drama does to melodrama. It is the highest and most serious form of humorous writing and it is required that the probabilities shall be observed. Comedy may not tax belief. It must be so framed as to find ready acceptance as fact. It must be true to the general rules of life and not to the exceptional incident.

2. Comedy is the generic name for all classes of humorous writing—as well as the specific designation for the highest form. The true comedy is also known by various sub-classifications as “Society,” “Polite,” “Parlor,” “Light,” and other names which are more or less explanatory. All refer to the same general type, but a society comedy is supposed to concern fashionable personages; parlor or polite comedies are those marked by absence of the slapstick element and is comedy played with a light and graceful touch.

3. It has been said that comedy proper is the most serious form of the humorous story, but here the word serious is to be taken only in a relative sense. If the plot is serious the play is some form of drama or comedy drama. In comedy the plot itself as well as the action must be light and amusing, but light does not mean trivial but suggests rather an absence of complication and labored effort to be humorous. The story must be complete, it must be backed by idea and it must be as cunningly contrived as the most pretentious drama though the plot should not be as intricate and involved lest the attention required to follow the thread of the story will detract too materially from the action.

4. In a properly developed drama every scene has a direct and important bearing upon the advancement of the plot. The action tells the plot and so much of the plot that there is small chance for digression. In comedy the action is almost equally important with plot. Not alone must the story be amusing, but the action telling the story must also be amusing. This requires a greater footage for the introduction of the essential by-play. If the plot is so ample that the footage barely suffices for the telling of the story there will be no room for enlivening action.

5. If you will read the best humorous authors you will find that it is not the story alone but the amusing manner in which the story is told that gives you pleasure. In comedies of the stage the dialogue is as important as the plot. In photoplay action must replace words and the action itself must be amusing.

6. But action alone will not make for comedy. There was a time when the incident comedy marked the transition stage from the short length to the half reel. A scientist invented a potion that would cause persons to laugh or dance or sing or kiss each other. After the invention of the producer gave out, these various persons got together and assaulted the scientist. In another form the leading character was called Mrs. Nosey or Mr. Buttinsky and went through a succession of scenes in which interference with the affairs of others invariably resulted in disaster. In the same class were the monomania stories in which the chief character made love to everyone, fought everyone, tried to fly or to imitate a submarine.

7. When incident alone failed to be amusing, through repetition, the chase was introduced. Each victim gave pursuit until thirty to fifty persons pursued the leading character, over fences, up and down stairs, through and over all sorts of obstructions to the inevitable violent end. It was even permissible to kick a football out of the scene and make five hundred feet of film in which the football bounded through a succession of scenes with a mob of ever-increasing size in pursuit.

8. The incident story is probably gone never to return, but the short chase as the terminal to a rough comedy is by no means extinct and may be revived every few years, provided that now some more definite and plausible reason is provided for the pursuit.

9. The very inanity of these pictures brought about the demand for

a comedy with a sound idea and definite purpose, and it was through reaction from the chase that the first of the real comedies came into being. Motion pictures were beginning to appeal to persons of intelligence; the dramatic plays were gaining in plot and finish, and comedy of the true sort came into being.

10. It is human nature to laugh at the misfortune of others if the misfortune is not attended by serious results. We laugh when we see a man fall on the icy pavement. In the first place his violent efforts to keep or regain his balance are ludicrous and in addition there is a feeling of superiority in the thought that we are keeping on our feet. But if the man should break an arm or leg or fracture his skull, laughter is banished in an instant and we hasten to his aid, all concern and sympathy. We laugh at the man who slips on the ice, but it is a momentary and trivial laugh unless the fall leads to other and more lasting consequences.

11. A man falling brings a laugh that is closely akin to shock just as women laugh the loudest when on the stage men in women's clothes raise their skirts. They are not amused. A moment later they may be angered, but they are shocked by the unexpected and find relief in mechanical laughter. There is no mirth. On the other hand if the man falling on the ice leads to some other development then his fall becomes really funny *because it contributes to the plot*. If we are interested in Jack, who has just been kicked out of Mabel's house by her irate father and the latter is racing down the walk to administer one more kick, then if he steps on little Bobby's express wagon lying in the path and does a somersault, we not only laugh because his actions are amusing but because he has only his violent temper to blame and because the accident gives Jack a chance to make his escape.

12. From this example, it will be seen that a comedy action derives its main appeal through its relation to the plot. Also we perceive that it does not have to be as closely connected with the plot as dramatic action. It is not essential that the father should fall to carry on the story. He might be outdistanced or be seized with a rheumatic twinge, but he must be stopped in some manner, and the fall is more amusing to the sight than the rheumatism or the lack of speed and so that is used in preference. It would be sufficient to the plot that the father fails to catch Jack, but the more humorous and amusing the action in which the fact is told the more sprightly and acceptable does the comedy become.

13. If instead of the wagon we planned to have Mabel throw a fruit skin in her parent's path or toss a stick between his feet, tripping up the old gentleman, then the situation would be even more amusing though the fall would remain the same.

14. Writing comedy action is more an accomplishment than a gift. An author may have a keen sense of the humorous and still be unable to find expression for this humor in proper action until he has trained himself to think in comedy action. But once the trick is

gained—and it is largely a trick—the writing of comedy action becomes almost mechanical. A situation is conceived and immediately the action presents itself. The sub-conscious mind has been planning the comedy action while the active mind has been conceiving the situation, and it now responds with the proper suggestion.

15. Not every scene is required to have comedy action, but most scenes should, and it is best in all scenes longer than a mere flash to show at least one distinct comedy action or situation. Note this series of scenes:

14. *Parlor as in No. 3*—Bill making love to May—Father enters—orders him from the house—orders May to leave the room—she exits—Father follows Bill out.
15. *Front as in No. 2*—Father and Bill enter from house—Father sternly tells Bill not to come again—Bill exits.
16. *Front gate*—Bill coming down the walk—comes through gate—looks back at house—turns and walks out of scene.

This is action that tells the story. In drama it would be the proper sort of action since then it would be required only to show that Bill is forbidden the house. In drama the fact is more important than the action. In comedy the action is of equal importance with the fact. It is the purpose of comedy to make people laugh. The story must make them laugh, and the action, the way the story is told, must also make them laugh. In a drama it would be quite enough if we showed the parlor scene and had the father speak a leader. We would not be able to afford a greater footage for one fact so simple. In comedy we have less story and more footage. We can have all three of those scenes if we can make them amusing. But we must pay for the footage in laughter.

16. The way to get the laughs is to build up the action. The idea is there. The action is not amusing. It must be elaborated. Try this:

14. *Parlor as in No. 3*—Bill and May on, spooning—he starts to kiss her just as Father appears in doorway—May has her mouth puckered for the kiss, but it does not land—Bill keeps on turning his head to see Father watching—Father comes down, waving cane—May rouses—Bill goes over the back of the sofa—only his head shows above—Father slashes at Bill's head—Bill ducks—Father gets down on knees—pokes under sofa with cane—Bill climbs back over the top—slips—falls on Father—May picks Father up—pleads with him—he throws her from him—she falls into Bill's arms—he kisses her—Father strikes at him—drags May from him—May turns her head for another kiss—Father lets go of her and grabs Bill by the neck—leads him out—May follows—weeping.
15. *Front of house as in No. 2*—Father enters from house with Bill—places him for a kick—as he is about to swing May comes from house with Bill's hat—grabs Father's coat tails—pulls him back as he kicks—kick falls short—Father falls—May tosses Bill his hat—he throws her a kiss—out of scene—Father up and follows—May follows him—
16. *Front gate—gate closed*—Bill running down walk—Father and

May in pursuit—Bill jumps over gate—Father runs into it—loses his wind—collapses, hanging on to gate—Bill kisses May over fence—tips hat to Father—exits.

This is almost farcical action, but it is purposely exaggerated a trifle to mark the contrast between this and the straight action, and it is action not much more marked than that which is permissible in comedy.

17. It should be noted that this does not read humorously. If you had to read half a dozen pages you might never even smile. Most Editors of experience are afraid of the story that makes them laugh as they read the action. They know that the story that reads well does not play well because the author has given his attention to expression in words and not in action and the action suffers. This is the chief essential in writing comedy. Remember always that your *story* must be funny and your *action* must be funny, but that the *words* in which the action is set forth should be the plainest and simplest that you can tell the action in. You cannot take five lines to tell what a famous football player Father was and tell how scared Bill is. You say that Father enters. That is all. If Father was a famous football player and you think that it will help to make capital of that fact, prepare for this scene by showing in actual scene or vision that he was a star half-back. Then if Bill is scared his reason will be plain, but if you merely write in the action that Bill is scared because he knows that Father is a gridiron star it will not help the action any, for only the Editor will see it and he will know that the audience will not know and so he will not value your clever phrase.

18. If you want to make capital of the fact, you must first show the fact to your audience and then use the suggestion. You must make a deposit before you can write checks against it. Perhaps in some early scene you see a couple of boys playing with a football. Father comes along and tells how he used to punt. He kicks the ball out of the scene, you cut in a picture of the ball going over the top of the house, you come back to Father and he remarks that he used to do better than that. If Jack happens to be passing and sees, then when Father appears in the doorway, a flash of the kick will bring back the scene and now you will be able to make capital of the thought. It is not probable that the laugh you will get will repay the trouble you cause, but it is the way you should do it if you want the audiences to know. You cannot merely write it in the action to make it sound funnier to the Editor. He will know better. Probably when he was not so old in the business he bought a couple of scripts just because they read well and has been regretting it ever since.

19. Next to the action the cut-in is perhaps the most useful aid to comedy. At times a leader seems to crystalize a laugh. A scene is funny, but not quite funny enough to bring a laugh. The audience is amused and quite willing to laugh, but there seems to be nothing to pin the laugh to. The action is all diverting, they are ready and

even eager to laugh, but do not know just when to start. A slightly more pronounced action may start the laugh, or a leader may connect the idea with the action to either bring the laugh or to strengthen the laugh already started.

20. In Chapter XXXIX there may be no laugh or only a small one when the girl drops ice cream on Jim's coat. The cut-in leader to the effect that he does not mind, because it is a borrowed coat, will connect the thought with the action and not only gain a strong laugh but pave the way for a still stronger laugh a moment later when the girl repeats the performance. It is only human to dance when another pays the fiddler and Jim's calm acceptance of the damage done Bill's coat will bring the laugh if we know that it is Bill's and not Jim's coat. We do know, but the reminder at this precise instant will precipitate the laugh.

21. These leaders must be written with the utmost care. It is not sufficient merely to say something. What is said must be the sentence that will most briefly and most forcefully remind the spectator of the fact. The use of slang, sayings of the street and the like are to be avoided, not only on account of the foreign trade, as already explained, but because the life of a film is apt to exceed in length the newness of a current phrase. No matter how aptly it may apply, do not use it. You will see this rule constantly violated upon the screen, but that is no reason why you should also offend. If you need a smart phrase get one of your own.

22. Straight leaders between scenes should be limited to fact and time leaders. Here the anticipated action is even more apt to lose value than in drama. If, in the foregoing example, you had written "Jim tells Grace he doesn't care what she does to Bill's coat," the surprise would be gone. All that would remain would be the question of just what she did to the coat, not the question of what the scene would bring forth.

23. Scenes in comedy should be brief. Any scene too long continued becomes tiresome; a fact sometimes utilized in drama to gain intensity. In comedy intensity is not required. It is better to get your laugh, go to another scene and come back to the first one if necessary. It is better to cut a long scene into two or more parts and have short, snappy scenes. It not only individualizes the laughs, but it makes for the suggestion of speed.

24. It is this fact which has led to the fiction that all comedies should contain about a hundred scenes. Having heard this statement made repeatedly and without qualification of any kind, the novice is too apt to suppose that one hundred regular scenes are meant and he gets two or more reels of action, mostly padding.

25. Even studio men doing special writing for one particular director seldom, if ever, turn out one reel with a hundred scenes. They are more apt to write sixty to seventy scenes and permit the director to make the rest of the cut-backs on his joining slip. If you cannot cut-back skillfully use fewer scenes still. The director then can get a

clearer idea of your action and use his own better judgment as to where to cut back on the action as it shows.

26. Comedy should be good natured. It should also be wholesome. Death and the suggestion of death should be avoided on the screen, though comedies have even shown men digging themselves out of their graves after having been buried alive. Good comedies—that is to say, funny stories—may be written about death or the trappings of death, but even the ghostly undertaker and the crape placed on the wrong doorknob sometimes react. There are so many other and more cheerful themes that it will pay you to avoid any suggestion of death. There is a steady run of unbought scripts patterned after the scene in *Con the Shaughraun* in which Con participates in his own wake. Write yours, if you will, but for the sake of your reputation, do not try to sell it.

27. Ministers are not humorous as a class, and many persons will resent disrespect to the cloth. You may have little reverence yourself, but commercial common sense should urge the omission of ministers from your comedy material. Ministers should be used only for marriages and then should not be exploited. On the other hand the hypocritical deacon is a sometimes amusing but always a sadly overworked figure.

28. In comedy, particularly, it is necessary to avoid giving offense to any particular class, race, creed or party. Do not assail any tenet of any faith or any general belief. There may be humor to you in much that others hold sacred and you must remember that you are trying to amuse the world and not merely yourself and the Editor. You may write a stage drama that may be shown in the United States alone or perhaps here and in England, but your screen play will circle the world. To you as to many others, the Chinaman may be a "Chink," a Mexican a "Greaser," a Frenchman a "Frog," an Italian a "Dago," but if your films are to be offered for sale in those countries you must not give offense to its peoples. You may use them, but you may not caricature them.

29. Many persons find a drunken man supremely funny. Many others see only the tragedy. Handle it discreetly or better still, avoid it. You may see humor in a harelip or bowed legs. In many families some bodily affliction is a domestic tragedy they try to forget when they come to the theatre. There are plenty of opportunities for good-natured comedy and you are not required to become ill-humored.

30. Avoid racial peculiarities. Shylock is permitted in Shakespeare, where the "comedy Jew" is offensive to others than the race slandered, and it should be remembered that Shylock was not shown as a type of usurer and swindler, but as a man, proud of his race, who sought, through his exactions, to obtain revenge on a defamer of his people. It is not as a lender of money at usurious rates that he is pictured. He seeks not money but the right, apparently given him in his bond, to take the life of the man who has aroused his hatred.

31. In the best type of comedy you laugh with rather than at peo-

ple. In the lesser and ill-natured type you laugh at and not with. You laugh with your hero because he outwits a man who seeks to swindle him. You laugh at the swindler, but he is a person who is undeserving of sympathy. On the other hand if you laugh with the swindler at his triumph over his victim, then the laugh is not as sincere and the pleasure you derive from the play is less lasting.

32. In comedy things that happen must have a reason. If you wish to remove a character from the scene by means of the grappling anchor of a balloon, you must account for the balloon and explain why it has its anchor out. You cannot merely show a character whisked to the clouds, you must account for the balloon and prepare your spectator if you wish your story to rise above the mental level of the harlequinade.

33. In doing so you may spoil your surprise, but in comedy, even more than in drama, the value of the momentary shock of surprise is less effective as a rule than previous knowledge and preparation that bring anticipation. Suppose that your leading eccentric character, Griggs, takes a woman to dinner at an expensive restaurant. They order a costly dinner, at the end of which Griggs finds he has no money. If this fact comes at the end of the dinner, then there is one short, sharp laugh. If we know all along, though Griggs does not, we get a constantly broadening smile that culminates in a roar of laughter. Griggs orders an elaborate dinner. We chuckle. We know that he cannot pay. The woman adds to the order. This is good for a second laugh. A bottle of wine is brought. There goes another item on the already long bill. Griggs becomes expansive. We laugh still more. Presently that inflated chest will be reduced most effectually. So it keeps up until the check is brought and now the moment we see the check we roar. We do not have to wait to see Griggs vainly search his pockets before the laugh comes. We start laughing when the bill is brought and all that follows merely adds to the laugh.

34. There are exceptions, of course, but these are so few that the best general rule to follow is to keep the spectator advised and the players in ignorance. We see an old man making love to a young girl, who has promised to marry him under parental pressure. We see him persuade her to an elopement. She gets into the car, heavily veiled. They search out a minister and are married. He raises the veil. It is the girl's maiden aunt. Every point made is good for a laugh if we know the facts. Seemingly unimportant actions such as kissing her hand or giving an enthusiastic hug will bring a laugh. If we can cut back to the girl going in an opposite direction, that too will be good for laughs, but if we must endure perhaps fifty feet of tame action for the sake of the surprise when the veil is lifted then forty-five feet of that footage are utterly wasted. We cannot go back and remember that he kissed her hand in scene thirty-nine and hugged her in forty. The story is going ahead. If we turn back it will get beyond us, but if we know in advance that it is the

aunt and not the niece, then every action will have an immediate result in laughter.

35. Care should be taken to select a plot that is clear and easily followed. Complication is to be avoided even in drama, but in comedy it is fatal to get the story too confusing. If you grow too ambitious and seek to tell a story with half a dozen complications, then the mind of the spectator will be given to the plot to the exclusion of the action or to the action to the detriment of the plot.

36. For illustration suppose that your story concerns one John Smith and five women who are all married to various other men with the same name. Here you must identify and remember each of these five women and connect her with the plot. Each time one enters she must be recalled. In keeping track of the five women we lose track of the story and so lose interest in the women, too. But take the story of a man who borrows a wife and unknowingly gets five, it does not matter which is which; they can come and go as the author pleases without confusion to the plot, which is merely that the man has been supplied with too many borrowed wives.

37. One story was written about a man who had three doubles, each with an individuality of his own. The story was so complicated that it was fatiguing to follow. With a dozen doubles, acting as a mob, there was no trouble at all, for the doubles were then a part of the whole and did not have to be identified individually.

38. To give a two-edged rule you must have more action because you have less plot and less plot because you have more action. You must have sufficient plot to fully motivate your action, but you must keep it simple and direct, because the spectator would prefer to follow action to following plot.

(3.LV:7) (4.XXXIII:11) (11.LVII:13) (15.LVII:6 & 16) (19. XXXVII:37) (20.XXXIX:22) (22.XXXVII:19) (25.XXXIV:6 XXXIX:10) (26.XX:15 L:13) (28.XX:14) (33.XXV:19 XXXIX:22 LVII:8) (35.XLIV:5).

CHAPTER LVII

FARCE AND SLAPSTICK

FARCE is that form of comedy in which the desire to amuse rises superior to strict probability. In comedy you are required to adhere with reasonable exactness to the realities of life. Your story must be accepted as a humorous but fairly correct presentation of life. In farce exaggeration is permissible if there is a return in added humor. We cannot, for example, accept as true to life the man-chasing old maid with corkscrew curls. It is conceded that there may be ladies, both young and old, who will slightly exceed the bounds of strict decorum in their search for a husband, but

in real life the determined woman who grabs a man and literally drags him off to the altar does not exist. She is more subtle in her methods. In a light comedy such a type would not be accepted. In farce she is a time-honored standby. In comedy she is tactical rather than tackling. In farce she may follow the football method.

2. It is an accepted rule in writing plays of any sort that the business must match the type of plot. You will not play drama with the slight exaggeration of melodrama, so in comedy you follow natural action and in farce emphasize it in a degree to suit the emphasis of the plot.

3. Farce is frankly created to induce laughter and not to represent life with strict fidelity. You are not required to believe the story so long as you laugh at it; indeed you are supposed to derive a part of your enjoyment from this emphasis just as you are amused and not disgusted with the impossible fables ascribed to the Baron Munchausen. You do not for a moment believe the tales of Munchausen. You love him for the ingenious liar that he shows himself to be.

4. But it must be understood that this latitude must not lead to the play that is merely silly or untrue. Your ingenuity must excuse your departure from the truth. It is not the extravagance alone but the cleverness of the extravagance that has preserved the Munchausen tales as a classic where so many clumsy imitations have been completely forgotten. Just because you distort you must be unusually careful to be clever. Part of the appeal of the story must come from the skill with which you transform fact and give it another semblance.

5. Farce must be as intelligently written as comedy. The more foolish you become, the more careful you must be not to become a fool. You must offer a well planned plot, develop your theme with unusual care and seemingly be unconscious of the fact that you are writing caricature and not fact. The chief difference is that where you state your comedy factors in straight terms you enlarge upon your farcical facts. In comedy you say that your maiden lady is anxious to find a spouse. In farce you say, instead, that she is determined to catch a husband. The action follows the same general lines, but where your comedy character will exercise all her fancied arts of coquetry, the farcical lady employs main strength and brute force. In comedy a man runs out of a house and down a short flight of steps. In farce he is kicked through the door and thrown down the steps, but there must be found a good reason for the ejection. This is the saving clause that keeps farce foolery and not plain foolishness.

6. Slapstick is merely the highest development or extension of farce. In farce a man is kicked through a door and thrown down the steps. In slapstick the man who throws him out falls down after him and perhaps they overturn another person coming up. If there is no one to throw the man down the steps, then he trips and falls anyway. If the ejector does not fall down the steps after the victim, then the

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latter picks himself up and throws a rock at him. If the man dodges and it hits someone else, it is even funnier. In comedy you laugh most at what is least expected. If you are led to expect one thing and get all ready to laugh at that and something else happens you reach the climax of surprise. We see John kicked down the steps by Maud's father. We laugh. John gets up and throws a rock at the old man. We laugh again. But if John throws the rock at the old man and he dodges and the stone hits a third person, perhaps the elderly rival for Maud's hand, it is still more funny. Then if the rival falls against the father and both fall down the steps, upsetting John, you come close to reaching the heights of slapstick.

7. But no matter how rapid the developments, they should be properly spaced. This is more a matter of direction than of writing, but a little may be done by the author to suggest the delay and coax the director. If John is rushed out of the house and kicked down the steps it will come too quickly. Bring John out of the house. Wait a second and a half before he is kicked down the steps. Then wait half a second before he throws the stone. Let the spectator see that he is going to throw the stone, and then let him see the stone thrown. Give the spectator time to sense what is coming and he will laugh all the harder. Many directors will not wait, in slapstick. It seems almost unbelievable that they should know so little of their art, but they seem to think that in slapstick the more rapidly they work the funnier the business is.

8. As a factor in comedy anticipation is just as important in the *scene* as in the *plot*. You begin to laugh at the kink in the plot when you first suspect it is coming. You laugh the harder if something else comes instead. In the single scene you laugh when John is placed for the kick. You laugh more when the father swings. Then you laugh even more if Father misses and himself falls down, but you must tease your spectator even in fast moving slapstick.

9. This does not mean that you can take a couple of minutes to play a scene, but just as you must have an interval between your crises so must you space your business that each point may register. You do not write:

14. *Piazza*—Father kicks Jack out of house and down steps—Jack throws a rock at Father—Father falls—Jack runs.

This conveys the essentials, but it will not be as funny as a scene written and played in this manner:

14. *Piazza*—Father brings Jack out—places him at head of steps—kicks Jack down steps—Jack gets up—picks up a rock—aims at Father—Father yells—tries to dodge—Jack threatens—throws rock—hits Father—Father drops—Jack out.

Here there is no more essential business, but the two slight delays in placing Jack at the head of the stairs and the aiming with the rock will warn the spectator to get ready to laugh and he will laugh when

the thing happens and not a moment or two afterward. It is possible to fill a scene so full of business that none of it will be funny.

10. To take a concrete example: A slapstick farce was written around a policeman discovered in a saloon by his superior officer. The Chief did not get a good look at the patrolman, but he did land his fist on the man's eye and told the bartender he would identify him by the eye when the men came off beat. The officer tells his wife and with ready wit she blacks the eyes of the entire platoon. When they come off duty identification is not possible. In an effort to speed up the story, the scenes were played so rapidly and with such a dearth of business that they passed too quickly. The wife would swing into a scene, black an eye and pass on before the spectator could mentally remark that here was another victim and that presently he would get his share. Before the spectator had time to start to think the scene was over. As a result, the story failed because there was no time permitted the spectator in which to let the idea sink in.

11. This is true of all farcical and slapstick work. If a blow is given or a fall executed without due warning, then there is danger that it will pass unnoticed or be noticed so late that the spectator is not yet prepared to laugh. The interval of preparation may sometimes be measured in fractional parts of a second, but the author should provide this warning, however brief it may be.

12. Perhaps you have seen in the vaudeville theatres some illustration of this. Two comedians are on the stage. An effeminate young man comes in. If one comedian immediately grabs him and throws him off the stage again there is a laugh and the audience is ready for the next happening. Instead of this the comedians work the scene up. One man wants to tear the dude to pieces. The other seeks to prevent him. Half a dozen times the comedian may make a lunge, to be caught and held back by the other. When the attack does come it is far more striking through this preparation.

13. Much laughter is based upon shock, as has been said above. In some forms the appeal may fall, but in others shock may carry the laughter because of the audacity or unexpectedness of the act. This is in harmony with the fact that if you lead an audience to expect one denouement and provide another the surprise will increase the laughter. A small man attacks a larger and seemingly more powerful person. We expect to see him badly thrashed. Instead he proves the victor and puts his burly antagonist to flight. The audacity of the action and the unexpectedness of the result make the scene far more amusing than did it run to the anticipated end. We know better than to strike a man our physical superior. We are amused at the effrontery of this foolish person who does what we know we would not do. When he carries off the honors of the field surprise intensifies an existing laugh. It does not have to overcome inertia and start a laugh. The momentum is there and all the force of the new factor is applied to increasing the power. It is comparatively easy for the average man to draw, unaided, a fairly heavy wagon once it is put in

motion, but it may require assistance to get the vehicle started. It is the same way in getting laughs. Get them started and it is comparatively simple to intensify the laughter. To this end it is better to use anticipation to get the laugh started and realization or surprise to complete and amplify the laugh. If this is thoroughly understood it is comparatively simple to write comedy if you have the necessary sense of humor.

14. There seems to be a fairly regular movement from comedy to slapstick with a quick return to comedy. Most veteran theatrical managers know that amusement affairs go in cycles, and this is very true of comedy. Starting with light comedy of high standard or farce of a polite type, directors slowly incline to slapstick. One, more daring than the rest, comes out with the old-fashioned slapstick and takes the lead. All other makers seek to follow suit and each tries to outdo the others. Presently slapstick has been so sadly abused that all sense of humor and decency is lost. There is a reaction that results in a sharp return to the high ideals and then a gradual return toward slapstick. One or two companies hold to slapstick because they realize that good slapstick, the sort with a fairly good reason, will always find a market. They keep within certain limits of restraint and make steady sales.

15. Slapstick takes its name from the actual slapstick, which is a pair of boards separated at one end by a small block. When one of the flat sides is brought into contact with a comedian's anatomy, the other side clashes against the first, resulting in a maximum of noise with a minimum of hurt. The former almost universal use of this device by stage comedians given to knockabout work made it almost a trade mark for that crude form of humor, and so the term slapstick has almost completely replaced the more definite and correct "knockabout" as the designation of this form of rough humor, but a use of the proper term will provide a better definition of this form of play, since the actual slapstick is seldom employed in photoplay and many students are at a loss to account for the term, where knockabout would be fully self-explanatory and is the proper technical term of the stage.

16. There are different degrees of comedy, of farce and of knockabout. It may be interesting once more to take the scene already used and in a succession of developments advance from light comedy to an extreme of knockabout.

14. *Piazza*—Dodds brings Jack out—they argue for a moment—Dodds drives Jack away.
14. *Piazza*—Dodds brings Jack out—they argue—Jack shakes his fist at Dodds—Dodds pushes him off the steps—Jack picks himself up—exits.
14. *Piazza*—Dodds runs Jack out of house—gets him set—kicks him off step—Jack gets up—exits.
14. *Piazza*—Dodds runs Jack out of house—places him for a kick—kicks at him—misses—falls—in falling pushes Jack off of steps—both get up—Jack picks up rock—threatens Dodds—throws—hits—Dodds falls—Jack runs off.

14. *Piazza*—Dodds runs Jack out of house—places him for kick—kicks at him—falls—falls against Jack—both fall down steps—get up—Dodds up steps—Jack picks up rock—aims at him—throws—Dodds dodges—rock hits Jared, who is entering from house—Jared falls.
14. *Piazza*—Dodds runs Jack out of house—places him for kick—swings—misses—falls—falls against Jack—both roll down steps—both up—Dodds up steps—Jack picks up a rock—aims at Dodds—throws—hits Jared, who is entering from house—Jared falls against Dodds—both fall down steps—roll into Jack, who falls—Dodds and Jared fight—Jack exits.
14. *Piazza*—Dodds runs Jack from house—places him for a kick—aims—misses—falls against Jack—both roll down steps—get up—Dodds up steps—Jack picks up a rock—aims at Dodds—fires—misses—hits Jared, who is just entering from house—they roll down steps—upset Jack—Dodds and Jared fight—May enters from house—Jack runs up steps for a last kiss—starts down—stumbles—falls—rolls into Dodds and Jared—exits.
14. *Piazza*—Dodds runs Jack from house—places him for a kick—aims—May runs from house—carries Jack's hat—sees Dodds—bangs him over head with hat—he misses—stumbles against Jack—both fall down steps—up—Dodds up steps—Jack picks up rock—Dodds uses May for shield—Jack fires—Dodds ducks—rock hits Jared, who is entering from house—he falls forward against Dodds—both roll down steps—upset Jack—Jack up—Dodds and Jared fight on ground—Jack runs up steps—gets battered hat—kisses May—Dodds and Jared rise—start up steps to stop him—Jack turns to run—slips—falls—rolls down steps—upsets Dodds and Jared—they fall—roll down—all up—Dodds and Jared on either side of Jack—aim blows at him—Jack ducks—Jared and Dodds hit each other—they clinch—fight—start to struggle up—Jack picks up pair of tricked flower pots from steps—hits them on head—they fall back unconscious—Jack picks up his battered hat—tips it to May—throws her a kiss—stoops—picks up the flowers that were in the pots—laughs—lays them on the breasts of Dodds and Jared—exits.

In these eight developments the main idea is the same. Jack is thrown from the house. The rest is all extraneous business, but so long as it is lively and all a part of the same laugh it is permissible to continue the scene, although the last development runs the scene about as long as is possible in knockabout. Had there been a clear division of the action into two or more parts, then it would have been advisable to have made this into two or more scenes, for it is best to work on the one-scene-one-laugh principle though permissible to build up the laugh as long as more laughter can be gained.

17. In the first of these scenes Jack is merely driven off. That is light comedy. In the second he is pushed off the steps. That is low comedy. It might be done by anybody at any time in the heat of anger. The probabilities are preserved. It is comedy. By the fourth development the probabilities have been stressed to the point of farcicality and from there the change to knockabout is rapid.

18. Comedy is easy to handle if you have a real and not a perverted sense of humor, but it must be told in comedy action if it is to be amusing. Moreover the action must directly concern the plot and

not be extraneous matter brought in merely to make the action more amusing. This is a point wherein so many beginners err. They think that they can put anything into a farce and it will be accepted. It will not be acceptable unless it is action that seems naturally to arise from the story. If this is held in mind it will be more simple to write even knockabout that is at least not stupidly irritating.

(6.LVI:15) (7.XLIII:11) (8.XXV:19 LVI:33) (13.LVI:11).

CHAPTER LVIII

MULTIPLE REELS

WHEN the second edition of this book was going to press, the two part story was just coming into fashion and it was then possible only to offer a resume of the studio practice without suggesting any definite form. Almost every studio was working on the form of the double reel and there was no uniformity of usage. Today the fads have been tried out and discarded and Editors and directors sanely regard the multiple reel story as one which differs from the one reel merely in the matter of length, which in turn affects questions of tempo and plot to some degree.

2. On the part of authors, however, there still seems to be a tendency to regard the multiple reel as something quite apart from the short length story. Some even have written to express the hope that in the next edition there would be many more chapters devoted to the multiple. There is not a line in the second, third and fourth parts of the current volume that is not as applicable to the multiple as to the single reel, and it is not necessary in this chapter to do more than point out the minor differences between the single and multiple reel story.

3. A multiple reel story is no more than a story requiring two or more parts (or acts) for its telling. It is merely a story in two or three or four or more thousand feet instead of a story limited to a single thousand foot length. It is probable, however, that through the long story will eventually come the natural length story; the story that may run twelve hundred or twenty-three hundred and fifty, or four thousand eight hundred feet as the story falls. Already there is shown a disposition to disregard the thousand foot yardstick and to let them run as they will, within reason.

4. Multiple reel stories are no more than stories longer than the one reel length, but it must be remembered that in fiction the short story and the novel and novelette offer slight differences in technique and that the one act play differs from that intended to run an entire evening. If you have a short story, condensation is the first requirement. If you have a one act play it should contain as much

plot as might go into an act an hour long. If you have a one reel story you must get plenty of plot into small compass. If you write a full play, or a story in sixty thousand words, you do not write twelve times as much plot as you would for a five thousand word story or give six times as much plot to the three hour play as you assign to the half hour playlet. You must have more plot, but you do not need quite five times as much plot for a five reel story as you do for a one reel play. Here you have not the same need for condensation. You are not required to complete your story in fifteen minutes. You may approach the climax more leisurely provided that you offer something else to replace the lessened plot-speed.

5. Perhaps it may mislead the student to say that not as much plot is required. It is true, but true with qualifications. You have only to look at current productions to discover many five reel stories that would be excellent in three reels, but which tire in five. This is because a three reel plot has been stretched to five reels and nothing has been supplied to take the place of the missing two reels of plot. A five reel story is not merely a film five thousand feet long. It is a story that must be capable of maintaining the interest *in an ever-increasing degree* throughout its entire length. You cannot hold interest with padding; you must hold it with plot and plot action.

6. If you will differentiate between plot and plot-action, the action that tells the plot, you will find that while the plot of the five reel story does not require to be five times as great as the plot of a one reel story, you must have more than five times as much plot-action. More than this, you must have a plot more than five times as big *in thought* if you will hold the interest for the entire period.

7. All of this may seem to be contradictory and confusing. You are told you may make a more leisurely approach to your climax and then you are told you must increase your plot-action. You are advised that the plot need not be five times the quantity of the one reel plot and then are told that it should be more than five times as important. You are told that you need less plot and yet more plot-action.

8. In the first place, suppose that we dissect a one reel story. This will run fifteen minutes. You find that the first five minutes are taken up with getting over the premises and getting rid of the introductions and explanations. In the next five minutes you advance the action that leads you to the climax. In the next three you work up to that climax and in two minutes more you are done. The net result is that Nellie did not run away with Robert because she realizes that Henry, her husband, is by far the better man of the two, though his fine qualities lie in his heart and not on the surface as do Robert's superficial graces. Both men are physicians. An epidemic of smallpox breaks out in a poor quarter of the town. Henry kisses his wife and goes to do his duty. Robert begs her to advance the day set for the elopement lest he be forced to his place of duty in the pesthouse. In the contrast between the two men Nellie realizes

the greater worth of the quiet man whose value she has never learned before.

9. This, if told with the proper care for detail, will be plot enough for a one reel story. It will not be plot enough for a two reel story if the interest is to be sustained. You will have the same five minute presentation of the premise and explanation. You will have the same two minute climax, the approach may now run five instead of three minutes, but you will have ten or twelve minutes of delayed and delaying action before you arrive at the same point you should have reached at the end of the first fifteen minute reel. You have twice as much action to the same plot. You may have been a trifle crowded in a thousand feet. You have altogether too much room in twice the footage. You cannot fill it with interesting action. You cannot approach your climax with the same *relative* speed and keep your action fast enough to hold the interest. You must build up the interest with more plot. You must build up the action with more action. You have a plot you can build on. You do not need another plot as long as the first. You build the original plot up by making it so much more important that it is *more* than twice as *important* as it was before, but it is not twice as *long* as it was before.

10. To do this perhaps you use the abandoned elopement as the end of the first reel. You merely carry on the story. Robert goes away alone. Henry, with double duty to perform, becomes ill. Nellie comes to the pesthouse and takes her place by his side. He cannot be permitted to break down. The plague is checked and Henry is acclaimed the hero of the hour. Nellie finds him a far greater man than Robert could ever be. You have another thousand feet of action, the added plot is not enough for a thousand feet by itself, but, added to what you already have, it will hold the interest for the additional reel. To go three reels you simply add still more plot. Perhaps Robert is brought to the place suffering from the disease he has sought to escape. Henry pulls him through. He makes it plain to Nellie that he knows of the affair and that he has saved Robert for her. She replies that she wants him (Henry). He explains that he knew of the affair and for her sake he did not vaccinate himself and that he has himself caught the disease. Now she nurses him back to health, and at the point of a revolver forces the timid Robert to remain and give the proper medical care.

11. Each time you add to the footage, you must add to the plot sufficient plot material to give you the required thousand feet of plot action, but you can draw upon material already present for strength for the added plot factors. Just as you take the bare idea for a one reel plot and build it up by adding factors, so you build past the one reel plot to the two or more reels you require, but while you may not require twice as many factors as in the one reel plot to fill the two reels with plot action, it is required that this added material must make your story slightly more than twice as interesting, if your story is to run two reels and that for a five reel story the interest in

the plot must be from six to ten times as great as the interest in the one reel plot, though the plot is not necessarily five times as long.

12. The longer your play is to run, the greater must be your interest. Your interest must grow upon what it feeds. It has been shown in other chapters that your play outline must show an irregular outline of alternating crises and falling action. You have been told that each crisis is represented by a peak higher than the preceding ones and growing relatively higher as the climax is approached. It follows that if you continue this diagram past your first reel, this gradual increase in the force of the crises will constantly require greater importance of plot, since the crises draw their interest from the fact that they are developments in the plot. To approach the climax of a five reel play with the same velocity as that with which you ascend toward the one reel plot would result in a series of crises in the fifth reel that would tax the skill of the most practical and experienced writers, but as the novelist more slowly approaches his climax and the dramatist exposes his plot more slowly in the long play, so it is proper, in photoplay, to preserve the same *relative* outline in your plot diagram *but to draw this diagram at a less acute angle*. You write with the same degree of interest, but not with the same degree of intensity.

13. Just as in the one reel play your action runs in a succession of crisis, so must your five reel story, and in the best planned stories four leading crises should end the first four parts, leaving the last reel for the catastrophe, the climax and what falling action you may have. If the end of your first reel is a crisis that is now of equal value with the climax of a one reel story, then your pace is too fast. You cannot maintain it for the distance. But note that in the example above, the crisis at the end of the first reel is practically the same as that which forms the climax of the one reel story, but now the point aimed at is not the elopement. In the face of the stronger material the frustrated elopement no longer has the same strength because it is not the end of the play, but merely the terminal of one period of action. It is no longer the story of the elopement, but the elopement is merely the crisis that leads Nellie to take her place beside her husband in the hospital. The physical action is the same, but it has been shown that action gains its value from the idea of the plot, and now the elopement has become merely the prefatory matter to the later development and so no longer has a climax valuation. It is merely a stopping point in the story and not the terminal, the journey's end.

14. Each part of the story, if possible, should end on an acute crisis; upon a rising and not a falling action, that interest may be carried to the next part, just as each act in a stage play ends with a crisis that is intended to hold the interest of the spectator during the entr'acte. This is not so important where the five reels are run as a unit, but many houses run on a single machine and here the reels must be changed on the one machine, necessitating a stop, and

it is well to stop at a point where interest may be held through unsatisfied curiosity just as the "To be continued in our next" always falls at the seemingly most irritating point. At first it may be difficult to plan the crises that this may happen, but it can be done with a little practice, just as the fiction writer, knowing the divisions into which his serial will be divided, himself plans the action so that these interruptions will come at the most important and interesting places in the story.

15. As a rule the end of the first part should end with a crisis but slightly less interesting than the climax of a one reel play, and each succeeding part should end on a climax of considerably greater value than the previous ones. This should not be difficult since you can draw from the existing crises for strength, but it is not altogether a simple matter to lay out the five reel story properly, and yet, unless you can do so, it is useless and wasteful in time. It is not sufficient merely to write five thousand feet of action. You must write five reels of constantly increasing interest, and each reel must move more quickly than the one before to a crisis of even greater interest than the last.

16. The reason for this is simply explained. The film story presents neither sound nor color. Action and action alone is its sole excuse as well as its chief charm. But action that is not constantly accelerated is apt to grow monotonous, and the longer it continues the more intolerable does the condition become. This is not materially different from the condition already noted wherein a scene too long continued becomes tiresome. There can be no retrogression, there must be progression, for a condition that does not advance but remains at the same level is retrogression. The story must grow in interest with each succeeding reel if the attention of the spectator is to be held and his approval gained.

17. It is for this reason that a photoplay is seldom offered in more than five or six reels. There are exceptions, but even here the mere fact that a play is in ten or twelve reels does not make it a play that is as interesting in that length, and one of the first of these, a production of "Les Miserables," in thirteen reels was cut from thirteen to nine and then to six with increasing benefit. For that matter a majority of the plays shown in five reels would give greater pleasure if shown in three or four. The chief charm of the photoplay is the rapidity with which facts may be presented through the absence of dialogue or printed description. The stage play running three hours can be condensed to a half-hour, two part story and still present in action much that is told on the stage in description. An entire novel may be presented in three or four parts. If longer time is taken it is merely that the action may be stretched out to cover the additional footage. If there could be established a board of censors to require that films should be released in relatively proper footage there would be fewer five reel releases and larger audiences in the theatres. If you write five reel stories, write five reels of plot action

and not three reels of plot action and two thousand feet of padding.

18. It is permissible—indeed, required—to be a little slow in starting the story. Facts may be more carefully explained and in a five reel story a considerable portion of the first reel may be given over to explanation shown in properly vivid action. But once the story is started it must be kept going and at a constantly increasing speed, but plan the layout of your plot in advance that you may know just how rapidly the action is to be accelerated.

19. Take your plot and examine it closely. Decide into how many parts it may be divided. Since you cannot accurately determine footage, you must be guided in this by experience and seek, through the manner in which you divide the story, to induce the director to follow your lead. Now plan that at the end of each part you can end on an important crisis, perhaps a trifle more important than those that will immediately follow, for just as in building your crises you drop back from one crisis before approaching the next, you may also drop back slightly with the start of each new reel, though this drop must not be so marked as to be clearly perceptible. The falling action in the second part of your story must not fall below the seven hundredth foot of the first reel and this general proportion holds good until the last reel of a four or five part play, when the opening of the last reel is little, if any, below the end of the preceding reel. This may require a little rearrangement of the original plot, but when you have gained a mastery of plotting you will be surprised to find it flexible and yielding if properly treated.

20. In writing the multiple there is a tendency to overdo the use of visions and effects. This holds particularly true of visions. Presumably the multiple reel will cover a longer period of time than the single. It is to be supposed that this will result in a greater number of time jumps to be established by means of time leaders. Also to present in the first reel material that is really not needed until the third or fourth will clog the opening with a mass of material that will not interest because its relationship is not yet apparent and cannot be made apparent without undue explanation and perhaps an exposure of plot factors you are not yet ready to present. All of this may be excellent argument, yet it does not in the slightest degree controvert the fact that a long play so sprinkled with visions as to disturb the spectator's appreciation of time is not a good play, no matter how good the plot, as such, may be. It is granted that it is sometimes necessary and important to vision back, but this should not be done to cover errors of omission or for purely pictorial effect. Light and other effects, used in moderation, may help the visual aspect of the pictures. They will not aid the plot nor cover up its defects.

21. Passing from the theory to the practice of writing the multiple, it should be said that since the multiple is no more than a single long story it should be treated as such and not as parts. Your story is written as a whole and not in parts. If you have a three part story you do not have three manuscripts, but one manuscript divided into

three parts merely by a division into parts as the chapters in a book are written to mark the various divisions. If your three parts total two hundred and twenty-eight scenes, your first scene is numbered one and your last two twenty-eight. You do not start each part with a scene one, but number straight through from the first scene in part one to the last scene in the last reel. You do not make out three casts nor three scene plots, and your synopsis covers your entire story. In a one reel synopsis you are permitted about two hundred and fifty words. In two reels you may have more, but you should not need five hundred words for two reels nor a thousand for a four reel script.

22. In writing the action, when you come to the end of a part you type a line about twenty spaces long under that part. You turn up two or three spaces and write "Part Two," or whatever the number of the part may be. Then you take the next higher scene number, and write the first scene in this part. You do not need to take a fresh sheet on which to start a new part, for your script will be handled as a whole and not in sections.

23. In the longer stories, those in four or more reels, you are not required to submit a plot of action; indeed, it is seldom advisable, as the matter stands, since it is almost impossible to so exactly suit the needs of a company that changes are not required. It is easier to change on the synopsis than to alter the entire run of action as written.

24. Where the synopsis alone is offered it should be double spaced and should ignore the word limit and run as full as is necessary in order to tell the action briefly but fully. If you can put it into the two hundred and fifty words per reel and make it perfectly plain, do so, but if you need nine hundred words in which to tell one reel, then take your nine hundred words per reel, for now the Editor cannot turn to the script of action to learn the minor details.

25. If the synopsis alone is taken, you are apt to receive not more than a third of the price that you would be given for the full plot. For this and other reasons it is well to place on the front page of your manuscript, preferably just below the title, a request that you be permitted to make the continuity of the story. A good form of request would be:

The Lure of Love
A five part story

In the event that this story, with changes, should meet with your approval, it is requested that the author be permitted to develop the plot of action.

This is better than a statement to the effect that the author "reserves the right" to make the continuity and will have the same result. Most feature companies prefer to have the work done by their own staff and under the immediate supervision of the director who will make the production.

26. There is a tendency among beginners, particularly among those who may be termed "check chasers" rather than students, to launch at once into the preparation of five reel stories because they will pay

better than one part themes. It is seldom that they succeed, for the construction of photoplay must first be studied until mastered and this is best done with the one part stories, later advancing to the two, three and so to the five reel plays. The artist must study the skeleton of a horse before he can draw a horse properly and so must the student of photoplay learn the structural parts of photoplay before he can round out action on the proper framework. It may be possible to sell a story or so on synopsis, but it is to be supposed that the student intends eventually to make a business of writing, and if he would do so he must learn his profession and learn it thoroughly before he can practice it. Once the single reel is mastered, the writing of the longer lengths is quickly understood, but no success is possible until the complete knowledge of the fundamentals is obtained.

27. It may be argued that if ideas may be sold on synopsis alone, it is not necessary to learn to write action. This is fallacious. You must know thoroughly what it is possible to convey in action before you can write a synopsis that will cover practical action. The story that may seem to you to be good may be something that cannot be done in action, and the Editor will know this even if you do not. Moreover, you cannot tell when you may be required to write in full action. The time is surely coming when manufacturers of film will appreciate the necessity for offering as wide a variety of ideas as possible and will purchase stories only from those who are not only able to write good ideas but to present these in better-than-usual action. In spite of the work entailed, it is even to be recommended that while you sell on synopsis you write this synopsis from the fully developed action.

28. This has the double advantage of giving you a better idea of what to write into the action and also will show you the weak points in the story as well as its points of excellence. It may seem a profitless task to develop ten to twenty pages of action merely that from it you may write a two or three page synopsis, but your time is not wasted and you will be the better for your labor in every way.

29. Stories of more than two reels are generally termed features, because it is to be supposed that a story worth the greater footage is of a nature to warrant its use as the feature of a program. If, however, the story is to be released for a period of weeks in installments of one or two reels a week, they are then known as series or serial stories, as will be more fully explained in the next chapter.

(3.XXXIV:2) (4.I:16) (6.XXXIII:11) (10.XIV:13) (12.XIV:8
LIV:9) (14.XLVIII:11) (20.XLIV:4) (21.LX:5) (23.XLIII:1)
(24.XXIV:14 XXVIII:6 & 16) (25.XXVIII:19).

CHAPTER LIX

FEATURES

FEATURE is a most elastic term. It is applied to anything over three reels on the argument that anything exceeding that length should be important enough to be made a feature, but the same argument was applied to two reels in the not very remote past, and some managerial geniuses have succeeded in making features out of one reel stories. Feature, as applied to photoplay, is more a trade term than an exact definition and the word is sadly misused.

2. Properly a feature should not be a story in three or more reels but a story in that length because it is worth the footage and will repay in charm and appeal the additional space. To the author his feature story should be something so much superior to the general run of one and two reel plays that it is worth not only the footage but a proportionately larger check. It does not pay merely to write a story in three reels or five. It pays to write stories that are so much better than the majority of pictures in the same footage that they stand above the average and command a ready sale. A story may require five thousand feet for its telling and yet not be worth the five reel length. Aim to make your stories worth not only that length but more, and there can be found a ready market.

3. It should not be sufficient that your story is as good as those you see on the screen. In the first place the story you see on the screen is seldom as good as the manuscript from which it was made. Practically all stories suffer some shrinkage in value in their translation to the screen through poor cutting and weak direction. Moreover, the author with a proper spirit will not be content merely to be as good as the others. He will desire to be better than others, not alone as a matter of pride, but because he knows that it will be to his financial gain. Certain names stand out on the list of writers because their owners lead the way. Some of these authors are of the old guard, while others are of comparatively recent arrival, but all of them are constantly striving to better their work, to develop along new lines, and their work is in demand. It was they who made possible the two reel stories and then the three part plays. It is they who are now offering original five part stories in competition with book and play rights. It is they who will lead the way to other discoveries. They strive constantly for the best and are not content with it when they achieve it, but immediately set a new and higher standard.

4. Feature work should be approached in this spirit. There is plenty of room among the stars, but few are rising that high, either through laziness or lack of ambition, and yet it merely means a proper concentration on one's work and a refusal to offer for sale a story that is not evidently equal to the author's standard.

5. To write a real feature of four or five parts is no easy task. The

need for constantly accelerating action is one of the great stumbling blocks; perhaps the greatest. The tempo of the story must be gauged to a nicety. It should not get into full action too soon or it will either expend itself before the climax comes or reach a point where further acceleration is not possible and it will be necessary to continue for a reel or more at the same speed, which inevitably means retrogression. Locomotive engineers, jockeys and foot racers are successful almost in proportion to their ability to judge pace. They go neither too fast nor too slow, but at the precise speed that will bring them to the goal with the least effort. The feature writer must also have this instinctive knowledge of progress. Given a certain story and a determined length and he must know just how to frame the story that top speed is reached just before the catastrophe. He does not need to have recourse to retarding action to lower the tension brought to the breaking point too soon. He will so guide his action that it never gets ahead of the story but progresses at the pace that will bring the greatest intensity of movement and the most intense part of the story to the moment of the climax. He will not need to go back through the story and insert torpedoed ships and dynamited bridges to bolster up the plot. He will have such an even and gradual development of the plot, told in action to match, that he will not need purely mechanical sensations.

6. Much can be done, as has been pointed out, with a recourse to melodrama toward the close. There will be no sudden and violent change from drama to the more vivid form, but as he nears the climax he will stress his action, knowing that the motivation of the earlier reels will carry a moderate amount of the slight exaggeration of melodrama. But recourse to melodrama alone will not suffice. New and novel situations must be created and new ways found in which to present old situations. There must be brought in some new tricks to appeal to jaded appetites. All of these must work together. A novel locale—a circus; the stage—may aid in getting picturesque environment that will help, but the chief charm of the feature must rise from the story and the action in which it must be told. You can unite the largest circus to the greatest Wild West show and add to this a World Series between two leading baseball leagues, and if your story is not worth while the interest will be purely visual and fleeting. If you would write features, you must be constantly on the alert to find new effects in action rather than new ways of working in a mechanical punch. The great need of today, as Phil Lang has pointed out, is not so much more novelty of plot as it is greater novelty in production methods, which means no more than that the author must find new ways in which to do the old things.

7. Professor Münsterberg in an article already quoted writes:

The producer of photoplays must free himself more and more from the idea with which he started to imitate the stage and must more and more win for the new art its own right.

We do not believe that the excessive use of visions suggested by the learned writer will materially aid in creating new effects, but he hits upon a mighty truth when he points out that the further we progress from the dramatic stage the fuller is the opportunity for originality of thought and expression. From the very first the photoplay has had the advantage over the stage in a freedom of motion not possible to the spoken play, but more can be done, not through the use of visions, of dissolves and fades, but from new uses and new combinations of these effects. Here lies a comparatively untrodden field for the writer of photoplays.

8. It will be noted that comedy has not been mentioned in connection with feature work. This is because through its naturally rapid action it is not possible to give comedy a steadily advancing action through four or five reels. Now and then a play will be advanced as a great comedy feature, but it will be found that it is either a comedy drama in which the melodramatic features are used to hold the suspense and interest or that the action strikes a dead level along in the second reel after which it becomes first tiresome and then tedious. You cannot, as in the drama, start off with comedy and pass through farce to knockabout. You must either spend your shot too soon or trust to melodrama to keep up the interest in the plot. Neither will be found worthy of the footage. For all practical purposes the five reel *feature* comedy does not exist.

CHAPTER LX

SERIES AND SERIALS

SERIES and serial pictures differ slightly, though both are serials in that they are presented in weekly installments. Serial pictures present sections of a continuous story where the series presents a less intimate relation between its various parts.

2. The oldest form of the series story is one in which each section or installment presents a story wholly complete in itself, absolutely independent of the others of the series, yet united to these through its application to the general theme. Probably the earliest example of this form was the Gaumont series presenting in a series of distinct plots the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. No two stories used the same characters nor the same locale. Each might have been released without reference to any of the others, but as a whole they formed, in series, a set of plays.

3. Another form is that in which each story has a definite bearing upon a common problem, but a distinct entity. One of the earliest examples of this form was the Pathe-Balboa "Who Pays?" in which each story answered this question in some form, but each was a story distinct in itself and dealing with an individual social problem. In

general it was the purpose of the series to show that the guilty seldom suffered alone and that those who were innocent paid the greater price.

4. In a third form the series may present a central character, but each adventure is performed without reference to what has come before or what will follow. The stories of the type of "Sherlock Holmes" represent this form. In these the stories are individual, but all relate to the uncovering of some crime or conspiracy by the detective. No two of them require to be read together to be understandable.

5. It follows, then, that a series of stories may be joined through their connection with a central character, a central theme or through their general relation to a theme. The most successful form is that in which the various stories, if issued singly, would be as interesting. If they require an understanding of the central figure's other exploits, then they are more limited in their usefulness. If they are complete in themselves, yet must be witnessed in a certain order to have their fullest effect, then they are more or less dependent upon each other, but if they bear upon some one theme in a way so general that they may be seen in order or may be enjoyed each by itself, then the greatest usefulness of the series is attained. For a proper understanding of the "Wallingford" series, a general knowledge of Wallingford and his associates is necessary. To a proper understanding of the Gaumont series they must be seen as the petitions fall. To an enjoyment of the individual parts of "Who Pays?" there was no bar.

6. Properly the "Wallingford" series was a serial each chapter of which made a complete incident, but one in which an understanding of what had gone before was essential to the fullest enjoyment. This type of story occupies an intermediate position between the series and the serial stories. Each story in the series works up to its own individual climax, but the stories as a whole work up to the grand climax. Wallingford determines to be revenged upon a certain set of men. Each story of the series shows how he squares accounts with one of this group. When all have been punished the story ends. Each revenge is in itself a reasonably complete story, but it requires knowledge of what has gone before to gain the fullest enjoyment from any one incident.

7. Passing from this hybrid form to the serial story proper, we find two forms. In the first the story aims to present a reasonably complete episode in each chapter. In the other the aim is directly the reverse and the producer seeks to end the action at the moment of greatest suspense that a resolution of that suspense may be sought by the spectator in the next installment. Each form of story has its upholders both among makers and exhibitors of photoplays. Some contend that audiences will not bother to follow the extended serial and others believe that it is the holding of suspense that makes for business. As this point of view is influenced by the class of persons who

form the bulk of an exhibitor's audience, the probabilities are that both forms will continue to be made, since both are liked.

8. In the serial in which each installment is supposed to be reasonably self-contained, it is customary to get the continuing suspense from a question. The author does not leave the brave young hero on the railroad track with the train thundering down upon him. The section tells a more or less complete story, but adds a remark to the effect that he cannot marry the lady of his choice as she happens to be his sister. The next installment may show how he proves that the girl is not related to him, but at the close the family lawyer enters with the announcement that he has just found that Harold is not the heir to the vast estates, but merely the son of a younger son and that it has been discovered that his uncle has an heir. In the next part Harold proves the forgery and is provided with some other little task.

9. In a slightly different form the installments may concern some object, perhaps a ruby stolen from the eye of the idol in some Indian temple. This is given to some person and the various parts end with the stone in a new ownership. Perhaps the first part shows the bestowal of the stone upon Lucile, the daughter of Colonel Charteris. At the end of the first installment the Colonel is found in the library with a Hindu dagger in his heart. In the second installment perhaps a band of thieves steal the stone, in the third part the East Indians get their innings, then Lucile's sweetheart regains it from them, and so, with the ending of each installment, the stone is found to be in new ownership until at last all the priests of the cult have been killed off or the stone is given up and Lucile is married and presented with a diamond tiara by the grateful priests.

10. Here the usual warnings against cross and counter plotting do not hold good, for the story will not be viewed as a whole, but as a two or three reel part of the whole and there can be a fresh subplot for each installment and an almost entirely new set of characters, if desired, only the chief personages appearing in each part of the serial. These plots do not conflict. One is taken up, played out and dropped. Another is employed and exhausted. Each is practically a single plot played out in one installment. The various plots are not threaded into the story like the various colors in a plaid, but rather as a band of successive colors through all of which runs a single stripe of uniform color representing the chief players. If each plot is dropped with the end of a part and is not permitted to conflict with other plots, or if each of two or more plots is used in rotation without reference to the others, then there is no limit to the number of plots that may be introduced other than the number of parts to the serial. In this it is not unlike the series story in which a central character moves through a succession of distinct plays, but here the general atmosphere is retained and all of the chief characters appear in each part.

11. This does not apply with as great force to the continuous serial, but here, as well, there may be several sub-plots if they are taken up

individually and one is dropped before another is picked up so that they do not run together. Here the story hangs over from week to week and there is never a distinct closing episode until the finish of the entire play.

12. Series stories may be run for as long as interest in the character may be held through fresh developments. "The Hazards of Helen," at the time of this writing, has been running for more than a year with a change in the leading player, and is still popular. The serial story must eventually arrive at some definite climax since it must first aim at a climax. Few continued stories are told in less than ten parts. From fifteen to thirty seem to be the more general limits. Fifteen is a better number of installments than thirty, for the story that runs too long is apt to drag and lose the interest of those who were originally admirers. Few true continued stories are good enough to last more than twenty parts.

13. Not many of these stories are bought in the open market. Suggestions will be welcomed, but it is seldom that they will be accepted because as a rule a company first gets an idea for a serial and then gets someone to write it for them. It will hardly pay the free lance to make much of an effort to develop these stories, attractive as the idea may seem, but where an effort is made to sell a serial, it should be submitted in synopsis form and not in full action.

14. This synopsis should consist of a brief synopsis covering in a general way the entire series, not as to story, but as to intent. It tells of the leading characters and the main theme of the plot. This is to be accompanied by a more detailed synopsis of each part. If the story is of the series type each story should be given on a sheet by itself. If it is a continued story then the synopsis runs on without breaking to a new page at the end of each part, but each part should be clearly indicated as "Part I" or whatever may be the number of the part. This should appear in the centre of the page between the parts with two or three lines of white space above and below. In the series stories the individual subjects should, if possible, be a trifle stronger than the preceding one. It is scarcely possible to imagine fifteen or twenty stories of absolutely equal merit. Save the better ones for the concluding numbers. It has been advised that the strongest story be placed first, but this is unwise if the difference between the best and poorest is so marked as to make it appear that the series has fallen away after a good opening. Put one of the better ones first, but not the best unless the weakest can stand comparison without detriment. In a serial it is even more important that there shall be a constantly growing interest. Some of this may be gained from the previous action, but the author must feel assured that the advancement of interest is marked. These individual synopses must accompany the general synopsis to show that the interest can be held. No studio is apt to be interested in a general idea for a serial. It wants the details.

15. In writing the script, each installment is written as a unit, with

its cast, scene plot and plot of action as well as synopsis. Each unit is numbered from the first scene to the last the same as a multiple reel, but each installment will begin with scene one and not with a scene number one higher than the last scene number in the previous installment. This is because each of these parts may be made as a unit and not all of the parts as a whole. In a serial it is a good plan to have not only the synopsis of the part but in addition a resume of the preceding parts in from one hundred to one hundred and fifty words, this to be used in the film prior to the showing of the part to refresh the memory of the spectator.

16. In working the parts it is well to remember that since each part will be made without regard to the other parts, it is a good plan to have the scene plot largely self-contained. By this is meant that if you have a gypsy camp in part nine, it is better to clean up with the camp in that part and not run three or four scenes in the same camp in part ten. Call for a camp in a different location if you can, but if you need the same scenes in two or more parts do not hesitate to use them, for your story is supposed to be more important than the convenience of the director. Some scenes, likely to be used in several parts, may be kept standing if there is stage room. If there is not, these will be reset as wanted, a still photograph of the scene being made for the guidance of the stage hands. By keeping your scenes and locations to one part you will keep down expenses and permit speedy production, and where this can be done the course should be followed, but it will not avail to save a few dollars and through a loss of interest cause a cancellation of the film.

17. It is a good plan to provide a general cast sheet. This is to be in addition to the special cast for each part. In this general cast you list first all of the characters that will be employed in practically all of the parts. In the second section you name the players to be used in many of the parts, but not in all. In the third you name all other persons appearing in any part. Suppose that you were preparing a cast of the play about the stolen ruby. You will first name the leading characters as:

Principals

Edith, daughter of Col. Carew.

Jack Belding, Lieutenant in Carew's old regiment. Edith's sweetheart.

Col. Carew, retired, formerly in the Indian Service.

You continue this list until you have named all the characters who will carry the burden of the action. Then you list the

Minor Characters

Santi, priestess of the Temple—1-2-3-9-16

Gaffney, Sergeant in Carew's old regiment—1-2-6-14-16.

Dakin, Carew's lawyer—5-6-7-9-11-12-13-16.

These numbers do not refer to the scenes, but to the parts in which these characters will appear. The individual casts will indicate the

scenes in which they appear. Here it is sufficient to indicate the parts in which they are to be used. The third division lists the still smaller parts as

Incidental Characters

Three Nautch girls—1-3.

Five priests—1-2-3.

Fifteen to twenty soldiers in 1-2-3-4.

In this last list must appear each person not named in the preceding lists who appears in one or more scenes in any one part. This complete cast is useful to the director and will be required by him only when it is fairly certain that your action will be followed with reasonable closeness. Where this is the case it will be helpful to the director in his casting of the parts. He will know from this list who must be retained to the end of the series, who can be used and dispensed with quickly and who will not be required for some time.

18. It is the present practice to make a few parts of a serial and then begin to release while the other parts are being made. If a story is to run thirty parts it will scarcely pay a manufacturer to wait until he has made sixty thousand feet before he starts to release. More than this, the reception given the opening parts may suggest the need for an entire change of plan in the later parts. A serial written by an author whose fame rested upon the fact that one of his novels had invited the attention of the police wrote a serial under contract. By the time the fifth installment had been reached it was clear that the venture would be a failure if his script was followed. His story was thrown away and a dime novel writer completed the run, supplying action where the novelist had offered words. In the same way another series story done by another man, equally ignorant of photoplays, was not only rebuilt in its later chapters but new scenes were sent out to the exchanges to be joined into the early reels already released.

19. It follows that the manufacturers of serials prefer to do business with tried authors who can be relied upon to change and improve in accordance with the public's verdict and that it will not pay the writer not known to a studio to offer a serial idea. It will scarcely receive full consideration.

20. Serials should be undertaken only by those so well grounded in the writing of multiples that it is a comparatively easy matter for them to handle the story. It is no simple proposition to lay out a series of stories that shall keep the interest at a proper point for two to four months, or even longer. It calls for a particularly nice sense of values, for skill in handling crisis and particularly for an ability to preserve such a pace that interest constantly increases with the increasing speed of the story and yet the story advances at a speed that does not attain its limit until the last installments are reached.

21. Before passing on, it is well to note the fact that many of

these serials are advertised through the offer of some prize for the best solution or the suggestion for a sequel. Before the student wastes time and energy in the pursuit of million dollar prizes he is recommended to read Chapter LXXI very carefully.

(10.XXIV:9) (13.II:3) (15.XXXII:7 LVIII:21) (16.III:11 XXX:9) (17.XXIX:3).

CHAPTER LXI

TALKING PICTURES

ALTHOUGH it is not to be supposed that the talking pictures will ever replace the silent drama, since it merely gives back a poor travesty on the speaking stage and the injection of dialogue defeats the end of the motion picture, it is only a question of time when the perfection of the device will bring it forward as a form of entertainment. A brief discussion may not be amiss.

2. As soon as the first novelty of the talking pictures was exhausted, efforts were made to add a phonograph to the projection machine. The photoplay had not then been brought to notice and the fifty to one hundred foot comedy subjects were supposed to be enlivened by speech. The numerous mechanical difficulties discouraged the inventors, who got no further than songs illustrated by picture motions, and it was not until 1913 that the talking pictures again came to the fore, when the Edison device was followed by a number of other machines all of which were essentially a phonograph, a projection machine and some timing device. Generally the phonograph ran at normal speed and the projection machine was turned by hand to keep pace. For part of a season the novelty of the idea carried some small success, but interest did not hold. The scheme may be revived at any time.

3. It may be predicted that the talking picture will never replace the photoplay. It may become an established form of amusement, but in this connection the motion camera will merely support the talking machine and supply appropriate action to the song or speech recorded. The phonograph is unlikely to be used as a device to heighten the effect of photoplay. The chief value of the talking picture will lie in its ability to reproduce the action that supports the phonograph record. It will be possible to both see and hear the operatic or dramatic star. It will also be possible to produce a form of vaudeville specialty. It is in this latter use that the talking picture will interest the writer of photoplays who may wish to write these sketches. To this end it would be better to study some book on vaudeville writing such as Brett Page's "Writing for Vaudeville," where the entire subject is exhaustively and most intelligently treated.

4. It is not possible to foretell the precise form that talking pic-

tures will next assume, but it is to be presumed the action must be confined to one or at the most a very few settings and that the plays will be brief and largely interiors or painted exteriors. As on the dramatic stage dialogue must be natural and not stilted blank verse. Dialogue is no more than the natural speech of the persons. It must be characteristic and individual. The banker does not talk like the bully and the maid seldom has the vocabulary of her mistress. In timing dialogue it is well to remember that the players speak with a certain deliberation that makes for a slight delay and that the business will also require some of the allotted time as a rule. Dialogue that may be read in four minutes may require five or six minutes to play.

5. It should be remembered that there is a form of drama intended to be read rather than acted, and that this reads more fluently than the spoken drama. Drama for the stage does not read as smoothly and may even sound disappointing to the novice who does not realize that inflection and gesture will be used to bring out the points. The action, too, will be less fully indicated, since in the reading play the action must be replaced by exact stage direction, where in stage plays only the essential business is generally indicated.

6. In writing dialogue and business, the former is written in black ink and the latter in red, if the machine has a two colored ribbon, otherwise the business is all underlined in red ink that it may be distinguished from the speeches. In printing this underlined matter is set in italic type. There are two general forms of writing. One of these places the name of the character in the centre of the page.

JOHN

Can you see Harry coming yet?

MARY

(*Crossing to window*) No. But here comes Jane, so it should not be long now before he comes.

This is the form generally followed in manuscript plays, but it may be written, and generally is printed, in this form.

JOHN—Can you see Harry coming yet?

MARY (*crossing to window*)—No. But here comes Jane, so it should not be long now before he comes.

In either form the speeches are printed single spaced. All the rest is double spacing. There are two spaces from the last speech and if the names are centered there is one white line between the name and the speech. Business to be played by a character who has no speech at the moment is written much as a speech would be, as—

JOHN

Enters through door, C. Stands watching Mary and Paul.

Here "C" means the centre of the stage. The right hand (or Prompt) is the right as the player faces the audience and the reverse the left, or OP (opposite). The author is supposed to indicate the general

movement of the characters and to supply a sketch of the stage setting as well as a more or less complete description of the setting and its decoration.

7. Plays are generally written on the eight and one-half by eleven inch paper with a left hand margin of ten spaces for binding. It is covered with stout paper and is permanently bound into a book form with McGill fasteners or staples. Each page is numbered in the upper right hand corner.

8. With these hints it will be possible to make a trial of the work on the next revival of the talking pictures, but it will scarcely pay the writer of photoplays to give much study to the work until the permanent success of this form of entertainment is assured.

PART VI

GENERAL INFORMATION

UNDER this head are gathered those matters having a bearing on photoplay writing and selling, but not of themselves concerned with plot or form. An effort has been made to anticipate and reply to questions the author is likely to ask, and it is believed that the ground has been covered with reasonable thoroughness. For matters not treated under chapter heads, the student is referred to the unasked questions in the appendix.

CHAPTER LXII

A COURSE OF STUDY

THIS, then, is the technique of the photoplay, the technique of form, of construction, of creation. The rest remains with you.

2. The great teacher is experience. You would not purchase a text-book on electricity and after a single reading expect to be able to build dynamos and motors, to wire buildings and install telephone systems. No more can you read this or any other book through and expect at once to write plays that will sell. First you must study the rule and then learn, through experience, to apply it.

3. Do not think that it is sufficient to read this volume through once or even many times. Study it. Absorb every fact and not the fact alone, *but the reason for that fact*. In the schoolroom you did not merely glance through your grammar. You studied the rules and then you practiced the application of those rules. You analyzed sentences, the relation of each word to the others, until, at the end, you acquired an instinctive application of the rules. You not only learned to speak the language correctly, but you knew why you were correct. It is the same way with photoplay. Having the rules, you must learn to apply them; to pick apart plays and perceive the relation of the scenes to each other.

4. Do not believe the misleading statements contained in the advertisements of self-styled schools which declare that any boy or girl can learn to write photoplays. Give no heed to statements such as one that declared that one could begin to write photoplays within three hours after receipt of instructions. It cannot be done. A rea-

sonably close study of a script will enable a person of average intelligence to turn out something that is in the form of a photoplay, but it will be form alone.

5. Writing photoplays is as much a fine art as writing the drama of the stage or the story in fiction form. The rules differ and there is not required the mastery of phrase and literary style that are demanded of the other forms, but this is offset by the need for being able to write in action so clearly that this action is as plain and understandable as the written word. The fact that literary style is not required does not also excuse the lack of inventiveness, of creative ability, of originality of thought. These are, in some ways, more necessary to the photoplay writer than to the fiction author, since the latter is able, to a certain extent, to hide poverty of idea behind a plausible and fluent expression. Imagination and the ability to direct imagination are even more essential to the photoplay writer than to the creator of fiction.

6. Next to imagination, the most important requisites are patience and persistence; patience to endure the labor of practice, persistence to enable you to withstand the discouraging failures that will, at first, confront you. It is disheartening to spend days, perhaps weeks, even, on a script, only to be told that the idea has been used before, but you at least have had the benefit of the practice and your time has not been lost.

7. Perhaps the most unfortunate thing that could happen to you would be the sale of your first two or three scripts. More than one promising career has been either ruined or retarded because the first few scripts sold promptly.

8. It sometimes happens that the novice, coming fresh to the work, may have one or more ideas so good that the editor overlooks the structural faults for the sake of the uniqueness of the idea. Suppose that this happened to you. You would not be human did you not attribute these acceptances to your skill and not to chance. You promptly conclude that writing photoplays is even easier than you thought and you sink into a careless habit of rattling off your ideas without any examination of the plot. Everything that comes to you is an idea. Promptly it goes down on paper in hit-or-miss fashion and as promptly it is sent out to some studio. After a while the succession of rejections, unrelieved by any acceptances, discourages you. You stop work, concluding that photoplays do not pay.

9. If you had made no early sales you would have been ready to face the failures through which success is really won, but these few almost accidental successes have done their work, and you are not willing, once the rejections commence, to face the long, hard pull.

10. Success that comes quickly is seldom lasting nor of real value. The success that is won through earnest, persistent effort, that is built on hard work and labor intelligently directed, is the kind that lasts because it is not built on chance. So do not be in too much of

a hurry to sell. Be prepared to serve your apprenticeship that you may become a master workman and enjoy a master's privileges.

11. Do not think that you can materially shorten this apprenticeship through school courses. There is a certain amount of drudgery that must be performed before you can qualify and this work no one can perform for you. You cannot buy success. There is only the school of experience, and the classroom is the motion picture theatre, but you must regard it, for the time being, as a classroom and not as a place of amusement.

12. If you had spent your entire life a hundred miles from navigable water, you would not expect to be able to build a ship or even a rowboat without having seen one. No plans or pictures can fully replace the intimate personal knowledge of thorough examination. It is the same way with photoplays. You cannot expect to write them without some familiarity with the screened picture. If you wanted to build a rowboat you would not simply look at it. You would closely examine every detail of construction, and this same careful examination is required before you can really know motion pictures.

13. It is best to go to the theatre alone that you shall not be disturbed by the comment of a friend and look on the picture not as a diversion, but with much the same spirit as that in which the medical student approaches the dissecting table. Your interest lies not so much in what appears on the surface as what may be discovered by deeper investigation. Look not so much at the picture as a drama, but as a study. Good or bad it will equally well repay your analysis.

14. The probabilities are that you are reasonably familiar with motion pictures on the screen, in which case you are out of the kindergarten and ready for the intermediate course.

15. Study to apply to the filmed picture the principles here laid down. Note the resemblance between the scenes you see and the examples you will find here. Add to your mental classification what you see on the screen. Note the handling of the cut-back, the use of trick work, the manner in which the story is developed. Educate yourself so that when you study the book you can add to the examples cited many more from the plays you have seen.

16. And note always what it is in each picture that makes an impression on you. You liked this picture. What was it that you liked? Was it the acting? Was it the story? Was it the production?

17: Suppose that your answer is that it was the acting. What was there to the acting that won your regard? Was it the personality of some favorite player? Look back of that personality and see, if you can, how the story cunningly contrived to show that player at his or her best. Note how all these situations were thrown to that player that your interest might be strengthened in the character. The player, no matter how good he or she may be, cannot hold your interest if the play is not well planned. You think for the moment it

is the acting, but you will find that, after all, it was the well written story; so well written, indeed, that you lost sight of the technique in the interest you felt in the character.

18. That is the true technique; not to show that you are deliberately planning to throw all the interest on the central character, but to so plan the plot and its development that the mechanism by which you influence is not apparent. The best story does not say "Look at Miss Blank. Isn't she lovely? Isn't she charming? Isn't it pathetic that she must give up Joe and marry the rich old miser to save her father from bankruptcy? See how we make you think that there is no other way, and now look how we have Joe's rich old aunt die and leave him all her money!" That is not technique, it is mechanics. Technique makes this same appeal, but does not let you realize that the appeal has been made.

19. Perhaps it really was the acting. Perhaps the personal charm and skill of the players were superior to the labored development of the plot. Here, too, you may learn, for you can see how the clumsy use of incident defeats its ends. It is as important to know what makes a story bad as what makes a story good.

20. If it was the story that interested you more than the acting, see what there was to that story that made it better than the playing. Take it detail by detail, incident by incident. Set each apart by itself and see what it is like, then put it together again and see what there was in the construction that caused these separate incidents to form a complete and pleasing whole.

21. If it was the production that pleased see how much the author apparently contributed to that production. The production was made by the director, but it was made from an author's script. Try and figure out how much the author brought the producer.

22. And while you are studying plays on the screen study also the stories of the films you do not see. You cannot witness all of the produced plays. Get what you cannot see on the screen from the *Moving Picture World*. This will not only give you the stories to study, but in a general way you will gain an idea of what each company wants from what it is doing, and later on the knowledge of what has been done will aid you in avoiding the theme already used.

23. Having become familiar with the screened story and with the terms and forms, you are ready for the next step. Select some theatre where two or more performances are given each evening and sit through the bill twice. The first time note the story. The second time decide which of the plays has made the strongest impression on you and note all the scenes of this play. Just a word or two will enable you to recall the scene. Put down no more than is necessary.

24. Now, at home, try to write that play, partly from memory but with the notes to assist you. Make the full plot of the action precisely as though it was an original story you intended to write and submit to some studio. Write in the action precisely as though you

were writing the business of a new play. Put in the leaders and the letters just as clearly as you can remember them. Now write the synopsis and cast of characters. You have a complete script from which you may make a careful analysis of the development.

25. Recall as clearly as possible the points that made the deepest impression on you when you first saw it. Think of how this scene thrilled you with fear, of how that one brought a smile to your face and that other put a lump in your throat. The reason for all these emotions is down on that paper in black and white if you have done your work well. The secret of the sob is clear, the reason for the smile is made plain. You have a clear insight into the mechanics of creating emotion.

26. But there is one thing that may not appear as clearly on the paper. You do not clearly see the punch, the reason why you liked that play so much better than the others you saw at the same time. You should find the visible punch if you will look for it, but you will, in time, find something else. What that is no one can tell you. You cannot tell yourself what it is. It has never been put into words and it never will be, but if you are ever going to make a story writer you will find that something in this study of the story that enables you to write plays with charm.

27. It cannot be analyzed and it cannot be described, but it is an ability to sense the story; to look past the action, past the technique, past the plot and past the punch itself and see the soul of the story. To some people it is never given to gain this sense, to some it comes only after long, arduous labor. Some are born with it, some have it partly developed and need but a little work to bring it out, but no matter how it comes, that instinctive sensing of the story is what makes the real author; is what marks the difference between the playwright and the person who merely performs the mechanical labor of writing a play.

28. But perhaps even before this comes to you you will be ready to go on to the next step. Instead of merely studying the work of others, study to improve their work. You have the script before you. Mentally redevelop it. See if you cannot better the situations by changing the relation of the scenes or by discarding certain of the scenes and using others in their place. There never was a story produced that could not be improved upon. Study to see how you may improve the work on the plays you have seen, for this will bring a keener insight into the development of the plot than the mere study of the plotting of another.

29. Study, too, to improve the leaders. Improving does not necessarily mean the cutting down the number of words. You may add a couple of words and get an easy, fluent leader instead of a harsh, disjointed one. Do the same with the letters. See if you cannot, make them sound more like real letters. Note where a paragraph from a letter might have been used with better effect than one pur-

porting to be an entire letter. See when the opening or closing paragraph would be better than one from the body of the sheet.

30. And all this time it is to be supposed you are working on your own plots. Work them into rough photoplay form. Write and rewrite them unless you find that the story grows worse with each revision. Writers may be roughly assembled into two classes: those who work best on the first draft and those who do better on revise. Do not mistake laziness for an inability to revise, but on the other hand do not work too long on a story if you find you do not improve it. Lay it aside and take it up again weeks, or even months, later.

31. Now you are ready to do more original work and less copying. You have learned not only the form, but the application of form to idea from your work on the plays of others. Now apply form to your own ideas with the intention of selling your product. In their proper chapters the various processes of plot formation and development are described in detail. Work along those lines unless you chance upon a method that suits you better.

32. Do not trust too much to the criticism of your friends. They mean well, but they may not know, and the possession of college degrees is no evidence of ability to criticize photoplays. One of the poorest scripts that ever came under the observation of this writer was the work of a professor of English literature in one of the largest colleges of the country. His knowledge of literature was profound, his English was classical in its purity, but he did not know photoplay. The minister, the teacher, the newspaper man, and the lawyer may each be learned in his profession and yet his opinion of your manuscript may be infinitely less worth while than the judgment of the grammar school boy who is an ardent "fan."

33. If you have made proper advance you are now able to visualize your action, to turn the printed word into motion, but you have this one drawback. You know the story you have written, and you cannot be certain that you have put all of the story into the plot of action. You may read it a dozen times and each time supply some missing point from your memory of the story and think it is in the script. You know that John does this because of some other action. You do not realize that the explanatory action is missing. Get someone to go over it for you. Encourage them to ask questions and do not grow angry if they do.

34. Write as much as you can, but do not try to market all you write. Send out only the best, retaining the rest to work over. If you cannot better a story by editing and revising, lay it aside until you have done at least two others and the incidents of the first are less clear in your mind. Now read your synopsis and mentally plot it afresh, writing the new action without reference to the old. Now compare the two. You are apt to find some improvement. If you keep at it long enough you will get the story right in time.

35. As you study and learn from your failures you will come to

find that sometimes the story may be all right, but the handling is wrong. At times you will find that to give the most important position to the woman instead of the man or vice versa will be to give the story the right twist. Again you may find that your hero is a doctor instead of a lawyer, or perhaps a clerk instead of his employer. One story was rejected eight times, but sold the ninth because on the last trip the hero was an insurance agent instead of a theatrical manager. The theatrical manager did not fit into the rest of the story. The insurance agent did.

36. Never throw away an idea. Even if you are told that the theme has been used before do not discard the story. There may be something good in the arrangement or business that you can use with another theme.

37. There is just one secret of success and that is work, hard, faithful work intelligently directed. Every man who today enjoys success has at one time stood where you are standing now. Every Editor, every photoplaywright, has at one time been a novice, has met the trials and disappointments of the beginner, has overcome the obstacles and fought his way to success through work. There is not a man in the business who will not ascribe his success to hard work if he is entirely honest. A few of us came up from the start of motion pictures and progressed so gradually that the amount of effort was not realized, but even those who were in the business in the old fifty-foot days and who progressed with the business have worked but have spread over ten or fifteen years the work you may accomplish in one or two.

38. This is one point wherein you may receive no assistance. There is no short cut to success. It is all hard but interesting work; interesting if you really are in earnest. No critic can aid you, no book can help you, no teacher may shorten by a single day the practice period. No matter how much information you may possess, you must make a practical study of the work before you can perform it properly. Unless you are prepared personally to do your preliminary work, you would do well to lay aside this book and with it all thoughts of ever becoming a photoplay writer.

39. Just how much work must be done depends upon the individual student. It cannot be said that the writing of ten or ten hundred scripts will bring success. A few have caught the knack of writing photoplay with comparatively little effort. They are few indeed, for not one writer in a hundred early finds success, and the most lasting reward comes only to those who have so thoroughly grounded themselves in their art through practice and experiment that they are masters of every detail.

40. In your study, as in your later work, devote your time to the plot and to the development of the plot in action. Do not seek to sell through trick effects, visual punches or other claptrap devices. Make your stories desirable because they are stories and not mere skeletons filled in with wrecked trains and burning bridges. You

cannot replace punch with spectacle, so let your studies all be directed toward plotting and the exemplification of the plot in cunningly devised action.

41. The race is not to the swift but to the persistent. The sprinter who can do his hundred yards within ten seconds is seldom much good beyond that distance, and the man who makes a dazzling success for a few weeks is not really a writer but an accident. He does not last because his spurt exhausts his capacities and he is soon passed by the steady, plodding distance man who has trained himself for the long run. To sell stories *and to keep on selling them* requires a greater mastery of the details of the work than the short-lived but brilliant success of the ideas man. Don't shirk, and do not try to cheat yourself, and remember that the sooner your practice work is done the sooner can you command success, but do not go at the task with an intensity that uses up your vitality. If you do, if you overwrite, you will presently go stale, and in the enforced rest that must follow you will lose the advantage you have gained and more. Determine your capacity for work. Work to your capacity, but do not attempt more.

42. At first do not expect to turn out good plays. You cannot. Do not spend too much time perfecting any one play. At the start you can better employ your time writing one hundred plots than writing one plot a hundred times. Each new plot offers new and interesting angles. Master these and you can presently go back and rewrite your first plot in the light of the knowledge gained through the study of the other ninety-nine. Get all the angles and then view your early work in the light of more recent knowledge and you will learn more than if you sought to complete one play before approaching a second.

(3.LXX:1) (4.LXX:3) (5.VII:10) (8.LXV:46) (11.I:10
LXXII:12) (26.XIX:2) (32.LXIII:2 LXX:7 & 12) (35.XXIII:34)
(42.XXIV:39).

CHAPTER LXIII

SELF-CRITICISM

CRITICISM, or the appraisal of a story, is a valuable means of study, and it is to be regretted that it is so seldom possible for students to obtain competent criticism. Please note that it is written "*competent criticism*," and not merely criticism, without qualification.

2. Criticism is merely the expressed opinion of one person. The opinion is helpful and of value only when the person offering the criticism is not only familiar with his subject but is able to give clear expression to his reasons for approving or disapproving. Few base-

ball reporters would make good dramatic critics and fewer still of the critics could write a report of a ball game. Criticism, therefore, is of value only when offered by a person not only intelligent and informed but sincere, and most persons thus qualified are too busy with more remunerative matters to give their attention to this one. Moreover, most qualified critics have learned that to offer criticism is only to invite dispute and possibly later charges of plagiarism of the puny plots they are asked to comment upon.

3. Criticism when not backed by practical knowledge or when backed only by half grasped truths is not alone not helpful; it is apt to be hurtful, because the dictum is accepted by the novice as law though it may be based upon entirely incorrect premises. The man who runs the picture theatre near your home, his usher or pianist will tell you that the story you show is great. You are pleased at the opinion. They see pictures all day long. They should be able to judge your work. This is a plausible but incorrect argument. They are familiar with the screened picture. They know little or nothing of visualizing the action. They may care less. They tell you that your story is great because they do not wish to offend a patron; possibly a very profitable one.

4. The Professor of English Literature in your high school may offer a learned opinion, but unless he thoroughly knows the photoplay business his opinion is apt to be academic rather than authoritative. He knows literature, but not pictures.

5. Actors are perhaps the poorest judges of all. As a class there are fewer good writers among the actors than in any other profession. They see only their own—the acting—side of it. They can see situation but not plot.

6. There are but three sources of criticism open to you. You may find someone who knows who is willing to help you. You may profit from study of editorial comment or you may learn to study your own product critically and not with a creator's pride.

7. In the first class may be found someone apart from your own circle who is still willing to help others through criticism because his patience has not yet been taxed to the breaking point. It may be that you will exchange criticism with some fellow author, though this has its disadvantages, since there is always the danger that you will both hit upon the same idea and each regard the other as a thief.

8. Editorial comment is often puzzling. You may not be able to understand what is meant, but more often it puzzles you because it has been offered by an officious office boy and not by the Editor at all. This is particularly true of the so-called checked rejection slip in which the reason for return is indicated by a mark. The points may be checked by the Editor or they may be put in by the office boy. You have no means of knowing which. As a rule the checked slip is more hurtful than helpful, and generally it may be ignored; particularly as many of the reasons given apply only to

the studio in question, though they may be accepted by the author as being generally applicable.

9. An explanation of a few of the stock phrases may assist the student to understand the general trend of the comment, though its application to the particular script in question must be determined by the author through comparison of the comment with the script.

Plot too old—You are using an old theme, one so old that most conceivable variants have been used. Yours has been done frequently.

Plot too weak—Your plot will not hold the interest of the spectator for the length of time the action will run. Apparently you have enough action, but you need to build up the punch in the plot to make it more interesting.

Too much plot—Either you are trying to tell too much in the footage or, as is more likely, you have too much sub-plot so that the story is confusing. Remove some of the minor factors to make the plot shorter and more direct.

Not enough plot for length—You have too much padding. There is not enough story to carry the interest to the end. This differs from the weak plot in that the plot is good so far as it goes but it is not told smartly. There is too much action taken for each fact.

Not enough action—Here you understand action to refer to the movement of the plot rather than the acting. Not enough happens to interest the spectator, though your characters may be doing enough acting. Strengthen the plot with more details.

Too long—Either this is a longer story than the studio makes, or it may be that it is too long to go into the indicated footage. The Editor may mean that the action would require at least 1500 feet and cannot be reduced to the even thousand.

Would not pass—That is, it will not pass the censors because of the showing of prohibited things. It is not a definite statement of fact, but merely indicates that in the judgment of this particular Editor it will not be permitted.

Theme used before—More polite than "plot too old." It does not mean that the theme has been used before, but that it has been used many times before.

Theme too like a story we have—The studio already has a story along the same general lines. It does not follow that another studio may not accept your script.

Too heavy—The production cost will be too great.

Too much slapstick—The story is too rough to suit the production methods of this company. Another Editor might declare that there was not enough slapstick.

Not strong enough—There is not enough force to the plot. The Editor prefers a more strenuous style of story.

These are the chief comments, but others can probably be understood through an understanding of these.

10. Self-criticism is not always easy. It is to be supposed that if you had not thought well of an idea you would not have used it

and it is not easy to reverse your own decision. At the same time, if you will permit your story to rest for a few weeks until your first enthusiasm for the plot has abated and if you will then examine it earnestly and with a serious desire to perceive its failings, should there be any, you will almost always find that there are some matters needing correction and perhaps some glaring errors. The proper mental attitude would be to disassociate yourself from the story and regard it as you would the work of another. It is seldom, if ever, that you can attain this frame of mind, but if you will realize that upon an appreciation of your faults depends your ultimate success, you will be able to view the story in the proper light, though equally you must guard against a tendency to become discouraged and disgusted.

11. The following series of questions has already been offered in the *Moving Picture World* as a test:

1. *Is the plot new or novel?* The plot may not be new, yet the treatment may show such cleverness that the idea appears to be new. Either *plot* or *treatment* may be new, but there must be some novelty.

2. *Is it practicable?* It is foolish to offer for sale a story that will cost more to make than it will return in sales, or to ask that money be spent upon matters that will not yield an increased effect.

3. *Will it pass the censorships?* Stories that may or may not be passed are often made, but the outside writer stands small chance if there is any question or doubt.

4. *Has it struggle?* Without struggle there is nothing upon which the interest of the spectator may be centered.

5. *Has it suspense?* There may be struggle and yet this struggle be so one-sided and the climax so clearly indicated that the outcome is never in doubt and therefore never of interest.

6. *Is it properly motivated?* You must not alone have an objective but the reason for desiring to attain that objective must be well founded.

7. *Are the characters well chosen?* Your play people must be vividly real and not merely shadowy character sketches. The leads should be few and all others should maintain a definite position in the story.

8. *Are the settings correct?* A story of the underworld would be out of place in the higher walks of society. The locale of the story must be in keeping with the nature of the plot.

9. *Is the plot adhered to?* All incidents must have a direct and clearly indicated bearing on the plot.

10. *Is the climax correct?* Right must triumph over wrong and the ending must not do violence to our sense of justice.

A story that passes these test questions *should* sell. It does not always follow that it will, but a story that does not stand the test has little chance of a sale.

12. To put the matter to practical application, let us take the two reel story which is shown in the Appendix as Example A.

13. The first question is as to the newness of the plot. Trial by ordeal has been done before, and so has the diversion of suspicion. It is not known that the two have been used in common or that this precise form of device has been used to throw suspicion on the wrong person. The answer would seem to be that while not startlingly new the treatment is fairly sound and is likely to pass.

14. As to the second question, the reply seems to be yes. The production is so planned that all of the essential exteriors are played in a single part of the country and the interiors may be made in the same spot. No great expense is incurred. There is a small cast, the sets are all stock stuff and the locations are easy of access to any west coast company. The play will cost less to produce than many one reel stories. It can also be made in about the same time.

15. Question three offers a difficulty. There may be objection to the snake. Other stories employing snakes in various ways have not been passed on the ground that the use of the snake was offensive. A company might take a chance on this and make it in the hope of getting it passed, but the probabilities are that most companies would be afraid.

16. Question four refers to the struggle. Clearly there is one here, Jack's effort to be revenged upon Cort. At the same time it must be admitted that this struggle does not figure very strongly. Cort is located without apparent effort. The end comes quickly. The story has a struggle, but evidently not enough.

17. Suspense seems to be stronger than struggle. Had there been struggle in proportion to suspense the story would have been better. There is little struggle upon which to fasten the suspense, but the most has been made of opportunity. In the second reel there are three questions of suspense running, the question as to the outcome of the duel, the question as to what will happen when Ruth and Jack meet, and what will happen when Flanders takes his revenge. In the second reel the suspense is ample, but unbacked by struggle (which does not mean fighting) to a proper degree. In the first reel both of these necessary qualities are lacking. The entire first reel is taken up with preparing the premise for the second reel. It is true that the ending of the first part leaves the story with both struggle and suspense imminent, but struggle and suspense are both wanting in the first part. The story seems to be strong, but it is really too uneventful.

18. After all that, it is comforting to find that the motivation has been better done. Here there is no question. All is prepared for and a reason assigned every action. Ruth elopes to escape what she regards as her unhappiness, but in reality to satisfy her desire for excitement and change. Jack vows revenge upon Cort for ample reason so far as he knows the facts. There is good reason found for Cort's appearance in the west and it is expected that a man of Flanders' temperament, once the restraint of society is removed, will sink low.

19. But it cannot be said that the characters are well chosen. They are clean-cut and well indicated. Jack is the protagonist, Cort the antagonist, and the revenge the objective. In employing the usual nomenclature it might be supposed that Jack was the hero, Ruth the heroine and Flanders the Villain, but Ruth and Flanders have but a secondary part in this story. They are merely the reason for the desire for revenge. Jack and Cort are the principals. Jack really draws less sympathy than Cort, who is innocently accused. We have no keen desire to see Jack win, because his objective, the death of Cort, is improper. The characters are well drawn, but they are not well chosen. They are not selected to give the interest to the story that is required.

20. Pride rises again on the next question. The settings are correct because the story is told in a series of scenes which harmonize with the story being told. Ruth and Flanders are not brought into the saloon until the descent in society makes this a fitting place for them to be. No fault is to be found in the placement of the scenes in their settings.

21. An affirmative may also be returned on the next question. The plot is closely adhered to. No person is permitted to intrude who does not belong to the story being told and no extraneous incident is permitted to interfere with the direct recital of the plot. Here the technique is impeccable.

22. The question of climax is answered both in the affirmative and negative. In this the story is peculiar in that the successful attainment of the objective, which is supposed to provide the happy ending, is lacking, and yet the outcome is better than though Jack had been permitted to attain his end, since we know that the revenge he seeks is improper. Here technique has been employed to overcome the objectionable feature of the plot, but we have been told that technique cannot sell a story. This seems to prove it.

23. It is very evident that this story will not stand much chance of a sale. The motivation is correct, there is enough suspense to save the second half of the second reel, the plot is told compactly, but our protagonist is not a person in whom we can become greatly interested, and this is largely because his objective is one with which we cannot sympathize. Good sense would urge the author to withhold the story. As a matter of fact it was sent out only once, with others, on the slight chance that the latter scenes would pull the story through. It is offered here not as an example to be followed, but because it serves a more useful purpose than would a better story.

24. But if the test questions are all asked in the affirmative, then there still remains a study of the action scene by scene. Study the scene as a unit and in its relation to other scenes and to the action as a whole. Consider even the little points. One thing that attracts notice is the fact that three times Jack enters the library and finds Ruth with a man. Each time he is first seen at the door. This is necessary in twelve and nineteen because we must bring him from

the office, but in twenty-two it would be better to show him in the house, entering from the dining-room that has been already used or showing him in a hall set coming down the steps. This will not only break the rigid connection between the two sets, but it will be more natural, for it is to be presumed that Cort is more with Jack than Ruth and that if he is home Jack may be supposed to be in the house also.

25. Scene twenty-nine is awkwardly written. In the first place it runs too long and in the second the notes will be slightly confusing. Suppose that in twenty-six we change Ruth's letter. She does not name an hour but merely says "Come to me." Now, even at the cost of another set, we show Flanders' apartment. The maid comes with the note. Flanders reads it, gives an order to his valet and leaves with the girl. While this is happening we presume Cort to be packing his trunk. Now we get:

29. *Library*—Ruth on—Cort enters—greets—asks permission—goes to desk—writes—

On screen—note—

Dear Jack: I'm off a month earlier than expected. Sorry I cannot say good-bye. Letters poste restante to Rio will reach me—perhaps. Good luck. JIM.

Cort gives note to Ruth—explains—she is placid—suddenly grows demonstrative—Cort surprised—Butler enters with bag—regards their attitude with surprise—Cort says good-bye—exits—Butler follows—Ruth looks at letter—

30. *Balcony with French window*—Maid enters with Flanders—goes to window—looks—all well—beckons Flanders—they start to enter.

31. *Back to No. 29*—Ruth on—startled—turns—relieved to see it is Flanders who enters—he takes her in his arms—Maid passes through scene—exits to hall—Flanders asks about note which Ruth still holds—she shows him—he speaks—both laugh—Flanders takes note—she writes at his dictation—

On screen—note—

Jack: I have gone to South America with Jim Cort. Do not seek to find us. RUTH.

Ruth seals note and leaves on desk—Maid returns with bags—all three exit through window.

This is a minor change, but it makes for a more orderly arrangement of incident and avoids two notes in one scene.

26. Take each scene and each set of scenes and make certain that you cannot, through change or rearrangement, make improvement. Almost always you will find places where a change will more fully explain a scene or where you can quicken the action through condensation or give it emphasis through addition. Do not be content with a single revision. Give it several, some weeks apart, and even after you have started to send the story out, see if you cannot find still further opportunities.

27. It is important that you adopt a critical and not a fault-finding attitude. There is a vast difference. Be proud of your work but not so proud that you are blinded to its faults and presently you

will find yourself to be your own best critic. You are about the only person on whose judgment you can rely, so cultivate your judgment if you would keep your work up to standard.

(10.XXIV:38) (13.XXI:9) (14.XVII:15) (19.IX:24) (22.IX:17 L:29).

CHAPTER LXIV

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

YOUR working tools are important if you are to do your work properly and in such a manner as to suggest and even emphasize your proficiency. It is the favorite statement of some authors and Editors that a story on common brown wrapping paper will be taken if it is good. This is very true. Others proclaim that a marketable idea may be scribbled on the back of an envelope. This has been done. Scripts can be written on any material and an idea can be condensed to go upon the back of an envelope, but it is not recommended that these experiments be tried. The extent of an author's experience is apt to be judged by the knowledge he shows of his business. It is to be presumed that a man who knows how to turn out a script knows how to write one. It pays both in the amount of money paid for a script and in the more careful consideration an inviting manuscript receives to give it the most presentable appearance possible.

2. If you are to work to advantage, you must work in comfortable surroundings. Have the proper tools and the proper workbench. You may not be able to afford a special room and luxurious appointments, but that is not what is meant. Privacy is desirable, and luxury appreciated, but comfort does not mean a roll top desk and a swivel chair.

3. The first essential is a typewriting machine. The day of the pen-written manuscript has passed and at best that day was brief, lasting only until trained writers could be interested in the work. Today a story written in pen and ink or, worse still, pencil, positively will not be read in any studio. You can send a most winning appeal to the Editor, telling him that if he takes this story you will be able to purchase a machine, but the letter will have no effect. The Editor wants stories, not opportunities to perform charitable deeds, and he will know that if you lack a typewriter it is probably because you also lack experience. Your penmanship may shame the copybook or your printing read as clearly as a type face, but this will gain you no advantage over the man whose penmanship is crabbed. Editors will not read longhand because they know that a man who knows enough to write photoplays knows enough to get a typewriter or at least to have his work copied.

4. There is another and more important reason why you should have a machine. You will need it in your practice work. Were it merely a case of having your last draft typed, you could go to any public stenographer in the larger cities or to some lawyer's clerk in the towns or send the work to someone who advertises in the literary publications. This would be expensive, but it would be practicable. The chief reason why you should have a machine is that errors appear more clearly on the printed page and you are better enabled to judge your own work. At a glance you take in a page instead of a line and you do not divide your attention between the copy and deciphering what you have written.

5. Owning your own machine does not mean an initial outlay of about one hundred dollars: indeed you would be foolish to invest in a brand new machine at first. The better plan is to visit some rental agency and hire a machine with the understanding that the initial rental will apply to the purchase price at the end of the rental period. The rental is from four to six dollars for a period of three months and such a machine will cost you in the vicinity of thirty-five dollars.

6. If possible, visit the agency yourself and try the various makes before you decide upon what you want. Almost all makes of machines are now visible writers. That is, you see the words as they form. Reject such as do not offer this feature. Try the touch and let the features be explained to you. Arrange that you may return the machine, if in good order, and take one of another make, if you wish, but the better plan is to get the machine you like in the first place and stick to that. The best typewriter is the one you are using. There is little difference.

7. But whatever you do, do not get a toy machine; one of the sort that sells for from five to thirty-five dollars. It will be better to get a junk machine for six or eight dollars that will at least be the wreck of a real typewriter. The imprint of a toy machine will show that you use one and that you have not written to the point of proficiency, since then you would have a real one. From your own point of view speed will never be possible on these cheap machines because they are too lightly built to stand the pounding.

8. Select a "pica" type. A pica is a twelve point type or a type that is one-sixth of an inch in height and wide in proportion. Do not get an Elite machine because you can get more words to the line. Get one that has seventy-five spaces to the line; no more. There is another face, seldom seen, generally called great primer, which is sold to clergymen and others who are to read from their pages. This is entirely too large. Avoid a machine that prints in italic or in imitation handwriting or one with a shaded letter, because this last will not permit you to make good carbon copies.

9. When you rise to the point of affluence where you can buy a brand new machine, deal with an agency of the manufacturer and demand a chart of the special characters. The alphabet will be the same, but you may trade the circled "a" you will not need for a

“star” you can put to better use, or make similar changes, perhaps giving up a pound sterling mark you will never use for an exclamation point that will be better than the combined period and asterisk. In getting a machine scheduled to your special needs (and at no additional cost) you will get a machine direct from the factory. This not only means a new machine instead of one some months out of the shops, but it means a higher serial number that may in turn mean a higher exchange value when you come to get another new machine, for you always will trade in your old machine as part payment for a new one. A typewriter company does not expect to receive the full hundred dollars in cash. If you can order through some municipal officer or through an office using many machines you may have still more discount.

10. As a rule a rebuilt machine is about as good as a new one, if you know how to pick them out, and will cost much less. There are some companies that sell out their old models through some clearing house, but there are also some fraudulent advertisers trading on this fact. If you buy a factory clearance be assured that you are dealing with a reputable concern. If you buy a second-hand machine buy of a dealer and not from a “poor widow lady” who is going south for her health. The dealer will be there if you want to talk to him about the machine later on and there will be less probability that you will need to seek such conversation.

11. Get a machine with an automatic ribbon shift if you can. You will probably have to take a two color ribbon, but you can overcome this by getting an all black ribbon and using both tracks for black. Your working ribbon should be a record and not a copying ribbon. The latter will smear in handling and presently the script will need recopying. From the first it will annoy the reader.

12. If you have the time to do things properly, do not pitch in and poke the machine with two fingers. You may form a habit hard to break. Get a book on the touch system and learn that. Most companies have these instruction books. If they do not supply one with the machine you take, get a sheet of tough paper, white or yellow. Make a diagram of your keyboard, outlining the keys with a silver dollar or the top of a tin can. Mark in the letter or letter and character as the case may be. Place that back of and slightly above the machine. Now learn to strike the keys by looking at the chart and not at the keyboard. No one ever learned to play the piano by looking at marks on the keys. Because there are marks on the keyboard it does not follow that you must look at them. Many machines are now made with both marked and blank keys, as you prefer. Get hold of some book that will give you finger exercises that are similar to the scales used in piano practice and learn the correct fingering. It will pay in the end, for you will then be able to write without thinking of the machine and give all your attention to what you are writing.

13. At a pinch a soapbox will serve as a typewriter desk or the dollar card or sewing tables will do nicely, and give you more room. The only essential is that your elbows shall be a couple of inches above the top bank of keys when you are seated at the machine. You can cut down the table or build up the chair as you prefer. A real desk is not necessary. This entire book was written on the upended case in which the machine is traveled. Any ordinary kitchen chair will do for a seat. Until you can afford a desk, any set of pasteboard boxes of about the proper size will serve as drawers. If you wish to be very orderly, get a few envelopes of stout paper or fibre large enough to contain all of the sheets of some one story on which you are working. The ten by twelve inch size is about right, and these may be had in fibre with bellows sides for fifteen cents each.

14. Always keep your machine covered when it is not in use. Oil lightly once a week, barely touching the parts that need it with a brush dipped in fine oil. Clean the machine well once a month by brushing it with a soft bristle brush with a handle long enough to reach every part. When the type faces become clogged—or before that—brush them with the brush provided for that purpose or with an old toothbrush. A little gasoline or benzine will loosen the dirt, but keep this off the rubber rollers. If your machine is of the removable carriage type, take the carriage out.

15. For the machine you will need three kinds of paper. For the script you send out, you will need a twenty pound bond, the sheets cut eight and one half by eleven inches. The paper must be white, either bond or linen finish, and sufficiently opaque to hide the next page. Take a sheet of the paper and put it over a newspaper, pressing it against the printed page. If you can see the letters at all clearly, the paper is not sufficiently opaque. A twenty pound paper is a paper that weighs twenty pounds to the ream of five hundred sheets. As the ream is seventeen by twenty-two inches, it is cut into four parts and if your paper really is twenty pound paper it should weigh five pounds without the box or packing of any sort. Get a good grade of paper, for an Editor dislikes to handle flimsy stuff and you are trying to please him. Even the feel of the paper sometimes helps or hurts. Paper of proper grade will cost you from a dollar to a dollar and thirty cents. Beware of bargains unless you can trust the man who offers it. Sometimes it is possible to get a box or two below cost if it is left over from a large order for letter heads. This has been provided to guard against spoiled sheets. The printer has already made his profit. He may sell the rest cheaply.

16. Your second, or carbon, sheets are the same size. It is best to get paper of another color. Then if you face the carbon against the color and put the good stock on top of that you cannot go wrong in getting the paper into the machine. Such paper costs about thirty-five cents for five hundred sheets. It is best to make two

carbons, one for your own use and the other to be sent a company, should it ask for one when it sends the check for the original.

17. For your practice work anything that is cheap will do. Only you will see it and you can do as you please. This you use in doing your exercises and in laying out scripts. Sometimes you can get copy paper from the newspaper job office. This is generally any waste paper cut to size and used by the reporters.

18. Never permit a piece of "onion skin" paper to be brought into the house. Some very new authors foolishly imagine that it is so nice and thin that they can save a lot of pennies in postage stamps. It does cost less to mail out, but where is your profit to come from if no one ever looks at your story? If there is any one thing that Editors unite in detesting, it is the onion skin paper. This is a paper used where many carbon copies are to be made at one impression, and with this you have nothing to do.

19. Carbon paper comes in varying grades and weights. Get the heavy weight. You will not need more than two carbons of a story and this will serve. The lighter weights will more quickly crease and tear. Do not get a whole box of carbon at first. You will not need it. Get a half dozen sheets. When you commence to sell, you can buy by the box.

20. Envelopes will be explained in the next chapter.

21. Get a rubber stamp with your name and address. The best will be a gothic letter and about a ten point size. Have it made as shown in Example A. and not as in Example B. In other words you have the type centered. Get a black inking pad to go with it and use it for the manuscript sheets and in the corner of your going envelope.

JOHN JONES
41144 BROADWAY
NEW YORK CITY

Example A.

JOHN JONES
41144 BROADWAY
NEW YORK CITY.

Example B.

The right and wrong style of rubber stamp.

22. If you do not want to go to the expense of a stamp, type your name on each sheet as shown in Appendix B. This will suffice though the stamp will be handy.

23. You will need a box of paper clips. Get one of the sort that will not perforate the paper nor permanently fasten it. The brass Niagara clip is about the best for this purpose. The steel wire form marks the script more and is apt to rust. These clips are attached to the upper left hand corner of the script and but one is used.

24. A plot book of some sort and a manuscript record will be needed, but do not get a scale for weighing manuscript until you can afford to buy a post office beam scales. The cheap spring balances are not to be used. Until you can buy your own scales, have

the letters weighed at the post office and not at a drug store unless the latter is a post office sub-station with a proper scale.

25. Do not spend too much money at the start. As you win success you can add to your equipment, but at the start spend as little as you have to. Including the first three months rental of your machine, you do not need to invest ten dollars, and until success comes such luxuries as printed letter and manuscript heads can wait. Never be rich enough to be able to afford embossed manuscript paper and keep away from anything else that will tend to make your work look faddish and freaky. Get good material, but have it plain. The best authors follow the same course and you want to make your work look like theirs.

(3.II:6) (15.XXVI:8) (16.XXVI:21) (18.XXVI:4) (20.LXV:15 & 19).

CHAPTER LXV

SELLING THE SCRIPT

WRITING the script is generally easier than selling it. You can write what you please, but you can sell only that which pleases others, and generally your script must win the approval of three persons of differing tastes—the Editor, who argues for the script that is literature; the director, who favors vivid action and spectacular effects; and the manufacturer, who considers expense against effect.

2. Most authors, perhaps naturally, are too eager to sell. Even where they are not eager for the check, they want the stamp of approval on their work, they desire to see the picture on the screen that they may judge how their work will look. This is to be expected, but something more than eagerness—finish—is required in the script that sells. It is always a mistake to enter the market too soon. It enriches the post office department and it irritates Editors, but it does no good. If it were possible to prohibit the offering of scripts for sale that fell below a certain standard of merit, it would be possible to gain a more respectful hearing for those that were sent in, but so long as studios continue to be swamped by a mass of obviously impossible stuff (and that will probably be always) it will be necessary for the script that does sell to be even better than the salable average. It must stand out from the rest like a lily blooming in a dungpile.

3. Most authors send out all of their product. Some start in with the first script they write. Others wait until they have done a few. Some who are suspicious write a single script and wait until they

sell that before they write the next, or at least such is their determination, though this is not always adhered to.

4. This is a grave error. Scripts should not be offered for sale until the author is assured a reasonable chance of making a sale. This seldom occurs with the first few scripts, even where the writer is already competent in other lines of literary work. These early scripts are crude and lacking in finish. Editors are quick to note the work of a new author of any promise, and unless the scripts show a rapid and marked improvement interest in that writer will be dropped; an interest he may seek in vain to engage later on when proficiency has come. Long before that time arrives the Editor will have reached the decision that the writer is not worth following.

5. Scripts should not be offered for sale until the author can offer a better grade of story than a staff writer, dulled by working continuously, can turn out. It has been shown that the staff men can better supply the studio with scripts that fit precise needs than the author who works in the dark. The free lance stands a better chance only when he offers a better plot. His work must rise above the grade. If he offers the same old ideas in moderately good action, he has no advantage over the staff man who has the privilege of working from the inside. No script should be offered unless there is a real punch to the idea and novelty of thought as well. If it lacks these it cannot compete with the product of the manuscript department.

6. With these facts in mind, the author will perceive the advantage of making his first submissions only the best of his work and not all that comes from the machine, and he will hold even these until the lapse of time brings clearer vision and enables him to decide with cooler judgment which is his best.

7. In order to sell intelligently, the market must be known. You cannot send an Editor a return envelope and ask him what he wants. One instruction book gives a form letter for this purpose and Editors receive so many of these letters that they pay no attention to any request for such information, nor is there any reason why they should. Most companies have a fairly well marked policy of production. A study of the product will show what is required. It is not always possible to tell from some particular release just what is wanted, but by averaging the output the general style may be comprehended.

8. It is not always easy to see much of the product of any one company since only in the large cities are all of the films shown and here one may travel long in search of any particular release, but in the pages of the *Moving Picture World* each week may be found the complete stories of all the releases. To read up the releases of any one company for a three months period will be enlightening. In this time there may be much that is contrary to the general policy. Stories may be issued a year or more after their manufacture and may

not represent the present policy, but to take the stories as a whole should give a good idea.

9. The news columns of the same publication will also give information of value, but the paragraphs must be read intelligently. An item to the effect that the company will winter two directors in Florida means that they will be in the market for stories with a sub-tropical setting and outdoor stuff in general. The announcement that a company has been sent to Bermuda to make a certain play may mean that the company will perhaps send a field troupe out as occasion requires, but it does not mean that stories with a setting in Bermuda are wanted. They have these and are making them. They are likely to want almost anything else.

10. Certain publications purport to offer a monthly list of wants. The requirements may change, and often do, while the magazine is passing through the press. This week a company may want only two reel domestic stories. It may happen that ten will be purchased next week and when the announcement is made the demand will be for some other form. The only way to work will be to follow the company's general style and offer your stories, trusting to luck that they will be what is wanted at the moment. If your stories are good but not suitable, then the Editor may suggest in a note that he is in the market for certain styles. If he writes you that he is in need of two part heart-interest stories and you have none, do not send him half a dozen five reel adventure stories and the explanation that you have no two part stories on hand. Either write some or wait a little and offer something else.

11. Here again the competent writer suffers from the overeager beginner. It was the practice a few years ago to send word to the trade papers of any special need, but it was found that the announcement that a particular company was in need of one reel comedies might precipitate an avalanche of everything else. It was argued that here was a company in need of something. It was buying. At once a certain type of author unloaded everything not actually in the hands of some other concern. On one occasion a single announcement in one paper to the effect that there had been radical changes in a certain corporation brought out in six days more than seven thousand manuscripts of from the half reel length up to thirty parts of two reels each, and of the lot not a full dozen were purchased. Almost always the announcement that a company has changed Editors will precipitate a flood of stories: sometimes fifteen or twenty from the same author, every one of which had been rejected earlier by the previous Editor. This process known as "dumping," has caused Editors to become wary and they announce their wants only to those they feel will not abuse the information.

12. Send out only your best. Send out what seems to be in demand, and do not attempt a wholesale business unless you are reasonably certain that scripts are wanted in carload lots.

13. You will need to keep some form of record and this record

should show the name of the story, its character, the companies to which it has been sent and the manner of its disposal. The simplest form is any cheap memorandum book in which you write the title of a story at the top of each page. Below you record its travels. A two cent memorandum book will serve you for some time, but some form of loose leaf book or, better still, a card index, will be more convenient. Perhaps the most convenient form is that shown here. This is the ordinary three by five inch catalogue card costing ten cents a hundred. These cards, an index of twenty-five guide cards and a wooden or tin box to contain the outfit, sells for about half a dollar. The face of the card shows the entire record of the transaction.

126- Fate Leads the Way.	2-r d.
Edison- Jan. 3	Feb. 18
Vitagraph- Feb. 19	Feb. 24
Selig- Feb. 24	Mar. 2
Lubin- Mar. 5	
Accepted Mar. 19.	\$40
Paid Mar. 24	

A Card Record for Keeping Track of Manuscripts.

14. This story was a two reel drama. It was the one hundred and twenty-sixth story written and was submitted to Edison, Vitagraph, Selig and Lubin, being purchased by the latter concern for forty dollars on March 19th and paid for five days later. When it was written and sent to its first port of call, it was filed under Edison. Later it was taken into the Vitagraph division and in turn to the Selig, Lubin, Accepted and Paid division. In use in the card file the alphabet guides are turned around to present their blank faces to the front. On these are written the names of the releasing companies with which the author hopes to do business. The first card is labeled "Live" and in front of this are placed the cards for all stories that are in the author's hands but which he expects to fix up and send out again presently. These cards are kept in the front where they will be always in sight as a reminder. Back of the live cards come the cards with the studio names and behind this the guides read "Accepted," "Paid," "Dead." As soon as the Lubin com-

pany announced its acceptance of the story the card was taken from the Lubin compartment and after being dated was placed in the "Accepted" division. Had it remained long there it would have suggested the propriety of making inquiry of the company as to whether the signed release slip had been received by them. As it was, the check came back promptly, so the card is properly marked and placed in its numerical place in the file. At the same time, if this is your first sale, you take a blank card and write the name of the company on it. Then below you write the number of the story and the date. In time these cards, which remain in their proper compartment, will show you just what you have sold to the company in question, and the average price. Reference to the number will locate the card for additional particulars. If you abandon the hope of selling the story you put it away and slip the card into the "Dead" division. Some authors put a card into each company compartment on which is entered each story sent to the company with date of mailing and return. This is supposed to show about how long it takes a company to pass on a script. It scarcely pays to enter into a too elaborate system of bookkeeping. The advantage of the card system over the memorandum or even the loose leaf book is that you can change the cards from place to place without difficulty. Another form of card entry is shown later in this chapter.

15. Having recorded your script, you are ready to mail it out. For this purpose you will need envelopes. Most authors prefer manila or kraft to a cheap grade of white envelopes, the fibres of which are rotted by the bleaching agent employed. If your script is not very long, it is possible to use the envelopes known to the trade as nines and tens, but it is very much better to use tens and elevens since a script must be folded with extreme care if it is to be placed in a number nine envelope. The tens and elevens permit some latitude. The number ten envelope is nine and one-half by four and one-eighth inches and the eleven is large enough to cover this. Your script is folded and placed within a number ten envelope which you have addressed to yourself. On this you place one or more stamps. If you are on a rural route you should prepay the postage in full to save the carrier trouble, or you can deposit this overdue postage with him in advance. The envelope should carry at least one two-cent stamp to move it in case of rejection, and it should have your address clearly written in good black ink or else printed on. If your script is accepted, the envelope may be used for the return of the release slip. If you inclose loose stamps instead of affixing them to the envelope, do not complain if your story goes out with ten cents and comes limping back with only a two cent stamp. Lick or lose your stamps as you prefer.

16. This return envelope, containing your script, is placed *unsealed* into the larger envelope with the loose flap toward the bottom of the eleven, which will reduce the chance that the letter opener will cut through the return. Do not wrap the envelope around the script

or permit it to be creased in any way. A fold may become a rent before the script gets back home. This larger, or going, envelope must be sealed and must be legibly addressed. The best form of address is:

**Editor of Photoplays
Union Film Company,
1153 Union Boulevard,
New York City**

Unless you know the Editor well enough to call him by his first name, do not address him by name. He may be gone by the time your script lands. You are dealing with a company and not with an individual. This going envelope **MUST** be fully stamped at the rate of two cents for each ounce or fraction of an ounce.

17. If you have no beam scale, take your letter to the post office and ascertain the exact rate. Many companies will not accept letters on which the postage is underpaid. In stamping your mail, remember that the letter that weighs more than one ounce and less than two is to be paid for at the rate of two cents for each ounce or part and not at the rate of one cent for each half ounce. A letter is two cents or it is four cents or six, never three or five. To split ounces is to advertise that you are so absolutely new at the trade of authorship and so ignorant of things in general that every well-informed person is supposed to know that it cannot possibly be supposed you are possessed of sufficient intelligence to write a worthwhile story.

18. If you weigh and stamp the letters in your home, it pays to keep a supply of four, six and ten cent stamps instead of plastering six two-cent stamps on a six ounce letter. No one may notice this, but if they should—and sometimes they will—then there is the suggestion that you have passed the two-cent stamp stage and are of greater experience.

19. If your manuscript is too bulky to go into a number ten, get an envelope that will permit the script to be folded only once. This must be across the sheet and not the long way of the paper. This will give you an envelope slightly larger than five and a half by eight and a half inches. Such a script is apt to arrive in a poor condition due to the fact that the letter will stand higher in the "pack" than the other letters and so will be tied over on the top of the rest before being wrapped and put into the mail sack. A better plan is to use a photomailer of some sort, but sealing the sides. This may be used for the return envelope and an envelope or merely wrapping paper used for the outside. In any case mark it in large letters "First Class Matter" and pay letter postage.

20. Do not register the letter. This will make trouble at the other end and the receipt for a registered letter is not a receipt for any particular script. It does not give the script an air of impor-

tance to register it. It may strike you that it will impress the Editor, but if he knows about it at all he will know you are a new writer.

21. You can obtain no form of receipt that will be binding upon a company in the eyes of the law. No company is supposed to be responsible for any manuscript placed in its keeping. If it does not advertise for scripts or has given notice through the usual channels that it does not want any, it is perfectly justified in throwing your manuscript into the waste basket, no matter whether or not you inclosed stamps for its return. If they have intimated that they are in the market for scripts, then they are supposed to use reasonable caution to insure the script against willful injury, but if it says it does not want scripts or has not said that it does, your action in thrusting your property into its keeping is unwarranted and unreasonable and you do so at your own risk.

22. Most companies are courteous in their treatment of scripts and some will pay the cost of recopying if the damage to the manuscript is the evident result of carelessness on the part of its employees, but this is a courtesy and not a right. You have something you wish to sell. If you wish to leave it with a prospective purchaser for examination and approval you cannot exact the same responsibility that you can from a warehouse company which you pay to care for your goods. When a company announces that it is in the market for scripts, it does not, in this statement, imply any insurance. It announces a willingness to examine the wares you have to offer and which you leave with them.

23. If you wish to know that a script is in the hands of a company, inclose a postcard, written or in part printed, that carries some such form as this.

Please post on receipt of manuscript.

Your story, "Led by Fate," has been received and will be passed upon in due course.

It is understood that this constitutes no claim against the company.

If you place your address on the face of the card the script clerk has only to drop the postal in the box and very probably will do so.

24. Many companies, but not all, have a custom of sending out postcards if a script is retained for further consideration. This is no more of a receipt than the other. If you should take the matter into court you might be able to collect the cost of copying the carbon, which might take a dollar or so off the court costs you would be compelled to pay. You cannot collect for the script because the company has not used the script. They have merely lost a *copy* of the script. If you have no other copy it is your misfortune, but no concern of theirs.

25. Do not write letters to the Editor. He knows you are sending him your story and that you hope that it will meet with his approval and that you have inclosed a return envelope in case he does not like it. He knows that and this is all he does want to know. It will not interest him that this is the first story you ever wrote and that

the family will be so surprised and pleased. It will thrill him no more to be told that you are trying to work your way through college or any other catch. He will merely wonder if you are lying or not and go on with his reading.

26. Do not try to catch the Editor by putting the sheets in irregular order, by lightly pasting two or three sheets together or any of the other tricks. It is not incumbent on him to read your story and he will not want to do business with a person of such a contemptible mind. If you leave him alone he will read the story, or have it read, to the point where its fitness or unfitness for the uses of that particular studio is made apparent. Beyond that the script does not need to be read. If you go into a fruit store looking for oranges and they have only lemons, you naturally do not sample the lemons to see if they are sweet enough to serve as oranges. You see that the man has not what you want and you go somewhere else. You would call a policeman in if he grabbed you by the arm and sought to argue that he had the "right" to make you taste his lemons to see if they would do. Then by what "right" shall an author require his story to be read if it is clearly unsuitable? It may be good, but if it does not suit the studio needs, its merit is of no avail. The only "right" an author has is to try and sell his stories to those concerns known to be in the market.

27. Once your story is in the mail you can do nothing but wait with such patience as you can command. It may be rather a long wait in some cases, for reasons already explained, but your impatience will not hurry a decision and may precipitate a rejection. There is no good reason why all material not suitable to the needs of the studio should not be returned at once. There is no *good* reason, but if a studio has slipshod methods and you wish to do business with that studio, you must abide by its practices. The buyer makes the rules unless the seller has the market cornered. As a rule the Editor will do the best he can to hurry things along, but he cannot dynamite his employer and a star director to get you quick action on a story. He may be married and have a family to support and he knows a good job when he has one. If you write him nasty letters you will not hurt his feelings but your chances.

28. Perhaps the story is found not suited to the company needs. The story is sent back to you with a printed note to the effect that the Editor thanks you for the pleasure you have given him, that he regrets the story is not immediately available, and that he will be glad to receive more of your work for consideration. This means he does not want your story. That is all it does mean. It is not a "good sign" that he wants to see more of your work. It is a "bad sign" only in that you do not make a sale. The story that accompanies the script may be unspeakably poor or it may be so good that the Editor hates the director or the manufacturer for turning it down, but the same printed form goes with all and covers all.

28. There was a time when Editors used to try to help the novices

by adding a hint on the slip, but a few letters will stop the most kindly-hearted man and curdle the milk of human kindness. Perhaps the Editor has written that the theme is old. He gets a reply that tells him:

This is to inform you that you don't know nothing about stories. This story happened to my mother when she was a little girl and she told it to me. Mr. Smith who runs the opera house here says it is a good story and that Blank films ain't so good anyhow. I warn you that if you steal my story after sending it back I will have the law on you because it is copyrighted and my whole family and Mr. Smith knows it is.

Sometimes there is better punctuation, but even persons of apparent culture will dispute the fact with equal force though in polite phrase. Naturally the Editor abandons his efforts to teach, though he will watch the work of the competents and give a hint now and then as to studio wants. If he is wise he will stop there even with the competents.

29. If the script still seems to you to be good, and you can see no improvements you can make, send it to the next most promising company and keep it going. If you make material changes so that the story is practically new, you may, after a lapse of time, send it over the route again, calling attention to the changes made since it was last seen. Do not offer it as new. Editors have uncanny memories for stories. They do not usually remember plots, but they will recognize a plot if it comes in again. Some writers stick to a story until they sell it. Marc Edmund Jones aims to sell a full hundred per cent, but as the card for one of his stories shows, he

The Siren		Vitagraph, Sept. 8th., 1915	
Was She Justified?	Oct. 25th. '11	No.	4
The Double Standard	Aug. 13, '12	Sale	46
When Standards Clash	Apr. 4, '13		
The Appearance of Circumstances	12-11-13		
She Would a Siren Be!	Sold \$25.00		

The Jones card showing the various changes in title and the repeated submissions. The top line is added when the story is released.

may completely rewrite it not once but several times. This is an actual card from his catalogue and by no means an unusual one. The story was first shown as the tale of an innocent young girl who compromised herself that she might win the man she loved and who would not propose because he felt that she was too good for him. The second form moderated this slightly—and the third brought out a brand new development. As a clean comedy the story sold.

30. If you can do nothing more with your story, you turn it into the morgue and place the card in the dead section. You may revive it some day or you may take parts for other stories. You should keep all of your material, for you cannot tell when the despised story may become useful.

31. If you make a sale you will seldom receive a check with the acceptance. The company will more probably send you a release slip. This must be signed in the presence of two witnesses and some even require a notarial seal. This slip is partly an assignment of copyright rights if any exist or the right to copyright if there has been no entry. It is also an affirmation that the story is of your own invention and that you have the right to dispose of it. If it can be shown that a company acted in good faith in making a story from a manuscript that was taken from copyrighted material they cannot be prosecuted with the same rigor that they could on an intentional offense. The company does not accuse you of having stolen the story you offer, but as a precaution all stories are signed for. Where a story has been taken from another source, the writer who signs such a slip can be prosecuted for obtaining money under false pretenses if intention can be proved.

32. Some authors warmly resent this supposed attack upon the honesty of their motives, but older hands know that it is not an aspersion on the person to whom it is sent and that it is a very necessary precaution when dealing with so many unknown writers. There are frequent charges that the studio steals scripts but little comment is made on the thousands of stolen stories that are sent into the studios—and sent right back again.

33. Your slip, signed and witnessed, is returned to the Editor and you wait for your check. Ten days plus the time spent in the mail both ways should be sufficient, but wait two full weeks before asking about it and then be polite and give the Editor the benefit of the doubt. Do not demand instant payment or talk about your lawyer. Say:

Editor,
Union Film Co.,
New York City.

Dear sir: On April first I mailed you a signed release slip for my story, "We Two and Ben." As no check has been received, I am writing to ask if the release has been received by you. If it has been lost in the mails I shall be glad to sign another if you will have a duplicate sent.

Very truly,

A. AUTHOR.

Do not suggest that he is a thief and the servant of a thief. Most companies have a watchdog of the treasury who has a permanent case of writer's cramp. You are entitled to your money and should have received it, but it will get you nowhere to demand where a request will serve as well. If you do not receive your money within thirty days make one more effort. Write:

Cashier,
Union Film Company,
New York City.

Dear sir: On April first I returned to your company a release slip for my story, "We Two and Ben." No check for the same has been received. Will you please give this matter your immediate attention.
Very truly,

A. AUTHOR.

If you receive no reply to this letter, do not waste further time or postage. The company evidently does not meet its obligations. You will not care to deal with them in the future. Turn the matter over to an attorney for collection.

34. Although you have submitted your story "at usual rates," you do not thereby legally bind yourself to accept whatever the company sees fit to send and a legal title does not pass to the company until you have accepted their money or have cashed their check. If the payment is small you do not have to accept it, but it is better to do so than to get the reputation of being a troublemaker. If you are offered twenty dollars and you think that you should receive at least twenty-five, it is better to take the twenty and mark a price on scripts that you send them later. On the other hand, if the company offers you five dollars for a reel, write them that you supposed that they paid in accordance with custom and return the check. Simply say:

Stinger Film Co.,
New York City.

Dear sirs: I am returning herewith the check for five dollars sent me for my story, "The Laborer and His Hire." This story was submitted at usual rates, but in the belief that you were paying usual rates and not such insignificant sums. Please either send a check for \$25 or make an immediate return of my manuscript.

Very truly,

A. AUTHOR.

If the company gets nasty and intimates you are holding them up because you know that the script is made, advise them that if they use the property of others before acquiring title it is no concern of yours. One company bought a large stock of scripts for a dollar a reel, and took a pride in the fact. Even the idea for a one reel story should be worth ten dollars if it is worth anything at all and the idea for a three reel plot cannot be worth less than twenty-five dollars. If you offer stories at usual rates be willing to take a minimum, but do not permit yourself to be swindled.

35. If you receive no news of your script and it has been out eight weeks or more, it is permissible to make inquiry. Be polite. Do not hint darkly at prosecution. Write:

Editor,
Union Film Co.,
New York City.

Dear sir: On March nineteenth I sent to your company my story, "A Ghost of Greysides." Not having heard from it, and knowing the uncertainty of the mails, I am writing to ask if the same has been received by you. If it has not, I shall be pleased to supply you with a fresh copy.

Very truly,

A. AUTHOR.

If the Editor has the time he will reply to this, but if, as sometimes happens, he is falling behind in his work for want of assistance, and is receiving hundreds of similar letters, he will not reply to the letters but will spend his time getting the scripts through the office. A stamped and addressed return envelope should accompany your inquiry, but this does not entitle you to a reply. That two-cent stamp places the Editor under no moral or legal obligation.

36. If you have waited three months without word from the studio, and the evidence suggests that you never will, make a formal demand for action. Here you are justified in writing more firmly. You will not continue to do business with this company, so say:

Editor,
Stinger Film Co.,
New York City.

Dear sir: On the tenth of August I sent you a manuscript, "Bound by Oath," for your consideration. Three months have elapsed with no word from you, nor have I received any reply to my inquiries of September fifteenth or October ninth. You will please either return the manuscript or send a check by the end of the current month.

Very truly,

A. AUTHOR.

This letter should be registered and at the time of registry you ask the registry clerk for a return receipt. This is not the receipt he will at once hand you, but a card signed by the person who receives your letter on behalf of the company.

37. If no reply is received by the end of the month, you make a formal withdrawal of the script in these terms:

Stinger Film Co.,
New York City.

Dear sirs: Please take notice that I herewith withdraw from submission my story, "Bound by Oath," which has been in your possession since about the tenth of August. This story will be offered elsewhere and you will be held strictly accountable for any use you may make of the manuscript copy in your possession. Very truly,

A. AUTHOR.

You will note that this is addressed to the company and not to the Editor on the proposition that a letter not specifically addressed must

be conveyed by the company to the persons most concerned. It is well to let one or two witnesses see that this is the letter you inclose in the envelope addressed to the company. You will, of course, keep a carbon copy, and you will register the letter and "demand" a return receipt. Give the company time to reply to this, then copy the carbon and send out the new original.

38. Precisely the same form of letter as above should be sent to the last known address of a company that has gone out of business. It may be that the letter cannot be delivered, in which case you retain the letter to prove that you have complied with the formalities. Then if some dishonest employee has taken the manuscripts and put them to his own use, you can show that you made an effort to comply with the formalities. Many companies fail to keep going long enough to realize on their investment, the capital being too small to let them continue until the returns come in. If they become bankrupt, there is generally an upset condition and there is no one to see to the return of the manuscripts.

39. This naturally leads to the suggestion that the safest plan is to deal only with known and established companies having an outlet for their product. It should not be necessary to offer such advice, but it is more than necessary as things stand, for some writers will send out their work to any concern having "film" as part of its corporate title. Even the "junk" dealers, the men who make a business of buying and selling second hand reels and who have to go to some regular exchange if they want to treat their eyes to the sight of a film in decent condition, get all sorts of scripts. They advertise in the trade papers that they sell second hand film. The advertisement should clearly show that they are dealers in and not makers of film, but they are called the Occidental Film Company, and so the authors rush their stories in. Some of these companies do not know enough to send stories back.

40. The "wildcat" companies are just as bad. A director out of a job meets a man who has some money and a belief that there is a fortune in the film business. A company is formed. When the backer's funds are exhausted the company goes out of existence again unless another moneyed man can be found. Such companies naturally do not pay for scripts. They either offer to pay on release or ignore the author's letters. No reputable and financially solid company offers to pay on release. It can afford to pay on acceptance. Any such offer should be viewed with suspicion.

41. If you do not market intelligently you have only yourself to blame. You are in the position of the grocer who extends credit to a person whom he knows to be unworthy of credit. He is taking a gambling chance of getting his money or some of his money. If you desire to gamble with your scripts, it is your privilege, but if you lose do not advertise your foolishness by asking for sympathy.

42. You are at liberty to offer a script "at usual rates" or to state a price. Each method has its advantages. At usual rates you may

be paid a few dollars less than you expect. On the other hand you may be willing to drop five or ten dollars from your stated price to make a sale and may lose a sale through the fact that your price is too high. There is also a chance that you will be paid twenty-five dollars, your asking price, for a story a company would be quite willing to pay fifty for. In the long run it is probable that you will do better by not pricing your scripts until you reach that point where your work is in such a demand that you can raise your prices well above the usual rates.

43. Do not auction off your script. Practical men are unable to fathom the debased mentality that can evolve such a letter as this:

Union Film Co.,
New York City.

Dear sirs: I inclose my latest and best story, "In the Knick of Time." This will make one of the Finest Storys ever shown. I have sent copies to the Stinger, The Jake, the Smith, the Cracker and the Contrast. The best offer received by me by October first will take the script. You will not be permitted to make a second bid after that, so name your Highest Price now. Respectfully,

A. I. DIOT.

No one wants the sort of script that such an ass will write, and it would merely serve to entertain the Editor for a moment were it not that the constant recurrence of this idiotic scheme is one of the points that confirm manufacturers and Editors in their adherence to the staff writer. It hurts the innocent and helps to retard the advance of the free lance in general.

44. Do not send out the carbon of your script and do not send out two or more ribbon copies at the same time. If two companies accept the same script and you have to explain to one that you have sold to the other, you will presently be unable to make any sales at all. A company may send you a release slip and put the story in work. If two companies do this, one must sustain a loss. They are supposing that you know the ethics of your business and are trusting to your intelligence. The carbon copy sent is always suggestive of this procedure, and will be ignored. If your original is lost, copy your carbon that you may have a ribbon copy to send. A ribbon copy is nothing more than a copy made with a typewriter ribbon and not with carbon paper.

45. When you have arrived at a proper point of progress and feel that you are doing worth while stories, make a careful survey of the field. Study the style of the various companies and decide upon those making a specialty of stories of the general type you write, or select those with which you prefer to do business. Make not only a first, but a second and third and perhaps a fourth and fifth choice. Send only your very best stuff to this selected list, starting with the first. If it comes back from there send to the next and so on. If you exhaust the list, send to other companies, but concentrate your efforts on the top names. It may be months before you get even a

nibble, but if you are writing the sort of stuff that company wants and send in a *good* story every week or two, even if none are bought, you are making an impression on the Editor and in time he will show you where you fail to suit them and seek to guide you into the right course. He may not be interested in a story now and then. You must show him that you can continue to do good work before he will be interested.

46. Almost any person of average intelligence can turn out one or two good plots. Editors know this, and it is the sole reason why they wade through the piles of scripts that yield so small a result. Always the next story may be a good one. But the Editor also knows that this good story may be the first and the last the author will ever write. He may take the story but he will waste no time on that writer until he has been shown that the story is not a chance hit but an average of the author's output. Then he will use his best endeavors to advance the good workman.

47. If he does, cultivate patience and courtesy. If the Editor is moved to tell you that the plot is too weak, do not reply that he is blinder than a day-old dog, or suggest that he see an oculist or invite him to a place where eyeglasses will melt. See if you cannot view the story with his eyes. If you are trying to please him, you must adapt yourself to his point of view. One young author once complained that a certain Editor was unduly finical in his objections; that he wrote page letters about every story he took. The Editor was asked about it. "I'll have a place here on the staff in a couple of months," he explained. "I'm training him for it." Welcome suggestion, appreciate criticism, and profit by it.

48. Play the game fairly. If you see a story on the screen that you know is yours, do not call the Editor a thief. Write him a courteous letter and point out that for some reason no check was sent you. You will feel small indeed if your abuse is met with the courteous reply that they made the story that they might obtain your address as you trusted to the address on the return envelope and had none on your script. Every studio has hundreds of scripts without return envelopes or returned as incorrectly addressed. You may have forgotten.

49. You are bound to sustain some losses, but what business is there that shows all profits? The butcher, the baker, the physician and the lawyer all have their bad debts, and if a lawyer cannot collect his own fees occasionally you should not expect to be paid for all you do. Now and then a script will be lost in the mails, perhaps in a train wreck or damaged in a pneumatic tube, perhaps a dishonest employee will steal your idea now and then, or perhaps you will sell to a concern that has no intention of paying for anything. You must learn through experience, and sometimes the experience is bitter, but you are no more badly placed than any other professional man. You must experiment until you know the sheep from the goats. After you have them tagged if you play with the goats, you must expect to be

butted over the fence now and then. It is the habit and nature of the goat, as you should know.

50. Go into the business knowing that it is one requiring a long and tiresome preparation, and be prepared to spend that time and patience.

51. Know that it is a business unusually abundant in vexatious delays and prepare to encounter these delays.

52. Realize in advance that there are all sorts and conditions of men and do not feel surprise or anger when you encounter the boors.

53. Play the game as the veterans play it. If you feel that Editors are thieves, do not try to do business with them. If you feel that you will not receive fair treatment, do not subject yourself to this treatment. Do not demand any fancied rights. You have none. The seller has no other right than to offer his wares. When you can write good scripts you can rub the editorial countenance into the dust of the road, so through your application advance the day. If you get ten dollars where you think you should be paid twenty, learn to write a script for which the Editor will offer you fifty and will be glad to pay a hundred, if he has to.

54. And lastly remember that if you can write stories that are wanted, you can sell them, and on top of your stamp box write:

More stories are sold with patience than with postage.

(2.XIX:16 XXIV:5-7) (7.LI:9) (26.II:7 XXVIII:5 XLIII:3)
 (27.II:14) (29.VIII:13 LXVI:4) (35.II:15) (42.XXVI:13)
 (45.XXIV:7) (46.XXIII:3) (47.II:16).

CHAPTER LXVI

EDITORS AND OTHERS

FAR too many authors make the mistake of trying to press too hard any seeming advantage. Others waste time and invention that might better be spent in plotting in trying to devise schemes for obtaining a supposed "pull" with the powers that be. Still others cherish the belief that there is some short cut to success, known to successful writers but which they jealously guard—and spend more time in the quest of this than they do in practice work.

2. Editors are persons of good literary judgment who are employed by film manufacturing companies to overlook the manuscripts submitted and select from these such as may be used for production. They are not hired to conduct correspondence courses in script writing nor to act as disbursers of their employers' charitable donations. You are impertinent and offensive when you argue that an Editor should divert his attention from his duties to impart to you the information you are supposed to possess before you presume to approach him.

3. Most Editors are men and women who have risen from the ranks and who have gained their preferment as a result of study and application. They realize that they have benefited by the advice of others in their student days, and are willing to pass along this obligation to others, but they prefer, and are entitled, to select those whom they will thus aid and themselves will determine the merits of the various applicants.

4. It is useless to write and ask an Editor that he favor you by telling why he sent back a certain script. Probably he has forgotten the story. He will remember if he sees it again, but he cannot recall, from the hundreds of scripts he handles, one particular story that gained his passing notice three weeks before. To return the script, that he may refresh his memory, will not serve. He is there to purchase manuscript, not to criticise it. He has all he can do to keep pace with his work, and while he does take much of his spare time to give suggestions to contributors, he makes these suggestions only in directions from which he may expect some return in stories suited to his needs.

5. You will probably receive no reply to such a request, nor does the inclosure of a stamp or a stamped return envelope alter the situation, for a stamped envelope imposes no obligation whatever upon your correspondent. You have sent it in the hope of encouraging a reply. It is a courtesy that must be shown if you have any hope of a reply, but it is not in any sense a guarantee that you will receive one.

6. Your relations with the Editor are no more than this: you have something to sell. He may wish to buy. You ask him to inspect your wares. He does so. If he says he does not want them, the matter ends. You shove into the gutter the importunate newsboy who seeks to force his papers on you. You never realize that your overeagerness may fill the Editor with the same desire summarily to get rid of you.

7. If the Editor does make a suggestion, do not sit down and write him a long letter, telling him all about yourself, your past history, your future hopes and wind up with an additional page telling him how much his seven word suggestion has helped you, how you now see all your faults and will correct them, and how his encouragement has put new heart into you. Do not do that *or any part of it*. Prove it, without words, by profiting by the advice. He is trying to help you that you may give him the sort of scripts he wants. Thank him by trying to give him just what he wants. Then when you send it in you can add a line very briefly thanking him for his suggestion and expressing the hope that he will find the inclosed story more to his liking. In the course of time a pleasant correspondence may develop, but it never will if you grow so verbose in your writings that the Editor dreads to open your letters, knowing that there will be one third script and two thirds personal pronoun.

8. Above all things, do not suppose that you can "roast" an Editor

into taking notice. A surprisingly large number of persons think they are such clever writers that they can gain interest in this manner. One might do it, but where hundreds try, none will succeed.

9. It is a mistake, too, to suppose that an Editor will take a greater interest in a script addressed to himself personally and not to his office. He may not even see these, but will glance at the envelope and, seeing that the script is not from a writer he knows, pass it over to the clerk unopened. Could he be flattered by such an obvious device he would not be sufficiently intelligent to hold the position he does. Here again a single script might appeal, but hundreds come in and the implied compliment becomes a bore, yet some writers spend a lot of postage writing to the papers for a list of Editors.

10. There is another angle to this. The company may pass on to an Editor who has left its employ all mail addressed to him. This will cause a delay. One man who held a position only a few weeks continued to receive mail addressed to himself for several months thereafter, though his retirement had been widely advertised at the time. That may involve not alone delay, but loss. The script may be returned to you, to be sent out again, or the person may have left his boarding place without giving a new address and the script may lie forgotten for months.

11. Manuscripts addressed to a director will be given to the director. He may turn them into the script room or he may hold them in his desk or his pocket for months. He cannot purchase scripts save through the manuscript department and he may not care to be bothered with the stories. He is seldom apt to be flattered.

12. It does not help to address some favorite player with a script suited to his or her style of acting. Players are more apt to be appealed to by praise of their work, but they have nothing whatever to do with the purchase of manuscript and seldom have a voice in the choice of plays in which they are to appear. If they turn the script over to the proper department they know they will be suspected of trying to sell their own stories under another name.

13. Send your script to the manuscript department and not to any individual. To seek to sell through a director or player is like trying to sell fish to the restaurant patron instead of approaching the steward. To address one of the high officials of the company is even more futile. He does not want to be bothered.

14. There are even some short-sighted persons who think it will help to offer the Editor a commission on stories accepted. That sort of an Editor, should he obtain a position, seldom lasts long enough to make good his promises. Most Editors will resent this insinuation against their honesty and feel that a person who would make such an offer is also dishonest enough to steal plots.

15. All authors have many demands made upon them for assistance. The leading writers are actually besieged by people who say they want help but who in reality are merely seeking the short cut they feel

must exist. They cannot be made to understand that a writer is successful only through long and careful study. They are assured that there must be some more speedy means of attaining success than hard work and that only the masonry of the craft and a desire to hold the advantage keeps this short cut a secret.

16. As a matter of fact, a knowledge of the personal histories of all of the writers of merit of today fails to reveal one single instance of a success based upon other than hard work and long continued study. There is not a single writer of even moderate success who has not put in from two to ten years of hard study of photoplay or general writing. There is not one single instance of an overnight success nor a single instance of a lasting success made by other than a person who is not only educated, but well educated. This does not necessarily mean a college degree. It does mean brain development and breadth of mental grasp through some form of study.

17. No writer can tell you anything that is not to be found in this text book. No writer will or can spare the time for the personal instruction of strangers, and most of them avoid the seeker after advice because they know that ninety-nine times in each hundred the inquisitor does not want to be told to study and practice, but wishes to be told how checks may be obtained at once.

18. That a writer is successful does not give you any more right to approach him than you have to approach the passer-by with a demand for ten dollars on no better grounds than that you need the money. Make your own fight. Ground yourself in the fundamentals, *and if you deserve advice and help it will come to you unasked.*

CHAPTER LXVII

CENSORSHIP OF FILMS

AT present most American-made pictures as well as those made abroad and released on regular dates are submitted to the National Board of Review, which is in no sense an official body, being composed of delegates from the various civic societies forming The People's Institute, of New York City. The board derives its sole power from the manufacturers whose films are thus submitted. There is absolutely nothing to prevent the distribution and exhibition of a film not passed by the Board save the common sense reason that experience has shown that a picture so disapproved will be stopped by the police in many cities, not so much because it has not been passed by the Censors as because it is unsuitable for display in theatres so largely frequented by young people.

2. The board was brought into being at the request of the exhibitors of New York City, and has been maintained largely through the contributions of the manufacturers, because it has been found that

the board renders valuable service in checking ultra-sensationalism that eventually must react against the maker of such films.

3. If you will notice the censorship tag you will see that it states the film has been "passed" by the board. At the start some manufacturers used a tag announcing that the film had been "approved" by the board, but it was explained that the board passed much material of which it did not approve and the wording was changed.

4. That alteration is the whole story of the board. It aims at the highest ideals, but it passes much that it does not approve of, since the material is not vicious. Its rulings and suggestions are as liberal as is consistent with common sense and it lays down no arbitrary laws, but seeks to consider the act and the reason rather than the act alone. The picturing of a wanton crime will be forbidden where precisely the same crime will be passed if the commission of that crime is necessary to point the lesson that crime must inevitably find its punishment. A crime performed in a moment of passion is more apt to be passed than a deed done in cold blood. A crime suggested may be passed where the crime shown in detail would be disapproved.

5. In general the board bars from stories all pictures based on crime and the commission of crime, all immorality and immoral acts, the lewd, the lascivious, the vicious, the cruel, the irreverent and the irreligious. But while these factors are all barred, many of them may be used if done with proper care—if used to point a moral, lascivious and irreligious themes excepted. These are always barred.

6. If Smith shoots Brown in cold blood to get the money that he knows Brown carries and if this act is performed merely to throw a little sidelight on the character of Smith, the deed will be barred. Precisely the same action might be allowed if the object was to show that having killed Brown, Smith, though escaping the law, found a punishment more terrible in the tortures of his own conscience.

7. But it is not probable that the board would pass a film showing the actual murder, because it is not necessary to show this. It is sufficient to show the two men quarreling. There is a cut to some other scene and we come back to Smith standing over Brown with a smoking revolver in his hand.

8. The woman who wantonly gives herself up to a life of shameful pleasure is not regarded as the fit subject for a story to place before young people. The woman who is led astray and who repents and is forgiven will point a moral.

9. It is best to avoid the underworld and the higher walks of crime. Saloons and other places of evil repute should not be shown or else shown so briefly as to carry small effect. Keep away from the atmosphere of crime and debauchery and avoid as much as possible the showing of fights, burglaries, or any other infraction of the laws. The juvenile mind is receptive and observant. We question whether they learn much in the picture theatres that they have not already learned outside, but it is easier to blame it on photoplays than any-

thing else and so photoplays have come in for an undeserved bad name. It should be the aim of the author to restore the good name.

10. If you write clean and decent stories, you do not have to bother about the Board of Review. If you want to revel in crime and bloodshed you must be careful to keep the actions of your character within the unwritten law. And mind you, merely because you *say* that your moral is a good one it does not follow that the story will pass. It must *be* a good one.

11. Much is seen on the screen that might better have been left undone, but it must be remembered that not all films are submitted to the censors and they should not be held responsible for the lapses in pictures over which they have no jurisdiction.

12. In general they aim not to wholly suppress the showing of scenes of crime but to reduce these to a minimum and to permit them only when they are used for some rightful purpose. There are always to be found men who are willing to take advantage of the taste for sensationalism and who will present a few salacious subjects which are snapped up by certain types of exhibitors who, like the makers of such subjects, see the immediate dime rather than the ultimate dollars that a cleaner program will assure. It was films such as these that helped to create a demand for the censorship. It injures the business in general and always reacts upon the makers in the long run.

13. It should be the aim of the author not so much to evade the censorship as to avoid the necessity for being censored. If the author will be guided by common decency and a liking for the clean he will have little trouble on the score of censorships, though some of the local restrictions are wonderful in their logic or rather lack of it. Write of the clean things of life and keep out of the dives in your stories as you would in real life and you will not receive your manuscripts back with "Would not pass the Censors" written as the reason.

14. Again, it may seem to you that material is passed that is no worse than the incidents in your story. You wonder why the board will pass this material and not yours. The reply is that the board has not refused to pass your story. The Editor is either afraid that it will not, or fears that you are so close to forbidden ground that the director may, in the production, carry the incident completely across the border. Studio writers who have means of knowing the rulings of the board on other submissions can come closer to the line than the outside author who is not in a position to come into possession of these facts. Permit the studio authors to take the chances and make your own stories so safe that the question of allowance will not arise. This does not mean that your stories must be puerile. It merely means that they must be clean.

15. The rulings of the board are given on the first print of the film and before the cut negative is sent to the printing room. Therein lies the value of the National Board. It helps the manufacturer to decide just what will pass before fifty to one hundred prints of the objectionable parts are made. After the prints are made and dis-

tributed, the local or police censorships in some cities make their own rulings, and these, being made by persons less well qualified to judge, may result in all crime scenes being cut out instead of merely those which are without excuse. Therefore, when a story is returned to you with the statement that it will not pass, it may mean the local censorships rather than the National Board.

(12.XXXIX:6) (13.XX:8).

CHAPTER LXVIII

COPYRIGHT AND COPYRIGHTED STORY

PROBABLY no question is more frequently asked by the novice than just how far it is possible to go in using the material of a story protected by copyright.

2. Sometimes, indeed generally, the question seems to be asked in all sincerity, but all too often the question is phrased so clearly that it reads, "Just how far may I proceed in stealing the work of another brain and get away with it?"

3. The answer in either case is simple. You may derive inspiration but not material from the work of another. Just what inspiration means is a matter between you and your conscience, since it is not easy to draw an exact line that may not be crossed.

4. Suppose that you read a story of a girl who has married the wrong man. He treats her brutally. She shoots him, not altogether in self-defense. The purpose of the book is to argue that a .32 bullet for the man is better than an arsenic tablet for the woman.

5. If you write of a woman who marries the wrong man and shoots him, you've taken too much from the story. Suppose you argue that she should have left him, should have tried harder to reform him or, in short, anything but killing him. The further you get away from the story, the safer you are from a charge of theft. You'll probably stay within the legal rights. But suppose that this story gave you the idea of a similar match in which the birth of a child drove the pair still further apart but its death united them.

6. In such a case you can take your check with a clear conscience, for you have not stolen the idea. You have merely given an impetus to your own imagination through reading the product of another imagination. That, perhaps, is the surest test. If you work your imagination and direct it rightly, you have produced instead of copying.

7. You can take the start or the finish or perhaps take a part of the middle and use it for a start. Once you have a start, if you possess imagination, the rest is easy, but if you have no imagination you cannot write photoplays and it is useless to try and become a literary burglar because your sins will find you out.

8. There is a commercial as well as moral side to this matter. You

may be able to sell a few stolen stories but you'll soon become known for a thief and have that reputation precede you into studios you never visited. More than one promising career has been wrecked by taking too much inspiration.

9. If the foregoing paragraphs do not apply to you they are not meant for you, but so many take up photoplay without previous literary experience that it seems to be necessary to lay down these facts with seemingly undue emphasis for the benefit of a few.

10. Now for copyright itself. If you have produced a play, a book, a lecture, a painting, a song, a statue, a drawing, a map, or a design and fear to publish the same lest others copy your idea, the government says in effect: "Go ahead and dedicate your work to the public, then give a copy to the Register of Copyrights. If John Smith reproduces your work he will have to stop it and give you all the money he has made, because we have enacted a set of laws to that effect. All you have to do is to register your work to give notice that this is what you claim protection for."

11. Now you can give your work to the world through publication, and if anyone infringes your rights you have a clean-cut set of laws exactly defining your rights, but first you must publish that work or "dedicate it to the public" as the law reads, and next you must give to the copyright office one or more copies, according to the classification of the article, and say in effect "This is what I claim protection for."

12. If you claim the copyright protection without registering the article then you not only have no protection, since you cannot prove in law that you wanted to protect it, but you are liable to a fine for having claimed copyright without having actually copyrighted the article.

13. You can copyright a book, because you have printed that in copies for sale, but you cannot copyright the manuscript of a book because that is not offered to the public, but is offered to a publisher in the hope that he will print it and offer it to the public for you.

14. Your status is precisely that of the author of a book. If you print your photoplay and offer copies for sale, you can claim copyright on the book as a book and the book copyright protects you from any sort of infringement. No one but you or a person authorized by you can make a photoplay production of the published book. If you photograph your story, you can copyright it as a photoplay either as "reproduced in copies for sale" or "not reproduced in copies for sale." and no one can make a photoplay from your script or turn it into a book or a dramatic play. But until you have published that photoplay either as a printed book or a photographic film, you are not entitled to the protection that is offered published works.

15. Mr. Thorvald Solberg, the Register of Copyrights, is one of the most efficient servants in Government employ in that he is constantly striving to give the fullest and most complete service his department can be made to afford. Twice he has urged upon the Congressional

Committee that the manuscript photoplay be admitted to copyright; not that he feels that copyright protection should be needed, but because so many have sought it. Each time the request has been refused, and probably will be refused by successive Congresses, if for no other reason than that the unpublished manuscript is as fully protected by common law as is the published work by Copyright Law.

16. Most authors seem to think that if they could put "Copyrighted" on their scripts it would stop possible thieves. Some of them do announce their work as having been copyrighted when they know perfectly well that it is not copyrighted, thereby rendering themselves liable to punishment.

17. It is one of the kinks of the law that if you announced that your story was copyrighted and then went into court with a suit it would be thrown out under copyright law because it was not copyrighted and thrown out under common law because you said that it had been.

18. In any case all copyright means to you is that you can sue under a definite enactment instead of common law.

19. Unlike the Patent Office, the Copyright Office does not guarantee against the registration of an infringing claim. Two or more persons may register the same book, but since there can be but one legal registration, if you can prove that you are the original author the rights lie with you, only you must go to court and submit to the usual delays and adjournments if you would prove your case.

20. Under the most recent rulings the photoplay has a separate entity in the eyes of the Copyright Office, if it was registered subsequent to the act providing for the copyright of films, dated August 24, 1912. All fiction stories registered since that time are capable of being registered both as dramatic plays and photoplays. Prior to the passage of the act above mentioned, which gave the photoplay a definite status in the Copyright Law, the photoplay rights are held to have passed with the dramatic rights. In other words you may now write a story and copyright it as a book. Under this original copyright you may sell to one person the right to make a dramatic version for the stage and to another the right to adapt the story for the screen, or you may do this work yourself. In each case the holder of such right must file with the Register of Copyright within three months his assignment of such copyright and must enter for copyright such stage or film version when it is ready to be given to the public.

21. If you wish to make an adaptation of the work of another, you must, if that work has been copyrighted, obtain the permission of the holder of the copyright. This is more often the publisher than the author. On works published prior to the date given above, you must purchase the right from the holder of the dramatic rights, if there be such a person distinct from the holder of the general copyright.

22. Copyright holds for twenty-eight years with a right to renew on the part of the holder of the copyright for an additional period of

equal length, or fifty-six years in all. If you have a copy of a book on which the copyright has apparently run out, to judge from the printed copyright notice, you are not excused because of ignorance if the copyright has been extended. It is your business to find out. Inquiry to the Copyright Office will generally bring the desired information.

23. Entry under a single classification covers all rights until they are sub-divided. Entry of a book holds to the title the dramatic and screen rights. If one of these rights is sold, the assignment must be recorded in the Copyright Office within ninety days if it is to stand in law.

24. Photoplays may be copyrighted in three forms—as a book, which covers the general rights; as a photoplay offered in copies for sale, and as a photoplay not offered in copies for sale. The exact wording of the law is “motion pictures” and not “photoplays” since there are other motion pictures than photoplay productions. As a book the story must be printed and bound. As a play in copies for sale two complete prints of the film must be deposited with the Register of Copyrights, who may retain them or, at the option of the Librarian of Congress, stamp them for identification and return them to the person entering them. In the case of plays not offered for sale, a typewritten description of the subject with cuttings from the film for the purpose of identification must be registered. One copy of this description and the cuttings will suffice.

25. To enter any form write the Register of Copyrights, Washington, D. C., asking for a proper form and explaining precisely what you want to register. Return postage is not required, as the cards will be sent under government frank. Fill out the blank and return to the Register with the copies for entry. Except in the case of film, which is not mailable, the postmaster will receive this material for free transmission if it is presented to him with the statement that it is for copyright. It is not sufficient to drop the matter in a mailing chute.

26. Generally the author of a photoplay signs a release of all claims before he receives a check. This covers *all* forms of copyright. If he wishes to retain one or more rights, he should so state on the face of the script when it is submitted for sale, writing “Fiction rights reserved,” or “Dramatic rights reserved,” or else “Fiction and dramatic rights reserved.” It is important that the release slip later sent to be signed shall carry this same exemption in legal form. It is this release slip which serves as the legal contract between you and the manufacturer. It does not matter what you may write on the script. *It is what appears in the release which counts.* Such a reservation, except in the case of well known writers, is apt to act as a bar to sales, since most manufacturers require the right to give the story in fiction form to the magazines and will not buy the photoplay rights alone.

27. It seldom, if ever, pays to purchase the photoplay rights to

books or plays on speculation. Manufacturers prefer to deal direct with the holder of copyrights or an agent.

28. You cannot copyright a title. This is merely an identification and not a part of the literary production. It is the literary production to which copyright protection is extended and not to the title. If you have written a play called, for instance, "He and Her," you cannot prevent, under the copyright laws, the use of that title by another. You can prevent the use of your play, for this you have registered for protection. The title is not a part of the play under the Copyright Act. If, however, your play "He and Her" has made such a success as to give grounds for belief that the second play is an attempt to profit by the success of your play, then you can appeal to common law and probably stop the use of the title.

29. As a rule it does not pay you to invoke copyright protection. All legal action must be at your own cost and this expense will generally amount to more than the value of the script; particularly if you win your suit and the case is appealed.

30. There is too great a tendency to suppose that the word Copyright is a menace the mere appearance of which on a script will have the same tendency upon a thief as the broken glass the voodoo doctor sprinkles upon a wall has upon a negro believer. If it should happen that some one should wish to steal your script he would know that copyright would be but a slight bar. It will not prevent theft to write on your script that it is copyrighted. On the other hand you declare yourself to be a liar if you do so, because all Editors know that typed manuscript may not be copyrighted.

(3.XXIII:23) (21.XLIX:8) (28.XXVII:18).

CHAPTER LXIX

THE STOLEN STORY

SOONER or later—and generally sooner—every author, whether of fiction or photoplay, is bound to ask if Editors are stealing his stories. No matter how experienced a writer may be, there are certain to come times when he is positive that a story has been stolen by some studio to which he sent it.

2. Beyond question there must be some dishonest employees in a business so large, and it is useless to argue that stories are never stolen, but on the other hand the number of these thefts is negligible, and in a greater number of instances the charges are without foundation.

3. You send your story to a studio and it comes back. Presently you find that the company has released, or is about to release, a story identical with your own. You are certain that it is your own and you

talk wildly about suits and all that sort of thing. It may be that an Editor, having to write a story a week as part of his contract, has remembered, consciously or sub-consciously, the idea of your story, but it is far more likely that the Editor found a script he liked and put it in work. It is possible that you and the author of this second story both derived inspiration from the same source and that the other did his work in better fashion. His story was taken because of its development where yours was passed over and forgotten. We have seen in a single week's batch of stories three to five scripts so nearly alike that they might all have been copied from a common source. More than that, perhaps two or three more came in the next week and the next. If any one of these stories had been purchased, possibly fifty other authors would have cried that they had been robbed. They make no allowance for the fact that the idea is commonplace and likely to suggest itself to anyone. They know only that their story is just like that on the screen except a few scenes where the Editor had fixed it up. And that is just where the answer lies. The "fixing up" was done to the same idea by another author more careful or more experienced and his idea sold on that fixing up.

4. A farcical story was written and sent direct to a producer in the field nearly a thousand miles from the studio, the work being done by an author another hundred miles from the home office. The story was produced and immediately another writer declared that she had been robbed as she had sent that story to the studio some time before. Investigation showed that she had sent such a story in after the director had gone south. There was no possibility by which the other author or the director could have seen this script, and the fact was explained to her, but immediately she amended her complaint to add the charge that her idea had been sent the other author, who really had worked over one of his old fiction stories written and published about eight years previously.

5. It is inconceivable that of the thousands of scripts turned out yearly by authors many of whom are not practiced hands at plot devising there should not be much duplication of idea. It may be that your idea has been duplicated by another, but with a better technical development, so that the other is taken where yours is declined. It may be that the other was in work when yours was sent back and that the editor did not advise you of this fact.

6. In time most authors encounter a duplicated story under circumstances that make it impossible that their idea has been stolen. After that they are cured of this hallucination, but few are immune from an attack at some time in their writing experience.

7. Give the Editors the benefit of the doubt. The probabilities are that they are without blame in the matter. No matter what the manager of the picture theatre may tell you, or the man who used to work for a company says, the chances are that neither knows any more about it than you do. You seem to want to have your doubts confirmed and it is easier to say "Yes" than to argue "No."

CHAPTER LXX

SCHOOLS AND AGENCIES

WHERE there is graft there will always be grafters. It seems fitting here to offer a few words of advice as to certain forms of graft. These are chiefly schools and agencies.

2. To anticipate the replies that these institutions will offer, this writer begs a moment of the reader's time for a brief explanation. The schools argue that they are attacked because this writer has a book to sell. This is not so. The writer has a book because he believes that only through a text book can information be cheaply and intelligently conveyed. He has refused to accept a connection with one established correspondence school and any number of offers to finance a school of his own. It has been said that he has revised manuscripts. This was in the nature of an experiment lasting less than two months, and was abandoned when it was found that it could not be done profitably and at the same time with honesty. For several years he criticised manuscripts for a nominal fee, conducting operations at an immediate loss but with a gain in a knowledge of the matters that puzzle the beginners.

3. The fake correspondence school is the most vicious form of graft because it harms not alone those who take the course but also those who merely read the advertising with its specious and misleading statements that "anyone" can learn to write plays, that no literary ability is required, that an income of fifty dollars weekly is at least insured and one glaring offender even advertised (just as the public schools were closing) that any schoolboy of fourteen or over could learn to write plays "in a few hours," and spend a profitable as well as pleasant vacation by giving a small part of each day to the writing and selling of plays. This all appears in newspaper advertising. The literature sent in response to inquiries and to what is inelegantly termed the "sucker list" is even more misleadingly glowing in its assurances, but these assurances are so worded that there is no positive guarantee and therefore the Post Office officials can only wait. One man, now a fugitive from justice, made the mistake of saying that certain Editors were "asking for" instead of being willing to read the scripts of his pupils. One Editor said this was not so. The indictment followed.

4. This sort of advertising spreads broadcast the belief that anyone can write plays and is very largely responsible for the number of illiterates who engage in the work and whose misspelled scripts litter the editorial desks to the detriment of real writers. But not all are illiterate. Many who might, with proper advice, develop into writers, approach the work so carelessly and with such a spirit of contempt that they make no progress. When they fail to make sales they abandon what might have been a profitable career if approached with the proper resolution to persist and win.

5. Most of these schools are frankly fraudulent. The earliest one was started about 1910, and its course, which is being used with slight changes today, was based upon material appearing in some of the magazines devoted to writers and on the instruction sheets then issued by the Vitagraph, Lubin and Essanay companies. This was supplemented by extracts from letters written by Editors in the belief that they were giving aid to some aspirant for fame and with no idea that the matter was to be used for swindling purposes. All of this was made into a semblance of lessons and offered at thirty dollars for the course. It was so immediately successful in a financial way that others took the course and then opened schools of their own, with the same lesson papers. The man referred to in the third paragraph of this chapter even sought to argue with the Post Office Inspector that he was within the law since he was using the course and methods of a Chicago school, and a comparison of the two courses showed that not a line had been changed. It is interesting to note that he had previously served two years in the Federal Penitentiary at Atlanta for engaging in the music publishing swindle.

6. These schools accept as pupils any person who has some money. Generally they will follow up their first letters with an offer of a reduction and the course that started off at thirty dollars, in the height of competition, would drop by degrees to as little as two dollars, though most schools held out for four dollars: two dollars down and two payments of one dollar each as progress was made.

7. Almost all pupils were taken on installment payments, largely because few could offer the complete sum in one remittance. For this reason the letters of criticism were invariably favorable, leading the pupil along, through flattery, to complete the payments. Generally the letters were written from sheets in which paragraphs or sentences were framed that could apply to almost any broad general condition. These paragraphs were numbered and cheap typists wrote the letters from these forms in accordance with the numbers marked. No very close criticism could be given by such methods, but the letters read well, though they were not helpful. At the end of two or three months, in the course of which four or five scripts might have been criticised, the pupil was graduated, sometimes with a diploma, and was turned loose upon the defenseless Editors.

8. One school offered to guarantee the sale of a first manuscript by putting up the price ten dollars and then buying the script for that sum. It was a legal guarantee, but "I positively guarantee that by my method you will sell your first script" did not convey any assurance that succeeding scripts could be sold.

9. In all cases the writer was told he was competent and well qualified. He accepted the assurance, because it was in harmony with his own wishes, and he made no further studies.

10. It is not to be argued that all schools teaching by correspondence are swindles. Some make an effort to give a complete course of instruction and take pains to advise their graduates that further

work is necessary. The value here comes from the criticism that is given.

11. But because a school is honestly conducted it does not follow that it may give value for the money. It may take two or more years to master plotting to the point where good work may be done. Obviously a school cannot devote this time to any one pupil for the money that he can afford to pay. It must show a profit on the twenty or thirty dollar tuition fee and get rid of the pupils as quickly as possible to make room for others. And even where the pupil is assured that his studies have only begun, there is always the feeling of finality that comes with the closing of the course. From no angle can a school course be really helpful unless the instructor can continue to advise his pupil, and this cannot be done at any cost that will be attractive to the pupil.

12. When schools lost attractiveness to the pupil (though they are still fairly well patronized) there came into being the revision bureaus and sales agencies. These conduct a general business, selling, criticizing, typing and revising. The appeal is based on the fatuous belief of the author that it must be something other than the value of the idea that keeps his scripts from acceptance. He turns with eagerness to the revision bureau and sends in his script with a fee. Unless it is hopelessly bad, he is told that revision is needed. This will cost a few dollars and there is a further charge for typewriting the new script. Then an effort may be made to sell the story, but in the long run it generally gets back to the author, who may have had many stories passed through the same course in the meantime, and herein lies the reason for holding a script for so long. It will not do to get the returns back to the author until his enthusiasm begins to wane and he no longer contributes several dollars a month in fees.

13. It is from these revision and typewriting fees that the agency makes its profit. Not one of them could exist for a month or even pay clerk hire from the commissions received from sales, but the revision fees and typing charges sometimes represent large sums and yield a handsome profit to the conductors.

14. The selling systems, where they try to sell, are all wrong, for scripts often come in in lots of from twenty to one hundred, and in one batch of more than eighty that this writer was permitted to examine not a single one was in the style of production obtaining in that studio, though the manager of the company had written that he had selected stories that he knew would appeal to the Editor.

15. If your plot has merit it will sell, no matter what its form, and the studio will make the reconstruction. If a plot has no value, it will not sell, no matter what its form may be. Technique will help *you* to present *your* idea in better form, but it is almost impossible that a revision writer can get from your script any more than the Editor can. The technique must be your own work if it is to show your idea to advantage.

16. The most recent development is an offer to make the film for

you, at your charge, to the end that you may show the story in positive print with a view to selling the negative. This will cost from thirty to forty cents a foot. The negative cannot be sold at that price as a rule. Really good negative commands from sixty cents to a dollar and a quarter a foot when it is of a professional grade of production, but there is such a small demand for outside negative in proportion to the wildcat production that only the very best is purchased and the rest finds no market, even though it may be offered at less than the first cost of the film on which it is imprinted.

17. Avoid all of these traps for the unwary. The best literary agent working under the most advantageous conditions can do little for the author whose work is not already in demand. The real function of the literary agent is to save the highly paid writer the annoyance of going the rounds of the editorial offices. Work of a lesser grade may be accepted for handling, but the agent will not push the stories to the detriment of the more important clients.

18. Until the real success comes the author must cut his own path, and none of these schemes will help. They may hinder progress very materially or completely spoil all chances of success.

(3.I:5 & 11 VII:3 LXII:4 LXXI:9) (4.VII:1 & 9 LXII:5) (5.I:6)
(7.LXIII:2) (15.XXVI:5).

CHAPTER LXXI

PRIZE SCHEMES

GAMBLING is a passion with the greater portion of humanity, and press agents are quick to take advantage of this trait to give publicity to their employers' schemes through the use of prize or contest ideas. Many of these probably are conducted under conditions of absolute fairness, but even where this is true, the schemes can help but few and will injure many. It is hoping too much to believe that this chapter will induce many to keep out of such affairs, but the few who do give heed will save time, avoid worry and give more attention to their regular lines of work.

2. The contest scheme has but two good reasons for its being. One of these is the advertising value of the idea and the other is the fact that better than average material may sometimes be obtained at average prices.

3. All readers of newspapers are familiar with the advertising contest. It is announced that some company will pay five and six figure prices for an idea for a new serial or for the sequel to one about to be presented by them or for the solution of the current release, or perhaps a hundred or a thousand dollars will be offered for a name or a title.

4. There can be offered small objection to the title contest, but

the idea contest, with its startling prize, is so attractive that writers are tempted to drop their regular work and concentrate upon the contest. Generally the current serial must be watched, which will take time, and the mind of the contestant is so filled with thoughts of the prize that regular work is neglected. The same amount of time and energy put into systematic work might lead to valuable results, but there is little to be gained from the plotting practice that is all directed toward one end, though many writers assert that this has been of value to them.

5. Even after the solution has been sent or the synopsis submitted the contest is not forgotten. The author worries and fumes and cannot properly concentrate upon his work. When the prize is awarded, then there is bitter disappointment and another drop in energy. Time and opportunity have been wasted against odds that expressed in figures would startle the contestant.

6. In at least one instance a serial, the story for which was desired, was actually in work when the advertisement for an idea appeared, but conceding that the contest is conducted fairly, let us examine these chances. Generally the scheme is worked with a string of newspapers throughout the country. Papers in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Baltimore and Washington may cover the territory of which these cities are the centre, and the same holds good of other parts of the country. Let it be supposed that not more than fifty papers will be in the contest. The contest has been so framed that practically any person capable of reading the paper is encouraged to believe himself competent to enter for the prize. Perhaps there are ten thousand replies to each paper. This makes half a million responses. Each paper is supposed to send in only the best replies received. Suppose that of each lot but fifty are sent to the company. The odds are 2500 to 1 against any particular script. It is not probable that all of these letters will be read. It may be that none of them will be read; the contest may have been decided in advance, but in the elimination you are one of twenty-five hundred.

7. If a prize is offered for the best script and not merely the best idea, there will be fewer contestants, but the elimination chances will be about the same, and it is probable that the examination will be more superficial, name being valued above merit in the quick reading.

8. In the form of contest in which a company offers prizes for the best scripts the object may be to get advertising and good scripts at the same time. Here the scripts are more apt to be read, and while you may not win a prize you may, perhaps, make a sale; for generally there is a clause that the company will buy such other scripts as it may want at its average prices. The saving on these average price scripts may yield the value of the prizes, and perhaps more, but you do stand a chance of making a sale, though

you will not sell at a price that will pay you a return for the nervous energy you expend worrying about the contest.

9. A third and more despicable form of contest is that in which some magazine is persuaded to offer a hundred dollars or so for a script. Most novice writers read these magazines and all will enter. The small prize may be awarded fairly (though it not always is), for the real object of the alleged contest is not a good manuscript but a fresh list of names and addresses that may be sold as a "sucker list" with the guarantee that they are all live addresses. One of the best of such lists now being offered was obtained through such a contest in a periodical distantly connected with the trade.

10. No matter what the contest, the damage done through delay in progress will far outweigh the possible financial gain. You can make more money keeping out of contests and selling in the market.

CHAPTER LXXII

IN CONCLUSION

IF you have read this book until you have come to this chapter, you have received a complete course of instruction in photoplay writing. But if you have merely *read* it, you are still in ignorance as to the art, for this is a text book to be *studied* and mastered. You cannot possibly read it and know all about photoplay writing. You may merely read it and know less than when you commenced, because you have filled your mind with a mass of undigested facts. You may be suffering from a mental indigestion that may lead to a chronic dyspepsia. It is not what you *read* or what you are *told* that counts. It is what you *know* and understand.

2. You have read this book and it is to be hoped that you have read with interest. Turn back now and *study* it. Take it up chapter by chapter. Thoroughly understand all of the subject matter of one chapter before you pass on to the next. Do not merely read it over and over; do not memorize it; *make it your own*. Not only know the statement of fact, but know and understand why such a statement has been made. Reason out every single fact. Take nothing on hearsay. Do not blindly accept the statement that a leader is an interruption to continuous thought for the reasons set forth. When you go to the theatre, forget the play for a time and note the effect of leaders upon you. You will find that the statement is correct. Now you know this to be a fact, and you know *why* it is a fact. Knowing this of your own observation, you are now in a position to use leader intelligently, for now you not alone know that it is an interruption, but just how it interrupts, and you know precisely what effect use and misuse of leader will have.

3. And when you have fully and completely mastered all of the

facts herein contained, do not then regard your education as completed. Do not feel that at last you are fully competent to write plays. You are not. You have merely advanced yourself to the point where, through this knowledge of facts, you are now ready to *begin* the serious study of photoplay writing. You have the fundamental knowledge. Now you must learn to apply it.

4. No shoemaker ever made his first pair of shoes without proper preparatory work. He had to learn to sew leather, to cut out the parts, to assemble them and, even then, it is probable that his first complete shoes were a batch. He had to spoil much leather before he could master his trade. It is precisely the same with photoplay writing save that, being a higher accomplishment, it will require more practice to gain proficiency.

5. But do not let this discourage you. There will come many times when you will be ready to abandon the work. There will be very many dark days when you will feel that you have wasted and are wasting your time. Such periods come to us all; even to the practiced and established writers. It would be strange indeed were you to be the sole exception to the general rule. If you are a quitter; if you are lacking in perseverance, stop the first time the mood grips you. Faint heart wins neither fame nor fair ladies. But if you are built of better stuff do not admit defeat. The setbacks and discouragements of today will enable you to avoid the more serious setbacks and discouragements of tomorrow.

6. Stick to it and keep plugging. Do not feel discouraged if you see some other person win a seeming success. All watch the rocket in ascent; few see the falling stick. No success ever was or can be built upon any other foundation than that of ample knowledge and experience. The new star may sell his plays as rapidly as he turns them out, but presently he will find that he cannot turn them out.

7. Some years ago a young sketch writer demanded of this author the reason for his "persecution." He was told that it was not persecution but a somewhat drastic form of literary salvation. In less than two years his playlets had passed from brilliancy to mediocrity. He was rapidly exhausting his creative powers through taxing them too heavily before he had reached a proper mental development. He saw the point and stopped. After a rest he began again, but more modestly. Today he counts his play-built fortune in seven figures.

8. It is the same with all forms of creative art. You must build on the solid basis of preparation and not on the insecure structure of a native but untrained brilliancy. You may have a few, very good ideas. You may be able to write and sell these within a few months of your start, without study and without thought. Then you are a literary bankrupt. You have no more ideas and you do not know how to create them. You have eaten of the fruit, but you have planted no seed.

9. No matter what your inherent ability may be, work, and nothing but work, can develop your gifts to their fullness. Nothing else

counts or can ever count. Some of the world's greatest thinkers have spent the better half of their lives in study and preparation for their magnum opus. Surely you can give a year or two to the mastery of a profession that by the end of such a time should put you in possession of a certain income. You must work and study to practice the law, medicine or any other profession. You must serve your apprenticeship at any trade or craft. In photoplay alone, it would seem, the novice expects and demands instant and complete success.

10. It is to be presumed that this work alone will not constitute your library, though it is the author's hope that it will ever be your chief guide. You should read other authors on photoplay, on drama form, on literary construction and expression. Some books you will find good. Others will be misleading and confusing. Decide for yourself what is good. Do not permit yourself to lose sight of the essential in a mass of detail. If one author advises the use of the word "leader" and another decides in favor of "sub-title," do not waste time in argument. You are told both are employed. Use that which seems to you to be best. Do not permit such slight variations in nomenclature to confuse you. All books worthy of the name offer the same general teaching. The rest is unimportant.

11. Form is your servant and not your master. Master form and be not mastered by it. Select for yourself the form that seems to you to be the best. Then give your attention to plot.

12. And in conclusion this author would offer the words of Gifford Pinchot that have been true since time began:

One of the most difficult things to do in any profession which involves drudgery (and I take it that no profession which does not involve drudgery is worth the attention of a man) is to look beyond the daily routine to the things which that routine is intended to assist in accomplishing.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY

ALTHOUGH the terminology of the studio is still incomplete—the various studios applying their own terms to certain devices and effects—this glossary will be found to contain all of the terms in general use and some likely to be adopted. Many of these terms will not be employed by the writer of photoplays, and they are given here for his information and not for his use. To the trained eye of the Editor nothing looks more amateurish than the manuscript that seeks to attain the professional air through an overuse of technical terms.

Most of the terms defined here will be found to be more amply explained in the body of this volume. Reference is given to the chapter and paragraph having the most direct bearing upon the word, and to some extent the glossary will supplement the index to chapter subjects.

ACT—In photoplay one of the divisions of a multiple reel roughly corresponding to the reel of one thousand feet. A three act play is a three reel play (LVIII-3). See REEL and PART.

ACTION—*of the player.* Any gesture or movement performed by the player.

——— *of the plot.* The movement of the story as shown in the action of the players which advances the plot toward its climax. Action having a vital part in telling the story (XXXIII-18).

———, *Plot of.* A written description of all the essential action of the play, divided into scenes and provided with the necessary leaders and other inserts (XLIII-21).

———, *Run of.* A succession of scenes in consecutive order relating to a single action or phase of action (XLVIII-15).

ADAPTATION—Rearrangement of other material into a continuity of action, fitting or adapting it to photographic reproduction (XLIX-9).

ANTAGONIST—The person or character chiefly interested in thwarting the objective aimed at by the hero or protagonist. The “villain” of the play (IX-24).

ANTI-CLIMAX—Any situation or incident which acts against the strength of the climax (XV-3).

APPARITION—The sudden appearance of a person or object in a scene (XLII-11).

BACKING—Scenery set back of the opening in an interior set to suggest other apartments or a landscape (III-10).

- BREAKAWAY**—*Scene*. A scene built so that at the proper moment parts may be demolished to simulate the effects of an explosion or other catastrophe (XL-9).
- *property*. Any portable property so made that it may break or fall apart at a proper moment (XL-10).
- BREAK scene**—A scene interpolated between parts of a long scene to shorten the action or to eliminate forbidden material (XLIV-10).
- *Leader*—See LEADER.
- BUSINESS**—Action to be performed by a player as “Business of untying rope”; the action of untying the rope.
- BUST**—A small part of the business in a larger scene shown in magnification whereby an action, through this enlargement, is given an emphasis or importance impossible in the larger scene (XXXV-3).
- BY-PLAY**—The non-essential business of a player in a scene (XXXIII-18).
- CAST**—The list of all characters employed in a play (XXIX-2).
- CLIMAX**—The point at which the suspense in the story is resolved. The greatest and most definite point of interest (XIV-4).
- CLOSE-UP**—A scene made with the camera close to the characters, giving larger images (XXXVIII-3).
- COMEDY**—A play in which humor is the object aimed at (LVI-2).
- *drama*—A dramatic story lightened by the introduction of humorous material (LV-1).
- CONTINUITY**—The uninterrupted action of a story or the arrangement of a plot to avoid or explain interruptions of time or plot (XLIV-1).
- *of action*. See ACTION (XLIV-1).
- CONTRACT AUTHOR**—One who contracts with a studio to produce a certain number of plays of a specified type within a given time at a set price (II-3).
- CRISIS**—A critical moment in a play, leading to the climax, but of less importance (XIV-3).
- CUTTING**—Removing the useless portion of a scene and connecting the remainder with other scenes, their leaders and inserts, into a complete play (VI-2).
- Removing non-essential actions to reduce a film to a required length (VI-2).
- *room*—A room provided with a projection machine and other conveniences wherein the film is viewed and the parts to be removed are decided upon (VI-2).
- CUT-BACK**—One or more returns to a previous action, either to avoid the showing of prohibited action, to raise the effect through contrast or to quicken the action (XXXIX-1).
- CUT-IN**—See LEADER.
- DIALOGUE**—A conversation between two or more persons (LXI-4).
- *Leader*. See LEADER.
- DIAPHRAGM**—A circular opening in the lens between the front and back combination, the size of which regulates the amount of light admitted to the camera to act upon the film (XLII-2). See IRIS.
- DENOUEMENT**—The outcome of a play. The result of the preceding action.
- DEVELOPMENT, of film**—The chemical process whereby the latent image in the film is brought out and made permanent (VI-1).

- DEVELOPMENT, *of plot*—The elaboration of the plot idea into its complete action (XXIV:2).
- DIRECTOR—One who produces photoplays; directing the preparation and acting of the story (V-1).
- *sheet*—A brief memorandum of the action sometimes prepared by the director for his personal use.
- DISSOLVE—The gradual blending of one scene into the succeeding action (XLII-5).
- The gradual introduction, withdrawal or replacement of one person or object by another by means of diaphragming (XLII-9).
- DOUBLE *exposure*—The exposure of a negative film two or more times whereby two or more images are recorded on the same surface, or the passage of the negative film through the camera two or more times, exposing a part of the film only at each passage (XL-21).
- *printing*—The exposure of positive film behind two or more negatives before development to obtain a composite of the various negatives (XL-22).
- DOWN STAGE—That part of the stage nearest the camera.
- DRAMA—A general term for all performances of the stage. In photoplay, a story with a serious motive (L-1).
- DUPE—A pirated print of a film. Made by passing a genuine positive print through a printer in company with negative film whereby an imperfect duplicate of the negative is obtained from which prints are made. These are much inferior in photographic quality to original prints.
- EDITOR *of film*—A cutting man. A person who assembles the components of a story for public presentation by taking from or adding to the original negative (VI-2).
- *of plays*—A person employed to select subjects for film production and to get them into proper shape for the director's use (II-2).
- EDUCATIONAL—Film possessing an informative as well as some entertaining value.
- ESTABLISHMENT *of fact*—The clear announcement of fact (XLV-1).
- *of a player*—Making known the identity of a player or making it known that a player is in a certain place at a given time (XLV-6).
- EXTERIOR—A scene in which the action is supposed to take place out of doors (XXX-2).
- EXTRAS—Players listed by a studio, but not regularly employed. They are paid only for the days on which they work (V-4).
- FACTOR—One of the facts which, in combination, comprise the plot (XLIII-4).
- FADE *in*—The gradual appearance of a scene from the dark screen (XLII-3).
- *out*—The gradual diminution of a scene to blackness (XLII-3).
- *vision*. See VISION.
- FARCE—A broad form of comedy in which exact probability is subordinated to the creation of comedy incident and situation (LVII-1).
- *comedy*—A play not so broad as farce, yet partaking of its nature. A merging of farce with comedy.
- FLASH—A short length of film, generally from three to five feet. It may be either action or insert (XXXIX-2).
- *back*. Same as CUT-BACK, which see.

- FLAT—A piece of painted scenery stretched upon a light framework of wood (III-5).
- FOLLOW SCENES—Scenes in which the camera, mounted upon a movable base, seems to follow the characters (XXX-22).
- FOOTAGE—The number of feet in a film. Film calculation. Too much footage is too many feet. Too small a footage is too few feet (XXXIV-2). Directors work "on footage" when they are paid for the number of feet of film made by them and turned into the studio and accepted.
- FRAME—A single photograph in the roll of film. A picture one inch wide by three-fourths of an inch high. There are sixteen of these frames to the foot (XXXIV-3).
- FREE LANCE—An author who writes on speculation and sells wherever he can find a market. One not under contract or other agreement (II-4).
- FRENCH STAGE—A front line, used originally by the French producers, which establishes a front line on which the entire figure is visible (III-8).
- FRONT LINE—The extreme front boundary of the camera stage beyond which the players may not advance toward the camera (III-8).
- HEAVY—A player or players of villainous parts.
- HERO—The chief male character in the story. See PROTAGONIST.
- HEROINE—The chief female character in the story. See PROTAGONIST.
- INSERT—Any matter, not pictured action, shown in the film. More generally applied to all such matter except leaders (XXXVI-1).
- INTERIOR—Any scene supposed to be played within four walls and a roof (XXX-2).
- IRIS—The common form of lens diaphragm, consisting of a series of curved movable blades acting in common, the manipulation of which permits a larger or smaller opening to be obtained, regulating the amount of light admitted to the camera (XL-19).
- IRISING—Properly vignetting. A term applied to the use of an iris device placed in *front* of the lens for cutting off a part of the picture at the will of the director (XL-20).
- JOINING—Cementing together the various scenes and inserts in their proper order (VI-1).
- *room*—That part of the factory wherein the various parts of the film are assembled into complete reels.
- LEAD—(noun) The man and woman most prominent in the play.
(verb) To write leader.
- LEADER—A printed legend conveying some fact not possible to show in action (XXXVII-1).
- , *Break*—A leader inserted between two scenes to mark a definite pause in the action or to interrupt the action for any other reason (XXXVII-30).
- , *Cut-in*—A leader, generally a quoted speech, appearing (or cut-in) within the scene and not inserted between two scenes (XXXVII-2).
- , *Dialogue*—A cut-in leader presenting in one frame two or more speeches (XXXVII-23).
- , *Time*—A leader used to state the time supposed to have elapsed since the last scene (XXXVII-25).
- LINES—Real or imaginary lines defining the limits of the stage by following the angle of the lens employed (III-8).

- LOCALE**—The country or section of a country wherein the scenes of action are supposed to take place.
- LOCATION**—Any place selected for the playing of an outdoor scene (IV-1).
- MAKE-UP**—The various materials such as grease-paint, powder, crepe hair, etc., with which the players change their appearance.
- , *Character*—A make-up that more or less completely disguises the appearance.
- , *Straight*—Make-up employed merely to cover up skin imperfections. Since retouching each minute figure is not possible, make-up is resorted to. The face of the player is "retouched" instead of the negative.
- MANUFACTURER**—One who engages in the production and sale of film.
- MANUSCRIPT**—The written photoplay. Abbreviated Ms. in the singular and Mss. in the plural. Also called "Script."
- MASKS**—Metal cut-outs employed in pairs to shield parts of the film in double exposures. Single masks are used to give some odd form to the picture on the screen to suggest what may be seen through a keyhole, spyglass, binoculars, etc. (XL-23).
- MATCHING**—In direction to plan the exit of a character from a scene to be in harmony with his appearance in the next.
- MELODRAMA**—A form of dramatic composition more vivid in plot and more strenuous in action than true drama (LIV-1).
- MOB**—Any large number of persons employed in a scene whether riotous or not (XVII-12).
- MORGUE**—A collection of scripts, unsalable in their present form (LXV-30).
- MULTIPLE REEL**—A story produced in multiples of the thousand foot reel (LVIII-3).
- NEGATIVE**—Film exposed to the action of light in the camera and subjected to a chemical reaction whereby the image is brought out and made permanent. This gives a reverse, the blacks being clear and the whites dense (VI-1).
- PANORAM**—A contraction of "panoramic" employed to denote a scene in which the camera is moved on its tripod to follow the action of the players without moving the tripod (XXX-20). See FOLLOW SCENE.
- PART**—A role assumed by a player.
- One of the acts or divisions of a multiple reel.
- PHOTOGRAPHIC STAGE**—That part of the stage nearest the camera. A small space on which the players work when it is desired that their images may be large and their expression clear (III-8).
- PHOTOPLAY**—A story told in pictured action instead of words (XXXIII-1).
- PICTURE EYE**—The ability to see being played the action you write or think of.
- , Ability to visualize action from written description (XXXIII-3).
- PLOT of the story**—The essentials of the story (IX-25).
- , *Master*—The last reduction of the story. The base from which many variations may spring.
- of action. See ACTION.
- , *Property*—A list of all objects used in a play (V-4).
- , *Scene*—A list of all sets and locations required in a play (XXX-24).

- POSITIVE**—Film exposed to the action of light behind a negative and then developed. A print giving the proper light values, the reverse of negative (VI-1).
- PREMISE**—The antecedent facts upon which a story is based (XLIII-4).
- PRINT**—A positive film.
- PRINTING**—The process of acting upon a piece of positive film by passing it through a machine in company with a negative against a source of light (VI-1).
- PRODUCER**—See **DIRECTOR**.
- PROPERTY**—Any object used in the course of a play. More generally referred to as "props." A "hand prop" is anything carried by a player and not set in the scene (III-10).
- *plot*. See **PLOT**.
- PROTAGONIST**—The chief or central personage in a story: the one around whom the action centers. The protagonist may be of either sex (IX-24).
- PUNCH**—The fact that gives force to physical action and holds interest to the story (XXV-2). The mental suggestion that adds power to a scene (XXXIII-16).
- RECONSTRUCTION**—The revision of a manuscript to improve its quality or to fit it to the exact needs of the studio that will produce it (XLIX-19).
- REEL**—The spool upon which the film is wound for use in projection machines.
- An arbitrary standard of measurement. A film approximately one thousand feet in length (XXXIV-2).
- REGISTER**—To indicate clearly and definitely some essential fact. Sometimes incorrectly used as a synonym for "expresses" as "Jim registers hate." Jim does not register hate, but if his expression is correct this emotion registers on the screen. A fact or scene does not register when it is not fully gotten over.
- RELEASE**—One or more subjects offered the Exhibitor as a whole (VI-4).
- *day*—The date upon which a release becomes available for public presentation.
- *slip*—A printed or written form in which an author releases or assigns to the purchaser all of his rights to a photoplay story unless there appears on the face of the release a reservation to him of the fiction, dramatic or other rights. The release slip is the legal utterance of the sale and no reservation holds good unless it is made a part of this release (LXV-31).
- RETAKE**—A second or subsequent making over of a scene for any reason found to be faulty. Remaking a scene to obtain better action or photography (V-7).
- RIBBON COPY**—A copy of a manuscript showing the impression of the typewriter ribbon as distinguished from a carbon copy (LXV-44).
- RUNNING SCENE**—The uninterrupted action of a scene.
- SCENARIO**—A description of the action of a play in its proper order, but not divided into scenes or giving the detailed action. Sometimes erroneously applied to the script as a whole (XXIV-14).
- SCENE**—All of the action taking place in one spot at one time without stop (XXXI-2).
- See **SET**.
- See **PLOT**.
- SCRIPT**—Abbreviation of manuscript.

- SET (noun)—Painted scenery assembled to suggest an interior or exterior scene (XXX-3).
 ——— (verb)—To assemble the scenery for a stage setting (XXX-3).
 ——— *up*—The general operation of selecting the viewpoint, placing and leveling the camera and establishing the lines preparatory to working in a set or location (III-8).
- SHOOT—To direct the camera at a certain point (IV-3).
- SIGHT STUFF—Material in a photoplay in which the spectacular side is of greater immediate importance than the story.
- SPLICE—To join, by cementing, one piece of film to another. To assemble the various parts of a film (VI-1).
- SPLIT *reel*—A reel containing two or more subjects within one thousand feet. Two or more short films issued as one release.
 ——— *scene*—Two parts of a scene interrupted by other action or a break leader (XXXIX-4).
- SPOT—Same as LOCATION.
- STAFF AUTHOR—One skilled in writing permanently employed by a company to write as directed (II-3).
- STAINING—See TINTING.
- STILL—A posed photograph. A representation of a scene made with an ordinary camera for advertising purposes.
 ——— *camera*—A camera used for making stills. Any ordinary camera as distinguished from the motion camera.
- STOCK *company*—The actors employed by the week. The permanent acting organization of the studio (V-4).
 ——— *stuff*—Pictures made as opportunity offers of fires, wrecks, etc., and held in stock until wanted (XVII-8).
- STOP—See DIAPHRAGM.
 ——— *camera*—Stoppage of the camera for the rearrangement of the field in some forms of trick work (XL-16). Stoppage of the camera to provide for the immediate appearance or disappearance of a person or object (XLII-11).
- STRUGGLE—The erection of obstacle to the achievement of the objective desired by the protagonist (IX-7).
- STUDIO—A place where pictures are made (III-1).
 ———, *Daylight*—A place where pictures are made without the employment of artificial light (III-2).
 ———, *Electric*—A place where photography is accomplished through the use of artificial illumination (III-3).
 ———, *exterior*—A studio scene supposed to represent some place out of doors, built in the studio for greater convenience in working (IV-1).
 ———, *Glass*—same as DAYLIGHT STUDIO. A building with a glazed roof (III-2).
 ———, *Open air*—A stage in the open on which interior sets are built (III-4).
- SUB-TITLE—Same as LEADER.
- SUSPENSE—Uncertainty as to the outcome of an action or the result of an action (XIII-10).
- SWING—To change the direction in which the camera points. See PANORAM.
- SWITCH-BACK—See CUT-BACK.
- SYNOPSIS—A brief resume of the story intended to inform the Editor in a few words as to the general character of the plot (XXVIII-5).
 ———, *Detailed*—A synopsis more closely akin to a scenario (which see) intended to be submitted without the accompanying action. Here the synopsis covers more ground, as it is the complete

- story and not merely a sketch of the accompanying action (LVIII-24).
- TINTING—Staining the emulsion on the film by immersing it in a bath of dye to obtain a dominant color, such as blue for moonlight (XL-6).
- TITLE—The identifying name given a play (XXVII).
- TONING—A chemical reaction brought about in the film through the use of baths whereby the color of the silver deposit is altered (XL-6).
- TOPICAL—A motion picture relating to some news happening.
- TRICK—A manipulation of the camera or lighting system to produce unusual effects (XL).
- To prepare an article to obtain some surprising effect as to trick a chair to breakaway (XL-10).
- TURN—To operate or turn the crank handle that actuates the mechanism of the motion camera (XL-11).
- UP-STAGE—The rear of the stage. To go up-stage is to go to the rear of the stage.
- VIGNETTE—A frame placed between the lens and the subject for the purpose of softening the edges of the picture through intercepting a part of the light rays. In photoplays this is usually some form of iris diaphragm, which see (XL-20).
- A picture produced by this device, varying from a picture in full frame but with the corners cut to a small picture in the centre of the frame.
- VILLAIN—See ANTAGONIST.
- VISION—Some scene or part of scene supposed to show the thought of the moment, some revelation of the past or dream of the future.
- , *Straight*—A small scene occupying a portion of a larger scene (XLI-3).
- , *Fade*—A vision scene occupying the entire frame connected with its proper scene by means of a fade or dissolve (XLI-6).

THE UNASKED QUESTION

ALTHOUGH nothing presented in this chapter has not already been covered, it is believed that these definite replies to questions will be more convenient to the student than the mere presentation of facts. The questions are those that have been most frequently repeated in the thousands of questions answered by the writer in the past five years.

How many interior sets can I use to the reel?

Supposedly as many as you will need, but it is not advisable to call for the erection of too many sets. Roughly that story stands the best chance of acceptance which does not require more than six sets to the reel, but this is merely rule of thumb.

How many interior scenes can I use?

This depends very largely on the story. Some stories may be played wholly in interior scenes, but it has been found that a story with a fair mixture of interior and exterior scenes will look the best on the screen.

Do I have to explain how to obtain some unusual effect?

You do not offer technical explanation of any sort whatever. You do the director the courtesy to suppose that he knows his business. You tell what you wish and leave the method to him.

What does diaphragming mean?

It may mean any one of several things. The diaphragm between the lens combinations is used to increase or cut down the apparent lighting of the stage. In another form the diaphragm meant is a second device placed in front of the lens. This gives the effect of a scene that increases from or diminishes to a mere point of light. This differs from the fade-in that the illumination is not cut down, but merely the area of picture on the screen.

How are rainstorms made?

Sometimes with a hose or sprinkler device and sometimes in an actual storm; one of those summer showers where but a part of the sky is overcast. Generally it is a studio set with the sprinklers.

Do they make night pictures at night?

Sometimes, when it is desired to obtain certain effects, but the so called moonlight pictures are made in sunlight and then stained. Night pictures are made when it is desired to have the immediate stage illuminated and the background in deep shadow. Here arc lights or magnesium torches may be used as is most expedient.

Can I write stories about foreign countries?

You may, but at some danger to the chances of acceptance unless you offer locales that can be obtained in this country without much expense.

Can I show two adjoining rooms at the same time?

This has been done, the wall being shown as though cut away; but your photographic stage is so small that it would be better to swing the camera and since you would not then show both rooms at once it would be more effective to cut from one to the other.

What is a director's sheet?

It is a memorandum of action made from the script by some directors. It is not prepared by the author.

What is a spoken leader?

A leader supposed to be spoken by some character; in other words, a cut-in.

Must the script be typed?

All scripts must be typewritten or they will not be read. There were exceptions to this rule some years ago, but now the requirement is universal.

How may I have them typed?

You should learn to operate a machine for yourself. Any public stenographer will do the work for you. If you are in a small town where there is no public typist, try some lawyer's office. In magazines for writers you will find the advertisements of people who specialize in manuscript copying.

Shall I single or double space?

Suit your own pleasure, but most authors single space their action and use a line of white space between scenes and between parts of a scene and its insert. Some Editors prefer single and some double spaced synopses for short reels. The detailed synopsis should be double spaced.

What is the precise difference between a bust and an insert?

There is very little difference sometimes, but a bust is supposed to show some small action where an insert is without action.

Is a bust a numbered scene?

A bust should be numbered because it is a scene and not a part of a scene.

Is an insert numbered?

An insert is not numbered because it is not made by the taking camera but by a special department.

Are two consecutive scenes in one set given one number?

No. They are two scenes and must be broken by a leader or else by some other action, so they are not really consecutive.

Is it necessary to send sketches of the stage settings?

No. The director will lay out the scene. You should not write such definite action as to require a special form of set.

Why is it forbidden to use two colors of ink?

Because it is not necessary. In a stage play it is done to distinguish the speeches from the stage directions. In photoplay your script is all business with no dialogue. To be logical you would underline it all in red. Since it is not necessary, its use is fussy and suggests the writer who wastes his time on small things instead of plot.

How fully should I describe the action of the scene?

Use no more words than will serve to give the director a general but clear idea of the action.

Why must scenes be short?

They must be short in action because action long continued in one scene becomes tiresome. They should be written briefly that a mass of by-play may not obscure the essential action.

How many words are permitted in a leader?

As many as the screen will hold, if you must use them to get the idea over; but you should be as brief as possible. As a rule it is a good plan not to go above ten or twelve words and to hold more closely to five or six.

Should the time of day be stated in each scene?

Scenes are supposed to be played in the daytime in the absence of any information to the contrary. You indicate only such as are not, as "night," "moonlight," "lamplight," etc., and then only when the action does not indicate the time. A ballroom scene, for example, would not be shown as a daytime affair.

Is it necessary to state the number of words in each leader and then give the total number of words?

This is advised in some books, but since it is seldom that the

leaders are not changed it is unnecessary to count your words save as it may serve as a check upon your tendency to use too many. These statistics need not appear in the script.

Can I use a title already used?

There is no legal prohibition other than an evident attempt to trade upon the popularity of a similarly named play, but it is better to try and get an original title. The fact that a title *may* have been used before need not worry you.

If I know of more than one good title may I suggest more?

You may, but it will be better to select the best and keep the others for your own subsequent use.

If a studio takes my story and does not use my title, may I use it again?

It would be better not to. You have sold the title along with the story and it would not be ethical to try and sell it twice. The company may want to use it for another story which it will fit even better.

Must I send the letters and newspaper clippings?

Send only the wording for these, written in the body of the script. Each studio has a special department for the preparation of this material. Yours would not be used.

Will it help my script writing to take a course in acting for motion pictures?

It will help only the bank account of the person running the school.

When may dialogue be used?

When it will both save words and more clearly convey the idea.

Is it necessary to write in all the cut-backs?

Write what you think will be needed to keep the action smart. Do not carry it to excess.

In what tense is the synopsis written?

Past or present, but it is better to write it in the present tense to match the action, which must be written in the present tense.

How many words or pages to a one reel story?

As many of each as are required to tell one reel of story. See Chapter XXXIV.

Can I use more than 250 words of synopsis per reel?

If you have to, but if you know your business you will not have to, if the action accompanies the synopsis. Where you submit the synopsis alone, there is no word limit.

If my character assumes a disguise, shall I call him by his new name or description?

He is still John Jones. Call him John or Jones, as you have been doing, but mention that he is in disguise.

How many scenes make a thousand feet?

It depends on the length of the scenes.

How can I tell what each manufacturer wants?

Half the time he doesn't know himself. To get a general idea see LXV-7.

What sort of scripts sells best?

The style of script that is fashionable at the moment. Fashions vary. As a rule the best sellers are first heart interest stories, then good comedies and strong melodramas with clean plot.

Will it help to send the story to some actor it will exactly fit?

Not unless the player happens to be an intimate personal friend. The actor has no voice in the matter.

To whom should manuscript be addressed?

In accordance with the form in LXV-16.

Does the author indicate the people he wishes to play the parts?

Not if he is wise.

But suppose that I have written with a particular player in mind?

Then you are not wise. If you have a story that will fit some particular star, you might make the suggestion on a slip of paper attached to the front page with a paper clip, but do not write the player's name into the cast.

Should I send with a script some property they might not be able to obtain?

They can make it if they want it. If it is exceedingly unusual you might add a note to the effect that you have such a property that you are willing to loan, but do not loan it until you get a direct request. The purchase of the script is not such a request.

May I send two or more scripts at the same time?

You may, if each script has its individual return envelope, but it is seldom a good plan. It invariably suggests a speed in production that is not indicative of quality.

May I send a letter and a script in the same envelope?

If the letter refers to the script, you should. If it refers to any other matter, use a separate envelope for the letter.

Should I wait a certain length of time before sending a second script to the same studio?

It is better to send not more than one a week—and not every week.

Shall I mark a price on my script?

See LXV-42.

Shall I register my manuscript?

It does no good and it is an annoyance to the mail clerk.

Why should I pay postage both ways?

Because you want your script back. You are doing the company no favor when you ask them to read your stories. The reverse is true. You should at least hold them free of expense.

Do companies give receipts for manuscripts?

They used to acknowledge receipt of a script, but the courtesy was abused. Some companies now advise the author when a story is to be held.

How long does a studio keep a script?

From a day to a year or more, but generally from three to eight weeks, unless it is returned at once.

Is a delay favorable or unfavorable?

It generally suggests that the Editor thinks he can take it, but while favorable, a delay is not an assurance.

How long should I wait before making inquiry?

At least eight weeks. Longer if you know the company to be reliable.

What should I write in making inquiry?

See letter in Chapter LXV, Paragraph 35.

But if no reply comes?

Write the letter in Paragraph 36.

How can I collect for a lost Ms?

You cannot. A suit might result in the collection of a sum sufficient to pay for copying the carbon sheets, but this would be less than the court fees you would have to pay. It is not supposed to be the *story* that has been lost, but merely a copy of the story.

What shall I do if my story is used and no check has been sent?

Ask for payment. You may have neglected to give an address. Write a courteous letter. If no reply is received write again and after due time put the claim into the hands of an attorney if you wish to sue (LXV-48).

Suppose that my story is returned and later the company makes it?

You will be reasonably safe in supposing that someone else thought of the same idea, and offered it in better form and found acceptance.

What does the rejection slip mean?

That the company cannot use your story. It has no other meaning and is neither favorable nor unfavorable.

What does it mean when I get a story back without a rejection slip?

Probably that the company is out of them at present or that the office boy forgot to send one.

What does "not available" mean?

That a company cannot use your story for any one of a hundred reasons.

What is the meaning of "Similar theme used before"?

Stories based on that theme have been done too often.

Why does a company write me they are not buying certain styles of stories when I see them keep on releasing them?

They may have a supply ahead or an arrangement with some contract author.

May I send a story to the same studio more than once?

If you make material changes and call attention to these changes.

Do stories ever sell on a second reading?

This is by no means uncommon.

If I write a series of stories around one character and cannot sell them as a series, can I sell the different stories to the different companies?

You can if they are not too much alike and you change the names of the characters to differ in each story.

Can anyone contribute to a series of stories?

As a rule they are all written by one man.

How many times should a script be sent out before being retired?

Just so long as you have reason to believe that a sale may be made, either in its present form or through reconstruction.

How long after a story is accepted will it be released?

There is no definite time. It may be only a few weeks or it may be never.

How can I tell when it will be released?

By watching the stories of the accepting company in the trade paper. It is not safe to go by title alone.

How can I force a manufacturer to make a story he has accepted?

He is under no obligation to produce the story.

How can I prevent the making of changes in my script?

You cannot. Generally the release slip provides that all required changes may be made.

How can I reserve the right to make a stage play of my picture story?

By stating in your letter you will send with the script that you offer only the photoplay rights and making certain that nothing in the release slip reads contrary to this. As a general thing this will block the sale of the photoplay save in the case of well known authors.

Can I sell the story to the studio and a magazine?

You can, but it is best not to offer the photoplay rights until the story has appeared or vice versa and you must be certain that you have signed nothing that has voided your rights.

Can I change business after I have sent a story to the studio?

If they have accepted the story you might write and suggest the changed action, but do not try to alter a story that is in the hands of the Editor for consideration.

Is it better for a woman to take a masculine pen name?

It is not at all necessary. Some of the best known and best paid writers are women.

Is it best to sell through an agent?

Most emphatically no.

Will it pay to have my scripts revised?

It will not. This is work you must do yourself if the story is to be improved.

What does first run script mean?

Some writers arrange with a particular studio to give it first call on all work. A slightly better price than usual is paid for what is taken.

Can I sell on royalty?

It is not customary save in the case of authors of great reputation, and here only where the author will not accept a flat payment.

Why cannot I sell all I write?

Because it is seldom possible to hold to the one high standard and at the same time always write material that will please the Editors.

What is the average percentage of sales?

Sixty per cent is a good average.

EXAMPLES OF FORM

PRECISE adherence to form—a placing of form before plot—is one of the pitfalls that yawn for the unwary. Beginners do not realize that form is merely a means of telling a plot succinctly and understandably. They waste so much time and thought on form that they have none for their stories.

There is another angle to this matter. Form is something that may be taught as a fairly exact science. It is tangible and definite and for this reason schools and books overemphasize form. In the same way the student follows form because here is something that he can study out of a book. He will spend hours arguing that a bust really should be a close-up or that a certain style of close-up should be called a bust. He does not realize that he is wasting his time. In the following pages are given in actual photographic reproduction examples of various forms from established writers. Look these over when you have mastered the ground work of the technique of form and either select some one example or combine such features as gain your approval. Adopt or adapt as you will, but early decide upon some one form and stick to that. Do not change each time you see a new "sample script." It is all good, but pick out what *you* think is best and stick to that. If you do not sell, it will not be because the particular form you use is bad, but because the story is poor. Mr. Lang, for instance, holds in particular detestation the use of the hyphen instead of the usual punctuation marks, but this dislike does not prevent him from purchasing a good idea written in this fashion. Other Editors prefer the hyphen, but will buy the punctuated story. There is no one form that meets with universal approval. Take from these what pleases you most and you will not be far from wrong.

One thing you should note is the almost entire absence of technical terms. The efforts of all these authors is directed toward getting the idea to the director in the simplest terms and with an avoidance of technical phrase.

Example A is a two-part story in the form used by this writer, who also uses a reverse indent as shown in B. In the former the paper guide is set to give a margin and then the numbers are started at the zero mark and the first lines of a scene start at five. There is no particular reason for this other than that it gives a sightly sheet. In both cases the description of the scene is underlined with the proper typewriter character.

Example C is a form used where the director likes the cast of the scene. It takes up a lot of space without serving any very good purpose. For the purpose of comparison the same copy used on the preceding page is repeated and it will be seen that there is a loss of three scenes to this page.

At D is shown a form of script that was used to give a certain director space in which to write in scenes as he wished. There are four blank spaces between the scenes, otherwise the form is the same as that shown at B. This is a studio script written for a particular director, and it is not as carefully phrased as it should have been had it been sent out to meet the market. This is a common trick in the studio, but it is not to be recommended as a model to be followed.

Marc Edmund Jones is represented by E. Mr. Jones sums up his idea by saying that he writes his script as he wishes the director to read it. He tells what happens rather than what is acted. He leaves it to the director to realize this in action. It will be noted that in this script there is the same five space indentation, but that the scene direction is given prominence by being drawn into the margin, and has a line to itself.

Two pages are given the Kalem form. Mr. Lang, it will be noticed, writes out the word scene each time a scene is started. He also keeps it in line with the rest of the matter, though most authors draw it into the margin where the numbers may be picked up more quickly when any special scene is desired and omit the words. These two pages are excellent examples of precise writing, clear and distinct in every way and yet not wasteful of words. F-2 is a capital example of how to break up a long scene with related action, showing only the essentials and yet not seeming to be trying to avoid the extended action. These scenes are from Mr. Lang's own adaptation of McKee Rankin's "The Runaway Wife."

Examples G and H show the difference existing even in branches of the same company. Mr. Lusk has written in the style of the Eastern studios of the Universal, while Mr. Mair uses the style preferred by the western directors of the same company.

I and J show the page to a scene scheme. John William Kellette goes this one better with a page to a scene scene-plot in which he gives all of the people to be "called" for that scene, their costumes, the scenes to be played in the set and other details. It is too elaborate to serve for general use, but valuable to the director who is going to make the story as the scenes are laid out.

Mr. Merwin's pages show a distinct form explained by himself in Paragraph 26 of Chapter XXIV. It is but reasonable to suppose that in the course of time this will become the standard form of script, a presentation of the action and the idea behind the action, but leaving the director the task of putting into proper action form much that is told in motive and thought, just as the stage manager realizes in action what lies beyond the words of the spoken drama. If you follow

the Merwin form you must follow it with the same intelligence. There is some danger of overwriting to such an extent that the real action cannot be separated from the chatty mass of stuff you add. Note how the words are made to count, even here. Mr. Merwin most of all realizes the necessity for not worrying the director with a mass of petty detail. In this point it would seem he has practiced greater condensation than was his wont a few years ago.

Study these examples well. Make your decision. Abide by it and give the remainder of your time to plotting and to writing in that form.

No

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
BOX SEVENTY - MADISON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK CITY

THE NARROW PATHS OF FATE

IN TWO REELS.

SYNOPSIS.

Jack Radford is married to Ruth, who does not love him. To find relief she flirts with Ned Flanders. Seeing that Jack suspects she seeks to disarm suspicion by flirting with Jim Cort, Jack's old college chum, who comes to visit them on the eve of an expedition to South America. Ruth manages to throw suspicion on Cort, but Cort allays it, and when Jack is called away on business he leaves Ruth in Cort's care. Cort himself is called away and leaves a letter for Jack. This Ruth destroys and leaves instead a note that she has eloped with Cort. She elopes with Flanders and Jack, on his return, vows vengeance.

Two years later he learns that Cort has returned from an unsuccessful venture and is prospecting in California, vowing that he will not communicate with his friends until he has made his pile. Jack goes in search of him. Flanders has become a drunken gambler. Jack comes to the town where he and Ruth are and fear drives Flanders to unusual excess. Big Bill, who has taken a fancy to Ruth, is persuaded by her to elope. They start out, following the trail of Jack who is riding to Cort's camp. Jack confronts Cort, but seems unable to shoot. Cort warns him of a rattlesnake behind him, and this gives Jack the idea of trial by ordeal. A knot is knicked from the bottom of a box and the men surround the hole with their hands and, blind-folded, wait for the snake to strike as it comes from the box. Bill and Ruth, trailed by Flanders, pass not far to the rear. Flanders overtakes and shoots them. At the sound of the shots Jack and Cort tear off their bandages and Cort discovers that the snake has escaped through a hole in the end. The ordeal has been decided and once more friends they return to camp, unconscious of the fact that Ruth and Flanders lie dead not half a mile away.

Some slight gain in effect is made in that the spectator is led to expect a general reconciliation through the close proximity of all the parties. Surprise helps the climax.

CAST.

Jack Radford- a young business man. Considerable aged in part two.
Ruth, his wife- pretty, willful and weak. Feded in part two.
Jim Cort- rather rugged type. Not much changed in part two.
Ned Flanders- man about town. Later a wreck.
Big Bill- a miner-gambler.
Jack's butler
Ruth's maid.
Jack's office boy.
Miners etc in hotel and saloon scenes.

A-1 The synopsis page of an unproduced two reel script. Where a longer cast is employed, it would be better to use a separate page for the cast. Note the "kick" in the last paragraph of the synopsis. Also note that the title line is too far up the page.

No. 429

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
 BOX SEVENTY MADISON SQUARE STATION
 NEW YORK CITY

THE NARROW PATHS OF FATE

Scene PlotInteriors-

Dining room- 1
 Office-2-10-14-16 (Change for two years later)-33
 Library-2-4-6-9-11-13-15-18-20-21-23-25-27-29-31
 Ruth's room-26-28
 Western saloon-34

Bust- flat and desk 3-5-24

Exteriors-

Front of house-8-12-19-22-30-36
 Front of office- 17
 Western saloon-34-
 Cort's camp-35-48-59-61-63-80-82
 Flanders' shack-38-40-42-44-47
 Hotel-37-39-41-44-49-51
 Trails-43-46-53
 -52-56-68
 -88
 -54
 -70
 -72
 -74-81
 -76
 Close-up of two men-65-67-69-71-73-75-77-79
 Spot overlooking Cort's camp-55
 Bust of snake-60
 Bust of box- 62
 -64-
 -66-
 -78-

A-2 The scene-plot is divided into interior and exterior scenes, busts and close-ups being classified in the same manner. When a lapse of time occurs it is well to note the fact in the scene-plot that the dressing of the stage may be slightly changed to carry out this suggestion.

NO 429

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
201 SEVENTH AVE. BOULEVARD STATION
NEW YORK CITY

THE NARROW PATHS OF FATE

Action- Part I.

- 1- Dining room at Radford's-- Jack and Ruth at breakfast-- maid serving-- Jack rises-- Kisses Ruth affectionately-- exits-- Ruth rises at place-- looks after him with expression of distaste-- pours water from glass on napkin-- washes mouth violently-- to wash kiss off-- sinks back into chair-- stares out at camera-- maid enters-- asks if there is anything more-- Ruth shakes head-- maid to door-- she looks back-- shakes head-- exits-- she knows how Ruth feels and is sorry for her-- Ruth exits to library.
- 2- Library-- Ruth enters-- hears 'phone-- takes up-- replies.
- 3- Hust of Flanders speaking.
- 4- Back to #3-- Ruth speaking eagerly-- enunciates "Come".
- 5- Hust as #4-- Flanders hangs up 'phone-- looks up-- well pleased-- shows an "I've got her going" expression-- exits.
- 6- Back to #5-- Receiver up-- Ruth still standing by table-- she registers half fear, half pleasurable anticipation-- she has taken the first step.
- 7- Office - Jack enters-- looks over mail-- shows surprise and pleasure at envelope-- opens-- reads--

On screen- Letter-

Dear Old Boy,

Ran across Jenkins yesterday who gave me your address. I am leaving the country next week and will run down to say good bye.

Your old chum

I have no address at present. Jim Cort.

Jack shows pleasure-- sits back in chair with reminiscent smile--

- Leader- The discontented wife seeks excitement in a flirtation.
- 8- Front of house-- Flanders ascends steps-- admitted.
 - 9- Library-- Ruth on-- Flanders ushered in-- greetings-- Flanders eager-- Ruth timid and inclined to be reserved-- they sit, slightly apart.
 - 10- Office as in #2-- Jack glances at clock (about three) rises-- takes hat-- exits.

A-3 The commencement of the plot of action, showing the use of straight leader and the insertion of a letter. Scenes one to seven form the first, or establishment episode, preparing the spectator for what follows by introducing the characters and explaining their relations to each other.

No. 429

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
505 SEVENTH WASHINGTON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK CITY

- 11- Library- Ruth and Flanders on better terms-- he delicately expresses his love-- she reproves him but shows that she is not wholly adverse to his attention--
- 12- Front as in #8- Jack comes up steps-- inserts key in lock.
- 13- Back to #11- Ruth and Flanders hear--rise-- Ruth slightly panic stricken- Flanders lays hand on her arm, quieting her-- moves quickly to other side of table-- Jack enters-- looks with quick suspicion from one to other-- goes to Ruth-- kisses her-- she tries to hide her terror-- Jack pretends not to see Flander's outstretched hand-- Flanders thinks he must be going-- Jack makes polite but faint protest-- Ruth strikes gong-- Butler enters-- Flanders exits with butler-- Jack turns to Ruth-- shows letter.

On screen- Flash of letter in #2.

Ruth shows polite interest-- exits-- Jack looks after her--registers suspicion-- sits in chair-- thinks.

Leader- The next day. Old friends meet again.

- 14- Office as in #2- Jack on- Cort enters-- Jack rises-- one keen look-recognizes Cort-- cordial greeting--
- 15- Library-- Ruth on-- Flanders ushered in-- comes quickly to Ruth-- takes hand-- turns to make sure butler is gone-- still holding her hand he draws her to him-- cut to
- 16- Back to #14- Jack and Cort still talking-- Jack calls boy-- gives instructions -- boy takes suitcase-- follows Jack and Cort from office.
- 17- Front of office-Jack and Cort come from office-- enter car-- boy brings suitcase-- they exit.
- 18- Library- Flanders and Ruth sitting close together-- Lovemaking not too strong-- they start up--
- 19- Front of house as in #8- Jack, in great good humor leads way up steps-- enters house.
- 20- Back to #18- Flanders nervous and worried-- catches up book from table-- speaks quickly-- takes up hat-- Jack bursts in followed by Cort-- the laugh dies as he sees Flanders-- face clouds with suspicion-- Flanders with easy grace explains that he came to borrow book-- Jack turns to Cort, who has been standing in background, ill at ease-- introduces him-- Flanders exits-- Ruth makes Cortwelcome- in her nervousness she is a little too effusive-- Jack a shade distrustful-- Butler enters-- has Cort's bag-- Ruth leads way out-- Jack picks up gloves-- "Yours?" "No. They are Flanders"-- with a curse Jack dashes them on table-- follows out.

A-4 Showing the use of the time leader as a break or interruption. The bareness of the announcement, "The next day," is tempered by the addition of "Old friends meet again." In scene thirteen is shown the method of flashing inserts previously shown to recall their prior use.

No 429

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
 302 SEVENTH STREET
 NEW YORK CITY

Leader- To disarm suspicion Ruth flirts with Cort.

21- Library- Ruth and Cort on-- chatting-- Ruth is making advances, but Cort does not notice-- they stand slightly apart, discussing a book Cort holds-- Ruth starts-- listens-- Cort does not notice.

22- Front as in #8- Flash Jack at door.

23- Back to #21- Ruth pretends to slip-- falls toward Cort, who catches her-- Jack enters-- comes down-- surprised-- Cort makes easy explanation-- Ruth pretends embarrassment-- Jack looks at Cort steadily-- Ruth slips away-- Jack seems satisfied-- they sit and chat for a moment-- butler brings wire-- Jack reads--

On screen-- telegram-

John Radford, Albany, N.Y.
 1042 Park Avenue, New York
 Bill before committee tomorrow. Must see you here.
 Hendricks.

Jack glances at watch-- calls-- Ruth enters-- Jack shows wire-- he and Cort exit-- Ruth waits a second-- goes to 'phone-- calls--

24- Just same as #4- Flanders at 'phone-- Shows satisfaction.

25- Back to #23- Ruth hangs up receiver-- Jack enters-- Butler follows carrying suitcase-- Cort enters-- Jack says good bye to Ruth-- turns to Cort--

Cut-in-- "I leave her in your care."

Cort shakes hands-- handshake somewhat in nature of an oath-- another kiss for Ruth and exit-- Ruth regards Cort half defiant, half entreating-- Cort turns and walks away-- she registers amusement-- exits.

26- Ruth's room- Ruth enters-- goes to small desk-- writes--

On screen- Note-

Dear Ned,
 It's all right. Come for me at eleven and we'll seek happiness together.

Ruth--

Ruth calls maid-- gives her note-- maid seems surprised-- Ruth gives her bill-- maid thanks her-- exits-- Ruth starts to pack suitcase.

27- Library-- Cort reading-- Butler brings telegram--

On screen- telegram- see next page-

A-5 Note the use of a fact leader as a break, avoiding a repetition of the timed leader. Scene twenty-five shows the form of the cut-in leader. At the bottom of the page is shown a continuation of scene. Where possible the scene should not turn a page, but it can be done if necessary.

No. 419

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
809 SEVENTH MADISON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK CITYJames Cort-
1042 Park Avenue,
New York-

Philadelphia

Expedition leaves here tomorrow. Join at once.
Hopkins.

Cort speaks to Butler-- Butler exits-- Cort starts to write.

28- Ruth's room as in #26- Ruth packing-- knock-- Ruth alarmed-- Calls-
Butler critic-- speaks-- Ruth nods-- exits.29- Back to #27-- Cort finishes writing-- seals note-- Ruth enters-- he
piece explains-- shows telegram-- Ruth registers polite regret--
Cort exits-- Ruth looks at letter-On screen- note-

Dear Jack,

I'm off nearly a month earlier than expected. Letters to
Post Keetente, Rio de Janeiro will reach me-- perhaps. Good
luck.

Jim.

Door opens-- Ruth starts-- hides letter-- Maid ushers Flanders in--
Ruth laughs in relief-- shows letter-- Flanders starts-- noise--
Flanders hits behind curtain-- Cort enters dressed for street
and with bag-- says farewell-- exits-- Flanders comes from hiding--
points to paper-- Ruth writes-- maid exits. Flanders destroys
Cort's letter.On screen-note-

Jack,

I have gone to South America with Jim Cort. Do not seek to
find us.

Ruth.

Flanders and Ruth laugh-- seal letter-- Maid returns with suitcase--
Flanders takes same-- the three exit.30- Front of house- Flanders, Ruth and Maid enter from house-- exit.Leader- A few days later.31- Same- Jack and Butler enter-- Jack asks for Ruth-- Butler confused-
shows letter-- Jack reads-- startled-- sinks in seat-- Butler offers
brandy-- Jack pushes him aside-- Butler exits-- Jack stands a
moment-- takes revolver from drawer of desk-- Butler enters with
mail on tray-- drops tray and catches Jack's hand-- Jack laughs--
epitaph--Cut in- "Not for me. Some day we'll meet again."Back to scene-- Jack looks straight ahead-- sways slightly-- holds
out his arms entreatingly-- sinks into chair-- arms on table--
head on arms-- Butler regards with sympathy.END OF PART ONE

A-6 The end of the first part. It is purely accidental that the part ends a page. Had it ended higher up the page, the second part would have run to the bottom. Note that there are but thirty scenes to this part against fifty-two in the second part, but that the latter are shorter.

No. 429

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
 BOX SEVENTY MADISON SQUARE STATION
 NEW YORK CITY

THE NARROW PATHS OF FATE

Action--Part II.

Leader- Two years later.

32- Office- Same as #2 but changed-- Jack reading mail-- gets letter--
On screen- Paragraph of letter--

You must remember Jim Cort, He's prospecting about twenty miles south of here. His South American plan failed and he won't go east until he has made a stake.

Jack springs up-- shows his satisfaction-- takes gun from hip pocket-- looks at it-- replaces it-- exits.

Leader- Flanders has fallen low.

33- Western saloon-- Flanders and others playing cards-- Flanders cleaned out-- Half drunk-- Ruth enters-- goes to Flanders-- tries to get him to come away-- Flanders ugly-- strikes at her-- Bill stops him-- Ruth asks for money-- Flanders has none-- Ruth turns away-- Bill takes coins from his pile-- forces them on her behind Flanders back-- she hesitates a moment, smiles-- accepts-- exits-- Bill takes Flanders by collar-- leads him to door.

34- Outside saloon- Ruth looking at coins-- Flanders pushed through door by Bill-- Ruth sees him-- he sees money-- takes it from her-- starts to go back-- changes mind-- starts up street-- Ruth cries-- Bill comes out-- gets the situation-- puts her shoulder-- gives her more money-- she thanks him with a trace of her old archness-- exits-- Bill looks after her admiringly--

35- Camp- rude shack or tent- Cort enters with prospector's shovel and pan-- throws them down-- no luck-- sits on box-- smokes.

36- Front as in #8- Jack exits with small handbag.

Leader- Later-

37- Hotel in small western town- Men on steps-- Flanders among them-- Wagon in-- Jack alights-- Flanders sees him-- turns-- hides face with sombrero-- Jack passes into hotel-- Ruth enters-- goes to Flanders-- sees that he is shaken-- speaks-- he points inside-- tells her that Jack is there-- she is shocked-- Leads Flanders out of scene.

38- Shack- Ruth leads Flanders in-- he sprawls on bench beside door-- she enters house-- Flanders rouses-- takes bottle from behind barrel or other hiding place-- drinks.

A-7 Starting part two. Had this play ended the first part in the center of the page, the title would have been replaced by a line about fifteen spaces long. The first four scenes advise the spectator as to the changes in the condition of the characters before resuming the story.

No. 429

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
BOX SEVENTY MADISON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK CITYLeader- Jack starts for Cort's camp.39- Hotel as in #37- Jack comes from hotel-- horse brought-- Jack now in riding dress and with no equipment-- holster and pistol-- landlord gives him final instructions-- Jack rides off.40- Back to #38- Flanders now completely drunk-- Ruth comes from house-- sees despair-- begins to cry-- Bill enters-- sees-- tries to comfort her-- offers money-- she refuses-- speaks-Cut-in- "Take me away from this-- and him."

Bill startled-- idea sinks in-- roughly he clasps her in his arms-- kisses her once-- turns and runs off.

41- Hotel- Bill enters-- dickers for two horses-- gets two mounts-- exits.42- Back to check- Ruth dejected-- starts-- hopeful-- bill leads in two horses-- points in-- "Get your dude." Ruth has nothing to take-- he points to skirt-- not riding skirt-- Ruth shakes head-- has no habit-- he lifts her to saddle-- mounts his horse-- they ride out.43- Trail- Jack rides through.44- Hotel- Bill and Ruth ride through-- loungers comment.45- Shack- Flanders stirs-46- Trail as in #43- Bill and Ruth ride through.47- Shack- Flanders rouses-- looks around-- calls Ruth no reply-- starts off scene.48- Camp as in #35- Cort home-- starting fire-- coffee pot filled.49- Hotel- Flanders enters-- asks for Ruth-- someone tells him-- he storms-- exits.50- Hotel yard- Flanders enters-- steals horse-- rides out of scene.51- Hotel- They see Flanders-- one man starts to shoot-- another knocks up his hand-- speaks-Cut-in- "He's got a right to get even."

That seems to be the sentiment-- they all subside.

52- Trail with fork- Jack rides in-- turns to right.53- Trail as in #43- Flanders rides furiously through scene.54- Trail- Bill and Ruth ride through-- traveling slowly.

A-8 Commencing with scene forty-three the cut-back is employed. From here until the end of the play it is necessary to keep the spectator advised as to the happenings in three or four spots occurring at practically the same time. Note how the same locations are shown with the various characters passing.

No. 429

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
801 SEVENTH MADISON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK CITY

- 55- Spot overlooking Cort's camp- Jack rides in-- dismounts-- draws gun-- steals toward camp--
- 56- Trail as in #52- Bill and Ruth ride through.
- 57- Camp- Cort preparing supper-- Jack speaks up-- Covers Cort-- speaks-- Cort starts forward with welcome-- sees gun-- speaks-- Jack tells him to put up his hands-- he does so-- Jack speaks-- accuses him of stealing Ruth-- Cort denies-- Jack sneers.
- 58- Trail- Bill and Ruth ride through.
- 59- Back to #57- Cort still arguing-- Jack tries to shoot-- can't get the nerve-- Cort points-- something back of Jack-- Jack laughs-- he's not to be caught that way-- Cort insists-- Jack edges around-- looks.
- 60- Bust of rattlesnake- (Can be had with fangs extracted of any animal dealer. Handler may be hired for a couple of dollars)
- 61- Back to #59- Jack points gun at snake-- stops-- speaks--
- Cut-in- "We will let Fate decide."
- Jack takes Cort's gun-- throws both into the brush-- takes box Cort has used for seat-- points--
- 62- Bust of hands holding box-- knot in bottom-- hands knock knot out-- point to hole.
- 63- Back to #61- Jack and Cort approach snake.
- 64- Bust of snake-- feet of the two men show-- box placed over snake.
- 65- Close-up of Cort and Jack sitting on either sides of the box-- they tie handkerchiefs over eyes-- take each others' hands.
- 66- Bust top of box-- Cort and Jack place hands so that hole is in square made by hands with the thumbs at right angles-- the idea being that the snake, in crawling out will strike one hand and so prove guilt or innocence.
- 67- Back to #65- Men quiet with tense faces.
- 68- Trail as in #52- Flanders rides through-- dismounts-- sees path Ruth took-- follows.
- 69- Back to #57- No movement-- faces drawn and tense.
- 70- Trail- Bill and Ruth ride through.
- 71- Back to #69- Still tense-- Bill and Ruth ride across scene as far back as practicable.

A-9 A continuation of the cutting back. Note here in scene sixty-two the use of the bust to show a detail of action where scenes three, five and twenty-four show a larger field. Sixty-two is used to magnify a detail and the earlier busts to save an elaborate setting.

NO429

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
BOX SEVENTY MADISON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK CITY

- 72- Trail showing Jack and Cort in distance-- Hugh and Bill close up-- just the reverse of #72-- Bill and Ruth look-- Bill shrugs shoulders-- they ride on.
- 73- Back to #71- No movement.
- 74- Trail- Bill and Ruth ride in-- stop-- something the matter with Ruth's saddle-- Bill helps her down-- adjusts cinch.
- 75- Back to #73- Still silent, but faces show the strain-- Flanders rides through scene at rear.
- 76- Trail-- Flanders rides in-- dismounts-- draws pistol-- fire--
- 77- Back to #75- Jack and Cort hear shot-- tear off handkerchiefs-- spring up-- look about for shooter-- Cort first to recover-- shrugs shoulders-- looks at Jack-- Jack still upset--Cort looks down-- utters a cry-- points-- picks up box-- shows Jack.
- 78- Close of hands holding box-- finger points to place in bottom where the wood has splintered away.
- 79- Back to #77- Jack and Cort looking at box-- Jack deeply moved-- Cort drops box-- the two men look each other in the eye-- slowly Jack offers his hand-- Cort grasps it-- they shake-- Jack pats Cort on the back-- Cort slips arm over Jack's shoulder-- draws him back to camp--
- 80- Camp- Jack and Cort come from last scene-- Cort busies himself with the supper.
- 81- Trail as in #74- Bill and Ruth on ground, dead-- Flanders standing over bodies-- maulin regret-- raises gun to head.
- 82- Back to #80- Jack and Cort at supper-- toast each other in coffee in tin cups-- Cort refills cups.

Picture out.

A-10 The last page of the script. It is not necessary to say "picture out." Instead a simple line may be drawn or an ornamental tailpiece devised. In the last twenty-one scenes there is no leader. This permits the story to move rapidly and without interruption to the climax.

John Jones,
12345 Broadway,
New York City.

Fate's Tangled Spin

- 33- Parlor as in #29- Mary on-- Maid ushers Paul in-- greetings--Paul sits beside Mary on sofa-- Maid exits-- Paul takes ring from pocket displays--Mary shows pleasure-- puts out hand for ring--Paul slips ring on.
- 34- Window by Parlor- Dave looking in-- starts back-- passes hand across forehead-- thinks-- Fade down.
- 35- Fade up scene six, using that portion in which Dave gives Mary the ring. Fade down.
- 36- Fade up to #34- Dave pulls himself together with a start--shows anger-- takes revolver from pocket-- aims through window-- fires. CUT.
- 37- Parlor as in #29- Mary wounded in arm-- Maid, Hendricks and wife rush in-- Paul points to window-- says shot was fired from there-- goes to window while others care for Mary.
- 38- Window as in #34- Paul coming through-- starts to run out of scene.
- 39- Road in grounds- Dave runs in-- locks back-- examines revolver-- satisfied-- runs on-- Paul follows through.
- 40- Country road A- Dave runs through-- Paul follows.
- 41- Country road B- Dave runs in-- stands at bay-- Paul comes up-- Dave threatens with gun-- Paul puts up hands-- they parley--Dave says
- Cut-in- "She married me five years ago."
- Paul startled-- rallies-- expresses disbelief-- Dave snarls-- takes pocket book from pocket-- uses left hand to do so, holding gun in right-- passes to Paul-- Paul opens-- takes out paper-- looks
- On screen- Marriage certificate made out in the names of Dave Varden and Mary Hendricks.
- Paul silently hands back paper and pocket book-- turns away-- Dave looks after him-- shakes head-- rather sorry for him.
- Leader- The next afternoon.
- 42- Parlor as in #29, but with couch brought to foreground- Mary on couch-- reading-- Paul ushered in-- she greets him-- offers lips for kiss-- Paul does not move-- Mary looks at ring.
- 43- Bust of Mary's left hand with ring on engagement finger--part of her face shows as she kisses ring-- face disappears.
- 44- Back to #42- Mary looks at Paul--half defiant, half afraid-- he speaks with anger-- takes ring-- exits-- as he leaves Dave climbs through window-- stands facing Mary with a sneer.

B Practically the same form as Example A except that the action other than the first lines are indented two spaces, throwing the scene description into relief. Scenes thirty-four to thirty-six show the fade vision. In thirty-six "cut" is used to show that the scene must stop there.

JOHN JONES
41144 BROADWAY
NEW YORK CITY

Fate's Tangled Skin.

- 33- Parlor as in #29- Mary on-- Maid ushers Paul in-- Maid retires--
Paul comes down and greets Mary-- sits beside her
Mary on the sofa-- he draws from his pocket a ring case--
Paul Mary knows what is coming-- he takes ring from case
Maid and displays-- with an affectation of shyness she
lets him place ring on her finger.
- 34- Window to parlor-- Dave stands by window looking in-- he starts
back, passes hand over forehead as though startled--
assumes a look of thought as he recalls his own
Paul. betrothal. Fade.
- 35- Fade up- scene six, using only that portion of the scene that shows
Dave giving Mary the ring-- Fade down.
Paul
Mary
- 36- Fade up to #34- Dave pulls himself together with a start-- shows
anger-- takes revolver from pocket-- aims through
Dave window-- fires-- CUT
- 37- Parlor as in #29- Mary wounded in arm-- Maid, Hendricks and wife
rush in-- ask what the matter is-- see Mary-- all
Mary excited-- Paul tells them that a shot was fired
Paul through window and that he will go after the as-
Maid sassin-- rushes to window while others gather
Hendricks about Mary and render assistance.
Mrs. Hendricks
- 38- Window as in #34- Paul coming through window from parlor-- looks
about him-- starts to run--
Paul
- 39- Road in grounds- Dave runs in-- looks back-- examines revolver to
Dave make certain it is all right-- satisfied-- runs on--
Paul in a moment Paul follows through and out of scene.
- 40- Country road A- Dave runs through and out of scene-- Paul follows.
Dave
Paul
- 41- Country road B- Dave runs in-- stands at bay-- Paul comes up--
Dave threatens-- Paul puts up hands-- Dave says
Paul "She married me five years ago."

Paul startled, then rallies-- expresses disbelief--
Dave snarls-- takes pocket book from pocket-- uses
only left hand to do so, holding gun in right--
passes book to Paul-- Paul opens book and takes out
paper-- reads--

On screen- Marriage certificate made out in the
names of Dave Marsden and Mary Hendricks.

Continued on next page

C The same example showing a form which gives the cast for each scene. This printed card is placed in the corner, where such cards usually are printed. The scene with cast form is recommended only where the author is reasonably certain that his play will be produced without change.

No. 676.

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
802 SEVENTH WASHINGTON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK CITY

- 21- Office-- Boggs looking out of window-- turns away-- here he comes-- he hustles over to his desk and pretends to be very busy writing.
- 22- Front of office building-- Jinks rushes into scene-- dashes into building, upsetting a couple of men coming out-- never notices them. Into building.
- 23- Office-- Boggs listening-- hears noise-- turns back to desk-- Jinks bounces in-- dashes up to Boggs-- begins to pound on desk-- Boggs laughs at him-- Jinks working himself into a frenzy-- all ready to soak Boggs-- Bill gets up-- pulls Jinks around to face him-- hands him one wallop-- Jinks drops-- Bill lifts him up-- holds on to his collar-- tells him to apologize to Boggs-- Jinks crawfishes-- Bill takes him by the shoulders-- runs him out-- Boggs laughs-- Bill comes back-- Boggs give him money-- shakes his hand-- says--
- "I think I'll play a little poker again tonight."
- Boggs sits down, pleased all over-- Bill doesn't give a hang what Boggs does so long as he pays
- Leader-- That evening.
- 24- Room-- Boggs and others playing poker-- Bill in corner smoking a cigar-- not much suggestion of booze.
- 25- Dining room-- Mrs. Boggs goes to clock-- looks--
- 26- Bust of clock-- hands show half past ten.
- 27- Back to scene-- Mrs. Boggs turns from clock-- paces up and down-- beginning to get sore.

D Part of a comedy script ("His Bodyguard," Lubin) with four lines of space between each scene to permit the director to make interpolations when desired. A useful form for first drafts and practice work, but not recommended for scripts for submission unless requested by the editor.

The Devil- p. 4.

22 Continued.

with a flash of fire in her eye. He makes a wrong move and offers her money. With a wild cry she rushes for him and beats him about the head and shoulders with her clenched fists, and then sinks to the bench, burying her face in her arms. He starts to go to her, thinks better of it, and re-enters cafe.

23 Camp, same as 8.

All ready to leave. Nina's father is about to give the order to go, but decides to try again to persuade Nina to come, and so he exits. A gypsy boy, or another gypsy, follows.

24 Arbor, same as 12.

Nina is still sitting on the bench. She suddenly rouses- her love has turned to hate. She takes a knife from her girdle and is about to enter the cafe when her father comes out, and looks at her inquiringly. She sees him and appeals to him, pointing into the cafe- "Kill him! Kill him!" When she tells her father about Albert he is as angered as she, draws knife, rushes in.

25 Cafe, same as 1.

The father enters and rushes for Albert, raising a knife to strike. A student seated with Albert sees him, strikes his arm, and deflects the blow. Albert rises, seizes his arm, and they struggle, the other students rushing to help Albert.

26 Arbor, same as 12.

Nina rushes in. The gypsy following the father enters also.

27 Cafe, same as 1.

The students break away and the father lies on the floor, while Albert drops a knife in horror, and rises. He then flees out the door, the other students stopping any who would follow. They then hurry out after Albert. Nina drops to her father's side. The other gypsy, seeing that he is killed, rushes out.

28 Studio, same as 2.

Albert is hurriedly packing. The other students rush in, and he is packed off, in flight from the authorities who might want to apprehend him for killing the gypsy, and from the gypsies who might attempt further vengeance.

29 Cafe, same as 1.

Nina rises from the side of her father, raises a hand as she swears vengeance, and then rushes out.

30 Camp, same as 8.

The gypsy has arrived and told the others of the death of one of their number, and all are arming, etc. prepared to avenge his killing. Nina rushes in and stops them. Vengeance belongs to her! To her alone! And she tells them of Albert. They agree that she shall be the one to avenge her father's death, and the gypsy hoard is brought out, from which she is given a large purse with which to meet her expenses. Use the old fashioned stocking-like purse, so that it will be recognized later. She then exits with a determined air.

E From a script by Marc Edmund Jones. Much the same as Example A except that the scene runs on a line by itself and extends into the margin. The top of the page shows a continuation. In scene thirty note how the directions serve to "establish" the purse to be seen later.

SCENE 8. Sitting room in farm house.

Eastman is seated before his easel. Hester stands by the side of Martin. Bob, the farm hand, enters with basket which he hands to Hester. Hester takes out the things which Bob has secured in the village. She lifts out the mail. There is nothing of consequence, except a letter for Eastman. Bob exits. Eastman comes to foreground and takes the letter from Hester. He opens it and reads:

Insert letter in masculine handwriting:

Mr. Arthur Eastman,
P. O. Box 406,
York, Pa.

My dear Sir:

May I presume upon our acquaintance made during your exhibit in Philadelphia, to invite you to visit me, relative to painting a portrait?

Yours sincerely,
Gerald Hastings.

Eastman studies the letter. At first he cannot place the writer; then he recalls who Hastings is. He shows the letter to Martin and Hester and begins to explain. Fade out.

SCENE 9. Corner of art gallery.

Fade in and hold diaphragm at vignette: Several persons, including Hastings and his daughter, Alice, are gathered about a painting. Hastings is much interested. He inquires about the artist. A gentleman summons Eastman and introduces him to Hastings. Hastings in turn introduces Eastman to Alice. Congratulations. They chat as scene fades out.

SCENE 10. Sitting room in farm house as in Scene 8.

Fade into regular scene: Eastman finishes his explanation. Hester is not much impressed. Martin is interested. Eastman says:

Spoken insert: EASTMAN:
"I SHOULD LOCATE IN THE CITY AND CULTIVATE
THESE PATRONS"

Martin nods with appreciation, but Hester resents the idea. Eastman opens drawer of table and takes out his bank book. Apparently the balance indicated scarcely warrants him in going to the City. Hester leads Martin out. Eastman sits in deep thought. Can he realize his ambitions?

Sub-title: THE FARM IS MORTGAGED THAT ARTHUR EASTMAN MAY OPEN
A STUDIO IN THE CITY.

F-1 Scenes from Editor Phil Lang's adaptation of McKee Ran-kin's "The Runaway Wife," showing the manner in which the Kalem Company specifies sub-titles or leaders. Note the use of the diaphragm as a vignette. This the free lance does not usually specify in the script.

SCENE 11. Sitting room in farm house.

Martin and Eastman are seated at table, gravely discussing the mortgaging of the farm.

SCENE 12. Exterior door to farm house.

A farmer and a Justice, who carries a small grip, come up and knock.

SCENE 13. Sitting room in farm house.

Martin and Eastman hear the knock. Eastman admits the callers. All seat themselves and discuss the mortgage. The Justice draws out the papers from the grip. Eastman and Arthur inspect the papers.

SCENE 14. Exterior door to farm house.

Hester comes up with filled milk pail and opens door.

SCENE 15. Sitting room in farm house.

Martin and Eastman are preparing to sign the mortgage, as Hester appears in the door with the milk pail.

SCENE 16. Close-up of Hester at sitting room door.

Hester sees what is taking place and controls herself with an effort.

SCENE 17. Sitting room in farm house. Continuation of Scene 15.

Eastman has signed and Martin prepares to affix his signature. Hester at the door puts down the milk pail and storms up to the table. She denounces Eastman. "It is your selfishness which has caused my husband to do this!" Martin pacifies her and prevails upon her to sign the papers. Then he leads her into adjoining room. The Justice places seal on papers and the farmer pays over the money to Eastman. The Justice and the farmer shake hands with Eastman and exit. Eastman looks at the money and gravely considers what he has done.

F-2 A continuation of the preceding. Scenes thirteen to seventeen are a continuous scene broken by close-ups of Hester, who in sixteen for the moment is the most important person on the scene and who is too distant from the camera to permit her display of emotion to be observed to the best advantage in the full scene.

The Journal of Lord John
 By C.N. & A.M. Williamson
 Arranged for the Screen by Norbert Lusk
 Part 5: The League of The Future.

143 DEN - back to 132

Dr. Ramesses getting into big cape
 overcoat, as worn in episode 4, telling
 gang to follow gradually. Wharton
 examines revolver - he may need it.

144 LORD JOHN'S ROOMS - back to 142

Lord John anxiously listens as Carr
 Price tells disconnected story:

FADE IN

145 DEN

Repeat scene 123, present episode.

146 CLOSE-UP OF HEART-SHAPED DOCUMENT.

Repeat scene 124, present episode.
 After first DISSOLVE, then DISSOLVE
 IN skull, already suggested by arrange-
 ment of name, etc. on document
FADE OUT

147 LORD JOHN'S ROOMS - back to 144

Carr Price suffering afresh. Lord John,
 troubled, consoles him. Price, almost
 out of head, points to wall as DISSOLVE
 IN: "IF THE GOVERNOR STILL LIVES IN THE
 MORNING NOTHING CAN SAVE THE LIVES OF
 YOU BOTH. WE HAVE BROTHERS EVERYWHERE."
 Carr Price implores Lord John to help as
 DISSOLVE OUT caption. Lord John rushes
 to telephone.

148 CLOSE-UP OF LORD JOHN AT TELEPHONE.

Carr Price nervously watches Lord John
 grasp telephone. He says to Carr Price:
 cut-in: "WE MUST WARN THE GOVERNOR--AND NORA"
 Lord John registers cut-in then calls number.

G A page from a serial adapted by Norbert Lusk, showing the form at present in use in the eastern studios of the Universal Company. On the next page is offered a sample of the form approved by the West-Coast Studios. Note the wide variance in scripts used by the same company.

- 28.5 Exterior hotel - porch, about as in 3 -- Sally and her Father, the Minister come on -- meet Wadsworth at door -- make inquiries for Eddie -- Wadsworth pulls stern father stuff -- says:
 "WELL -- YOU SEE EDDIE ---"
 He looks yonder ---
29. Porch location -- flash Helen Blazes rocking -- showing him a little stoking.
- 30.3 &28 - Pa clears his throat - takes his eyes off Helen and starts to explain all about poor Eddie -- Sallie is interested #
- 31.25 &27 -- Eddie has just spoiled another one -- he can't help seeing the joke is on him -- laughs cynically -- begins to play with his can of tobacco -- makes a bomb out of it with a match for a fuse -- starts to light the match from another #
32. Corridor - exterior of Eddie's room -- Lemoran, leaning on his janitor's brush -- peering through key-hole.
33. KEYHOLE MAT -- inclosing view of 31 -- Eddie has lit the "bomb"
- 34.32 &32 -- Janitor jumps -- Good Lord -- he's lighting it -- slips in trying to get away -- brush thumps on door --#
- 35.25 &31- Eddie hears noise -- to door -- opens it -- gets brush in face - looks.
36. Shooting down corridor -- Eddie looks out -- sees no-one -- back in, puzzled.
- 37.26 Lemoran - at junction of corridors as in 26 - on knees, with fingers in ears -- eyes shut - praying..#
- 38.11 Wadsworth, the minister and Sallie seated -- Pop has finished his explanation -- "and so, you see - Eddie isn't allowed to get out much." Minister is scandalized -- Sallie laughing at them both behind their backs as her father says:
 "BUT -- WHY COMPEL A BOY TO MAKE COFFIN-NAILS?"
 Pop storms -- coffin-nails, indeed? -- Sallie sees an argument is on -- she slips away..
39. Clerk's desk -- Helen in, carrying magazine -- looks at register -- tiptoes off to elevator or stairway -- out. Sallie in -- Clerk asks her whom she wants -- "Eddie Wadsworth"-- gets Eddie on 'phone -- clerk looks other way while she sneaks off to see Eddie.
- 40.26 &38 - Helen in -- sees janitor on knees -- he opens eyes suddenly -- looks foolish -- rises - adjusts his monocle -- explains.
 "ER - REALLY, YOU KNOW I'M A DETECTIVE -- LOOKING FOR SPIES"
 She gets him -- asks him where Room 42 is -- he points -- she shows she thinks she'll have to get the Count away -- off hurriedly.. Lemoran looks toward Eddie's room - wonders why no explosion.

H Showing the form approved by Western Universal. From a comedy, "Always Roll Your Own," by Walter Edmand Mair. In the margin the second figure refers to the first use of a set or location. In the scene "& 38" means that scenes thirty-eight and forty are practically one.

Play No. 643

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
BOX 76, MADISON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK CITYIf Love Were AllA five reel romantic drama

Capt. Hugh Conyere, head of an expeditionary force in China, falls in love with Fui-San, daughter of a Mandarin in one of the western provinces, and sacrifices honor and the safety of his command to win her in marriage, but the thought of the lost battalion stands ever in the way of happiness and he learns that love is not all.

Full synopsis on next page

Play No. 643

EPES WINTHROP SARGENT
BOX 76, MADISON SQUARE STATION
NEW YORK CITY

C O S T U M E S

Conyere- (1)- Khaki service uniform. No sword. Cartridge belt and double holsters for pistols.

(2)- Rich Chinese robe.

(3)- Uniform not unlike number one, but of dark cloth and of native manufacture. Emblem of the rising sun on left sleeve.

Fui-San- (1)- Rich Chinese dress.

(2)- Absurd imitation of European dress. Same as shown in insert in scene 128.

(3)- Plain Chinese dress. No figures or embroideries.

I-1 A convenient loose leaf form. The same form of page is used for the synopsis, cast, scene plot and costume plot, in that order. All of this is on paper of a color different from the other sheets; in this case it is cherry colored. The sheets are 4½ by 7¼ inches.

Play No. 643 EPHR WINTHROP SARGENT Scene No. 128
 BOX 78, MADISON SQUARE STATION
 NEW YORK CITY

Insert Leader "Am I not like your people now?"
Cut-in

Insert Any old magazine showing the picture of a woman in same style of dress as that Fui is wearing. Copy costume from magazine. Not a fashion magazine, but something the soldiers might have had.

Play No. 643 EPHR WINTHROP SARGENT Scene No. 128
 BOX 78, MADISON SQUARE STATION
 NEW YORK CITY

Last used in 124 Next used in 131 Setting No. 38
Location Costume Cast

Conyers on-- smoking-- discontented--	2	Conyers
Mimosa enters-- tries hard to suppress her amusement, but cannot help giggling-- Conyers irritably asks what she wants-- she announces Fui--Fui enters-- Conyers springs up-- she stands expecting praise-- he turns from her in disgust-- she speaks	2	Fui-san
<u>Cut-in</u> Conyers shakes head-- she turns to Mimosa-- takes book-- shows him--	1	Mimosa
<u>Insert</u> -- Conyers laughs-- pushes her away-- goes to door-- turns-- laughs again-- not a pleasant laugh-- he is actually hysterical and trying to hide it-- exits-- Fui sinks down on floor-- Mimosa comforts her.		

I-2 The top sheet is used for leaders and other inserts, and is placed before the scene in which the material is used. It is not the same color as the action sheet, shown below. In this set the insert set is green and the action pages white. A different color makes it easy to assemble the insert pages.

STUDIO <i>Set No. 8.</i>	EXTERIOR <i>Location No.</i>	SCENE No. 56
<p>Controlled fan to blow curtains. Dark outside window. Candles have burned 20 minutes.</p>		<i>Est. Footage: 40.</i>
<i>Stage Same as Scene No. 50</i>		<i>Feet Taken:</i>
<i>Close up in</i>		Light Effects Candles - shadows.
CAPTION		
<i>Action Continued from Scene No. 53</i>		<i>Continuing Action of Scene No.</i>
ACTION		
<p>STONE enters slowly - his terror has greatly increased - with shaking hand places candle he carries with those still burning on table - sinks into arm-chair - the curtains at window behind STONE are slowly parted and DANVERS peers in - a strong puff of wind causes candles to flicker - STONE feels wind, and, as though fearing to look, slowly turns head - his eyes meet those of DANVERS-</p> <p><u>Cut.</u></p>		

J Emmett Campbell Hall's scene-to-a-page script. These are printed four to the 8½ by 11 inch sheet of paper and are written with the sheet as a whole, making it necessary to change the paper only once to every four scenes, the paper being perforated that it may be torn apart.

16.

smoking jacket. She is about to go upstairs with the coat he has just taken off when Waite stops her with a smile, and takes the money from the inner pocket of the coat. He puts the money into the pocket of his smoking jacket as Viola goes off upstairs with the coat.

Waite, still talking and oblivious of his wife's reticence, goes to the mantle-shelf for his pipe, which he takes up. Blowing hard at it, he discovers that it is choked and will not draw. Laying it back as something to be cleaned later, he goes into the dining-room. Mrs. Waite looks after him curiously, but does not follow.

SCENE 32 - Waite's Dining-room. (Same as So. 16) --Light from the sitting-room doorway. ---Evening.

Action - - - Waite enters from the sitting-room, still talking over his shoulder to his wife. He goes to the shelf where some of his pipes are, and reaches up for one. In taking a pipe down, he knocks over the vase in which Mrs. Waite has hidden the stolen trinkets. "Good Lord! What have I done?" he exclaims, with an expression that almost indicates forebodings of bad luck on this eventful evening.

Mrs. Waite, of whom we have a glimpse through the doorway, makes a step forward towards the dining-room, but shrinks back as she sees her husband bend down over the fragments of the vase.

SCENE 33 - Still Waite's Dining-room. This is a close view of Waite bending down over the broken vase. Among the fragments of the china he discovers the stolen trinkets. He stares aghast for a moment. One by one he picks up the trinkets; then slowly rises.

SCENE 34 - Waite's sitting-room (Same as So. 4) ---Evening.

Action - - - Mrs. Waite is standing in abject terror. Waite enters from the dining-room with the trinkets in his hand. He has himself well under control and his horror is more or less hidden under a patient and gentle surface manner. He holds out the trinkets towards his wife. "Where did these come from?" he asks.

Mrs. Waite attempts some glib and artificial explanation, but falters under her husband's searching look, and stares at him piteously. "My dear," he says softly, "how could you!-- How could you?" His reproach is harder for her than denunciation. With an agonized gesture she hurries away from him into the dining-room---while Waite stands staring with the trinkets still in his hands.

K-1 Examples of the Bannister Merwin form in which the reason behind the act determines the action rather than the written gesture or movement. In the original script this material completely filled a page as did the succeeding example.

SCENE 68 - Interior of a Shop -(Same as So.64)-

Action - - - Viola is waiting for her mother's return. She is becoming restless, and, after a moment, she asks the shop-assistant the time. The assistant looks at her wrist-watch and names the hour. Viola decides not to wait any longer, and goes.

SCENE 69 - Sitting-room in Waite's Flat -(Same as So.50)-

Action - - - Mrs. Waite is sitting by the table with the paste pendant before her. She is looking at it with mingled emotions. There is something of her first irresponsible mania to possess, but mingled with this is an expression that shows that she begins to realize what she has done.... Finally she covers the pendant with her hands, and, with a face that shows complete wretchedness, leans forward over the table, resting her head on her arms.

The door opens and Waite enters hurriedly, without stopping to remove his hat. He advances toward Mrs. Waite and says sharply: "Elizabeth!" Mrs. Waite slowly raises her head and looks at him miserably. "Where's the pendant?" he demands. She still looks at him as if silently imploring his pity for her fault, and slowly removes her hands and uncovers the glittering paste ornament on the table. Waite snatches up the pendant and upbraids his wife, holding the pendant before her eyes as damning evidence of her guilt. "You would ruin me!" he cries. "This cannot and must not go on!" and so on and so forth, emphasizing each statement with a little shake of the pendant. Presently his eyes rest on the pendant for a moment, and suddenly his look becomes fixed--He stares. With a quick movement he brings the pendant nearer to his eyes. With another quick movement he turns towards the light. His expression shows that he recognizes that the pendant is paste. "Good God!" he whispers. And again he turns to his wife fiercely. "Where did you get this?" She indicates falteringly (more terrified by his new manner) that she took it from a chair in his office. He sees that she is speaking the truth. Ignoring her, he stands, trying to puzzle the matter out. Then a glimmering of the truth comes to him: "Manning!" he whispers. He considers a moment longer, and then, without another word to his wife, he hurries out.

SCENE 70 - Smith's Office---the "bucket shop" -(Same as So.52)-

Action - - - Smith is at his desk. Manning enters and pays Smith the overdraft on his (Manning's) account.

Manning is again confident and shrewd. He feels that he is in a safe position, for, even if Waite discovers the substitution

K-2 Compare the brevity of scene sixty-eight with the care with which the succeeding and more important scene is written. Not mere fullness of description but fullness of description where required is the essence of the Merwin script. In long scenes it is not always possible to avoid turns to the following page.

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**SYNOPSIS OF RELEASES AND DEPARTMENT
OF PHOTOPLAY WRITING ARE OF SPE-
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