SODOM AND GOMORRAH

BY

MAX KNEPPER

Here we come:
with more Mouth Man poetry
to spoil your last cherished
fancy about "our beloved stars,"
to enlighten you about sweet
charitable Marion and brilliant
"dirty Willy" and to kill
the rest of your illusions
about God's Chosen people
of New Jerusalem.

Sincerely yours
"for higher education"
Lucie Olsson.

SODOM AND GOMORRAH

THE STORY OF HOLLYWOOD

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PREFACE

Ever since I have been living at the backdoor of Hollywood, which has been nineteen years, people have been writing to ask why I don't write a book dealing with the motion picture industry, after the fashion of the "Brass Check" with the newspapers, and the "Goose-Step" with the colleges. I have had it in mind as something to do, but now Mr. Knepper has done it, and so I shan't have to bother.

Generally I have a pessimistic attitude toward the masses of manuscript and proofs, pamphlets and amateur books which the postman and the expressman bring to me in great quantities. Manuscripts generally have to go back with a form letter. But it happened that some of Mr. Knepper's material was published in our "Epic News," and so I was in duty bound to read it. Now, reading the galley proofs which he sends me, I find that he has collected a mass of sound information concerning Hollywood and its practices, and has presented it with intelligence and good commonsense. I am happy indeed to be able to say that the book is worthwhile, and deserving of attention from those who are interested in the cultural life of America.

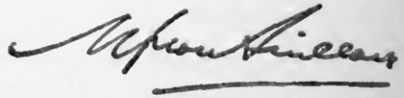
I note Mr. Knepper's closing statement that we will soon have Federal regulation of the motion picture industry. That will be a step forward, but we must not have too much hope from the interference of politicians in the making of motion

pictures—at least not while politicians remain what they are in America. About the only immediate help which the Government can give us is to break the system known as block booking, which makes it impossible for theatre owners to select their programs by choosing good pictures wherever they can find them. Breaking up that system will make it possible for independent producers to find an outlet for their productions, and it is in the independently produced picture that our immediate hope of progress lies.

I know something about this matter, for I have tried several times to make independent pictures or to get them made, and always I have found that the major companies with their monopoly of distribution are able to block the way. I have told in my book, "I Candidate for Governor, and How I Got Licked," what the motion picture industry did to defeat the hopes of the people of California in the 1934 election. During the four months which have elapsed since that election, I have been discussing plans to put the story of that campaign into the form of a motion picture, so as to bring it to the people of the entire country; and in this effort I have been acquiring more knowledge as to the power of the big studios to block the way of the independents. Four different groups of men have come forward, eager to make the picture I have suggested, and confident that it would prove a financial success, and each time these men have learned upon inquiry that they

did not dare to make the venture. Each time they were "reached" by one form of intimidation or another. Their banks shut off their credit; their lawyers came to warn them of the dangers of the undertaking; their clients and customers threatened them with boycott; and always it was the "majors," that is, the big studios, which were behind the threats. In the recent election in California the motion picture industry went Fascist, and it does not intend that any independent shall go Socialist, nor even EPIC. Its biggest mogul is chairman of the Republican State Committee of California, and that is where the industry stands and will stand to the end, no matter how bitter that end may be.

The motion picture is in chains, but the book is still free. In this book a competent man has written the truth in the public interest, and those who help to circulate the book will be rendering a public service.



A Word About the Story

O. O. McIntyre, whose clever writing is a credit to journalism, claims in one of his series of articles on Hollywood (May, 1934) that the film city is the most cussed and dicussed place in the world. This is not a writer's mere opinion or exaggeration, but a fact.

Hollywood is discussed in magazines, in the newspapers, on the radio, and in everyday conversation. Whole sections of almost every type of publication are devoted to chatter about the motion picture world and its inhabitants. Not even the sports world enjoys so much publicity as the realm of celluloid drama. Dozens of individuals make their living, and better than a mere existence, too, by writing daily columns of gossip about the goings-on in Hollywood. Some of the articles are syndicated, the greatest triumph gossip has yet achieved. The editorial of more than eighteen monthly publications consists of nothing except stories and bits of gossip about film celebrities. Even the high-class magazines frequently publish articles dealing with some phase or other of the motion picture. The fashions are turning to Hollywood. Aspiring actors, writers, directors, designers, and whatnots stream into Hollywood. What remain of the nation's population, who, for various reasons

are constrained to dwell in other localities, read, talk, and think about Hollywood.

As for the cussing, Hollywood gets that from numerous representatives of every class of human beings in the civilized world. The actor who fails to crash the impregnable gates of the motion picture world cusses Hollywood. The beautiful stenographer who sacrifices her time and money, and probably her virtue as well, contriving to break into films, voices her chagrin and disappointment loudly and freely. The motion pictures are cussed by the writer who sees his masterpiece mutilated beyond recognition by what he calls stupid and mercenary business men. Puritan parents who are tired of refusing their offspring permission and the price to see "The Sin of Nellie Peters" vent their spleen on Hollywood. Not least among the groups of Hollywood's vilifiers are the holders of worthless motion picture securities, and those bankers who have sunk millions into an industry that cannot pay. These, and the extra players who see the comparative few attain great wealth frequently through effort not relative to acting talent, are only a few of the adverse critics who heap continual vituperation on the film capital.

The author was induced to write this informative work on Hollywood on the old theory that where there is smoke there is fire. The smoke rising from the Hollywood gossip chimneys is

obvious, but just how much fire burns in the grates below has always been a much-disputed subject. It should be explained that the greater part of all the material written about Hollywood is directly or indirectly dependent on the bosses of the motion picture industry. Even the newspaper gossip writers, despite the reputed power of the press, depend upon the good-will of the studios. For if the doors of the film factories and the gates of the stars' homes were to be barred against a writer, his source of material would be substantially depleted, if not completely wiped out.* One of the interesting events of Hollywood is the monthly press women's luncheon at the Brown Derby Cafe on Vine Street, where the unprintable news of the picture industry's inner circle is privately discussed. Not a word of this ever reaches the ear of the public. While isolated incidents unfavorable to the industry and its personnel may be occasionally recorded in the newspapers or even the fan magazines, the tone in general is abjectly flattering.

A logical title for this work would be, "The Truth About Hollywood," but an impersonal pity for the overworked phrase induced the author to give it a rest. For indeed half or more of all the

*Followers of Walter Winchell's gossip column will recall his mentioning a chain of movie magazines for sale at almost nothing, because one issue ran a story of Marie Dressler displeasing to Mr. Louis B. Mayer, who caused a boycott of this company's magazines by all the producers. This applied not only to advertisements, but resulted in no interviews being granted to writers of this unfortunate publisher.

articles dealing with the films and their personalities go under the title of "The Truth About—" You simply fill in the blank. And unfortunately the vast majority of them are not the truth about anything. In the maze of gossip emanating from Hollywood, the truth is such an uncommon event as to be a luxury.

The whole truth about the uncanny picture business is difficult to ascertain. In fairness to the reader, it must be stated that Hollywood, with regard to accurate information, is like Russia. It is possible to find examples to prove any point you wish to make. For instance, if you are writing an article on the spirit of generosity prevailing among the picture players, you have as proof the undeniable philanthropy of some of these celebrities—even the worst Chicago racketeers frequently donate huge sums of money to charity. But if you wished, you might take for your theme the hard-heartedness of many film players who cause to be discharged needy and deserving employees, whose only offense consists in having annoyed in some trifling way the temperamental actors.

The challenge to any writer attempting to draw a sketch of Hollywood conditions lies in getting beneath the superficial "facts" distributed so lavishly by the organized studio publicity departments, and in presenting a picture of cinema life without the helpful make-up of ballyhoo.

Any sincere writer trying to give an accurate description of Hollywood is handicapped by having to protect his sources of information. The status of any studio employee is always precarious in the extreme, and much of the information imparted in this work has been derived from individuals very close to the celluloid divinities. Consequently, it has been necessary to camouflage many incidents and situations. In fact, our information concerning the adventures of a beauty-contest winner in Hollywood was gained only on promise of fictionizing the events.

I have avoided mentioning names as much as possible, not from a benevolent urge to protect those to whom I refer, but from a desire to avoid advertising them. Only in those cases where it is essential to preserving the authenticity of the work have I brought in the names of some who figure in this written panorama. Names, except to color with authority, are of little value, since it is with institutions, rather than individuals, that we are chiefly concerned.

But this work is not intended as an exposure of Hollywood, or as an instrument of reform, and if in the course of the following chapters this sort of thing occurs, it is because it is unavoidable. The author has desired to create, simply, a picture of the Hollywood sacred circle, and afford an answer to the prevailing question of why the

average motion picture is such wretched entertainment.

Among others, the author wishes to acknowledge his gratitude to "Plain Talk Magazine" for its kind permission to print certain excerpts from articles by an apparently well-informed author dealing with Hollywood conditions. ("Unmasking The Movies"—September, October, November, 1933.) These articles were outstanding in their fearless exposure of the malpractices of certain executives and actors of the motion picture aristocracy. Certainly there is enough material in these articles to render their publisher liable for heavy damages were the charges untrue, for there is no ambiguity concerning those referred to.

In writing a work unflattering to Hollywood, the author lays himself open to attacks by outraged demi-gods of the screen. The producers always issue their dismal wail of "intolerance," their stock reply to every type of criticism. Naturally, after they have gone to the trouble and expense of fitting out a pair of green spectacles for the public so that it will eat the shavings they provide it, the producers are annoyed when anyone contrives to destroy the illusion.

As with almost any issue, you are either for or against Hollywood, whether or no you wish to take sides. Inasmuch as this work is more or less "against," I desire to give a very brief resumé of the arguments commonly employed by the

supporters of the picture industry, of which there are a goodly number, so that the reader may contrast the two scenes.

Apologists for the motion picture industry usually advance the theory that Hollywood is no worse than any other city, and that the bad reputation of the "picture people" in general is the result of the huge amount of publicity attending the "few" outstanding cases of immorality and otherwise unfortunate conduct of film celebrities. In speaking of divorce lately, George Arliss—one of the few exceptionally good actors, and a fine fellow—stated that the general impression of Hollywood's high percentage of marriage failures is inaccurate. He claimed that only a few of the players can be charged with marital inconstancy, whereas most of the colony live in peaceful domesticity. This optimistic viewpoint hardly coincides with that of the Legion of Decency, whose survey shows conclusively that a successful marriage among film celebrities is phenomenal. As for the contention that "Hollywood" is no worse than any other city, vague and misleading as it is, that is probably quite true as far as murder or bank robbery is concerned. But when it comes to sexual license, drunken orgies, narcotic rings, perversions of all kinds, and crimes against good taste, Hollywood has a long lead over other communities, except, perhaps, the Barbary Coast or

a few other localities where the people admittedly are degenerate.

To avoid any misunderstanding, it must be made plain that the term "Hollywood" wherever appearing on these pages has reference to the motion picture colony exclusively. Only in connection with the normal elements of the population does the argument that Hollywood differs from no other city hold good.

The smell of the Augean stables may be a bit nauseating to some readers, but, if only for the sake of truth, it is better to see the inside for oneself than to remain afar and be told by highly-paid stable boys wearing perfumed clothes that they are in reality very pleasant.

CHAPTER I

Adventures of a Beauty Contest Winner in Hollywood

The judges were middle-aged men, most of whom were victims of a sort of lecherous senility. They squinted and stared at the lovely beauties parading before them, each man vaguely planning to attempt a rendezvous with his favorite. And round and round on the platform walked the contestants, displaying their charms before the judges and spectators. In the end the judges selected as the winner a girl with an innocent baby-face, the usual preference of middle-aged, masculine fools.

Gulda smiled and bowed to the crowd. The president of the Lady Nelson Beauty Cream Company presented her with a cup, and again she smiled and bowed. Then she smiled for the press photographers, a little nervously for it was the first time she had ever been photographed for a metropolitan newspaper. The sensation was a delightful one.

Soon her friends, and her envious enemies, and thousands of neutral people would see her beautiful likeness and know that she, out of nineteen contestants, had won the annual cup. What a triumph!

But all this was only minor, when one considers that the greatest reward was coming. For six years the Lady Nelson Beauty Cream Company had been sponsoring annual beauty contests for the sole interest of the public. That, at least, was the claim of the management. Somehow or other, it was the divine duty of the manufacturers of America's greatest aid to beauty to send some young girl every year on her way to fame and fortune. The fact that the publicity was worth considerably more than the expense involved in the contest was discreetly unmentioned, though of course no one could be so uncharitable as to object to the company's incidental profits from this institution. And no one ever seemed to remember that not one of the winners ever attained a fortune, and but very little fame. Each winner was a local Queen for a moment, and then it was all over.

To be sure, the lucky winner received a large gold cup on which was inscribed a charming little verse about Venus, but even this loving cup was something of a fraud, for it was only gold-plated. However, it shone as nicely as solid gold, and the winner's friends and neighbors would never know the difference. Invariably the winner herself was ignorant of the fact until some Los Angeles pawnbroker brutally appraised its value.

The great feature of the entire contest was the ticket to Hollywood and the promise of a great career in motion pictures. That, above all other attractions, was the flame that drew the moths. How much more munificent would it have been if the company had made the ticket round-trip, but no doubt they believed quite rightly that such charity might be regarded as an insult to the recipient, and hence they refrained from such a course.

A by no means insignificant feature of the contest was the personal letter of the President of Lady Nelson Beauty Cream Company to the Hollywood picture producers on behalf of the contest winner. This letter was supposed to be the magic charm which would open the forbidding studio gates to a new face. The young ladies regarded it as infallible. In flowing terms it introduced the bearer, telling of her charms and possibilities, and requesting that every possible consideration be shown to such a rare jewel. The president could not be accused of a lack of enthusiasm for the Lady Nelson protégé.

Plenty of local publicity was afforded, too, as a support for the aspiring actress. The two large metropolitan newspapers of Toledo carried pictures and short articles on the front pages. If she were lucky, the Associated Press would pick up the news. This was rare, though, and Gulda was not fortunate. She was unlucky enough to win on

the day there was a huge riot in Europe, and even a beauty contest winner cannot compete as news with a European riot.

Naturally she continued no longer as Gulda Frankfort. Her sponsors concluded that such a name was not conducive to screen glamour. There is no sex appeal in "Gulda" and very little more in "Frankfort." So the first step in her metamorphosis was the transition from her old name to the new. She emerged as Ireena Delmar, with the accent on the last syllable. That would look nice in lights, and would be easy for her public to pronounce and remember.

Her father mortgaged his bungalow on Cherry Street and endowed his daughter with a thousand dollars, which of course she would repay out of her first week's salary. But she had to have some capital until she could get organized in Hollywood. As yet she had not decided at which studio she would work. After they had made their offers it would be time to decide that.

Naturally her father would become his daughter's secretary and business manager, and the whole family would come to Los Angeles and live in a Beverly Hills mansion, luxurious, ostentatious, and in superbly bad taste, like most of the other wealthy film people.

Gulda—pardon, we must remember to call her Ireena now—was already looked upon as great by her friends. They petitioned her for future

favors, a type of flattery that gratified its recipient immensely, for it made her feel like a celebrity. Ireena, like a true veteran, rose to the occasion by giving this and that which she did not have as yet to give, but it promoted good feeling on both sides, and there was no real harm done.

Of course her friends entertained their famous chum with a lavish party which they hoped was the type given in Hollywood. As far as lavishness was concerned, it was a fair reproduction of a Hollywood party, only on a more limited scale. The film colony "throws" a party on the least possible occasion. The purchase of a new pet, or somebody burying his dog, or a divorce or a marriage are each and all sufficient pretext for gay entertainment lasting hours. Such is the mirth of Hollywood.

The Lady Nelson press agent met Ireena at the Union Depot where she embarked for the western paradise. She was assured more local publicity, which the clipping agency would send her. Celebrity that she was, she received candy, flowers, and kisses from friends and relatives. It was quite a ceremony.

A grave shock it was then, when she arrived in Los Angeles unnoticed. In her dreams there would be people from the studios, reporters, photographers, and perhaps an official welcoming committee. That was the way it had been in certain movies she had seen. However, the fact

remained that she was unheralded and had to proceed to a hotel where she could organize her battle for screen recognition.

She had already decided that she would stay at the Ambassador Hotel until she was well launched in her career. Then she would find a modest little palace where she could make her home. She chose the Ambassador because she was under the impression that it was the right thing to do. She had read of the Cocoanut Grove, where the stars came to dine and dance, so it followed in her mind that she should live there. She knew that it would be expensive, and her expectations in this respect were not disappointed. When she paid her taxi fare and inquired the price of the rooms her heart sank. A poor mathematician, nevertheless she understood that she could not continue to live at this splendid residence long without a screen contract.

Alone in her room she experienced, for the first time, a few misgivings concerning her future. What had happened, she wondered, to her five predecessors? They, too, had left Toledo amid the glorious fanfare of publicity, and armed, no doubt, with letters to the producers from Mr. Chadwick, president of Lady Nelson. Yet nothing was ever heard of them again. She shuddered. What if—but no, such a thing could not happen to her. There was her father's thousand dollars, and a mortgage on the bungalow at home. Such

a thing did not dare to happen! However, she resolved to retrench in her expenses. Unless she got work immediately she decided to leave the Ambassador for a cheaper residence. She must save her money.

The following morning she inquired her way to the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios. She was informed that this plant was located in Culver City, five or six miles to the west and a little south. From her previous experience she knew that taxi rates in Los Angeles were substantially higher than in Toledo, and she reflected that such transportation to Culver City would be expensive. She decided to take a street car. Nobody would ever know the difference. Her prestige would not suffer. Accordingly, she took a Pacific Electric Interurban, the most sensible thing she could have done.

The lobby, if such it may be called, in the big Culver City studio is neither large nor pleasant. A few hard benches, an ugly desk, and scratched, dirty woodwork are the outstanding features. There is nothing about the room to encourage the visitor. Surely the executives of this studio cannot be accused of undue extravagance in furnishing the lobby. Ireena's enthusiasm and hope perceptibly diminished when she entered. The little room was filled with people, so that one could not talk to the desk clerk without being overheard. She slowly approached the desk.

"Well?" inquired the clerk.

"I would like to see Mr. Mayer, please," said Ireena, keeping her voice as low as possible. She felt that everybody was laughing at her.

"Have you an appointment?" the clerk asked skeptically, implying that the question was whether Mr. Mayer wanted to see her.

"No, but . . ."

"Then I'm sorry. We can't let you see anybody without an appointment." His tone was one of finality. It practically said, "You may as well go home now."

Ireena became flustered, but she was not going to give up yet. "I have a letter here," she said, "from an important . . ."

The clerk held out his hand. She gave him the letter of introduction from Mr. Chadwick. "I understood that Mr. Mayer would see me," she said hopefully.

The clerk became a little less hostile. "I can send it up if you want me to," he replied, "but I tell you what you had better do. Call up his secretary and try and get an appointment. Tell her about your letter, and maybe she'll do something for you."

Ireena was infinitely grateful for this advice and bit of kindness. She began to feel dreadfully alone and homesick. Almost she wished she had never come to Hollywood. Things were going so much differently than she had anticipated.

Instead of the studios fighting for her, she was having to fight to secure even an appointment with some official.

As quickly as possible she returned to her hotel and called Mr. Mayer's office. Finally she got the secretary on the telephone. She was informed that Mr. Mayer was very, very busy and so, unhappily, he would not be able to see her. But if she would mail in her letter and newspaper clippings, they would see what they could do for her.

Oh, the bitter process of disillusionment! One by one the pillars were crumbling beneath her beautiful air castle. Surely something terrible had gone wrong. They must not understand who she was. Mr. Mayer would not even see her! Her eyes were wet as she prepared to mail her introductory letter and press clippings to the executive's office. And then she wrote a letter to Mr. Chadwick. He simply would have to do something about this terrible mix-up, and that was all there was to it. Meanwhile she would wait.

The days passed. Ireena wanted to move to a cheaper place, but she was afraid to change her address for fear the studio might try to get in touch with her by telephone or messenger. She did not want to call and tell them that she was moving. At last, however, she tired of waiting, and telephoned to Mr. Mayer's office. They informed her that her letter was received and she

would hear from them shortly. Two days later she received a note, along with her clippings and Mr. Chadwick's introduction, telling her that her name was on file in the casting office, and, though there was nothing for her at present, she would be called when needed.

Poor Ireena cried. Her hopes were dashed. She still had money left. Why not take what remained of the thousand dollars and return to Toledo? There was obviously no reason for remaining in Los Angeles, for she could as well mail her recommendation and publicity from Toledo. But the mere thought of going home sickened her. It was impossible to consider returning home a failure and facing her friends, especially after that glorious party and all those rosy promises. They were counting on her so much. She could not fail. No, she would stay in Hollywood and fight. There were other studios besides Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Surely they would not all be so inaccessible. She would try again. Tomorrow would see her attempt at another.

Meanwhile, she would leave the Ambassador and move into a cheap apartment in Hollywood. She decided to take a place close to the studios, so as to be in immediate contact with her future employers. It would be easy to visit the casting departments of the Gower Street studios if she took an apartment in the vicinity. Besides, she

reflected, no doubt she would there be in a position to meet many people connected with pictures, and that would be a help. On that very afternoon, then, she moved to an apartment house close to the studios on Gower Street. And she spent a very lonesome and worried night.

In a few days she obtained an appointment with an executive in one of the major studios. He was an associate producer, and Ireena's hopes rose. She had achieved an appointment with a real motion picture power. From the minute she made the appointment she lived in bright dreams.

A few days later occurred her interview with the executive. After being compelled to wait in the anteroom of his office for twenty-five minutes, an old studio custom, she was shown into the office of Divinity on Earth. He was a fat, short, perspiring gentleman of the Hebrew race, whose appearance did not coincide with his executive ability, if he had any. But Ireena was duly impressed. The twenty-five minutes' wait had not been in vain. She realized that she was in the presence of a very important executive, a man who perhaps held in his hands her destiny. Merciful Heaven! He was about to speak.

"Vot vas de name?" he mumbled.

"Ireena Delmar," she cried eagerly.

"Vell, Miss Delmar, suppose you sit down and tell me vot vas it you vant. Lemme see, you von a beauty contest, eh?"

"Yes, sir," she replied. Quickly, before anything could interrupt, she handed him Mr. Chadwick's letter. He looked at it absent mindedly and handed it back.

"H-mm," he grunted. "And vot you vant to do?"

"Act. Act in —"

"Yah, yah. I know. But I mean, vot is your type?"

She hesitated. "I believe, sir, any type. That is, anything except comedy. I want to be a dramatic actress."

"Oh, shure, shure, Miss Delmar. Almost, it seems, every girl vants dat."

"Do you think I have any possibilities?" Ireena inquired, her voice trembling with excitement.

"Vell, I dunno about dat," was the reply. "Haf you been filed with the Central Casting Bureau?"

"No, sir, I hope to avoid that. You see, well, I came to Hollywood with the understanding that I would have no trouble getting a place. I thought I would be welcome. Instead—"

"Yah, yah," smiled the executive. "I know. Dat is an old story out here. Dey come by de dozen, dese beauties. Dey all tink dey iss going to be a star. But dey iss only a few stars."

"But my record," protested Ireena.

"Your record in vot?" asked the executive. "Lemme tell you someting, Miss Delmar. Dot

record don't mean nottings. You got a pretty face, yah, but ve get tousands of dem. But can you act? Ve vant vot you call personality and dramatic ability. Ve got enuff beauty."

Ireena could not restrain her tears. The Jew looked at her shrewdly. "You come back to me next veek. Maybe I haf someting for you den."

Ireena left the studio discouraged and yet hopeful. He had asked her back next week. That was something. But he had made no definite promise. And he had told her that her record in Toledo was worth nothing. If that were true, what did she have left to put her ahead of the many other girls who wanted to be actresses? Yet there was the invitation to come back the next week. Surely he must have been impressed. At least, she fared better with this studio than with M-G-M.

Over the week end she became acquainted with Vera Tell, a stenographer in one of the studio offices. As she was leaving her apartment, Vera, whose watch had stopped, asked Ireena for the time. From this mere incident sprang a Hollywood friendship. In a few minutes the two young women were engaged in intimate conversation. Ireena acquainted Vera with the fact that she was a beauty contest winner, and the latter was somewhat more impressed than the studio executive with Ireena's publicity and Mr. Chadwick's letter. But even she was skeptical.

"It's a hard fight, kid," she told Ireena. "There's so much damned competition, and besides, there are other things that count a lot more than beauty,—or acting ability either."

Ireena wondered what she meant by other things, but she did not ask, trusting Vera would explain. Vera did.

"Let me tell you, girlie," she went on, "that a lot of the stars didn't get their jobs because of their looks or talent. I'll tell the world not. They got their jobs by being good sports."

Ireena opened her eyes wide. She was far from being an innocent, but she had no idea that sex played the key role in obtaining screen opportunities. She did not quite believe it.

Vera continued with her information. "Of course, not all the stars get their jobs by being reasonable, but a heck of a lot of them do. Why, I can act better than half the dolls that draw big salaries in our studio. But, heck, I ain't got enough sex appeal to make some executive want to bargain with me. That's why I'm only a twenty-a-week stenographer."

"Then you mean," said Ireena very slowly, "that you have to—"

"You've got it exactly," was the answer. "And, of course, no matter what you do you're never sure of getting anything out of it. The best rule is to get some fat, ugly old big shot that can't get anywhere with a girl without paying for it, and

then hold out for a high price. If you can do that, you're started in pictures. And once you're started, you're fixed all right."

Ireena instantly thought of the executive she had met. She shuddered. Perhaps Vera was exaggerating. She had no doubt that some girls got parts by doing that sort of thing, but surely most of them did not. She would be of the latter type, and win out solely by her talent and beauty, rather than by the sale of her body.

Six days exactly from the day of her interview, Ireena called the executive's office for an appointment. To her dismay she was informed that he had left for New York and would not be back until the first of the following year. "But he told me to come tomorrow," wailed Ireena. "He told me to."

"I'm sorry," was the reply, "but he is in New York." Ireena heard the telephone click. The woman, presumably his secretary, had hung up. It seemed to her that this was the end of everything.

She tried other studios. She secured interviews with minor executives, none of whom could help her. They all advised the same thing, that is, she should register at the Central Casting Bureau. Some of them, because of her contest record, placed her on their own casting files, promising to give her a call when they needed her. Ireena understood how indefinite and hopeless that was.

She still had more than half of her thousand dollars left. Why not go back to the city where she was better known? Chances for employment would be much greater. True, there was nothing that Toledo could offer a beautiful woman in the way of a motion picture career, including the glamour and money that accompanies screen stardom, but it would be better than starvation in the cinema capital as an extra. In Toledo, smoky, ugly, and devoid of those elements that make Hollywood so attractive to feminine youth the country over, she would be safe from those things in life that are sordid and grossly unwholesome. Perhaps not safe, but safer.

But ask the moth why it will flit around an open flame, drawing closer and closer to its death, instead of flying about in sure territory where it is darker but safer.

Hollywood is the flame that attracts poor moths like Ireena. Its glitter is too great to be overcome by the dull glow of common sense. Besides, Ireena had left home a conqueror. In a burst of glory she had departed amid the plaudits of her friends. And she had taken with her a thousand dollars which her father had given her to start the new life. Like the general who stakes all on one battle, she could not turn back.

And still, was there not a chance? There are many directors in the motion picture business. Ireena had read many articles quoting these di-

rectors as saying that Hollywood needed new talent, new faces. Perhaps she could impress some director favorably and be given a small role in a film. He would immediately recognize her ability and soon she would be on top. No, she could not leave Hollywood. It was unthinkable. But it would not hurt to take a temporary job in some other line than pictures. She would get one—soon.

Then Vera introduced her to Selwyn Kent. At last, it would seem, fortune smiled on her. Kent was an assistant to one of the supervisors, the position having been created for him mainly because he was an intimate friend of the supervisor. He had nothing in particular to do except to agree with everything his superior said or did. Kent was one of the much-talked-of "yes" men of motion pictures. His salary was seventy-five dollars a week.

Vera told Kent about Ireena's success in Toledo and wondered if he could do anything for her. He immediately became interested. Having just tired of his current feminine companion, he was in the market for a new object on which to bestow his ardent affections. His last, he had promised to make a star, but she was still working as a switchboard operator in an apartment house. Kent, even had he wanted to, was without the power to put her on the acting list, and it is doubtful if he ever wanted to. So they parted

company, after Kent had got his share of the bargain.

The new romance started off quite casually. Kent, after being introduced to the Toledo beauty, inquired very innocently if Ireena were interested in a motion picture career. Once encouraged, Ireena flooded him with enthusiastic assertions which bore testimony to her interest in cinematic art. Her life's ambition, she told him, was to become a famous actress. She related to him all her troubles, and how sometimes she despaired of ever accomplishing her ambition. Verily, she opened her heart to him and received the manna of his counsel and encouragement.

"I am glad you are interested in the screen," he told her seriously. "We are in such desperate need of new talent. You would be surprised if you knew how little grain there is in all the chaff." (Meaning, of course, the horde of film extras.) "I can see that you have possibilities. You—"

"Then you really think I may get somewhere?" inquired Ireena eagerly. "There is a chance for me?"

"Your possibilities are infinite," he assured her. "But allow me to give you a little advice. You are young yet, very young, and you have much to learn. You are trying to break into pictures the usual way—the wrong way. Your technique is wholly wrong. You feel that your splendid record in the East entitles you to a chance on the screen,

but there is where you are wrong. There are a vast number of beautiful women who come to us who cannot act. So many, in fact, that we have become a bit skeptical. We—"

Ireena interrupted. "But what is the right technique, Mr. Kent?"

"I was just coming to that," he replied. "You must get into contact, close contact I mean, with someone connected with the industry. You must become intimately associated with him, freeing yourself from restraint. If that person, after knowing you, thinks you can act, he will push you forward into prominence. Then you are started, and how far you go depends entirely upon yourself."

"But how can you get into close contact with some influential person?" Ireena wanted to know. "You just can't run up to some executive and commence a personal friendship."

"Ah, that's the point. I'm glad you brought that up," he said. "There is a way, Miss Delmar —oh, damn it all, why be so formal, I'm going to call you Ireena, you don't mind—and I shall point it out for you. I can give you a concrete example. I am the right-hand man of Mr. Lechstein, an important supervisor. Now if I know someone who I think is a potential star, I'll recommend her to Lechstein. Naturally he will want the credit for such a discovery. He'll fix it up with a director

to give her a screen test, and if she's got anything she's started on the road to stardom."

"Oh," exclaimed Ireena breathlessly, "so that's the way it's done?"

"That's the way it's done," he replied. "Say, why don't you have dinner with me tomorrow night? I'd like to show you some of the Hollywood night life. Vera tells me you haven't been around much. Besides, we could have a little talk about your screen future. As a rule I never take up with women trying to break into pictures. They all expect one to get them jobs, even if they aren't qualified. But in your case it's different. I can readily see that you have something worth while. I believe I may be able to do a few things for you."

The girl breathed her thanks. Then she burst happily into words. "You do think so, Mr. Kent? Oh, that's wonderful. I was beginning to think I made a great mistake in coming out here, and I almost persuaded myself to return. Now I'm glad I didn't. How can I ever thank you enough?"

"By going out with me tomorrow night," was the gallant reply. "I'll pick you up at eight-thirty. That will be all right?"

"Of course it will," was the answer.

Ireena could scarcely wait until the next evening. The prospect of seeing Hollywood night life with a motion picture man thrilled her immensely, but even this thrill was only second to

the thought that at last she was really started on the road to success. From the depths of despair she was raised to the heights of exaltation and superb optimism. At last she held in her hand the magic key that would open the gates to wealth and fame and glory. What a fool she was to have ever thought of going home.

Kent was a little late. Like most young men who have enjoyed many a conquest among the ladies, he was very vain and liked to make them wait on him. Naturally it flattered him when he reflected that a beautiful woman, capable of attracting dozens of men, would patiently wait for him to arrive. The fact that practically all of these women were in a position of having to cater to him never entered his mind, or, if it did, it never caused him a moment's misgiving. He serenely believed that it was his personal attraction that made him so irresistible to the ladies. Kent was not at all shrewd in this respect.

It was after nine when he arrived. "Hello, kid," he greeted her. "I'm a little late, but it was business. Are you all ready to step out? Say, we're in luck. A friend of mine is throwing a big party at his apartment. He wants me to come and bring you. Think you'll like that?"

Ireena assured him she was in ecstasy at the mere thought. She had, strangely enough, felt no resentment at having been kept waiting, and Kent's failure to apologize for his tardy appear-

ance aroused no trace of anger in her. If one of her male friends at home had been guilty of such conduct, Ireena would have lost no time in letting him know that she could do without his company for that evening, if not for good. But the situation this time was different. Kent was a motion picture man, and Ireena realized how important it was to treat him with complete deference. She had heard that all motion picture people were eccentric and temperamental, so she dared not risk offending Kent. There would be time enough to be firm and haughty after she had achieved stardom. And when she did, there would be a reckoning with conceited men like Selwyn Kent.

"You know," he observed, after they were in the car, "I had you on my mind all day."

"I'm glad," said Ireena. "I hope you were thinking pleasant things about me."

"I was," he replied. "For one thing, I was thinking how pretty you are."

"Do you really think I'm not bad looking?"

"You've got 'em all beat, kid," Kent replied. "I'm going to do a lot for you . . . Drink?" The car had stopped before an apartment house, and Kent pulled out an expensive flask.

Ireena had been raised during the age of prohibition, so of course, like most high school youngsters, she had learned to drink. However, she never liked any of the stuff, and merely drank

to be modern. So when Kent asked her if she drank, she felt sure there was only one correct reply, and she gave it. "Sure."

"I'm glad," said Kent. "Some few girls are so narrow-minded as to believe it's wrong. You know, Ireena, there's nothing that's really wrong. A person should do what ever he or she really wants to do. And if you're going to be an actress, you've got to be broadminded. An actress has to know life before she can interpret it. Lechstein says the greatest trouble they have with a new player is getting her to give a realistic interpretation of her part. Now how can a woman give a realistic interpretation of something she has never felt nor done? The answer is obvious. She can't. That's why, Ireena, you must have a broad background of experience before you can become an actress." Kent was proud of his speech. He had not realized before that he was such a philosopher.

If Ireena had been a little older and just a little bit wiser, she would have immediately understood Kent's rather crude efforts to influence her mind toward license. But if Kent was not at all shrewd, neither was Ireena, and Kent had covered the ground thoroughly enough to know that he was dealing with a young, blindly ambitious girl who would sacrifice anything provided she thought it was necessary to her career.

Ireena laughed a little nervously. "Sometimes," she said, "I think I should get married. They say an actress is never great until she has married."

Then Kent laughed. "Why keep a cow when milk's so cheap?" he asked, and laughed again. Ireena, to hide her embarrassment, laughed also. She did not want Kent to think her unsophisticated. Quite the contrary, she wanted him to believe that she knew something of life and that she was not afraid of life.

The drinks were strong, stronger than anything she was used to. Ireena realized that she could not drink very much of the stuff without becoming intoxicated. Kent, who was used to living on alcohol, gulped his down and poured another. "Here," he said to Ireena, "let me fill up your glass, it's getting empty."

"No more right now, thank you," replied Ireena. "I'll drink later on."

"Nonsense," cried Kent. "Don't be that way. Let me fill it up." Ireena felt that she dared not refuse him. She held out her glass and let him pour in a little gin and some rickey. This drink was even stronger than the last. Already she was beginning to feel light-headed and irresponsible.

The party was one of those Hollywood events where everybody was supposed to be deliriously happy. As a rule, everybody gets deliriously drunk, which in the film capital amounts to the

same thing. The chief topic of conversation was sex. Ireena, although sadly under the influence of liquor, was terribly ill-at-ease, for the language was much franker than anything she was accustomed to. In fact, it would have shocked many a stag party. Scenes that should have taken place behind bedroom doors were performed before the eyes of everyone.

Kent, noticing that Ireena was horrified by the orgy, took her out to his car. "My dear," he said thickly, "you mustn't be afraid of life. An actress must face life. She must love life!" He slipped his hand gently on her breasts. Suddenly he drew her to him and kissed her. She did not resist. Neither did she respond warmly enough to suit him. She was too frightened. "Mr. Kent," she protested, "we better not—"

He kissed her again. "There is much you must learn before you can become an actress, Reene. When I take you to Lechstein, I want you to be experienced, good. Then he will have no trouble making you a great star."

Although befuddled by liquor, and frightened by Kent and the scenes in the apartment, the light of stardom, her consuming ambition, flashed across her mind. Stardom! The one thing for which Ireena lived. Nothing must come between her and the fulfillment of her dream.

Slowly he began to remove her clothing. "Life," he whispered huskily, "is wonderful. You

must never be afraid of life. You must gain experience. Experience alone will make you a great actress. Don't be afraid of me, 'Reene. You must realize that love is the greatest thing in life. Love is life. I love you 'Reene, and you must love me."

Ireena felt ill and ashamed when she awoke in her apartment near noon the following day. How she had got there, she did not know. Grave doubts about her future tortured her mind. Doubts about the preceding night, whether she had done the right thing. She had been made love to before, but like most of the girls in her set, had never gone quite so far. This morning she felt wretched. What if after all it availed her nothing? She could hardly believe that it was necessary for her to go so far. She wished now she had not done it. But it was too late. Remorse is an impractical emotion.

Kent, in contrast, was delighted. He had made a new conquest, had found one of those rare creatures who are beautiful, young, and too stupid to defend their morals. Kent had committed himself to nothing. Ireena had traded herself for a mere promise of something in the future, and that something was nothing more than a promise to help her. Kent thanked Heaven that most girls were too foolish to ask for something more tangible than mere promises or vague inferences. For the next few weeks, or perhaps

months, he would amuse himself with this new toy, and then find someone else.

Ireena, although she was sorry for her indiscretion, decided, when Kent called her to make another date, that, now the fat was in the fire, there could be no turning back. Her one chance, she decided, lay with Kent. Perhaps he really would help her. Possibly he was in love with her, or at least liked her very much, and would want to do something for her. She resolved that she would make him stick to his promise, although if anyone had asked her how she would do this, she would have been baffled to find an answer.

The days flew by, and yet the motion picture industry was not enriched by the talents of Ireena Delmar. "You're not quite ready yet, child," Kent kept putting her off. "I want to see you well matured before you break in. I don't want you to be a mere flash in the pan. You must be completely ready. It is seldom that two chances come in this business. You must make good on the first."

"But when will I be what you call matured?" inquired Ireena impatiently one day when he told her this. "I want to get started some time. My money is running short, Selwyn. I've got to get a job one of these days or starve. I wish you'd get me something to do now. Can't you get me just a little part, anything, in one of the pictures?"

"I wish you'd trust me and quit worrying," he replied irritably. "When I see what I consider a good opportunity for you, I'll snatch it up. If you think you can do better with someone else, just let me know and I'll get out of your way."

This always terrified Ireena into making elaborate assurances that she trusted him implicitly and that she knew that he was the best friend she had. However, one day when he repeated the old formula she surprised him by bursting into tears. "I don't believe," she said, "that you ever mean to do anything for me. You've just taken advantage of my helpless position and ignorance of the real conditions to satisfy yourself with me. Oh, Selwyn, you've got to stick by your promise to help me! You've got to!" She began to cry so hard that Kent became frightened, fearing she would attract the attention of the neighbors. Her analysis of the situation was so precise that it left him for a time speechless. But not long. Kent could always find words suitable to any occasion.

"Now, now," he said, trying to soothe her, "don't carry on this way. Save your emotions for pictures. I promised I would take you to Lechstein when the time was ready. All right, tomorrow night in my apartment you'll meet Lechstein. I'll have you both for dinner. That's all I can do, and from then on it's up to you."

She threw her arms about him in gratitude. At last her dream was really coming true. She never stopped to reflect that perhaps her happiness was a little premature. Like most humans, she believed that what she wanted to come true would come true, and so she was sure that Mr. Lechstein would immediately put her in films.

As soon as she had finished lunch the next day, Ireena began to prepare for dinner at Kent's apartment. She had an appointment with the hairdresser to have her hair set, and there was considerable else to be done. She had purchased some new clothes—nothing was too great an effort to spend on meeting Mr. Lechstein. He was an important studio official. Kent had made that plain to her. And when she left that evening in a taxi for Kent's apartment, she appeared truly beautiful. One would never have dreamed that she was so very young. Her experiences had matured her. In this respect at least, Kent had told the truth.

Lechstein was there waiting when she arrived. He rose to greet her, and when Kent introduced him to her he was most cordial. "Selwyn has not exaggerated your beauty, I see, my child," he said warmly. "I must confess that I doubted a little whether he told me the truth about you."

Ireena responded in the same vein. She was very happy that she had obviously made such a good impression on the executive.

At no time during the meal did they discuss motion pictures. It was only after the last course had been served that Lechstein himself brought up the issue that was all-important to Ireena.

"I understand, Miss Delmar," he observed in his even tone, "that you have aspirations of becoming an actress."

"Yes," she said, "I do. It is my sole ambition."

"You have had some experience?"

Ireena looked at Kent. Lechstein noticed the glance and smiled. "Experience as an actress, I mean," he said. "Have you played on the stage?"

"No, I'm afraid I haven't," she faltered.

"Now, now, don't be discouraged. Perhaps it will make no difference," was his reply. "Many of our best players were inexperienced when they came to us. Still, it would be much better if you really did know something about acting. Beauty, especially in the talking picture, is not the important quality. It will take much more than your beautiful features—I am talking to you frankly, Miss Delmar—to make you an actress."

"Yes, I know," Ireena said quietly. "But I can act."

"How do you know? You think you can act, of course. All girls who come to Hollywood think that. How do you know that you can, Miss Delmar? You say you never have."

Ireena felt her heart sinking within her. Was he telling her that she didn't have a chance?

Breathlessly she answered, "I don't know how I know, but I just feel that I can." Then, before the film supervisor had time to reply, she added, "I'm sure that I can do as well as many of the prominent stars. Most of them are really very poor actresses. I would not have to have much ability to compete with them if it were talent alone that counted."

This amused Lechstein. The latter had a sense of humor, and he was under no illusions regarding the ability of many of the famous screen players.

"Suppose," he suggested, "that you come to my apartment tomorrow evening at nine o'clock. We will see what you can do."

Ireena left Kent's apartment with the mingled emotions of joy and doubt. She was happy that Lechstein had not turned her down. She was to have a chance. He said that tomorrow night he would see what she could do. But he had made no promises. She had been frankly told that her beauty would be only a minor consideration. What if she lacked the other and more important requisites of a screen actress? She would have nothing left. Her hopes had been aroused and dashed so many times that she could hardly believe that at last everything would be all right.

Lechstein received her the following evening with the same profuse cordiality that he had displayed the preceding. "I should have invited you

to dinner, child," he apologized, "but I was afraid I would arrive too late. Won't you have a sandwich and a little wine with me?" On the tea tray were some dainty, tempting sandwiches and some delicately cut wine glasses. Ireena accepted with real pleasure.

"I find it much more pleasant to talk and eat," went on Lechstein, "than to merely talk. And since I like good wine, too, I combine all three pleasures."

"You are a very interesting man," said Ireena.

"Thank you, Miss Delmar. That is a compliment. I contrive to avoid seeming dull to young people, young women, especially." He laughed a little at this. Then he continued. "Now regarding your desire to get into pictures, I wonder if you realize what that means. You are competing with thousands of girls as good looking as yourself. Some perhaps more so. You have won a beauty contest, it is quite true, but so have hundreds of others. Some are international beauties. It really means very little. Your only chance, my dear, is to get someone influential in the business to fight for you, to sponsor you . . . My child, I should like nothing better than to be responsible for your future. I can do something for you. Selwyn is a good boy, but he can't do you any good . . . If you could love me, I would stop at nothing to make you a great star."

She was sitting close to him, and as he said these words she could see his hands trembling. Suddenly she drew back as his arms clasped her tightly. He pressed his lips to hers. Something in her revolted against this mauling. Perhaps she thought it would be the same thing over as with Kent, that she would be deceived. Perhaps it was the appearance of this fifty-year-old man, with rolls of fat on his neck, and a huge stomach like a pickle barrel that prompted the spasm of revolt. Anyway, she successfully jerked herself free and screamed at the stunned supervisor. "I hate you all, the whole tribe of you. You're all the same, every last one of you. You buy us with promises of fame and money, but you never mean a word you say. I was a fool to believe Selywn Kent, but I didn't know any better then. Now I see the whole thing. Well, you won't get me. I couldn't do what you ask even if it meant becoming the biggest star in pictures." She fled home and cried herself to exhaustion, and then she went to sleep.

The next morning she started out to look for work down town. She had taken a course in typing and shorthand in high school, and she hoped to get some kind of an office job. Her lack of success in getting something drove her to desperation. Her money was almost gone.

She got a letter from Mr. Chadwick, after writing four times. It was very cold and concise.

It simply stated that the Lady Nelson Beauty Cream Company had been very generous with her, and it was not the Company's fault if she could not make the grade in Hollywood. She could hardly expect them to place her in a production. They were sorry, of course, if she were unsuccessful, but there was nothing further they could do.

To Ireena that meant the end of her last hope. She felt sure there was nothing for her to do but face a future that excluded the screen. She must find some other kind of work. And there was nothing to assure her that she could succeed in doing this. But she would try.

It was some months later when she at last landed a job, a job that paid eight dollars a week —and tips. A new fancy restaurant for film celebrities was established by two enterprising Jews who were officials of one of the major studios. Naturally, they felt that they could influence to a certain extent the patronage of their restaurant by the film notables. They advertised for beautiful waitresses. Ireena took her news clippings, arrayed herself in her best finery, and landed a job. Her destiny that guided her to success in a beauty contest had led her to Hollywood only to give her a place among the waitresses in an expensive eating house.

But, Ireena, you have no idea how lucky you are. Today you are earning your living by what society would call honest, if not illustrious, toil.

Some of your less fortunate sisters have met a vastly more unkind fate. Their loss has been the gain of those houses that flourish on the sale of young love.

Your fault, and the fault of your less fortunate sisters, was that you were not clever. Instead of demanding your reward in advance, you gave everything now for a promise of something in the future. You gave credit where credit was not due.

* * *

The little Hebrew executive sat at his desk brooding. He wanted a beautiful woman. His friends had their charming mistresses, some of them famous screen players. He, because of his physical repulsiveness, could get nothing but prostitutes—they, like a cheap coffee shop, having to cater to anybody with the price.

Then he remembered that amazingly beautiful young woman who had come to see him some time ago. She had wanted to get into pictures desperately. Perhaps she wanted a screen career badly enough to . . . He rang for his secretary. Let's see, what was the girl's name? No doubt she had left her address. He would have it looked up. The efficient secretary got the files, and finally they found where she had lived. They called the apartment house. Miss Delmar had moved, they were informed, and had left no forwarding address.

"Oh, vell," said the executive. "Don't bother any more."

Ireena will never know how close she came to being a great screen star.

CHAPTER II

Virtue at a Discount

A fan magazine once attributed to Mae West the remark that while virtue may be its own reward it has no place at the box office. Whether or not it was she who really said this is unimportant. The fact remains that it is a remarkable summary of the attitude of the motion picture industry toward morals.

Hollywood exists on love, both in its commercial and private phases. Love is the principal theme in studio offices, on the lots, in the film stories, in the gossip columns, and in the home. No other business or community so consecrates its time, energy, and money to the altar of Venus as Hollywood. The liberal Nation magazine claims that the motion picture is "the most completely sex-soaked form of popular amusement ever provided to any society." Unless one is closely associated with the motion picture industry, he cannot fully appreciate the scope of this vast truth.

Like, however, produces like, and the product which comes from Hollywood speaks for itself. So prevalent are the sex and crime pictures that European fans almost universally regard America as a nation of glorified racketeers and drunken,

sensual louts. With regard to the sex angle, it is amusing to reflect upon a situation wherein France, long regarded by the world as the incarnation of licentiousness, declared it necessary to establish a censorship of American films to protect the morals of the French nation. Whether or not French morals could be harmed by anything, is, of course, a debatable subject, but there is some significance in the fact that a people known to be free from prudish notions has deemed it advisable to protect its youth from the effects of immoral American films.

The recent movement against sex films in the United States has prompted in many minds the question why Hollywood producers insist on making so many objectionable films. The answer is too involved to be explained in a paragraph or two. It is necessary to get a broad background of the situation in the film capital and the attitudes of those responsible for the type of cinema entertainment produced in order to fully understand the reasons. The producers have several stock excuses which they apply to every accusation. The principal one consists of the argument that only objectionable films pay. Conversely, of course. they claim that clean pictures are not money-makers. One producer declared that "good" pictures always sustain huge losses. This statement was made soon after the release of "Little Women," a terrific box-office success. Conse-

quently it carried less weight than if it had been made at a more auspicious time. He declared that "most of the so-called constructive pictures are box-office flops." Yet as a standing refutation of his statement there are among the recent money-makers such films as "The House of Rothschild," "Lost Patrol," "No Greater Glory," and several other artistic and at the same time decent pictures.

As a criterion of the films that make the greatest impression on the public, a survey among three hundred people of all walks of life produced the following lists of past films that they remember: "The Ten Commandments," "King of Kings," "The Covered Wagon," "Ben Hur," and the Charlie Chaplin comedies. Not one of the hundreds of slimy sex pictures seems to be remembered any time at all. Each of these "moral" films that has made an impression on the public mind proved profitable. This fact makes it hard to believe that decent pictures cannot be produced at a gain.

In contrast to the afore-mentioned pictures, how many people remember even the recent cinemas, "No Bed of Her Own," "Monte Carlo Nights," "Gambling Lady," "Ever Since Eve," etc., or, since some of them are still current attractions at the third run theaters and hence before the public eye, who will remember them a year from now?

Cecil B. DeMille, Hollywood's ace producer-director, claims that the greatest money-makers in the history of picture production have been the so-called "epic" pictures, such as, "The Ten Commandments," "The Covered Wagon," and the like. This statement seems to substantiate the result of the survey made among the few hundred picture patrons.

The regrettable truth is that the minds of the motion picture executives are so sordid, ignorant, and debauched that they cannot conceive of anything being interesting unless it features flagrant crime or immorality. Instead of presenting normal romance, they have to have unnatural, filthy situations which are paraded as real life.

The titles of most motion pictures—just glance over the list of attractions in your newspaper—suggest that the efforts of the producers to get sexy designations have led them to "Love Magazine" or its like.

When pinned down, the producers always wail the question, "What kind of films can we give the public? All our features cannot be Alice in Wonderlands." This obvious truth, however, hardly constitutes a defense for the continuation of filthy photoplays. It is, of course, a fact that adult films must contain something more than "Pollyanna" appeal to be interesting. Drama must have a menace, and the menace must consist either of crime or sin. The principal issue is getting

Hollywood to recognize the difference between good and bad taste in drama. As things stand now, those responsible for cinema entertainment are either so ignorant or debauched—quite likely both—that they cannot or will not see that it is possible to have sex or crime in pictures without making either of these dramatic factors offensive. After all, that is art. The only difference between a good stage production and a burlesque is the difference in the quality and manner in which the entertainment is presented. It is the same with literature. Two writers can take the same subject and one can turn out a masterpiece and the other a lot of filthy "tripe." The idea that there might be a possible art in producing amusement that is entertaining without being obscene seems never to have occurred to the heads of the motion picture industry. It is a fact, a most lamentable one, that the average motion picture is more nearly like a dirty burlesque show than a good dramatic feature.

This statement will appear on its face to be pretty much of an irresponsible exaggeration, but consider the case. In the average film one finds the "undressing" scenes that are entirely superfluous to plot or characterization in the picture. They are there merely to stimulate the erotic desires of half-baked youths or those feeble-minded adults who derive sexual pleasure from

anything the least suggestive, which is the appeal of burlesque.

There is no other reason for the inclusion in most pictures of a scene in the heroine's bedroom where she slips off her clothes and gets into a negligee, to return to the hero waiting for her in a dimly lighted room. The audience is privileged to see the star's naked limbs, and as much of the rest of her anatomy as a bribed censorship dare let through. It is the old burlesque undressing scene all over again. In some cases daring films display as much of the actress's naked form as can be seen in the more conservative burlesque. In one recent film, barred in certain states for indecency, the heroine, while in bed, receives a telephone call from the hero. He imparts a message of the utmost importance, necessitating her coming to him immediately. As she rises from her bed, the audience is given an unobstructed view of the heroine's breasts, the low-cut pajamas evidently being designed for hot weather. She then makes her way to the dresser, where she is shown putting on her stockings. Her fans are thus treated to a view of her beautiful legs. The next scene portrays her in a low-cut slip. By this time everyone has a fairly accurate idea of her form, almost to the very last detail. One could see but very little more in any except the most ribald burlesque show.

Now on the legitimate stage an actress contrives to impress the audience with her dramatic ability. Her aim is to give a realistic portrayal of the character she is playing. On the screen, however, it would seem that an actress's goal is to captivate her audience with the calves of her legs. In fact, Marlene Dietrich is known to her public as "Legs Dietrich." Obviously she has made a touch-down.

No fair-minded, intelligent person would object to crime and sin where either is a vital element to the plot, and when presented in such a way as not to offend the taste of respectable people. It is these unnecessary bedroom scenes and strip act episodes, thrust into a picture to gratify the urge of some director to look at the form of his naked star, or to appeal to those fractions of the public who are thrilled to their finger tips by the sight of a naked limb, that are so offensive.

Some films go much further, however, than the insertion of a mere scene or two in which the actress or actor appears as nearly in the nude as possible. Certain films are based on nothing but flagrant sex and are designed with great care to gratify, or rather arouse, the erotic desires of the audience. In a way they correspond to lecherous French photographs.

An even semi-conscientious censor board could never have allowed "Red Dust" or "Hold Your Man" to be shown anywhere in the country.

Starring Jean Harlow and Clark Gable, both pictures reached the ultimate in filth and bad taste. Their appeal was to that class of people who pay five dollars for a six-page, illustrated story of what Johnny saw under the parlor door. In "Red Dust" one scene shows the prostitute, the heroine played so realistically by Jean Harlow, taking a bath in a rain barrel when Gable walks in on her. The male element of the public is treated to a scene of naked Harlow with the minimum covered by the sides of the barrel, or was it a foot of water? Gable, in one instance speaking to Harlow, says, "I'm tired of your kind. I've been going to them ever since I was sixteen." In another scene Harlow is engaged in cleaning out her bird cage. Provoked at the apparent difficulty she was having with the dried mess, she exclaims angrily, "Whatcha been eating, cement?" This is a typical burlesque joke. Besides, the trouble could have been avoided by using paper on the bottom of the cage. The theme of this picture is undisguised sex, the male role played by he-man Gable, and the female by the very feminine Miss Harlow. The characterization is sexy, the conversation is sexy, and the action is sexy, and these are the only elements there are in drama. Were there any others, they probably would have been sexy also.

"Hold Your Man," a later picture, is a masterpiece in both sex and crime. It goes one better, if possible, than "Red Dust." The hero is a crim-

inal and, of course, a great lover who takes his love on the no-payment-plan, while the heroine is the glad donor of her affections and everything included to the attractive Gable. She further distinguishes herself by assisting her lover to beat the law.

Clark Gable and Jean Harlow have come to typify in films free love and plenty of it. Anybody having the slightest knowledge of youth psychology knows what a disastrous effect such films have on the immature minds of adolescents who see them.

Then, of course, there is that outstanding example of the woman who has made a fortune by flaunting sex in her pictures. She is that vulgar creature whose asserted quotation began this chapter. Mae West, in the cinema, personifies licentiousness. Her pictures, it is frankly admitted, enjoy their tremendous drawing power from their suggestiveness. Mae, clad in tinsel, shakes her hips, winks her eyes, and invites the men "to come up sometime." Obviously the invitation includes something more than tea and a pleasant chat about politics. Judging by the titles of her pictures, there is nothing in the world of any importance except sex, and the contexts of these pictures justify their titles. "She Done Him Wrong," "I'm No Angel," "It Ain't No Sin" (this title expired under the knife of the New York Censor board) all suggest to the public the

glorification of sex. No wonder some theaters do not "recommend" her films for children.

It is less widely known that Miss West is the author of several books, none of which will ever be found on the shelves of a public library. The heroine of one is a nymphomaniac who lives with one man after another, including a gigantic black brute, a Harlem autocrat. Colorful with dope fiends, prize fighters, stool pigeons, crime, and intimate portrayals of sex orgies, the book should be seized like a leper and every copy destroyed. Dealers, as well as publishers, of this type of literature should be sent to prison for committing a felony. I am not mentioning the titles of Miss West's literary efforts to refrain from advertising them. Unfortunately, they can be obtained at almost any lending library, though the reader has to wait his turn.

A welfare worker in Cleveland, Ohio, recently stated in a public speech that she overheard a group of boys discussing Miss West's artistry, one of them mentioning the fact that he enjoyed seeing a West picture quite as much as visiting a prostitute. Perhaps he has an abnormally active imagination.

However, it is hardly less significant that Walter Winchell, who makes a fortune from his gossip peddling, mentioned the fact in one of his daily columns that most of Mae West's fan mail is obscene. Such would be the type of fan mail

received by a prostitute were she to correspond with her patrons. It certainly testifies to the sort of appeal Miss West enjoys. Likewise does the fact that she is a most popular figure on public toilet walls and a favorite of comfort station poets. But this is publicity, and like the rest of Hollywood, Mae no doubt feels that it is good, no matter what kind.

Perhaps the worst feature of a Mae West picture is the ridicule it heaps on decent people and morals in general. The characters are so drawn that Mae can wisecrack about the strait-laced Puritans (the good people are all unbearable hypocrites) and win the sympathy of the audience. The attitude of the characters she portrays is the same as that of the Barbary Coast prostitutes who used to shout at decent women, on the rare occasions the latter happened into the neighborhood, "Hey, you dummies, when are you going to get sense and quit giving it away."

When one reflects that Miss West herself has spent time in jail for staging an immoral show, he cannot help but wonder why she is permitted to become a public institution. It is an unhappy reflection on the degraded state of American morals and good judgment that she is permitted to grow rich as an exponent of license. At last, however, it looks as though her career has struck a decided snag in the opposition of the powerful Catholic Church.

Her last picture, "It Ain't No Sin," has been barred by the State of New York and has been cleaned up, if such rubbish can be cleansed. The censors do not like the title nor the advertising slogan, "The Rustle of her Bustle says, 'I Love You.'" The film is now called "Belle of the Nineties." The long deferred action, however, has come at last, and perhaps, if the reform wave lasts, Mae West and all she implies will be swept into oblivion.

It is the impression left on youth and the unthinking that makes obscene films so detrimental. As exemplified in the West cinemas, they influence the public to believe that immorality is the accepted thing, while decency is abnormal. This effect is gained, as we have shown, by putting stress on indecent scenes that have no bearing on the plot. In those cases where immorality is necessary to the development of the plot or to the characterization, it can be condoned, providing it is done a little subtly. For instance, in dealing with the life of Catherine the Great of Russia, it would be justifiable, if only for the sake of accuracy, to portray the empress as a woman of lax morals. Or in presenting a biography of Madam de Pompadour, it would be quite reasonable for the film to leave the impression that she did not die a virgin. But, if the picture were to give a somewhat fair portrayal of these characters—which is so rarely done—their immorality would

be only a phase of their lives, as those women possessed other qualities besides sexual lust.

And even though biographical films sometimes deal with notoriously immoral figures, they are less destructive than the common sort of lewd cinema, for they are films dealing with the lives of admittedly exceptional people. It is these "everyday" indecent pictures that have such an insidious relationship to our post-war immorality, especially since they are presented under the banner of being cross sections of average life. These films are advertised as "the story of modern youth," etc., whereas they are really the stories of abnormal, sordid, and pathological cases. An excellent example of this sort of thing is a recent Irene Dunne picture in which the heroine has to deal with an unscrupulous vamp and an adulterous husband. The advertising previews advised all women to see the picture because, "here is a problem every woman may have to face." Now as a matter of fact it is a little absurd to declare that every woman may have to deal with such a situation, as though it were inevitable like rainy weather. The vast majority of homes will never be troubled with the problems that arise in "This Man Is Mine." Here the "menace" is a vamp who derives unnatural pleasure from watching a married man succumb to her wiles, and the subsequent anguish of the wife. So abnormal is the whole emotional situation that Dr. Freud would

have found it a most juicy morsel. Yet many a woman will get the idea that what she has seen in this picture is representative of twentieth century home life.

Most devastating of all films on the youth of the country are those giving the impression that sexual license is practised by every smart young couple. The sight of something risqué is very stimulating to erotic thoughts of immature minds. Imagine the ideas a youngster gets when he or she sees a favorite screen idol in a suggestive picture. One young man questioned on this subject declared that he always took a girl to an indecent film before attempting an indiscretion with her. "They're easy," he said, "after they see a hot love show." Most authorities on the subject of child psychology agree that lewd cinemas have just such an effect as this adolescent described. It is not a question of morals, or at least morals alone, but one of social welfare, for the result of high school lovers seeing sophisticated photoplays in many incidents is a shot-gun wedding. Either that, or sex crimes, or disease.

It is a source of wonder to an observing soul why producers display so much partiality to bathroom scenes. Surely everybody, or nearly everybody, is sufficiently well acquainted with the sight of a bathtub as to make it unnecessary for Hollywood to carry on an educational campaign in this respect. It is quite surprising how many

films show scenes of the hero or heroine in the bath. It might be good propaganda for National Clean-up Week, but fifty-two weeks a year is too much. Besides, one sees so many of these scenes in Lifebuoy Soap Ads that to see them in the movies is very trying to the patience. Such scenes are generally completely irrelevant to the plot. In one of the later films with Lew Ayres, the hero is seen being interviewed by reporters while bathing. Sometimes prizefighters are met by pressmen while being rubbed down after a fight, or during training, but never while taking a bath in their homes. Even Mrs. Roosevelt, who is in the papers every other day, has never been photographed or interviewed while scrubbing herself. This bathtub scene with Ayres was created merely to satisfy a director's curiosity to see Lew's form, or because the producer thought that a sight of the star undressed would increase the feminine patronage—just as Clark Gable is always photographed in one or two scenes half or three-quarters naked.

This practice is about as disgusting as it is inexcusable. It contributes nothing whatever to the dramatic interest. The plot in Ayres' picture, for instance, would have been just as exciting if he had been interviewed in his living room properly clothed, as would normally be done. Unless a bedroom or bathroom scene contributes something to the action of the story, it had better be

left out. Of course, if this rule were to be strictly adhered to, it would go hard with pictures like "Red Dust" and "Hold Your Man," which, if the offensive scenes and conversation were to be omitted, would have nothing left.

It is interesting to know that the pictures rated highly by the dramatic critics seldom, if ever, contain indecent material. And as a rule these highly-rated films make more money by a wide margin than the mediocre and poor pictures containing so much trash. Surely the extra effort spent in producing good pictures, would in the long run, if not immediately, be vastly more profitable.

That Hollywood does sometimes produce pictures that are representative of real life cannot be denied. Fox Film's production of "State Fair," is such a picture. This cinema accurately portrays the family life of a moderately well-to-do farmer. It contains romance without showing the farmer's wife or daughter taking a bath in a rain barrel, and the entire film contains no trace of an illegitimate child. True, the son has an affair with a rather loose woman at the fair, but it is not portrayed in detail nor is it made the theme of the entire picture. He recovers from it without staging a demonstration against conventional society for opposing fornication, and he does not knock his father down in the process of defending his love for the woman "whom society persecutes."

When the fair is over, he goes home and subsequently marries a decent girl in a normal way. And another good feature about the picture is the fact that it was not advertised as a lesson for all farmers who someday would have to face the problem of their sons having illicit romances with fast women at state fairs.

"The House of Rothschild"—one of those rare masterpieces emanating from Hollywood—contains a perfectly normal romance, there being no birth of a child before a consummation of love in marriage. Sometimes, if one were to take seriously the average motion picture, it would seem that half the children must be born illegitimate. What a relief, then, to view something like "The House of Rothschild," which is especially conspicuous by its absence of filth and nonsense, and its portrayal of real people who lived normal lives, even if they did live them in the hectic days of the Napoleonic wars and Jewish pogroms.

There is really no excuse for Hollywood to produce anything but good pictures like some we have mentioned. There is enough literature in the world to provide material for decent films, so the excuse that pictures like "Cimarron," "The Champ," "Min and Bill," and so forth can be only exceptions and not the rule, is invalid. A survey of the literature found in the better magazines shows that most of our periodical reading is clean and respectable. The editors of our leading popu-

lar magazines do not cry out that the people will not support clean literature but demand scurrilous stories. Quite the contrary, some of the leading smooth-page magazines will not print any objectionable fiction at all.

Hollywood alone is to blame for the rotten entertainment produced, for a perfectly clean story will be taken from a good magazine or book, and by the time it has been made a picture the heroine is a dissolute woman, the hero cracks filthy jokes, the plot revolves about a terrible sex tragedy, painted as a picture of real life, and the author in a daze watches his story unfold, wondering if he could actually be the creator of such a depraved piece of literature.

Yes, the blame must be laid on the producers, for with all the available good stories to draw from, a certain film company thought they had to produce "The Story of Temple Drake," taken from a book dealing with degenerates. Is it a wonder that decent people are becoming disgusted?

Now occasionally a film dealing with risqué (they always term it "sophisticated" in the advertisements) situations comes out that deserves adult patronage. "Design For Living" was done so well that it in no way proved offensive to good taste. Moreover, it was not masqueraded as a story of "real" life, but obviously dealt with three very exceptional characters. The conversation

was clean, the scenes free from flagrant dirt, and the whole thing done in such exquisitely good taste that no one except the most unreasonable prude could object. Moreover, the sex element was so subtly suggested that few except mature minds would understand. The difference between a picture of this kind and something on the order of "Temple Drake" is the same difference that separates literature like "The Good Earth" from a story in "Smut Magazine." Both contain the element of sex, but the treatment of this element varies greatly in the two works.

One knows not whether to blame executive ignorance or executive immorality—probably both—for the fact, but it is certain that Hollywood cannot be trusted to deal with sex in pictures because it cannot differentiate between art and rubbish. It is also a fact that most films, like "Smut," subordinate everything to sex, whereas, if the films really did portray real life, sex would be made incidental to other human effort, for in real life the average person does have some other interests beside sex, although it is whispered that among those in high places in the film industry this is not so.

It is this situation that is responsible for stressing the physical attractions of screen beauties rather than their acting ability. Sex appeal instead of talent is the principal requisite

for screen opportunity in Hollywood. It brings us right back to the appeal of the burlesque.

In "Dancing Lady" Joan Crawford (as presented in a fan magazine article) wore brief panties, a whisper of a brassiere, and a gardenia that was later removed. In "Roman Scandals" Verree Teasdale and Ruth Etting wore very scanty apparel, while the chorus was attired in a Lady Godiva costume without the benefit of a horse. Clara Bow exhibits practically all of her 118 pounds in the picture "Hoopla." Ginger Rogers in "Sitting Pretty" wore a costume that weighed 2½ ounces, and which was so scanty that no stills could be taken. Quite amusing is the statement of a Warner Brothers' designer to the effect that "the Greeks loved their bodies and dared to show them. They were a race of body-worshippers. We are approximately the same here in Hollywood." This gentleman spoke an unconscious truth. In the spread of this cult Mae West has performed an invaluable service, for, according to Banton, the designer at Paramount, "A very low front with a swelling bosom effect is due to Mae West."

The type of story demanded for screen use always calls for a strong sex interest. Sometime ago the writer was in the office of a Hollywood scenario agent while the latter was discussing with a screen editor the possibilities of a certain story. "I'm afraid it won't do," he said, apolo-

getically. "The sex interest is weak." The same old tale, sex! As a matter of fact, the story did contain a romance, but unfortunately for the author the love between the hero and heroine was very ordinary and normal. Had there been an illegitimate child, or had the hero or heroine been entangled in an all-conquering sex tragedy of an unusual nature—which of course would have been advertised as a picture of actual life—the author would likely have sold his story. As it happened, there was plenty of action in the plot, but the story was guilty of the cardinal sin of lacking brazen conversation and loads of undisguised filth.

Substantiating this point is a letter from an author who published two years ago a very worthwhile book. His publisher was one of the largest and most discriminating concerns in the business. He has requested that his name be unmentioned, for at the present he is negotiating with a film company on the sale of a manuscript he has designed especially for screen use.

. . . "Before I became familiar with the demands of motion picture companies, I thought I had every reason to expect favorable consideration of my book. All reviews praised it highly, the New York Times mentioning it as 'wholesome, fine reading.' Certainly there were no press comments that would lead one to believe the book was uninteresting or trite.

"I was encouraged to try to sell it to the movies. A friend who had covered the groundwork in Hollywood advised me to place it in the hands of a good agent enjoying the confidence of the producers. I did this.

"At first the agent seemed optimistic—professional politeness. But as the months passed and he could report no favorable action, he became more and more indifferent. Then one day he gave me a ring, after the last major studio had returned it as unavailable, and suggested that I might try another agent. 'I'm afraid I can't do anything for you,' he said. 'To tell you the truth, as I see it, your book isn't quite the sort of thing for motion picture material. Of course it's a very good book, but I couldn't convince the producers that it's the thing they're looking for. The sex element is a little weak, you know, and you understand what most pictures demand these days. I'm sorry, but I don't see how I can do anything more for you.'

"I took a copy of the book to an acquaintance engaged on the writing staff at the Paramount company. I asked him to tell me frankly what was wrong with my story. He did. 'Your book is one of those things that manage to cover three hundred pages without resorting to rape or adultery to sustain interest,' he told me. 'Consequently, you haven't a chance here. If you want to make money writing for pictures, let me give

you a tip. Get hold of some used scripts. Study them carefully and then write something just like them. We have no use for originality. Do you know that one of the biggest stars in the business told me a few nights ago that she has stolen another woman's husband in seven of her last nine pictures? Don't you see what you must do? Write a story for this actress and have her steal another woman's mate. You'll be sure to sell it.'

"So that's what I'm doing. I need the money, and from now on I'll write characters that live outside the law, love outside the law, and die outside the law. Not only will my characters disobey every civil, conventional, and moral rule, but they will be possessed of every variety of lust, and I will make heroes and heroines of each and every one.

"I hope to make enough money to live in a castle somewhere out in Beverly Hills, have two motor cars equipped with fake Russian princes for chauffeurs, and someday grow so fabulously rich that I can afford to indulge my taste to write a tale of some strange family in which the husband does not commit adultery with an old friend of his wife, and in which the wife does not console herself with an old friend of the husband, requiring the children to be killed in an auto accident after a drunken orgy to reunite the parents. . . ."

Not very long ago a minor motion picture executive was discussing the question of the sex element in films. He was extremely agitated by the Catholic Church attitude toward indecent pictures. The executive launched a tirade against "the narrow-minded Puritans" who want to squelch all kinds of entertainment. "What is wrong with showing sex in pictures?" he demanded. "The public wants pictures of real life (you simply cannot escape the 'real life' issue) and sex is a part of real life. After all, we aren't giving them something they don't all know about."

This is quite characteristic of the stand assumed by official filmdom. As mentioned previously it never occurs to them that there may be such a thing as good taste. The idea that reproduction, although admittedly one of the ten biological functions and recognized by practically everyone at an early age, had better not be flaunted before the public in its most naked form, never bothers them. Excretion, too, is a natural function, a part of real life, yet it is a mark of civilization and the evolution of a higher order when man attends to this function in privacy rather than on the street corner or stage. Probably the only reason this natural act has not been exploited on the screen is because the producers regard it as being less glamorous than sex.

However, decency is not respected by some of the stars even in this phase of life. Quite a stir

was caused on one of the sets when a well-known Mexican star announced loudly in front of the entire staff, "Me have to pee-pee!" and dashed away.

According to various statements of the producers, the quality of the mentality of cinema audiences is not very high. This, of course, is just another slip-shod excuse of the executives for the quality of entertainment imposed on the helpless public. When pressed to make better pictures, after all other excuses have failed, the producers invariably fall back on the theory that their patrons are too stupid to appreciate anything better than what is being offered. As proof, some exceedingly dry and stupid production, possessing the one merit of being clean, is advanced. Naturally it has been a failure at the box office. But such proof is as superficial as it is feeble. Of course the average picture audience does not enjoy a deeply philosophical or involved biographical screen story. It is quite true that the general public lacks the education and background to appreciate historical films, which accounts for the fact that "Alexander Hamilton" and other cinemas on that order do not make money. Advocates of decent pictures do not wish to turn the screen into a strictly educational institution. A Catholic prelate, speaking on behalf of his organization, said that they do not expect and do not ask the producers to supplant the films now used

with religious pictures. "Religious pictures would be uninteresting to the vast majority of people," he said. (However, all the past religious pictures have been exceedingly profitable.) Nothing is being asked of Hollywood except the elimination of obscene and sympathetic crime features. The point that is so hard for the film executives to grasp is that a picture can have crime, menace, and romance without being disgustingly filthy. It is likewise possible to show a romance in progress without showing the couple involved lying together on a couch in a darkened room. Cecil B. De Mille's "Sign of the Cross" gave us a view of the conditions at Nero's court without giving us a picture of Nero and Poppaea in a suggestive pose.

Crime in pictures is another thing. The films have sinned far less in their use of crime situations than in sex. After all, a film must have enough action to provide interest. If some of the pictures did not surround criminals with so much glory, there would be little to object to on that score. In most of the films the criminal is the menace, and he is presented in an unsympathetic light. Before the advent of the gangster picture, Hollywood generally devoted its sympathies to the law. The gangster film, however, with two or three notable exceptions, tended to idolize the racketeer. But even so, there is not so much ground for objection to the crime element as to

the sex. For crime is abnormal, and the average youngster, despite some cases to the contrary, will not commit murder no matter how many pictures he sees in which this is done. For the same reason that a wild west magazine is infinitely less harmful to an adolescent than a filthy sex story, a picture featuring crime is much less detrimental to youth than a picture dealing with suggestive situations. The wild west magazine, other than being hardly conducive to the development of high literary taste, does no harm whatever, whereas the reading of obscene literature by adolescents is directly responsible for many sexual crimes and sometimes tragedies. Imagine, then the havoc that can be wrought by a suggestive film viewed by millions of immature minds.

Thus, there is really very little to the two principal arguments of the producers for continuing their wretched entertainment. There is as much profit to be made from decent pictures as indecent. True, it might take a trifle more effort to produce clean pictures that are interesting than to make sexy, impossible films that disgust every level-headed person. It has been shown that decent pictures do not necessarily mean dull pictures, and that decent pictures can be made profitably. The Fox Film Company will verify that "Seventh Heaven" and "Sunny Side Up" put some large black figures in the ledger. Every filthy picture that has made a profit can be matched by a decent

one that has done even better at the box office. Admittedly the obscene pictures do enjoy profits. So does prostitution make money for the white slavers, but that is no argument for continuing the traffic. Besides, what few vulgar patrons the theaters would lose in showing better class films would be more than made up in the increased patronage of a large group of people who are at present too nauseated by the current trash to attend the cinema.

After all, as far as dullness is concerned, nothing is more tiresome than seeing a "triangle" picture, the theme of which has been that of a countless number of other films and contains no surprises for anyone. The producers are prone to confuse immorality with originality.

There is one more vital reason for the constant stream of immoral pictures flowing out of the film capital. This reason will be discussed in the following chapter. The moral conditions of Hollywood have long been a national scandal. Let us look into the lives of those who constitute official filmdom.

CHAPTER III

The Unrepentant Sinners

In the automotive industry, or the steel industry, or the mining industry, the private lives and morals of the executives or workers do not influence the quality of their products. It is an unfortunate fact that in the business of producing motion pictures the reverse is true. What a pity it is that in those industries where the morals of the personnel are of the least importance, they are the best; while in Hollywood, where decent and normal living on the part of those who influence the industry would result in better films, they are the very worst. The characters of those who guide the industry have a very pronounced and unhappy reflection in their product.

Henry Ford may be a calloused, narrow man, but his private life, as far as morality is concerned, is irreproachable. Yet if Ford were the most depraved man on earth, his private life would affect neither the product which he sells nor the lives of his customers. The same thought applies to practically all the tycoons of industry—except film executives. John D. Rockefeller, Walter Chrysler, the Mellons, and the Schwabs are only a few of the influential people whose private lives are not a series of scandalous episodes.

It is a somewhat significant, if not particularly colorful, fact that the industries which they control are run on such a basis that traffic in human lust and the compromising of one's morals do not play a very important part in obtaining positions. Can anyone conceive of a young woman being given an important position with a huge salary for becoming the mistress of Henry Ford? Or can anyone imagine that an executive in one of the Du Pont corporations would dare to give a young woman a brilliant place for "being reasonable"?

Yet this sort of thing in the motion picture industry is the rule instead of the exception. Temptation, of course, is great. The industry traffics in feminine beauty and youth, and in masculine handsomeness and, occasionally, virility. In other industries the only high-paid jobs are the comparatively few executive positions. In Hollywood, Greta Garbo is just a salaried employee, but her position is more glamorous and better compensated than many an executive of the cinema. This striking difference between the motion picture and other commercial institutions is obvious. In Hollywood, if one is employed as an actor, or a director, or a writer; or a supervisor, or a cameraman, he is more or less "in the money."

There is nothing particularly glamorous in saying, "I work in the Ford factory,"—even if the position pays a hundred a week. But to say, "I

am a film actor," is equivalent to saying in England, "I am a member of the royal family."

Now since most actors and actresses are young and possessed of masculine good looks or feminine beauty, those in a position to distribute jobs wield enormous power in any way they wish over those who aspire to them. As most of the actors and actresses have something of the artist in them, although it would be unwise to commit oneself very far in this respect, they are propelled by an overweening ambition, hesitating at little to attain their ends. And even those who are not prompted by the divine spark of artistry are impelled by two very powerful incentives, money and fame. It is perfectly apparent that a girl would be far more likely to compromise herself for a position that can offer as high as five or more thousand dollars a week and international fame, than for a position offering less lucrative and glamorous rewards.

The motion picture industry is actually an industrial freak—ask any owner of motion picture stock if this is not so! Motion pictures, if conducted on a smaller basis and in a different manner, might be called an art. But as practically any artist who undertakes to do film work will confess, if he is not afraid to speak frankly, once he is on the payroll of a studio corporation, art, as he has previously enjoyed it, flies out of the window. A good writer, hired by a studio to

crank out material, either goes mad and leaves, or else he looks at his bank book, groans, and, for the sake of his wife and children, stays on. The former clothes manufacturers who have become the lords of filmdom pay good salaries to those who are fortunate enough to be in the few select divisions that pay them. But in return for the abnormally large compensation he receives as a studio employee, the artist ceases to be such by becoming a machine that turns out pseudo-art by formula and on schedule. The result of this combination of business and art is that motion pictures are neither. That is why the idealist is so bitter against the films, and affords an explanation of why the business man experiences the same unhappy emotion when he discovers that his film stock has again passed dividends.

Perhaps it is because of this extraordinary situation that such deplorable moral conditions exist in the upper strata of the film personnel. Not only the upper strata, but even the entire organization is honey-combed by all sorts of depravity and looseness. However, large-scale immorality is a luxury, so it is to be expected that the worst conditions will be found among those who can afford to pay the price.

But whatever the reason, it is a fact that the moral conditions is the film industry are worse than those existing in any other industry with the exception of the white slave traffic, which,

after all, hardly counts, for it is illegal and makes no pretense of being respectable. An accusation of this sort always raises a great clamor on the part of Hollywood's apologists. Of the latter, the film colony is not without a good-sized number. Equipped with the best publicity staffs that money can buy, and recognizing the necessity of placating the vast majority of the public who still, to a certain extent anyway, uphold some sort of morality, the films are attempting to convince the people that the ill-fame attending the industry is not deserved. One reads all kinds of tales about Miss Star going to bed every night at nine o'clock—and alone, too—so that she can get up next morning at six for her sunrise walk, or about Mr. Star who drinks nothing stronger than orange juice, as he is an ardent supporter of the Anti-Saloon League, but somehow these stories are not very convincing to intelligent people. Likewise, in whitewashing the whole town, one reads frequently about Hollywood being just a sleepy little village nestled among the hills, where nothing happens after the curfew rings at eight-fifteen. We ought not to anticipate, but shortly we shall see that these stories depend more on the imagination of their authors than on fact. Of course, on the surface it is more or less true. If one stands on Santa Monica Boulevard around ten o'clock it is pretty quiet. Just what this is supposed to prove, however, is indefinite, for one would hardly

expect to see a party of drunken motion picture stars celebrating an orgy in the middle of the street.

And then there is the much repeated tale of how the actors, directors, and executives play drop-the-handkerchief at their innocent little parties which close promptly at ten-thirty. Actually, one can read this sort of thing in any of the film magazines, of which there are at least eighteen. And it might—although of course it isn't—be true and still nothing would be proven. The things that are of a scandalous nature, that are so revolting, do not happen at large balls to which are bidden representatives of the press, nor do they happen on the corner of Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street in public view.

But all these silly stories are the efforts of the publicity organizations to create the impression that Hollywood is a virtuous city. These organizations do not hesitate to take advantage, naturally, of the model lives led by George Arliss and Will Rogers. They point out, with truth, that neither Rogers nor Arliss has been divorced, or mixed up in any scandal, or is anything but the most angelic individual. And of course these are not the only two. But there are hundreds of actors and dozens of directors, and dozens times dozens of sex-maddened executives. It is too bad that the virtue of Rogers and Arliss cannot quite cover all their colleagues, though of course Jack

Oakie can drink himself into jail and still be a good, jolly boy all the same. So what matter?

So well do the publicity staffs function, and so closed are the lives of the screen stars that what goes on inside of the immediate motion picture circle is known only in a general way. It is a supposed fact that the lives of the screen idols are open books, but that is just another sophistry. They are open to the extent that the publicity office prints every constructive fact about them. But the destructive facts are carefully and deeply buried. It is harder to get into a studio or an actor's home than it is to gain admission to Buckingham Palace. In reality the "open" lives of the screen notables are only as open as the publicity writers wish to make them, and this generally means that we see only as far as the front hall. We read all about their birthday parties, their European trips, their children, their husbands, their petty likes and dislikes, their divorces, and other dull trifles. But nothing that is liable to harm a star's popularity is ever allowed to reach the public.

As an example of how much the fan magazine stories can be relied on, there were two film monthlies on sale with legends of Nancy Carroll's blissful wedded life when the newspapers broke the story of her Mexican divorce. Oh, yes, indeed, her life was an open book, but the words were false.

However, the player is not the only sinner in Hollywood, nor is he the greatest. The whole tribe, except many in the lower pay brackets who cannot afford to pamper their vices, maintain a loose moral standard, to put it conservatively, with the proverbial exception to every rule.

Only recently a film magazine has published an article on the innocent Hollywood parties. According to this feature, the average party attended by film celebrities compares favorably with any Sunday School picnic. Yet for all this innocence, it is a fact that some ninety per cent of all the property damage suits brought by the realty owners of the better class apartment houses in Los Angeles are against film people. It is an accepted fact among the real estate owners that motion picture people are the worst class of tenants. Several months ago a Los Angeles court ordered a film comedian to pay damages amounting to more than four hundred dollars done to the interior of an apartment which he had occupied only two months. It is quite startling to reflect that in only sixty days time a guest could ruin an apartment to the extent of four hundred dollars. It must have been the church parties!

At least once every month one reads in the papers of similar cases. A Los Angeles daily during July carried a story running in the same vein as the above.

PAT O'BRIEN, ACTOR,
SUED FOR DAMAGE
IN RENTED HOUSE

"Pat O'Brien, screen actor, and his wife, Eloise Taylor O'Brien, owe their landlady, Etta Goldsmith, $520.97 for damages to household furnishings it was charged in a suit for that amount on file today in the municipal court.

"Various articles of furniture, dishes, and fixtures were either damaged or missing after the O'Briens vacated the premises at 2026 North Serrano Street, which they occupied one year, the complaint said.

"A love seat, badly damaged, worth $14.75; a teapot in a gold cabinet, allegedly missing and worth $7.50; and a bedroom rug, damaged, worth $341, were among articles on which Mrs. Goldsmith sought to recover.

"O'Brien and his wife denied they owed the bill."

Despite the comparatively great number of alcoholics and drug addicts connected with the film industry, the great moral infringement among the screen people, as in their product, is sexual license.

Verily, Venus is the trademark of Hollywood. The great art, the great joy, the great occupation, and the great diversion of the film capital is love. Naturally, where there is such a demand, if it is to be satisfied there must be an equally great supply. The provision of this supply comprises one of the major problems of many a film executive, male star, director, and what-not. Necessity is the mother of invention, and these ingenious

people have methods by which they solve the difficulty.

Every year throughout the country there are many beauty contests sponsored by various business concerns in conjunction with the studios in Hollywood. The winner, always a beautiful, ambitious girl, is given a ticket to Los Angeles by the local business firm, and the studio is pledged, supposedly, anyway, to give the youngster a try-out in pictures. This, however, rarely works out as expected. The girl arrives in Hollywood with very little money, expecting to be given a job in the films as she has been led to believe was part of her prize. Instead, she frequently finds that she cannot even gain admission to a studio, much less obtain a part in some picture. Or, if she happens to be a little fortunate, she may get an interview with some executive, but that is of no practical value. Outside of a few vague promises and a pleasant (?) chat, her time has been wasted. She gets into a desperate state financially. The chances are that she has no money to stay or no money to leave. About this stage of the comedy, or tragedy as is more likely the case, some fellow connected with the films begins to pay her his attentions. It seems almost providential. Just when she needs some studio notice the worst kind of way, here comes a gentleman actually associated with the studio wanting (?) to help her. Naturally she receives his attentions, delighted

that at last fortune has smiled on her. Unless she is very experienced, which probably she is not, since most of the contest winners are very young, the beauty will be surprised to discover that in a very short time, frequently in an hour or less, her romantic studio lover has conceived such a passion for her that only the most intimate physical contact will satisfy him.

In the probable event that he meets with some resistance on the part of his protégé, there is a stock of arguments that he may use. One of the most popular persuasions is the old one of needing to understand "real life." Before a girl can interpret roles on the screen she must have lived life to the full, and her sponsor will accept only first-hand information that she has done this. If she has not, he, generous man, will teach her, and there will be enough lessons to make sure that she will not forget anything. But if the girl concludes that she is well acquainted with life, or if she insists that her lessons shall be taught under the protecting garb of conventional marriage, then another plan of attack must be employed.

Marriage is too old-fashioned, it will be explained. How does she ever expect to get along in Hollywood with such antiquated notions? Oh, sure, the big film stars marry, but that is for publicity. Why, if they were to hear of such silly notions at the studio, she'd be laughed off the lot. He's just trying to help her. God almighty, he

could have any of fourteen dozen beautiful girls if he wanted them. That is not the point. He has taken a fancy to her. He only wants to help her . . . But if this line of argument fails to make an impression on her, there remains one infallible weapon.

"If you don't want to be reasonable," he tells her, "then I won't be either. I'll help you get a job out at the studio if you'll be nice to me. But if you won't, you can go to hell for all I care." This line of attack generally succeeds. To be sure, it is not the subtle kind of romance young ladies dream about, and would hardly be an approved method of Don Juan or Casanova, but it gets results. Actually, it is little more than rape, considering the girl is virtually forced by her pitiful circumstances to do anything he asks. She needs a job, and he's offering her one. By no stretch of the most benevolent imagination can it be put above prostitution. In fact this girl is worse off than a prostitute as far as the commercial angle is concerned.

A prostitute is practical enough to accept something much more substantial than promises. For her favors she accepts nothing but hard cash. But the motion picture extra seeking work has to take mere promises of aid, forced by the knowledge that if she does not accede to her lover's demands, she will of a certainty get nothing.

True, there may be other men in a position to dispense the good jobs, but it would be the same story all over again. In Hollywood there are no knights who aid beautiful, distressed damsels from motives of chivalry and purity. All assistance must be paid for, and in advance!

It would be unfair to certain executives, the Warner Brothers among them, to leave the impression that they deliberately establish such conditions. Like a few in all lines, part of the executives live normal, respectable lives. But they are not without fault. Their sin consists not of what they do, but of what they do not do. If they were interested in lifting the moral conditions of their business a little, they could put a stop to the use of sex as a prime factor in employment. Their minions, if confronted by the necessity of employing decent methods in their work in order to keep their jobs and swollen incomes, would hesitate a little before placing their mistresses on the company's payroll.

That such conditions do exist can be seen from the statement of Earl Carroll, famous "Vanities" producer, who, in listing the things he would do to effect a much-needed reform, said that he would "subject to instant dismissal any executive who took out any girl in the company's employ." If the situation were not as we have described, why should Mr. Carroll claim that such a rule is sorely needed? And if such a rule were to be

rigidly enforced, what a ludicrous picture the depleted ranks of executives would make!

The worst of it is, a great many girls who compromise themselves on the strength of promises of employment are cruelly disappointed. More often than not the creatures who promise this, that, and the other to the movie-struck girls are in no position to keep their promises, even if they were sincere in wanting to. The girls, of course, do not know this, and when some assistant director promises to raise them to stardom, they bravely submit to his demands no matter how physically repulsive he is, simply regarding their action as a sacrifice one must make to get along. Strait-laced Puritans should remember, before they condemn girls too severely for slipping, that many of them do so with the greatest reluctance, feeling that it is absolutely imperative if they are ever to get into pictures. Their crime is stupidity rather than deliberate immorality. It should be kept in mind that most of these girls are very young—so many of them are only eighteen or nineteen—and are not the hardened, sophisticated things they later become. If they were a little older and more experienced, or if they were a little shrewder, they would never give in until they got something more definite than a worthless promise from an equally worthless motion picture gentleman. They would be just as immoral, per-

haps, but at least they would be more commeasurably recompensed.

A very few are clever enough to make use of their beauty and brains to get somewhere in the films. These few frequently become our most famous stars. They are wily enough to give just enough romance to these amorous "sheiks" to make them want more, and then refuse. As long as men always want what they cannot have, it is comparatively easy to lead them along. Especially is this true of men who have had their way with women so long that it piques their vanity when they are refused. In this condition they will do anything the clever girl wishes. Consequently, some few women get a career out of them, or marriage, or sometimes even both.

But most of the girls are too stupid and too trusting to do anything but fall into the laps—and this may be taken literally, too—of the Hollywood "big-shots." Soon the latter become tired of them and drop them as abruptly as they were picked up. The unfortunate dupes have nothing left but lives without careers or money, and sordid lives in the bargain.

If it were not necessary to give some concrete cases where this sort of thing has happened in order to eliminate a condemning vagueness, it would be better not to mention any names. Many of the Hollywood men who practice this sort of

thing are so depraved that they enjoy seeing their names in print no matter what is associated with them.

There is the case of the Brooklyn girl, according to information derived from "Plain Talk Magazine," a beauty-contest winner who was sent to Hollywood to make her fortune and fame in the cinema. She met the same fate as many of her sisters. She could get no attention, no tests, from the lords of the screen. Finally perseverance seemed to win out, for she secured an appointment with Lowell Sherman, the actor-director. This gentleman is considered—being himself his greatest admirer—one of the leading lights of filmdom. It was Sherman who replied to Francis Lederer's obvious statement that an actor is not a very important cog in the social scheme by saying, "Who told that guy he can act, anyway?" Mr. Sherman apparently believes that an actor is an important person, being eclipsed only by a director, and Mr. Sherman is both. What induced such a divinity to grant the Brooklyn beauty an interview can only be conjectured, but he did. He looked her over and told her that she could have a small part. Then he proceeded to request her to undress. Thinking that perhaps he wanted to see if her figure would do for a chorus-girl part, she started to do as he wished. After all, in the show business one cannot afford to be squeamish. But presently Mr. Sherman

made it plain to the girl why he wished her to undress. She fled from the director's sanctuary in all possible haste, though properly clothed. Mr. Sherman had lost a conquest and the girl a movie job.

(Mr. Sherman has died since this chapter was written, and perhaps it is unfair to use his name, as he is unable to refute this charge. However, more than a year ago a more detailed story of this happening appeared in a national magazine, and inasmuch as Mr. Sherman never denied the article, or never alluded to it publicly, it is doubtful if his spirit will be troubled by the reprinting of a story which he never refuted while living.)

No doubt from a practical standpoint the young woman's action was highly injudicious, but from a moral standpoint, if such a thing there be, her decision was commendable. If more girls did the same thing, we should have better actresses and fewer mistresses on the screen.

One thing that Hollywood can, and does, claim is that rich girls have no better chance to get in the movies than poverty-stricken beauties. The wealthy girl must submit to the same mauling and sex license as her less fortunate sister if she wants to get anywhere in pictures. An excellent example of this fact is the case of the daughter of a very successful Park Avenue physician, who came to Hollywood after being advised by several dra-

matic critics, including one writing then for the New York Times, that she possessed an unusual amount of talent. She was not an amateur in the ordinary sense of the word, for besides having been trained in drama, she had to her credit several performances in plays produced on New York and Philadelphia stages. She had every legitimate right to be optimistic about her future in Hollywood, for she, like everyone else, had read of the pleas from Hollywood producers for new talent. She could not even get a test. Although she had plenty of money and did not have the worry of starving to death, a consolation which most aspiring actors and actresses are deprived of, she could get absolutely nowhere. At first shocked when a certain executive suggested how she might get started, she at last made up her mind that if it were necessary to do so in order to get a foothold, she would. She surrendered first to this one, and then to that one, and finally to the other, but for all the good it did her she might as well have conserved her virtue. Because she lacked either the ruthlessness or the cleverness to be a successful blackmailer, she failed to hold her lovers to their promises. Sadly disillusioned, she returned to Park Avenue. Her comment on the situation was simply, "You're damned if you do, and damned if you don't."

If this is the difficulty experienced by a girl with plenty of money and a great deal of proven

talent, imagine what the chances are for a girl of poverty. And when you consider that a huge number of the thousands registered at the Central Casting Bureau (whose former chief executive we shall presently discuss) have neither money, nor a stage career, nor even a beauty contest record to recommend them, it is easy to see why many of them sin to pay for a chance at fame and fortune. If they only got their chance, the situation would be a trifle less tragic.

One famous red-headed star, now in eclipse, who got her start in the East Coast studios frankly attributed her success to the fact that she was "nice to every Jew on Broadway," her indiscriminate choice of words making a verbatim quotation impossible.

A much more tragic case than the usual run is the adventures of a Washington, D. C., beauty contest winner with motion picture producers. The sordid details are almost beyond belief, and were not the conditions in the cinema capital so notoriously immoral, one would be inclined to set the tale down as a melodramatic fiction. However, the case has been published in a liberal magazine, and inasmuch as there has been no refutation from Hollywood one can proceed on the assumption that it is true.

The eighteen-year-old contest winner received a trip to Hollywood where she was to be given a screen test—the same old song in the same key.

Because of her youth, her parents insisted that a guardian accompany her, and the film representative in Washington got some woman to play this role. For "play" it was all she did, as the girl was seduced in a St. Louis hotel room by the estimable producer's representative under the very eyes of the "guardian." When this gallant gentleman finished with her, he passed her about to his friends until she hadn't a shred of decent reputation left. Then, the film studio would have nothing to do with her, their pretext being that they had no use for anybody so immoral. At certain times the studios can be very severe moralists, expediency serving as occasion for such conscientiousness.

The final act of this tragedy has its locale on the border of Mexico where the United States officials caught a couple of white slave peddlers smuggling this girl across the border. When investigated, it finally came to light that the destination of the gang was a house of ill-fame in Tia Juana. It seems that the girl, failing to get a job, sank lower and lower, and finally, deserted by her paramours, she became a commercial prostitute. The authorities got in touch with her mother, who, when she heard the sordid story and saw her daughter, fainted from the shock. She refused to believe that the human wreck before her was her child.

The culprits would have been prosecuted, as they richly deserved, except that the father was a public official who feared the scandal. Besides, were the facts to become public, the girl would be shunned by her Washington friends and acquaintances, who of course know nothing about her past. It is difficult to prosecute in a case like this.

But sometimes the unusual happens. A case coming up for retrial in Los Angeles now, will convince the most skeptical that Hollywood is guilty of more than one such case as we have previously described. A few months ago the following story appeared on the front page of the Los Angeles Evening Post:

> "The sordid story of a Hollywood extra girl who depicted moral compromise as the alleged price of a job in the movies was bared today in a transcript of the girl's startling testimony before the county grand jury.
>
> "The testimony, shocking in its intimate details of purported Hollywood parties, was given before the grand jury which recently *indicted* Dave Allen, manager of the Central Casting Bureau in Hollywood, and Gloria Marsh, film actress, on morals charges.
>
> "Both Allen and Miss Marsh denied the charges of the extra girl.
>
> "The witness was a pretty girl who came here three years ago from the east in the hopes that she eventually could become an actress.
>
> GIRL'S CHARGES
>
> "The extra girl charged:
>
> "That Allen promised her work if she would submit to certain demands and that later she was persuaded by the casting executive to invite other extra girls to the alleged orgies in her apartment.

"That on one occasion when a woman friend of hers walked unexpectedly into her apartment and found her and Allen and another extra girl Allen accused her of a frame-up, flashed a badge which she thought was that of a deputy sheriff, and threatened to telephone Chief of Detectives Joe Taylor.

"That two strange men forced their way into her apartment late at night, addressed her in abusive language, and told her they were going to take her to jail.

"That she had been told by friends that girls were sent on parties with policemen, and that if certain policemen wanted a beautiful girl that was registered there (the Central Casting Bureau) he, Allen, would give her work if she went out with them.

" 'Did you ever find it necessary to have affairs with other men in order to get jobs in pictures?' the witness was asked.

" 'Oh, yes,' she replied.

BORED BY PARTIES

" 'I don't drink nor smoke, and parties bore me,' the girl declared."

In July of this year (1934) the case came to trial, and the details, which correspond to those of a perverted court orgy under Nero, shocked even Los Angeles, long accustomed to hearing the stories of the most degraded happenings in Hollywood.

Allen claimed the whole thing was a frame-up, but there was enough evidence of June Delong's charges to warrant, in the opinion of the grand jury, a trial. There was enough evidence to convince eight of the petit jurors that Allen was guilty, although at first ten voted guilty, two

changing their minds in the last balloting. It is a good thing for Allen it takes a unanimous vote to convict, instead of a majority, or he would, and may yet, be spending a session at San Quentin.

In practically any other business Allen would have been forced to resign when mixed up in such a scandal, but although the charges were made in the spring, Allen did not resign until forced by public opinion about four months later. To be sure, while the trial was going on, he "took a leave of absence," but he did not resign. The destiny of thousands of extra players remained in his hands.

Miss Delong testified that she "had affairs" with other men in order to get jobs in pictures. No doubt she was peddled around, for one of the greatest favors a "gentleman" in this racket can do for a friend is to pass along his girl. It is no uncommon thing for a group of Hollywood people at a party to trade wives for the sake of novelty, so it would not be reasonable to expect that men of this type would object to trading their mistresses or "pick-ups"—many of the girls not even attaining the dignity of the mistress class.

To work your way up in most businesses implies something very commendable on the part of the individual accomplishing this. To be able to say that one has worked one's way up from office boy in a newspaper office to the city editor's desk is equivalent to saying that one has brains, ambi-

tion, and ability to do a lot of hard work. This is true in almost any other line. But in pictures an actress who declares that she has worked her way up implies quite another thing. She means that starting with the gateman she surrendered to every male until she reached the vice-president's office, and then she became a star.

It should be mentioned that among the various ways of persuading a girl to compromise herself is the "cut-out" weapon. One very important R.K.O. star has mastered the employment of this instrument, although it enjoys many other practitioners beside him. If a girl for whom he suddenly acquires a "yen" has a small part in his picture, this star gets the director to cut it out. Then our handome hero consoles the distressed "bit" player and promises to have the part reinserted. He immediately follows this magnificent gesture with an invitation to go out with him and see the town, and the invitation is issued in an unmistakably mandatory tone. Naturally there is nothing for the poor girl to do but accept. Of course he wants to show her the facts of life, and if she responds to his suggestion, she finds on the following day that the director has changed his mind about her part. Of a sudden he has discovered it to be a great dramatic requirement of the picture. But if the girl insists on being unresponsive to her handsome tutor's efforts, her part in his picture is irretrievably lost. And the

chance of her getting any more work with his studio becomes appreciably smaller. Since it is veritably an economic necessity for most girls to accede to this male player's demands, he has found his system well-nigh infallible. No wonder he can boast with impunity that he has made more conquests than any other man on his lot, which, perforce, must be an appalling record.

Another interesting fact about this same star is his taste for the esthetic. He is extremely fond of portraits of nude women—a pure love of art, of course—and is the proud owner of many beautiful drawings of women in all sorts of poses. People less inclined to be charitable might call them lecherous. To a best friend this star sent as a Christmas present one of these pictures, feeling, no doubt, that he had given of his very best possessions. The friend has the portrait hanging in the living room of his apartment. It must be wonderful to have such a beautiful soul.

But is it any wonder, then, that motion pictures coming from such an atmosphere contain a great deal of objectionable material? Among a group of people whose only interest in life is sex, it is to be expected that their attitude affects their work accordingly. If a Chicago gangster were to keep an accurate journal of his activities, the words would hardly be of the sort a pastor would care to read from his pulpit. Nor would the diary of a prostitute be likely to consist of ma-

terial that a mother could read to her twelve-year-old daughter. Yet the Catholic and other churches ask why Hollywood produces so many objectionable films. The marvel of it all is that they aren't worse.

Moral laxity applies to the entire industry. As pointed out once before, it is quite true that some individuals are above reproach as far as their private lives are concerned. These people provide the "front." Even in the ancient wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah there were a few good people. But these few were so in the minority that their goodness made no impression whatever on the general populace. And as these cities had no high-powered publicity departments to whitewash them, the Lord was not fooled into sparing them. He decided the best way to deal with the whole mess was to get Lot and his family out of town and then burn the place. But if he were to do that in Hollywood today, it would be merely wasted effort, for the producers would probably set up business in Harlem—Paramount would, anyway, as an accomodation to Mae West.

There is, of course, that class of individuals whose private lives are fairly clean, but who care not a tinker's damn whether the industry of which they are a part is morally corrupt, and whether it produces a type of entertainment termed obscene and filthy by the best elements of the country's population. In this class fall some

very important executives who could, if they only would, put a stop to the sex traffic that goes on within their companies. What an individual chooses as diversion is mainly a private affair, so long as no one else is involuntarily harmed, but it is quite another thing to use a major industry —the fifth largest—engaged in producing public entertainment, for the glorification of lust.

Naturally the quality and type of entertainment afforded the public is directly dependent upon the personnel of the film industry. As the situation exists today, the public and stockholders are merely paying for the exotic pleasures of the Hollywood Casanovas. It is no wonder that many of the screen actresses of today cannot act, and at best are but third or fourth rate players.

A great banker may support a mistress in a luxurious apartment and send her a weekly or monthly check of a sizable figure, but he does not install her as assistant cashier of his bank, or make her a vice-president of some company in which he owns the controlling interest. In Hollywood, however, the reward for sin is a job, thus putting the support of the mistresses onto the company, which ultimately means the stockholders. A gay Lothario simply obtains for his mistress a part in some film, or a berth on the writing staff, or a minor executive position, acting, however, constituting the principal compensation. Thus Maxine de Verree, because she has been

"reasonable" to some sex-starved executive, is foisted on the public as an actress. Ninety-nine percent of the chances are that she cannot act. Most girls who get anywhere in Hollywood are those with enough brains to know how to make their beauty serve them to good advantage. Instead of marrying for money, they marry for a career, and, in the event they forget to have a formal ceremony, no matter. This is an enlightened age.

It is a regrettable fact that acting talent and beauty are not co-existent. That is why we see so many legs in pictures. The producers seem to believe that a view of a pretty calf will more than compensate the audience for a lack of talent in the leg's owner. Or perhaps the executive wants the audience's approval of his choice.

According to a soap advertisement, there are more than four hundred important actresses in the films. Of these, not more than half a dozen are first rate actresses, some ten or twelve are second rate, and all the rest are third and fourth rate players. In a later chapter there is offered an explanation of how all these mediocre or poor players are dished out to the public. Since the cinema audiences have never known much good acting, they are more easily fooled than if they were accustomed to seeing the best talent. When one considers that more than four hundred major features are produced every year and only eight,

or at best ten, of them are rated as excellent, he is forced to admit that the percentage of good entertainment is not very high. And who would ever dream that sex plays such a devastating part in this record? Freud should have gotten out a special work based on a study of Hollywood.

It is an accepted thing among people who have ever had any dealings with the motion picture industry that talent is the least important qualification for a job in the movies. For by the time the corporations have placed all the executives' relatives and courtesans there are few positions left for anyone else.

On the surface this would seem to be an exaggerated presentation of Hollywood conditions. Only those who have actually contacted any film company—and this refers to those who approached them with practical recommendations of their ability—fully realize how futile it is to try to find an opening—unless one happens to possess an international reputation, and then the publicity value of such a name is the decisive quality that lands its owner a job.

The actors, writers, directors, and others constituting the best elements in the industry are chiefly those who have made outstanding names for themselves in their respective lines, and who do not need to cater to the rulers of the various picture concerns. It would be out of the question for some movie executive to suggest to Katharine

Cornell that she spend the night with him in return for a position in films. Nor would Vicki Baum or Mary Roberts Rinehart—can anyone imagine Mrs. Rinehart a part of such filth—have to compromise herself to get a position in the scenario department of some studio. But just let someone whose name isn't worth a fortune to the producers, no matter how talented, try to get a place, whether in writing, acting, directing, stock, or any other department, and see what results he gets. Invariably they are most disheartening.

It would be infinitely better for everyone concerned, the artist, the producer, the stockholder, and the audience, if the executives of the film industry would triple their already enormous salaries to pension personally all their relatives and mistresses and friends, and leave open to real talent the positions in their studios. The minority stockholders might indeed groan at the increased executive salaries, but their position could be no worse off than it is now, and probably in the long run they would be money ahead. At least, the public would get better entertainment.

In the average executive's mind, and the director's, too, good acting and real drama consist of wiggling suggestively plump hips, of a splendid view of naked, pretty limbs, and a close-up of a violent love scene. Fine actors and actresses, if there were any in the studios, could not help but

revolt against playing such trash. Showing promise of improvement in this respect was Evelyn Venable's late rebellion against acting in mushy roles. This action seemed to spring from a genuine dislike of the continual flaunting of sex on the screen. Certainly she jeopardized her career by her refusal to play with Francis Lederer in a romantic film consisting chiefly of kissing bouts. What her producers would do about the situation no one knew until finally the publicity office decided that, in view of the strenuous campaign being waged against indecent pictures, they would capitalize on Miss Venable's refusal to play her role. But it is also significant that, while Paramount paid lip service to her rebellion and placed her in another production, they went right ahead with the feature, merely substituting another woman player.

Some of the more cynical observers are inclined to think that Miss Venable's revolt was nothing but a publicity gag, for the resourcefulness of the studio publicity offices is practically boundless. But Venable came to Hollywood from the New York stage where she played in classic roles, and there is just the chance that she is actress enough to appreciate the better drama and feels genuine disgust for the sex-laden roles created in Hollywood.

But her producers' refusal to discontinue the picture, even after the rebuke administered by this

young lady, is characteristic of the brazen indifference of official Hollywood to decency and good taste. What could be more indicative of the low moral ideals of the motion picture executives than the fact that, no matter how much the comment and action from respectable elements of society condemn the type of entertainment they produce, the producers blandly refuse to do anything about it? The trouble is that they are so accustomed to all kinds of filth that they have come to believe that everyone else lives the same way and wants the same thing in his entertainment. Hence, no matter how many promises of reform come from Hollywood, no reform ever actually takes place.

Oh, to be sure, occasionally things do get a little better for a short while. The last attack of the Catholic Church and allied powers revealed so much hitherto-latent discontent with motion picture conditions that the ordinarily complacent producers are troubled. The threatened boycott of those theaters showing contraband suggestive films, and that would include practically all theaters, by the Catholic flock embracing about one-fifth of the population, has put the fear of reduced profits in the hearts of the producers. Many people must see a picture to pay the enormous salaries drawn by the executives, and the latter cannot afford to antagonize too much a church noted for its discipline over its flock.

Also, in the recent hullabaloo raised at the Catholic Conference, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Presbyterian Church, the Jewish Women's League, and a few other non-Catholic organizations offered their approval and support.

But a criminal in prison does not mean a reformed man. His cessation from crime and violence can be attributed more to the restraining influence of the prison bars than to a changed attitude toward society. Forced decency is never genuine. This thought applies particularly to the motion picture. As one Catholic official said, "The producers' promises are worth nothing. They have promised time and again to lift the moral standard of their product, but they have repeatedly broken every promise they have made. It is now time to crack down on them." If the producers do make a few feeble efforts toward bettering the films, the reform organizations can be assured that the movement will not go far enough to bring about any noticeable improvement. The prelate's observations regarding the value of the producers' promises are accurate, but hardly original. Any number of disappointed artists have said the same thing. Whoever is foolish enough to believe them is doomed to disappointment and complete disillusionment. Hollywood's promises to reform from within are about like Wall Street's. Wolves never cease being

wolves, no matter how much sheep-dip covers their hides.

The only way to insure better pictures is to clean up conditions at the source of their production. Otherwise let them go on as they are. As long as the personnel of the various staffs depends on every other element but talent and ability, you cannot expect any pronounced change for the better in the product.

Let us look at the lives of a few of those who compose the Hollywood aristocracy. One of the assistant directors at a major studio was formerly engaged in the white slave traffic. Now that he has advanced, his principal duty consists in finding each night a new, "reasonable," attractive woman for the son of an important producer. His salary is five hundred and twenty-five dollars a week. No doubt, as an assistant director, he has some influence on the cast, as well as the type, of the pictures with which he is associated. One could scarcely expect an uplifting force coming from this man. Probably if he had his way entirely, all the pictures made by his company would deal with the harem of a Moorish sultan, and he would play the sultan.

The two Schenck brothers, Joe and Mike, own the gambling resort of Agua Caliente, which, although of course it is no crime to gamble in Mexico, is hardly conducive to art in motion pictures. That two of the greatest producers in the

United States should conduct an institution of chance, illegal in America, surrounded by an atmosphere of depravity, does not hold out much hope to those who trust Hollywood to reform itself without the aid of external pressure.

Located in the desert resort of Palm Springs is the Colonial Club, patronized principally by motion picture people. This establishment is owned and operated by the famous Wertheimer brothers, whose police records outshine even the illustrious Al Capone's. The Wertheimers were engaged in their promising gangster trade until the United States government made it virtually impossible for them to make an honest living in Detroit, so they came to California to make money from the motion picture people. They are apparently very successful. So many of the executives and other important film people feel at home in the Wertheimer atmosphere that the resultant profits have been most gratifying.

As evidence of the type of girl that frequently becomes a great actress in Hollywood, the Los Angeles Herald and Express recently printed in a movie gossip column the story of a big studio worried to death because a certain gentleman from Chicago asked the frightful sum of one thousand dollars each for some negatives of one of their most important stars in some very obscene poses. Possibly this actress, like the R.K.O. male player, has esthetic tastes, and

thought she was contributing something artistic for future ages.

Moreover, this same star owes her rise in films to her faculty for forgetting conventional law in her relations with a certain executive of her studio. She, like many of her sisters, discovered that virtue is not always practical. In her business there is one sure way to get ahead, and she steadfastly pursued it, and not without success.

Another very popular star, police investigators have discovered, although married is the mistress of the head of a huge Los Angeles dope ring. Giving her every benefit of the doubt, she may not know her dangerous lover is a narcotic peddler, but surely she must know that she herself is married, and that adultery is not countenanced by society. But possibly she has been in films so long that she believes true and beautiful love, even with a gangster, transcends all moral bounds. She will have another thought coming when her lover is sent to a federal penitentiary.

One more significant fact for those who trust the motion picture industry to reform itself from within is the statement of an executive of a New York life insurance company to the effect that fifteen Hollywood picture officials were turned down by his company because they had police records. At one of the Hollywood "church" parties not long ago a guest impersonated a police officer and demanded that the others submit to

having their finger prints taken. A certain very powerful film executive fled in terror. All those who know about the incident are still wondering why. From these things it can be seen that the reformers might just as well expect Alphonse Capone to sponsor a campaign against illegal profits as expect motion picture executives to reform their industry.

Hollywood's one stock argument against accusations of loose morals is that there are similar cases in other cities. To begin with, that argument is as shallow as most of the film capital's other points, as though a Chicago gangster were to justify his violent acts on the pretext that gangsters in other cities do the same thing. If you are shot by a gangster in one city, you ought not to mind, for someone might be shot by a gangster in another city, which evens everything.

However, granting that some people in other localities and in other lines of work than pictures do commit some, or all, of the disgusting crimes against moral and conventional law that are perpetrated in Hollywood, at least most of this alleged immorality is divorced from the various business institutions with which the non-cinema sinners are associated. It is not so much what the Hollywood celebrities choose to do as their private diversion that merits censure, but that the standards of a great industry, wielding a more subtle influence than the press, should be lowered

in the course of this diversion is another thing. The motion picture is potentially the greatest existing instrument civilization possesses for the diffusion of art and culture among the masses. Society has the right to demand that, if not the lives of its creators be clean, at least their filth be not allowed to pollute their product.

The quality of a film depends directly upon four groups of people. Most important are the producers, for they control the money, the fountainhead of power in every organization. The other important groups are writers, directors, and actors. Any one of these groups could influence the cinema for the better, if it wished.

But from top to bottom the wrong people are in control. To start with, many of the producers are either immoral individuals themselves, or else they have no sense of moral responsibility. One of the most perfect examples of what is the matter with the motion picture industry, morally, is a certain picture producing company that releases through Warner Brothers Company. This producing unit is owned by a great publisher, who has his finger in the picture business from several different angles. This gentleman is supposed to be an advocate of 100% Americanism. Possibly he has never heard that, while complacently displacing one's wife with a mistress may be an old Chinese custom, it is scarcely an American tradition.

For the sake of insuring a certain lady's future in films, the publisher has established himself as a motion picture producer, among other of his vast enterprises. Now what kind of films would this gentleman be apt to produce? Since he himself has flouted—and very successfully, too—the conventions governing marriage, it is unlikely that he would oppose films in which the characters do the same thing. It would be rather embarrassing for his lady friend to have to play in a role upholding the sacred institution of marriage. It might be difficult for her to deliver a convincing performance.

Here we have both producer and leading star living immoral lives. Since these two elements very decidedly dominate in their production unit, it should not be expected that this particular company will lead the way in the reformation of motion picture morals. And since the relationships in other units are much the same, except that in some if it is not producer and star it is director and star, only the most inveterate optimist could hope for an improvement without the help of outside force.

To be sure, this publisher-producer does pay lip service to clean pictures. A short time ago he wrote a stirring editorial in his papers condemning the profligacy of motion picture producers and voicing a demand for respect for the sacred institution of the American family. He signed this

charming message, "An American Husband." At the time he wrote it, he was traveling in Europe with his beloved star, while his wife was several thousand miles away. It is to be feared that this patriotic American has his head buried very deeply in the sand.

And it should be remembered that his favorite actress is a pillar of charity—the price she must pay society for flouting its laws. It is indeed a fortunate thing for the Great Publisher that his legal wife does not possess the same urge for munificent charity as his pet, or our publisher friend, rich as he is, would have a difficult time of it making both ends meet.

But in fairness to the favorite of this marvelous American, it must be stated that many of the screen celebrities who do live within the pale of marriage are in reality no better than the unwedded darling of the publisher, if not actually worse. At least, the latter has the reputation for constancy to her paramour.

A jewel of an article on this subject of Hollywood marriages appeared in the "Chicago Tribune" and was reprinted in "The Current Digest" magazine. It was fittingly called "Hollywood's Progressive Polygamy." In contrast to what George Arliss said in favor of Hollywood's marriage record, this article claims: "In no other civilized community of the world are matrimonial knots so loosely tied as in Hollywood.

Couples of the film colony who remain together for a period of five years are considered paragons of connubial bliss. They are so few, however, as to be unimportant." Is it any wonder that the Legion of Decency accuses Hollywood of outraging the moral feeling of the American public?

As long as the pictures depend on the sort of production elements that dominate the film industry today, the Catholic Church will see many a pope come and go before it will witness any important reform brought about by the producing interests themselves. The surest way to clean up pictures, outside of cleaning up the morals of the individuals who comprise the motion picture world, is for the federal government to establish a rigid censorship. This, however, would be a tragedy in itself, for it is characteristic of government to go to extremes, and probably the motion picture would evolve, or devolve, into nothing more than a testimonial to the divine wisdom of the administration.

CHAPTER IV

What Price Ballyhoo?

There are literally hundreds of actors and actresses in pictures. If one follows the Lux Toilet Soap advertisements faithfully—and who can escape them—the number of female players alone varies between four hundred and nine and four hundred and eleven, the vast majority of whom, naturally, keep beautiful by using Lux. Yet out of all these actresses there are not more than half a dozen first-rate players. No more than ten or twelve could be termed second-rate. All the rest fall into the third or fourth category—there being no fifth in the critic's vernacular. Since a delicate skin is not a prime requisite of male beauty, the toilet soap advertisements have never concerned themselves with vital statistics on the number of actors. However, most critics hold the opinion that the rate of good players among the actors is a little higher. They do not depend so much upon their willingness to be "reasonable."

Since the public gets few good screen plays and still fewer good players, there has to be some way of putting over these pseudo-artists to the people. It is done by the use of a type of, intentionally or not, profound psychology.

As America is without the glamour qualities of a royal family or aristocracy, the motion picture

industry has shrewdly supplied the need of the citizenry for something to worship. As far as public adulation is concerned, the motion picture stars, with the exception of prizefighters, Lindbergh, and President Roosevelt, have little competition. The American people cannot watch adoringly their king and his gorgeous royal court open the national legislature, but residents of Los Angeles can throng about and wait for hours at a premier at Grauman's Chinese to see a few dull, atrociously bejeweled people walk from their limousines into the theater. Perhaps, if Fortune smiles on them, some of the waiting crowd may get an autograph or hear one of their idols actually speak.

Hero worship is an American institution that is worth millions, literally, to the motion picture producers, as well as to the stars themselves. For it is this incomprehensible urge of one mortal to deify another that enables the highly organized publicity departments of the studios to create shining gods of these very common, and frequently very coarse, people. Only in America can you find the apotheosis of prizefighters and cinema actors. Both have two characteristics in common: ignorance and affectation. It is a most unhappy reflection on the mentality of the American people that they cannot find it in their hearts to give their love and worship to anything higher than a mental pigmy. Their hysterical affection

for President Roosevelt is at least an indication that the future promises something better. Perhaps three hundred years from now our descendants will be idolizing politicians exclusively. The ice age, however, will have come on the earth again before Americans will ever entertain anything more than a profound suspicion and dislike for intellectuals. By that time the motion picture producers will have adapted themselves to the changed conditions and will probably feature at least one college professor in every picture, and in million-dollar extravaganzas perhaps an Einstein and a hundred ordinary professors will be starred.

But at the present it is possible for some stupid little doll from Six Corners, Kansas, or from the slums of New York, to have a million of otherwise sound Americans at her feet. This condition arises from two factors. One is the inherent passion of the public to glorify somebody; the other is wrought by the magic of the dollar-greased publicity departments of the studios. It is the latter which direct the idiotic hero worship into channels that terminate in the box office.

The producers make little effort to appeal to the people's artistic sense—if they have any—by giving them real actors. As has been pointed out, talent is very rarely the decisive quality that lands a player, especially a feminine one, in pictures. Because of this, and because otherwise they could

last but a few months—many only last this long anyway despite the gigantic efforts of the publicity departments to save them—the studios have devised the most highly organized and grossly expensive system of ballyhooing in the world.

Compare, if you please, Eva Le Gallienne or Katharine Cornell with any motion picture star now in the business. The two stage actresses really act. These artists survive the succeeding years, as have Ethel Barrymore and others, without the benefit of reams and reams and reams of that cheap publicity so vital to the careers of the film beauties. For most of the screen actresses are merely beauties, good-looking people foisted on a defenseless public as exponents of the dramatic art. Some of them are not even beautiful, only barely pretty. Most of them do have a winsome personality on the screen, which is one reason why they attain popularity. But their survival for five or six years, if that long, is due primarily to the machinations of their press agents.

Miss Cornell does not appear in the daily columns of Hollywood gossip writers, nor are there monthly articles on "Katharine Cornell Tells All!!!" or "Katy Confesses!!!" appearing in the imbecilic fan magazines. Nor does Eva Le Gallienne sustain her career by founding a charity or refusing to speak to anybody, and by so doing have an endless stream of articles and press

notices written about her graciousness or idiosyncrasies. Neither does she have her home robbed every other month. And when somebody mentions the name of the better stage stars, a person does not instantly connect them with a current mouth-wash or soap advertisement.

It is not merely whim that Miss Cornell has refused to come to Hollywood. She understands perfectly that there is nothing in the film capital for her to do. On the stage she plays real drama. In the films she would probably be stereotyped in the part of a wicked vamp, a gangster's moll, or the patient mother who raises a child without the benefit of a marriage ring. Her name would be associated in all the petty gossip columns with this man and that, and she would be reported confessing to this, that, and the other insignificant deed or saying. Only a few years and she would be ruined as an actress.

Neither does one find Miss Cowl or Miss Le Gallienne among the Hollywood recruits from the New York stage. It is axiomatic that when the movies raid the legitimate stage, they always come back with the worst talent, which their publicity departments promptly transform into Sarah Bernhardts and John Drews.

The machinery of a studio publicity department is remarkably ingenious. Little Hilda Guldenbach from Fern Center, Indiana, at last sees her way clear to forget the Lutheran gospel and her

mother's teachings and consents to live with a motion picture executive. While she has never heard of Shakespeare, Ibsen, Eugene O'Neill, Noel Coward, or any other dramatic author, classic or modern, she does have sense enough not to compromise her morals without adequate compensation. Her ambition has ever been for the screen. She will risk the hell fires, providing the executive will establish her as an actress in his company. He, being infatuated with the pretty little blond who refuses to lose her virginity without first being given a role in pictures, accedes to her demands. A new star appears in the Hollywood constellation.

The publicity office decides to use the glamour formula on Miss Guldenbach. A fake Russian princess, financially embarrassed as only a fake Russian princess can be, for a consideration consents to become the aunt of the very German Miss Guldenbach. But this paradox is eliminated by changing Miss Guldenbach's name to Anne Romensk, thus changing her nationality. The old story of the Russian Revolution is invoked, Anne and her aunt, the Princess Xenia being the only members of their aristocratic family to escape. (This is not such a strange tale when one considers that several fan magazines have created Elissa Landi a relative of the late Hapsburg emperor, Francis Joseph, as well as a relative of the royal Windsors.) Well, it is not hard to throw

glamour about a girl whose aunt is a Russian Princess, and so Miss Romensk is launched on her screen career.

After the release of her first picture her fan mail may be some fourteen letters a week, which an industrious press agent makes more impressive by the addition of two ciphers. The studio publicity department announces that fourteen hundred letters a week puts fan mail at a new high.

Mental suggestion is a wonderful thing. When good American citizens read that their countrymen have been writing fan letters at the rate of one and a third thousands a week to a glamorous princess. whose family was killed by those damned Bolsheviki, fourteen hundred more immediately sit down and write too. The press agent, regarding philosophically this phenomenon as his own work, doubles the number in his report to the papers. The publicity department then issues a statement declaring that Miss Romensk's popularity is germinating a panic in the studio post office because of the huge amount of fan mail. Several clerks are added.

Then there is the little item of salary. Miss Romensk is working for three hundred dollars a week, which seemed like a fortune when she was only Hilda Guldenbach. But a Russian Princess has considerable expense, so after a violent quarrel, which the publicity department carries to every nook and cranny of the globe, it is

adjusted favorably to Miss Romensk. Her salary becomes a thousand dollars a week. To make it compare advantageously with Garbo's—the measuring stick of all Hollywood—the solicitous press agent multiplies the actual figure by five for good measure. So the great salary war comes to an end.

The fact that Miss Romensk cannot act, is, of course, of no consequence. To the public she is a celebrity, a great person. So camouflaged in their minds is publicity with talent that they really believe that she is an incomparable actress. Blond, diminutive, and seductive, she plays the role of a sinning woman who is misunderstood by a hostile society, and she is reputed to be the greatest artist since Duse. She plays the same role time after time, true to the Hollywood system of stereotype. The titles of her pictures are changed, but the plots, beneath a few superficial variations, remain the same.

In two years Miss Romensk begins to slip. The publicity department goes into frantic action. More and more glamour is arrayed, and thicker and thicker is spread the news of Anne's extraordinary exploits. She becomes a sponsor of Ibsen's drama, organizing amateur companies to insure the diffusion of this wonderful art among the masses. She makes comprehensive and profound statements regarding the superiority of Shakspeare's works over contemporary drama. (The

uphill task of teaching her what to say may result in a nervous breakdown for her press agent.) Following this, she organizes a movement to elect a woman president of the country. This, for a time, causes quite a stir in the nation, but it dies a natural and unobserved death during the news of a kidnapping mystery.

Miss Romensk begins to slip faster. The public, dull and crude as it is, inevitably, though it may be a long time in doing so, does distinguish between good and bad acting. Unable for a time to differentiate between glamour and talent, it unconsciously wearies of the former, while the latter it never ceases to applaud. Everybody prefers genuine fruit to the artificial, although the make-believe can be made to look very pretty.

So faster and faster speeds Miss Romensk into oblivion. Publicity is like any other kind of narcotic. It must be increased at every dose to get an effect. Although each succeeding picture is released as "Miss Romensk's greatest work," and the press reports declare that "she is sweeping the nation in this great epic," the figures in the ledger are not so enthusiastic.

One day the studio does not renew her contract. That dreaded event, a personal tour, has at last come. Miss Romensk sees the termination of her career. A sympathetic writer in an obituary press story speaks of the end of a great actress. But she is wrong. It is simply the collapse of a great

myth, the dissolution of a marvelous illusion. Miss Romensk, like others of her kind, suffers from only one handicap, she cannot act. When she becomes old news and the public wearies of her, she has nothing left by which she can appeal. Then it is the end.

This little parable of Anne Romensk is not an isolated Hollywood case by any means. The vast majority of film actors, both male and female, are simply publicity-created celebrities who are put in plays. The greatest insult ever offered Art occurred within this last year when Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced "The Prizefighter and the Lady." Nowhere in history can such a degradation of drama be found, not even in Nero's court where all sorts of pseudo-artists flourished. Incidentally, no better example to prove our point can be found in all the shabby annals of the film industry. Max Baer is not an actor, no matter what the publicity department of his studio may say to the contrary. But because he has been "in the print" and before the public, he was given the leading male role in a motion picture. Probably the day the film was released the Muses fell into a faint from which they still suffer, for he is to be featured in another "great drama"—this time produced by Paramount. At least, however, the producers are willing to concede this one point to the art of acting. They are willing to admit that Mr. Baer can play only one part, the prize-

fighter. Mr. Baer, however, refuses to recognize any such limitations to his talent, and has caused his producers no end of trouble by refusing to play fighter-roles. He insists on doing "real" drama!

The situation is worse with actresses, however. The biggest stars of Hollywood are female, because it is easier to associate glamour with a woman than with a man, but since it seems that prizefighters are going to compete with professional actors for movie jobs, soon there will be as much glamour associated with male players as with female. One may hazard a guess that within a few years the requirement of all male players will be a championship record in the ring, while actresses will have to make non-stop flights to Europe before they can land picture contracts. A screen role will not be given to a real actor but to some individual who has had considerable press notice. That will save the studios the money they now spend in building up their players. And as a result, the public will receive even rottener drama than at present, which now almost defies description.

For the benefit of those readers who are inclined to doubt the story of Anne Romensk, we have an excellent "real life" picture of an actress erected and sustained by press support.

Marion Davies was made by the Hearst newspapers and—here she has a decided advantage over her less fortunate sisters—she is being kept in pictures by the Hearst papers and the Hearst pocketbook. When the average player begins to slip, she has no powerful protector to extend a strong arm and save her. But Marion Davies has successfully defied gravity. Whatever may be said of Mr. Hearst's faults, unfaithfulness to Miss Davies is not one of them. Never a good actress—critics, except those working for Mr. Hearst, vary between third and fourth rate in labeling her—she still appears in a number of films each year. To keep her productions from losing money, she is ably supported in all of them by very prominent entertainers, such as Bing Crosby, the radio crooner; Gary Cooper, the he-man star, and Robert Montgomery, all of whom are box office draws by themselves. This fact was noted in a recent criticism by a reviewer for one of the national weeklies, who said that Miss Davies' pictures are always suffocated by a conglomeration of big names, "Operator 13" even including the Mills Brothers. It is too bad Mr. Hearst could not persuade one of the popular Roosevelts to accept a part in his friend's picture. That would have made an unparalleled box office draw.

No other star in the cinema firmament gets such magnificent press support. Advertisements,

press notices, photographs, articles, everything consistent with movie ballyhoo is Miss Davies' in an unlimited amount. She need not worry about the day when her studio will not take up her option—Mr. Hearst owns too much picture stock. When she is fifty-five she will still be playing in eighteen-year-old roles. Few, indeed, are the Hollywood celebrities who can cherish their illusions of youth as can Miss Davies.

It is a filthy shame that all this publicity and ballyhoo cannot make Marion a good actress. She can dance, it is true, but she cannot act. One must concede that her singing is at least mediocre, but she cannot act. It may be a fact that she has one of the most charitable natures of any human alive, but still she cannot act. All Mr. Hearst's vast newspaper organization, and all his dollars will never be able to make an actress of her. Actors, like poets, are born rather than made. All the Hearst papers can do is to contrive to make people THINK she can act.

It is impossible to have good bread without good bakers, and it is equally impossible to have a good dramatic performance without good players. If only Mr. Hearst and his kind would be content to reward their favorites in some other way than screen roles, leaving the profession open to those who really have a claim to it, we should receive much better entertainment. Mr. Hearst would not think of making Miss Davies editor of one of

his papers. Yet why, just because she has a pretty face, and he is fond of her, does he think she should be thrust upon people as an actress? Truly, love is blind.

The public really has no idea of the value of a publicity department to a motion picture studio. In fact, the great majority of the public are unaware of its existence. Yet such an organization is a veritable mint of money to the producer. Remember that any plain girl, properly made-up, and who can read and write, is able to fill a role that fits her type. For instance, if you wrote a play in which one of the characters is a fat, middle-aged farmer woman, my wife, if she were fat, middle-aged, and a farmer, could play the part merely by acting natural. On the screen, especially, where poor acting is not so obvious as on the stage, my wife could do very well. Having done so all her life, she could give an admirable performance of milking a cow. Her language, her movements, her very atmosphere would make her perfectly plausible in such a part. But that would not mean that my wife is an actress.

Hollywood recognizes this situation, and has met it with the development of the stereotype. Good actors, such as you will find on the stage or in some foreign, particularly British films, can

do equally well fifteen different characterizations. They generally prefer one or two types of roles, it is true, but they are talented enough to give convincing performances in almost any type of part. That is art. And that is what so many of the Hollywood players cannot do.

Norma Shearer plays sophisticated roles. She is always well dressed and mauled by two men, at least, experiencing a difficult time trying to decide just whom she loves. In the end, after quarreling with the man she truly adores and leaving him to live for a time with his rival, she returns to her husband or fiancé, whichever the case calls for. Her gowns are always the latest creations. This is Norma Shearer.

Jean Harlow plays a sexy, hardboiled damsel of the streets.

Mae West plays plain sex. ("I do my best work in bed.")

Janet Gaynor is the sweet and innocent little farmer's daughter, whose every word and action is Righteousness, though in real life she is engaged in a strenuous denial about the birth of a child that is assertedly hers. One can never know what will be next in Hollywood.

James Cagney is tough, Lee Tracy is a fast-talking, brilliant reporter, Adolph Menjou is a male siren, Wallace Beery is rough but good-hearted, and Clark Gable is a male Mae West.

These stereotypes are grooves in which the

actors always move. Seldom do they ever get out of their track. When they do, the result is nearly always pitiful. They can give a convincing performance in only one line.

A stereotype is created by giving the player roles that constantly conform to his physical characteristics, just as Victor McLaglen always plays the strong-but-dumb type and Edmund Lowe the weaker-but-smarter in their team. They simply could not play it any other way. Their pictures are always the same thing with different settings and new titles. The physical characteristics of Clark Gable are such as to make him the perfect type to play Don Juan roles in which he keeps your wife company while you are on your vacation.

The publicity department takes each player in hand and creates and sustains each stereotype by releasing stories and press notices that will develop the desired illusions in the mind of the public. Every Gable-struck girl knows that Clark has led a life of adventure in lumber camps, in mining camps, in tent shows, and in love, all of which bear out his "manliness." If it is a woman who is being stereotyped, the glamour edifice is carefully constructed, and thereafter everything the star says or does is reported for the benefit of her fans in such a way as to make word and deed absolutely consistent with the part she plays on the screen. Pictures are not art. They are

merely an assembled group of stereotypes which, when put together properly, create an illusion. The sincerity, the element of interpretation of a character in a human manner that belongs to a great artist is lacking in films. The real artists in motion pictures are the cinematographers and the press agents, especially the latter who can take a dissolute, ignorant, plain-looking woman and make the public believe she possesses the beauty of Venus and the virtue of the Saints.

The films consistently stress the physical in relationship to their players. A motion picture actress is selected because she has beautiful limbs, or a fine figure, or platinum hair. Whether she can act or not is of no consequence. The same applies to the male actors.

A group of men questioned on their opinion of Norma Shearer as an actress unanimously replied they thought she was a beautiful woman. One boasted of having seen her at the beach in a bathing suit, and he went into ecstasy over her "divine" form. Another declared her the most beautiful woman on the screen, but none answered the question that was asked, except in a negative way. Not one of these men commented on her ability as an actress. They all paid tribute to the power of a beautiful female over the male, but not a word of praise was given her as a player. Since Miss Shearer attracts men so much physically, in all seriousness is it not possible that she has

missed her calling in life? Why should a woman possessing her undeniably great flesh attractions engage in a profession in which she has so many superiors? As an artist's model she would have few equals. It is a pity indeed that she and women of her type waste their gifts in efforts foreign to their ability, when they have so much opportunity in other lines.

But they are inflicted on the public, and to take care of them from a practical studio viewpoint, each star has a special press agent assigned by the corporation. He is with the star as much as humanly possible to record everything that the player says or does that may be consistent with the latter's stereotype. When necessary, of course, the agents supply or distort in quoting their charges. Some of the press agents really have the most ingenious imaginations. Garbo's press agent has to rely on his imagination entirely, for his sphinx-like employer seldom deigns to speak. But, on the other hand, when Mae West says, "Virtue may be its own reward but has no appeal at the box office," then the press agent can quote her in all the papers in the land so the West fans can see what marvelous wit their idol has.

And so it goes with the whole lot of them, male and female. Every time one of them comments on politics, inflation, the liquor problem—you would be surprised how many of them profess to be teetotalers—the N. R. A. and any of the half

dozen other issues they know nothing about, their agents are there to write up their comments in such a way as to make them "Westy" or "Gablish" or "Davies-like" or whatever the case demands.

How long these screen personalities would survive without the succor of a great publicity organization is extremely problematical, and will remain so, for there will never be an occasion in which one of them will try the hazardous experiment of getting by on his or her own ability alone. If only Greta Garbo's reticence and love of solitude were genuine instead of being one of the cleverest publicity stunts ever hatched in a business saturated with ballyhoo, she would be the best example of a motion picture actress owing her popularity to the quality of her work, rather than to the genius of her press agent. As it is, Miss Garbo is one of the better actresses in the industry. It is too bad that she has developed that mystery pose which, admittedly, sustains so much popular interest, for if she could have dispensed with that she would be a welcome oasis in the desert of circus-barking advertisements so typical of the motion picture business.

It is the stereotype that is responsible for so much of the misery of the cinema actors. Depending on the publicity edifices their agents have created for them rather than on their own talent, they have to be careful how they tread lest the house of cards should collapse. Being tight-rope

walkers almost every moment of their existence, they cannot help but feel the precarious situation that confronts them. No wonder they drink themselves to death or seek escape from their worries and artificial living through the avenue of drugs. It is far from pleasant to spend one's life doing things and saying things that are unnatural, and in many cases entirely foreign. As one able critic has said of Hollywood, "Before the camera is the only time when cinema actors are not acting."

Little Nell Chapman plays the role of a sweet, virgin girl on the screen. Because she has blond, wavy hair and a cherubic face, the studio discovered that she "goes over big" in the role of an innocent. Thereafter she is Pollyanna, without sin and without shame. Now it may well be that Miss Chapman came from Cicero, Illinois. Her father may be serving a jail sentence for any or all of the felonies. She may have obtained her "dramatic" experience in Chicago burlesque, as several screen stars have. These facts being hardly consistent with the person her public believes she is, it is necessary that they be suppressed. Likewise, Nell's taste for liquor must never become a public fact. She joins the Women's Christian Temperance Union and all the other morals organizations, although she heartily detests them all as insufferable busybodies. She has to be careful of her language,

too, for it would never do if her public should learn that she swears like a trooper.

Thus Miss Chapman has to live a life that is distasteful to her in the extreme. Perhaps she must even comment on the comparative values of contemporary and mid-Victorian literature, when she scarcely knows the meaning of the words. But she is forced to rattle off in parrot fashion the words her press agent has taught her. The public's conception of her is flattering to the highest degree. She is the incarnation of virtue, charity, and learning. Imagine the general surprise and disgust, then, when the public learns that their goddess has deserted the screen to spend some time in an institution for the cure of drug addiction. How much better for all concerned—except, perhaps, the producers who made money out of Miss Chapman—if she had been left on the burlesque stage in Chicago, and her niche in Hollywood occupied by a real actress whose talent would have sustained her so well that off-screen acting would have been unnecessary.

So universal among the studios has the practice of stereotyping a player become that, much to their disgust, even the best actors are more or less victims of it. Because they make considerable money for a time in certain roles, the picture firms force them to play the same kind of films time after time until the public, always on the lookout for a new sensation, tires of them and turns to

someone new.

Stereotyping, with the adherent publicity upon which this system is based, is most degrading to "art" if there is any art at all connected with motion pictures. For the practice is little better than that of the professional barkers of a side show, urging the crowd to come in and see the fat lady. Indeed, only the cheapest sensationalism is responsible for the printing of the multitude of unimportant sayings and deeds of stellar Hollywood.

The stars often pose as being adverse to the constant light of publicity attending their actions. They claim that their open-book existence is a never-ending source of trouble to them. Some of it may be, but the truth is that most of their trouble is of their own choosing and a part of their job. Their lives are not open, anyway, for most of the adverse details are carefully suppressed, as the film companies carry enough weight with the press to enable them to squelch all but the worst scandals. But the size of their feet, the kind of undergarments they wear, the silly platitudes they speak, and all the other unimportant things are dished out to the public in sickening quantities. Most of the Hollywood marriages are accomplished for publicity purposes, so the stars involved can say, "We are madly in love," and most of the divorces are arranged so the unentangled parties can exclaim

"But we are still the best of friends."

It is this sort of thing that makes the motion picture industry resemble a street carnival. Would it not be a blessing to have for a change a group of people in the show business whose acting alone could stimulate the people? As it is now, the public has to be artificially aroused by million-dollar ballyhoo. Hollywood might very well be likened to a dinner in which the main course, acting, is served in microscopic quantities, while the cocktails, soup, and condiments are served in an overwhelmingly disproportionate amount.

That it is the glamour of Hollywood, the halo of semi-divinity thrown about the stars, that appeals to the public instead of the quality of the product is demonstrated in practically any fan magazine forum. The following letter has been taken from Photoplay, one of the so-called "better" screen magazines.

> "We hear so much about 'reality.' But DO we really want reality on the screen—the reality eighty per cent of us know? I love every inch of my home, but I have so much reality in my daily life that when I 'step out' of an evening, I want to step into the land of make believe.
>
> "I want to live in dreamland for a while. I want to be made love to by Gary Cooper and Frederic March, and imagine I have the winsomeness of Shearer, the sophistication of Dietrich, the lure of Loy, the appeal of Crawford—that I'm marrying a prince and that I live in just such a beautiful home.
>
> "Don't we all?"

This was a prize winning letter! However, it demonstrates very clearly what the screen really is, and what the average person expects of it. It is apparent from this woman's letter that she does not attend motion pictures to see good drama, to be entertained by brilliant acting, but to stimulate her imagination by seeing the likeness of those glamorous creatures she has read about in the film magazines and the newspapers.

The public could get the same effect from reading fairy stories. The woman whose letter won a prize should get herself a well-written book about glamorous characters at a lending library, and she could save her quarters. Obviously she does not care much about the vehicles her idols appear in. She sees Gary Cooper and dreams about him. Likewise, in the bejeweled Crawford and in the satin-gowned Shearer she sees herself with the things she would like to have.

It is for exactly this situation that the studio publicity departments exist. This is the end to which all the million dollar ballyhoo strives. The brilliant illusions are created for this woman. She becomes interested, yes, even in love with these screen people, and she pays her money to see them and hear them talk, no matter what they say or what they do. The whole thing is akin to drug addiction. The public gets fame, wealth, beauty, and passion by the way of the cinema. But drama, talent, and art—these are elements that do not

count.

No, Hollywood has but very little to do with art and drama. It is a celebrity creator, fashioning little gods and goddesses in the womb of the greatest publicity organization on earth, and supplying the demand of the American public for heroes to worship.

In this process of creation there is one important instrument exceeding, perhaps, in value all the other types of ballyhoo. It is as much a part of Hollywood as the pictures themselves. It is the fan magazine.

CHAPTER V

Wherein Gossip Is Cash

Since the motion picture industry is supported principally by pillars of ballyhoo, like the side show of a circus, it is interesting to examine the structure of these pillars. How are celebrities created? How is the public's attention brought to focus on the screen beauties who are transformed from ordinary human beings into glittering spirits of another world?

The press, of course, plays a very important part. People read in the newspapers about the exploits of the Hollywood film stars, just as they read about Dillingers, prize fighters, and other great American celebrities. Every metropolitan newspaper carries syndicated daily columns of Hollywood gossip, besides frequently having its own special staff correspondent. Even smaller newspapers which can afford it do their best to give their readers the "low down" on the cinema capital. But the newspapers, for all their love of sensationalism, will print only a limited amount of this chatter, and they do stick rather more or less closely to something approximating the truth. Not that it would be accurate to say that newspaper gossip about the film capital is based strictly on fact. That would be asking too much.

However, they do not often print deliberate falsehoods. To be sure, an actor's salary is exaggerated, and considerable rumor is fed the public, but even so, when compared to the writings in the film magazines, the press write-ups are fountains of truth.

As a matter of fact, one might be safe in estimating the percentage of truth in the press gossip at about fifty percent and ten in the fan magazine. The press, it must be remembered, except for the front-page stories of Hollywood scandals, publishes only short bits of chatter about the film celebrities. In the better newspapers, at least, there appear no articles telling "all" about this star and that, for the press is too occupied with the sordid details of all the late crimes to bother about featuring two and three thousand word stories concerning Miss Muffet's view on marriage and morals, or Teddy Love's comments on the works of Freud—although Miss Davies has had printed her comments on why a movie star should not marry.

The chief value of a newspaper to Hollywood celebrities is the importance given them by printing their names, for the public always believes in the greatness of anyone who gets his name in the papers. It is reserved for that other great channel of systemized gossip and falsehood, the fan magazine, to create the required illusion by

printing long and misleading features about the various motion picture stars.

The fan magazine is one of the most magnificent institutions in America—even reaching into Europe—where as a rule one finds better taste in literature. However, it is only in America that one can find on every corner a dozen and a half publications devoted exclusively to gossip about a group of people, who, without the help of that artificial glitter surrounding their names, would be exceedingly dull, uncolorful people.

There are at least eighteen film magazines flourishing in the country today, and when one considers that this is an era of stressed finances, that all these magazines are devoted to only one subject, and that they are all as nearly alike as one blank sheet of paper is to another, the number itself presents a most amazing phenomenon. Flourishing each and all of them, they rival in circulation the sexy confession magazines which contain infinitely more interesting reading matter and represent an equally high type of literature.

The fan magazine, it should be observed, is just an extension of the Hollywood publicity office. What cannot be conveyed in the newspapers is handled by the film periodicals. Featuring stories about the many stars, running from a thousand words on up, praising and lying, condemning slightly and then lauding, and then praising and lying all over again, truly the screen magazine is

the most unique type of literature to be developed in a country that has produced wild west, gun action, true detective, and confession stories.

The latter at least are publications that do not serve any particular industry. Even the aeroplane stories are not publicity notices for Colonel Lindbergh. The screen magazines, however, are indispensable to the motion picture industry and could well be subsidized by the studios although they make huge profits as a separate business. Unique hardly describes the institution. Back of it all, of course, lies the American love of heroes and the inherent hero-worship.

Whenever a new star is being developed in Hollywood, all the film magazines release stories about her life, her loves, her likes and dislikes, her views on every conceivable subject, and a biography of the baby, if she has one. She is praised to the skies, she is made eccentric, of course, and she may be condemned a trifle for some petty fault, but never enough to hurt her. The art of condemning a screen star to her advantage is something which only the Hollywood press agents have been able to accomplish. Genius is no word for it.

The motion picture magazines really ought to be prosecuted on charges of defrauding the public. The titles of their stories are made excessively alluring, sensational, and promising, yet nothing of significance is ever revealed in any article.

Again the Hollywood press agents have developed an art achieved in no other civilization. They are the only ones who can cry, "Wolf! Wolf!" time and again when there is no wolf, and get away with it.

Glance at the titles of some of the latest fan articles. "Norma Shearer Tells All!" Miss Shearer, in this article, divulges nothing whatever. It is the most amazing string of words in which not a single idea is expressed that you can ever hope to read. No doubt Miss Shearer could tell something interesting about her life if she chose. Hardly anyone of adult age can spend many years in the film capital associated closely with the motion picture industry without having some experiences that would prove interesting to the rank and file of the public. But Miss Shearer chose, apparently, not to say anything about such experiences. So, although nothing was said by the star, some ingenious fan writer did an article entitled, "Norma Shearer Tells All." And the preceding issue of this magazine, one can be assured, advertised very extensively to its readers that the forthcoming issue would carry a magnificently frank disclosure of Miss Shearer's hidden life.

In the same month a rival publication, not to be outdone in the confession business, ran an article entitled, "Katherine Hepburn Confesses!" Here is news! A famous screen actress reveals

the dark secrets of her life. After all, when one confesses, one usually tells something unknown and unusual, if not actually unpleasant, about one's actions, thoughts, or words. A person hardly confesses that he eats food every day, or drinks water when he is thirsty, or sleeps when he is sleepy. One takes these things for granted. Yet in the article bearing such a sensational title, Miss Hepburn confesses nothing whatsoever except a few dull likes and dislikes, which are not even idiosyncrasies.

In "Screenland" for the same month, another Hollywood actress threatened to reveal her mistakes. The title of this literary effort is "I Was A Fool"—Glenda Farrell. Miss Farrell may be just that, but in the article she only hints that she is, and then goes right to work and disproves it.

So it always goes. Reading a Hollywood fan article and expecting to find anything in it is more optimistic than cutting into a delicatessen pie and expecting to find something beneath the crust.

The truth is there is nothing about these synthetic great people of the films to warrant even a five hundred word biography, except in the case of those whose immoral exploits would furnish sensational reading, which of course is taboo. Nothing ever appears in any fan magazine that would cast any dirty dirt at either a star or the industry. All fan magazine material whitewashes Hollywood directly or indirectly. Yet month

after month these inane publications continue to sell without having a single thought worthy of the name between their covers. They constitute a world wonder. How they continue to fool the public year after year is not to be explained unless by Barnum's classic statement regarding the birth-rate of fools.

Sex magazines and action stories, even though they may appeal to the wrong elements in nature, at least give the reader what he is looking for. To the man or woman whose chief enjoyment in life is cheap sex episodes, the sex magazine gives genuine pleasure, for the stories therein stimulate his imagination like a travel book intrigues those interested in foreign lands. The boy who is interested in Indians and cow punchers and gun fights derives real enjoyment from reading about the exploits of his heroes in action-story magazines. When "Gunfight" publishes a novel of "Death on the Flaming Plains" death really occurs in the story, probably to the tune of a dozen or more white people and a whole tribe of Redskins. But when the film magazine on the corner stand advertises a story called "At Last Garbo Breaks Silence and Tells All!" do not, unless you are sure you can afford it, waste your dime or quarter. For you can be assured that Miss Garbo is not going to confess anything more sensational than a dislike of police sirens and a dread of old age.

Almost anyone with an imagination can write an article for a screen magazine. Simply dismiss, if you have any, your intelligence and imagine you are writing for a deaf, dumb, and blind person who has long since lost his power of reasoning. You must get yourself a tremendous stock of adjectives and apply them without discrimination to all your proper nouns. You need not worry about selecting a title, for your text need have no bearing on the name.

For the sake of those who aspire to write for film publications suppose we try a story. We shall choose Miss Clara Bow for our heroine, as she surely has spent an eventful Hollywood life.

The facts are simple. Miss Bow is living at her husband's (Rex Bell) ranch where she is spending a more or less dull life in peaceful domesticity. She eats three meals a day, drinks water and sometimes liquor, and has put on weight. We are her guests for a few hours and she serves us delicious cocktails and sandwiches. When we arrive, she is reading a popular confession magazine.

From these facts we shall concoct the following story:

THE TRAGEDY OF CLARA BOW'S LIFE

It was one of those blistering hot California days. Quite appropriate weather, I thought, to interview the hottest girl of pictures, the original "It" girl of the movies.

Right here, Mr. and Mrs. Movie Fan, I want to confess that I was just a little bit afraid to keep my appointment, for the day was so frightfully hot that I feared I could not stand both the weather and the torrid beauty with whom I was privileged to spend the day. But I was ridden by duty, that stern, inexorable master who allows not his servants to shirk. And I, Mr. and Mrs. Movie Fan, had a duty that would permit no faltering. My duty was to that great, vast, magnificent public and to that little wisp of humanity, so small in stature but so great an artist, Clara Bow! I was ordained to bring to my stupendous public the real truth about Elinor Glyn's famous "It" girl. Not the truth as told by Daisy De Voe, that cruel, cunning, heartless serpent who hid in the recesses of Clara's great, kind heart, only to strike her benefactor in the latter's weakest moment, when the star's health was failing and she needed every precious ounce of human kindness and friendly assistance to carry on, and who almost, but not quite, destroyed that great soul known to the world as Clara Bow, the unmatched "It" girl. Nor, my dear, dear readers, the "truth" as told by the indifferent press men, men whose only aim was to get sensational news for their papers, no matter if in doing so they wrecked the life of a defenseless victim, a victim who had many times given them of her store of human kindness. I had the burden of bringing the real truth to the public

and thus do justice to both of my glorious parties. For the truth is what every American wants, and the truth about Clara Bow has never been told. So, with duty resting on my shoulders, I drove swiftly but surely to the ranch of Rex Bell, the modern knight.

It was Rex who rescued Clara from that abysmal pit of despair and disillusionment induced by the grossest ingratitude in one whom Clara loved like a sister. It was Rex who carried her away from a heartless world into his castle where her health was restored under his loving care, and where for the first time in her existence she learned what real love is, a love that came to her barren life like water into a parched field. Rex, out of all the others, alone in that vast throng of Bow acquaintances, was the only unselfish, kind, unmercenary human to extend a strong helpful hand when Clara stood on the edge of that awful pit. Only fate could have sent Clara such a savior. And right here, Mr. and Mrs. Movie Fan, let me predict that the sun and stars will fall out of the sky before there will ever be a divorce in the Bow family. The Rex Bell-Clara Bow partnership is too strong to ever be broken by the disturbances that dissolve so many Hollywood marriages.

For that is what their marriage is, a glorious partnership, blended into a divine relationship by genuine love.

Rex was not at home, Clara explained, having gone into Hollywood to take care of some of Clara's investments. "Rex takes care of every detail," she confided to me, "as a true husband should. I really think that it is best to let a man handle money and other incidentals, and the woman should take care of the home. I believe that the principal reason there are so many divorces among the Hollywood couples is due to the fact that the wife insists on entering her husband's domain."

"Do not misunderstand me," went on the great star whom Elinor Glyn called the "It" girl. "I believe that a woman should enjoy all the rights of a man. I believe in emancipated woman. But women should know how to use their new freedom. I am very careful not to poke my nose into Rex's cabbage patch and he never attempts to interfere in mine. That is why our life together is so beautiful. Rex and I are equal partners in our marriage venture. He has his duties, and I mine, and we respect and admire each other's work.

"What do I consider my duties and what are his? Well, I believe that a woman should flatter a man's ego by intrusting to him those affairs which he has for ages considered his. Rex has the management of my entire fortune, and I love him all the more for it." And let me say right here, patient reader, that Clara Bow is Holly-

wood's greatest philosopher. Emanuel Kant would have idolized her. Schopenhauer would have adored her. And as for the Greeks, well, the Greeks had a word for it.

"Won't you have a drink?" she asked me sweetly. Clara is so considerate. She realized that I was thirsty after driving so far in the heat, and she felt sorry for me. That is Clara Bow! Her great, kind heart is always going out in sympathy for someone.

"Of course," I replied. I expected something strong, I confess, and I must admit to you, Dear Reader, that I am not quite a teetotaler when good liquor is served. Now that prohibition is gone some of the stars serve their guests small quantities of liquor, and one must not be shocked to see a small glass of light wine before him in the homes of the stars. Imagine, then, my surprise when the woman about whom so much malicious scandal has been circulated, and who has been accused of touching strong drink, returned with a tray of lemonade and cakes.

"I do not believe that public personalities should ever imbibe intoxicating drinks," the famous Red Head declared decisively. "As we are ever before the public eye, it behooves us to remember that we are a potential force for either good or bad, depending on our every action. I honestly think that if every true American adult would consider the effect of his deeds on the youth

of the country, the rising generation, he would never touch a drop of liquor."

"Ah," I gasped, frankly astonished, "if only those who—"

"I know what you are going to say," she interrupted me with a sad, heart-rending little smile. "You are going to say that if the people who have been slandering me really knew the truth about me, they would tell a different story."

"Exactly," I said. "I wish that every blue-blooded Puritan could have your statement, could see you serving nothing but the most delicious, invigorating lemonade." And I thought to myself, "If all the parents and teachers in our glorious country had the same wholesome, unselfish attitude as glorious Clara, there would be no need to worry about crime waves."

She sighed. "I have learned the bitter lesson," she said to me in a queer little whisper, "that slander is only one of the prices a girl must pay for fame. No matter how good she may be, no matter how stainless her life, she will be represented as a vicious woman. People are not content to let her live her own life as she wants to live it, in peace and quiet, with a good book. The entertainment she gives them on the screen is not enough. They must be entertained at her expense day in and day out by cutting in tiny pieces her reputation, killing the very life in her."

Ah, Mr. and Mrs. Movie Fan, I wish you could have seen Clara as she rose to defend her name and honor. Her beautiful red hair flying in a gorgeous crimson mass, her blue eyes flaming like brilliant sapphires, she was the primitive American woman fighting for that which was dearest to her heart, her reputation as a virtuous woman. Never had Clara been more beautiful. Never had she been more alluring as she sat there sipping lemonade with me on that hot day in July. If she were angry, it was because she thought of the cruel torment to which she had been subjected at the hands of a faithless friend and a cruel, heartless public.

"You think, then," I asked her, "that a motion picture star cannot be happy?"

"I did not say that an actress CANNOT be happy," she replied. "You will quote me carefully, won't you, and not print those cruel, devastating lies about me? An actress may sometimes learn true happiness in spite of the terrible burdens she has to bear. Love, that divine gift, can raise her to the heights where vicious gossip cannot reach her with its bloody talons. But an actress must beware of fearful, jealous people, creatures who will stop at nothing to tear her apart. I thank the gracious Father above us that I have the love of a wonderful, wonderful husband to cloak and protect me from the world."

Suddenly she drew close to me A fearful expression transfigured the features of that incomparable face. "Do you know," she said in a trembling voice, as though afraid some unseen force lay back in the shadows ready to tear her away from her darling husband, "that if Rex had not rescued me when he did, just at that moment, I would not be alive today?"

I shuddered. I could not think of the world without Clara Bow. Certainly I could not think of a Hollywood deprived of its glorious "It" girl. Poor, poor, Clara! Her escape had been so terrifyingly close, outdoing in dramatic force anything she had ever portrayed on the screen.

The sun was setting in a golden blaze, like the crowning glory of America's "It" girl, although her hair was unkempt from the rough ranch life. Clara glanced at her tiny diamond wrist-watch—a present from Rex—and jumped up. "My husband will be here any minute, and I haven't even started his supper." Just like Clara—always thinking of her husband, never of herself. I thought of her at that moment not as a great dramatic actress, not as an immortal Duse, but as a typical American woman whose first thought was of her husband's supper.

As I drove home in the twilight, the Bell ranch disappearing in the distance behind me, I thought of that vast public waiting to hear the true story of Clara Bow's life, the story of her great, untold

tragedy. I had not intended to paint such an intimate picture. I wanted this interview to be something of my very own, a secret in my breast. But one cannot keep from the world such a vital truth. Again the stern finger of duty pressed against my temples, reminding me of the treasure I must give to the world.

I have satisfied Duty, I have satisfied Conscience. At last the world has the real truth about the tragedy of Clara Bow's life.

The fact that there is nothing in the text to justify the title of tragedy does not matter in the least. To catch fish one must use attractive bait. People always like to read about tragedies. The title of this epic is no more inaccurate than the general run.

To people not well versed in the lore of motion picture fan material this story may seem ridiculously exaggerated, but it is not. It is virtually impossible to exaggerate the silliness of most film magazine articles. Some of them, of course, are better written and a little less hysterical, but many, if not most, are equally as bad or even worse.

This article about Clara Bow conforms exactly to the formula for writing screen magazine trash. It has an alluring title, promising startling revelations of the tragic events composing Miss Bow's life. Most of the article was devoted to mean-

ingless descriptions and irrelevant platitudes. The remaining material was devoted to quoting Clara on many subjects, her views being supplemented and flattered by the author. Then she was white-washed, and made to appear a victim —here is where the tragedy comes in—of the scandal mongers. This sympathy-arousing stunt is pulled in almost every screen article. Of course the tale contains the usual description of the star's appearance, an indispensable factor to every fan story. Besides a few other very trite details there is nothing else in this eighteen-hundred word story. Of course there is no real tragedy. The entire article is simply a jungle of dull verbiage.

But when one remembers that the real facts which occurred during the author's interview were even duller than this story, one has to give the author credit for some imagination.

The celebrities about whom these articles are written never object even when they are represented as saying things they would never dream of saying. They understand all too well how vitally important it is that their names be kept before the public eye, no matter what is said of them. Some are even flattered when quoted in philosophical and otherwise brilliant statements, statements that they never made. A feature article, especially one demanding sympathy for the star's trials and tribulations, always results in

increased fan mail, which sustains the high salary at the studio. No wonder the stars are grateful to their fan writers.

It is too bad, though, that these articles do not stick to presenting more credible stories. So many of them quote the ignorant players on subjects they know nothing about, and that everybody knows they know nothing about.

"Gary Cooper—Can A Man Love Two Women," one of the more recent articles, is an example of the stupidity and similar characteristics of this wretched literature. The article, true to form, commences with a description of Gary . . . "The tall, handsome, he-man Gary sat back in his chair," etc. "He was wearing orchid silk pajamas and a very becoming lounging robe . . . It was 10 A.M." The article proceeds to inform the reader that Gary, being a man from the western plains, loves huge breakfasts and describes in detail just what Gary ate. Then, finally, after a third of the article has been devoted to a description of the setting and the author's feelings in the presence of the great he-man star, the subject matter is touched. It would seem that Gary believes it possible for two men to love the same woman, but impossible for one man to love two women. Then at this point the author digresses to say that Gary is very much in love with his fiancée and that the author could read this truth in his eyes. Gary, after having sufficiently radi-

ated his love, proceeds to go into a very deep psychological study of the possessive qualities of a man's love and devotion to a woman. He explains how a man might love two women if it were not REAL love, but if it were real love, he could not, for, as he explains it, the woman a man loves is in his sight the acme of perfection. On the obvious truth that there could be only one acme of perfection in a man's eyes at one time, he rests his case.

His discussion of a problem that would trouble the minds of the world's greatest psychologists is so ridiculously presumptuous as to defy description of it. Let us hope that most of his declarations were invented in the mind of the author, for if Gary Cooper were really the inventor of this silly discourse, it is just one more bit of proof that the standard of mentality in motion picture players leaves something to be desired.

Many articles have been written about Joan Crawford, and her career will probably furnish food for countless more. Those which already constitute history are immensely enlightening and at the same time amusing. One of the later of these biographical sketches is almost a direct refutation of the assertions made in a rival publication of a month previous. This article commences by telling of the author's palpitating heart as he rang the bell of Joan's apartment. He is greeted by the famous star whose deep, "pensive" eyes

reflect "the unusual intelligence of their owner." In this particular article Joan is a happy, happy girl. Her first ambition, as she describes it, is "to go on and on with this wonderful art"—referring to motion pictures. The development of her great talent gives her boundless joy. She shares the credit for her happy existence, however, with Mr. O. O. McIntyre, whose articles she professes to clip daily from the paper and paste in her scrap book. She enjoys Mr. McIntyre so much because his writings "express such a gentle philosophy."

It really does one's heart good to see Joan so happy in this lovely description of her life, for the picture painted in the previous article was dark and somber. That extraordinary feature quoted Miss Crawford as suffering from a general misunderstanding involving the entire public. Miss Crawford was, it would seem, almost on the verge of suicide from worrying about wicked words of the scandal mongers. She claims that she "strove for higher things, only to be laughed at by those who posed as her friends." The article, conforming to pattern, sought to arouse the reader's sympathy for poor, misunderstood Joan by saying that she is so very sensitive that every thoughtless word or deed cuts her like the slash of a great knife. Hence the poor girl must be terribly disfigured by now. Were it not for her art, she would disdain to live longer. As for

love, she was finished once and for all with that fickle emotion, although subsequent articles insist that she has recaptured the elusive passion in the person of Franchot Tone, to whom she has given an expensive wrist-watch. Since Miss Crawford is such a paradox, it is little wonder that she is so fertile a field for screen magazine writers.

One of the most obvious examples of the misrepresentative titles applied to fan narratives is "The Truth About Warner Baxter's Life!" (The exclamation points after all these titles are not ours.) Now surely from such a designation one would expect to find at least a sketchy revelation of Baxter's deeds. Certainly, even if one were lenient enough not to expect a complete biography of Warner, the reader should have the right to expect one or two highlights of the Baxter career described briefly. However, if the reader looked forward to anything of the sort in this article, he was doomed to disappointment, for there was nothing whatever in the entire string of words to warrant the title.

The breath-taking composition begins with a vivid portrayal of the beauty in Mr. Baxter's "mysterious brown eyes." The article goes on from here to refute the assertedly general supposition that Warner Baxter is the most unhappy of mortals. As a matter of fact, declares the article, Warner, his wife, and his mother comprise an astonishingly happy household. The only

thing approximating tragedy occurred when Warner, having taken a child for possible adoption, returned him after the little boy cried for five consecutive nights because he could not sleep with the lights on. This comprises the entire story called "The Truth About Warner Baxter's Life!" except for a closing paragraph devoted to the author's final hysterics over Warner's delightful brown eyes.

No doubt the author based the title of her article on the proof she offers which is supposed to show that Baxter's life is normally pleasant, this being the truth and so on. But the advertising remarks of the magazine, as well as the large letters in which the title is printed, lead the reader to believe that he is to find therein an exposé of the player's private life.

Another magazine informed its readers in one of those monthly articles on "the untold story of Garbo's life" that what the Swedish actress has really wanted all her life is to be a tight-rope walker. It is impossible to make a general statement regarding the accuracy of the author's contention, but Miss Garbo's fans need not cry their eyes out in sympathy for her, as no doubt Greta has adequate consolation in her reputed nine-thousand-dollar-a-week salary and the adulation of millions of picture patrons. After all, if Miss Garbo really desired to be a tight-rope walker, she probably, with her fame, could get a job some-

where in that capacity. If not, she has enough money to start in the business for herself.

But the most brazen example of this ridiculous literature ever to harass a long-suffering public was the recent article of George Kent, asserting that Mae West is the mother of us all. This is really going a little too far. With such a title, it devolved on Mr. Kent to prove his wild statement, which he did only in a round-about and unconvincing way. Certain people, especially members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Legion of Decency, some of Miss West's most irreconcilable enemies, would be inclined, if they were to read this article, to take violent exception. It certainly does not place motherhood on the high plane commonly associated with the term.

This dissertation claims that all children love Mae West, even though they do not understand what is meant by her suggestive hip-shaking and "come up sometime" invitations. It is to be fervently hoped that this is so, although the State of New York, through its censor board, was skeptical enough to forbid the showing of the original version of "It Ain't No Sin," her latest picture. (They now call it "Belle of the Nineties") From the viewpoint of the Church and other moral organizations Mr. Kent's assertion is tantamount to raising Jezebel to the status of

the Virgin Mary. Mr. Kent must possess a powerful imagination.

Still another fan magazine featured "Why I Had To Leave John Gilbert!" From the title of this literary effort one would guess that there was some grave or unusual reason why John Gilbert's fourth wife found him unpleasant matrimonial company. But Miss Bruce simply explains that Gilbert was moody while she was lighthearted, so she decided it was best for them both to part. Of course they are "still the best of friends."

Then there is another discussion of love, the favorite Hollywood topic. This time the oracle is Dolores Del Rio. The modest inscription over the philosophical work is "Dolores Del Rio Extolls Passive Love." "Love here in your United States," declares Miss Del Rio, "is taken so lightly. In my country people die for love." Fortunately for the citizens of Hollywood love in this town has no such fatal complications, for if it did the place would have been depopulated years ago. Think what a hero Mr. Gilbert would be in Del Rio's country, he who has sustained four marriages and divorces and is none the worse for them, except financially. Nor is this hardihood confined to the masculine sex, for Gloria Swanson has the same number of domestic wrecks to her credit.

An old favorite among the screen magazines is the story of Rudy Vallee and his "Vagabond Dream Girl." Of late, however, the value of this stock theme has declined, for people are getting their fill of Vallee's love life. The Vallee-Webb affair has thoroughly disgusted every sensible person, and besides, the American people are much too practical a race to remain enthused for long over a dream girl. There are few ethereal qualities to be found in the practice of tapping telephone wires and making dictograph records of one another's infidelities.

"Screenland" in a recent issue featured an article called "Baby-face Grows Up." Mr. Ayres is the player to whom the title refers. According to this impressive work, Mr. Ayres is the most suppressed lover in Hollywood. Right now—or rather six months ago, as affairs of the heart move rapidly in Hollywood—Lew is madly in love with a sweet girl whose disposition is said to be a marked improvement over that of his recent spouse, Lola Lane. But due to the unfortunate inhibitions that afflict poor Lew, he cannot bring himself to declare his passion to his loved one.* Just what all this has to do with Ayres growing up is uncertain, but perhaps the author is trying to be subtle and so leave the question open to settlement by the reader.

*Lew has finally married Miss Ginger Rogers, and at least four fan articles have prophesied a permanent marriage.

One of the most tragic types of fan articles is that in which the author makes so bold as to guess which couples of Hollywood will live in perpetual union. About a year ago an article of this type appeared on the news stands, prophesying that some ten Hollywood couples would never be divorced. Among his optimistic hazards the author placed Mary Pickford and her blue-blood-worshipping husband, an almost sure bet, and also Gloria Swanson and her fourth mate, Michael Farmer. With regard to putting Gloria in the permanency class, the author must have based his conclusions on the law of averages, figuring that if the first three of her marriages were failures, surely it was time for one to succeed. Of the ten couples who were to remain united until death intervened, only one remains together, and it was not death that broke up the others. Barbara Stanwyck and Frank Faye are the miracle couple. Of course, the whole story was nothing but another feeble attempt at whitewashing the film colony, which utilizes marriage as a convenient tool for making lust respectable.

There is also that half-condemning type of fan article, designed to arouse the loyal fans to fervent letter writing. An example of this sort of article appeared in the July number of "Hollywood." It was an open letter to Clark Gable, a warning message "from his fans who want to help him BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!" The

article accuses him of going "high-hat," and then promptly exonerates him from the charge. It is one of those fence-straddling affairs. Witness: "Clark, you have swapped your turtle-neck sweater for the dress suit. You MAY not be high-hat, but there IS talk. They say you are no longer the old love 'em and leave 'em Clark that you were before your rise to fame. They say you have become a drawing-room tea guzzler. This may not be so, but the talk doesn't do you any good." Etc., Etc., Etc.

In the same number Glenda Farrell, another infallible source of material, informs her friends and fans that love is too precious to be destroyed in marriage. Here is a new angle for argument against matrimony. Generally it is pure convenience, rather than a high value of Cupid's wares, that induces Hollywood lovers to refrain from marrying, but Glenda supports celibacy from purely ascetic reasons. Instead of striving to prevent soiled love by the omission of the marriage ceremony, Miss Farrell has attained novelty by reversing the situation.

All this sort of thing, stupid and silly as it may be, is what places the Hollywood stars on their temporary pedestals of fame. Publicity, the foundation of their careers, finds its best medium in the inane fan magazines sold to the hero-worshipping public. One can understand, after learning the circulation of this trash, why

educated people make disparaging remarks about the low intelligence of the American people.

There remains one more aspect of the fan magazine to be considered. A fan magazine reader should remember that these publications are not really independent, like other magazines, but are directly or indirectly related to the producing corporations. Beside the feature articles that make up the editorial content, the magazines are composed largely of gossip items, furnished FREE, as are even some of the feature stories, by the studio publicity departments! On top of being the largest advertisers, the studios make it possible for the screen publications to get out their issues very cheaply. Moreover, the studios hold another trump card in their power to handicap the writers of any magazine by barring them from the studio and forbidding their players to give any interviews to the representatives of the offending publication.

In fact, to anybody who gives his attention to the situation, it is plain that the fan magazines are merely a subsidiary of the picture industry, with nothing original or truthful to offer their readers.

CHAPTER VI

Delusions of Grandeur

Little more than half a century ago there lived in San Francisco an eccentric merchant known as Joshua A. Norton. Although dead for quite a number of years, he recently became news when his grave was moved with great pomp and ceremony, the event being honored by the presence of some of San Francisco's most prominent citizens. Norton was a victim of megalomania, imagining in his diseased mind that he was Emperor of the United States and Protector of Mexico. It was a harmless sort of madness, and Norton was treated by friends as though he really were a sovereign. This deference even went so far as to honor the small notes he issued on the "Imperial Treasury of Norton I."

In Hollywood there are many victims of megalomania. The number of film celebrities suffering from delusions of grandeur is as amazing as it is ludicrous and pitiful. Of course they would be offended if anyone were to suggest that they are insane, but surely the things that happen in official filmdom could scarcely occur among rational individuals. From the former tailors and dry-goods store owners, who today dominate the motion picture industry, to the very lowest clerk and gate-

man, there exists a feeling that those connected with the gigantic cinema bluff are vastly superior to the other members of the human race engaged in less colorful but more worthy occupations.

Those who are without experience in dealing with the personnel of the film industry do not know, and can never realize, how true this is. It is only after one has made an effort to contact those who rule in Hollywood that he can wholly comprehend and appreciate the full ravages of the mental disease which has spread throughout the industry. To those who are condemned by fate to spend their lives associating with the egomaniacs of Hollywood, the megalomania of official filmdom takes on the aspect of a plague. Ask any honest newspaper man!

The greatest victims of this form of insanity are the motion picture executives. Delusions of grandeur are always most tragic in the excessively ignorant. The latter have no foundation whatever on which to base their mad pretense of greatness. Consequently, the uncouth tailors, who have become the rulers of the canned-drama business because they invested their money at a time when a little went a long way in Hollywood, have by flimsy props erected glorious thrones on which they sit and imagine they are gods.

All the motion picture magnates, except the independents who have no stockholders to rob, have extensive suites of offices, extensive and ex-

pensive. They employ large office staffs of the most impudent people imaginable to serve as a buffer between themselves and the rabble of the outside world. The same office force, flanked by the personnel of many departments, serve as a bureaucracy for their masters, something like the Romanov Tsars of Russia used to maintain for the government of their far-flung empire. An executive vice-president must have an assistant to handle one phase of his business, a secretary to handle another, and an assistant secretary for general purposes. The assistant, too, must have a secretary, so as to maintain the proper atmosphere in the offices of a great executive. Besides, the girl at the office switchboard is equipped to direct a thorough questionaire at any person trying to reach the executive by telephone. And since it is virtually impossible to reach him any other way, the system is well-nigh perfect.

Nothing is more amusing, or trying, than to attempt to get in touch with these divinities by telephone. To start with, you are questioned by the girl at the switchboard who demands your name and that you tell her what you want to talk about. If you insist that your business is of such a private nature that it cannot be disclosed to anyone less than the executive himself, after a few minutes of waiting, if you are not cut out, you will be connected with the assistant secretary. This enterprising individual will promptly fire a volley

of questions at you, so that no matter how private your business may be, you have a choice of telling it or hanging up. Assuming that you successfully storm the fort held by the assistant secretary, you are placed in touch with the personal secretary. The latter covers with a fine-tooth comb the same ground as the assistant secretary, so that every detail of your business by this time has become common property of the office staff. If by some miracle the secretary thinks your business is important enough to warrant an interview with the all-highest, you are connected with the latter's assistant. You have by this time almost scaled the mountain. If your patience holds out, and if you are seeking rather than being sought, you have to be patient, the assistant will finally speak with you and set the time for your interview, in the event you are granted one. But if you are looking for a job, no matter what your qualifications may be, the chances are a thousand to one that you do not get by the first assistant secretary, if indeed you even get by the switchboard operator. Most likely, you will be advised to write in, which means virtually that you are being advised to bury your hopes.

As for getting in touch with the president of a movie corporation, that is too much out of the question to be useful in even a hypothetical case. Only God and the president of the Chase National Bank have access to him, and it is safe to say that

the banker, while he is even less welcome than the Almighty, gets inside the studio offices a great deal more often.

One has frequently read jokes about inaccessibility of motion picture people, but there is nothing made up about these quips. So much a fact is it that the sometimes witty columnist of the Los Angeles Times, Harry Carr, in writing of King Albert of Belgium, said that it was much easier to see the famous monarch than any stuffed shirt in a Hollywood picture studio. Harry Carr, incidentally, spoke from experience. Is it not a tragically absurd situation wherein it is easier to obtain an audience with the ruler of a nation than an interview with a petty executive of a business corporation, and who, in theory at least, is nothing more than a servant of the stockholders? The theory of royalty, accepted by so many Europeans, as well as Americans, is that in some unmentionable way a monarch and his family are better than non-royal people. Quite testimonial it is then of the bloated Hollywood heads when a monarch of real royal blood—Hollywood is so saturated with bluff royalty and bluff aristocracy, as well as bluff acting ability that it is necessary to stress the "real"—made himself as accessible as possible to those beneath him, while the rulers of the film industry, whose work probably occupies half an hour of their time every day, will condescend to

see no one except those whose business or social connections are greater than their own.

With their tremendous salaries, it is not hard to understand how the stockholders' servants maintain the outward trapping of that glory and power they so love to affect. They have limousines, Hollywood palaces, yachts, beach homes, mountain residences, desert ranches, gay parties, and all the other paraphernalia needed to maintain their delusions of grandeur. Inside their Moorish castles on the top of some Beverly Hills cliff, they can look down on those in the valley and imagine themselves feudal lords. Or, if their fancy dictates, by establishing a few beautiful women in luxurious apartments about town, they can convince themselves that they are Turkish sultans. Autocrats in their studios, if they have vivid imaginations, perhaps each can picture himself as a "Soleil-Roi" that would make the original Louis shrink with shame. Without doubt certain picture executives consider themselves the Napoleons of drama or, perhaps, Mussolinis. (They do not like Hitler.)

Of course some of the recipients of the fabulous screen salaries persuade themselves that they are connoisseurs of art, and go about Europe paying outrageous prices for paintings and antiques, most of which are not genuine, and which they couldn't and wouldn't appreciate if they were. However, they are not cheated so badly as one

might presume, for the "masterpieces" whether genuine or not, bolster up the vanity of the owners who believe that possessing them makes themselves real aristocrats.

The kidnapper scare has given the rich and famous screen people a pretext to maintain armed retinues of guards. Naturally this is a potent force in aiding the celebrities to believe they are super-mortals. With armed chauffeurs, uniformed footmen, gatemen to operate the portals of their fortified estates and the even more impregnable studios, they require only an anthem and a coat of arms—which latter some celestials have monogrammed on every conceivable object in their possession—to complete the illusion of "potentate."

What is true of the studio executives is also true of the directors, actors, and some of the higher-paid writers and assistants this, that, and the other. The spirit of greatness is keenly felt by everyone associated with the industry, even by the typists and the janitors, but the latter people, along with some others, lack the means to indulge in anything more substantial than spirit—or gossip about greatness.

But the actors can indulge their fancy for splendor to the very ultimate in bad taste, and they do. Only a few intelligent players are able to refrain from investing their incomes in gaudy baubles of every description. Some motion picture

stars get as much money as the major executives, and many more get nearly as much. Their salaries far outdo those of the less important officials, as well as those of important executives in other industries. What Wall Street magnate enjovs a salaried income of $9000 a week, Greta Garbo's reputed stipend? Of course, some of them enjoy much greater incomes, due to their vast properties which yield rents and dividends, though it is safe to venture that none of the latter type income is derived from motion picture stock. The nation, almost to a man, set up a howl against the compensation enjoyed by railroad presidents, one salary aggregating a hundred and fifty thousand, but such an income would be laughed at by a motion picture company president. The latter would tell you that it is infinitely more difficult to manage a film producing organization than to run a great railroad like the Pennsylvania or any other first class line. Joan Crawford earns more money in six months than the president of the New York Central Railroad does in a year.

The executives by no means have a monopoly on the Moorish castles or French chateaux, but have to share their exclusive neighborhood with their high-salaried employees, among them being not only actors but directors, a few writers, and some "technical advisers." Not being acceptable in real blue-blood society except as entertainers, the entire set of monied people engaged in pictures

have formed an aristocracy of their own. Some of the film celebrities, it is true, have been hosts to many genuine aristocrats, including a sprinkling of royalty, but the press notices are always far too polite to hint that curiosity on the part of the high-born ones is chiefly responsible for their visits—either that or economy!

Possibly it is the exaggerated self-esteem of these people that prompts them continually to seek publicity, or perhaps it is only force of habit, but from the president on down, one of the principal aims in life of the motion picture people is to get their names in the newspapers, or even a fan magazine. However, fan magazine publicity is at a discount, for like most of Henry Ford's articles, it is practically advertising. Marion Davies is the only actress in the world who has assured press notice, the rest have to fight for it. It is quite surprising to what lengths some will go. Lupe Velez has a system which has worked very well in the past, but some day she will get hold of an irate judge, and then there will be trouble. Miss Velez periodically* institutes divorce suits against her ape-man husband, Johnny Weissmuller. The press immediately sweeps the nation with the news that Tarzan is about to lose his mate. At the crucial moment, just at the time the judge is about to grant a decree, Miss Velez

*As this book goes to press, Miss Velez has just instituted and dropped another suit against her husband.

remembers that she is a jungle lover and drops suit. The using of the Courts for this cheap publicity is meeting with considerable adverse comment on the part of serious minded people. Sooner or later the deluge is bound to come.

Katherine Hepburn has taken to running about town in a popular-make truck, her resourceful mind developing this marvel entirely unassisted, which is obvious. Miss Hepburn is determined that Miss Garbo ($9000 a week) who drives a dilapidated old car, shall not outstep her in eccentricity. Miss Garbo holds a great deal of faith in the maxim that consistency is a jewel, for her famed silence is not the only attribute of her eccentric nature. When Greta returned to her native country for a visit, she traveled on a freighter, although she could well afford to go on a regular passenger boat. However, Garbo, for all her closed-mouthness, knows what makes good press fodder. She was right in respect to her travel, and it was not wasted. Also, her desert disappearance with Rouben Mamoulian happened to occur just before the release of her picture, "Queen Christina." Hollywood coincidents are always the most amazing events!

Some of the leading Hollywood celebrities pose as being bored by publicity and adulation. They treat reporters shabbily, a pose that is as stupid as it is ungracious, and they refuse to autograph various articles for the simple-minded, professing

to be bored by such procedure. However, they haven't the decency to back up their pretense, for, while they snub the press in public, they tip off newspaper men privately by telephone and mail. Katherine Hepburn, who has shown herself in her true colors by completely "going Hollywood" is among those who outwardly spurn publicity and praise, but who do all kinds of ludicrous and nauseating tricks to attract attention.

Nor are actors the only class of motion picture people who hunger and thirst for publicity. The producers and directors are equally in love with press notice, so long as it is not adverse. In fact, some like attention so much that they care little even if it is derogatory.

There exists among the motion picture people considerable petty jealousy. If one producer is quoted on some subject, the press agents of the others get no rest until their employers are quoted too. If one star gets a marvelous write up, the publicity departments of rival studios must spare no effort to get in print even better stories about their leading stars. This is not merely commercial rivalry, but is really a strife commenced by injured egos. In the event that two rival stars are in the same studio, the jealousy between them has about the same effect on the press department as the proverbial bull on the wares of a china shop. It is bad enough when the rivalry is between the leading stars of competing

studios. If Marlene Dietrich is given space in the press one day, Garbo must have twice as much the next. Even the directors squabble over the publicity accorded them. Only an insider can see the true situation and know how much ill feeling and trouble is aroused by press slights.

But regarding the high esteem in which the motion picture deities hold themselves, nothing is more amusing than the unbelievable furor caused by a recent statement of Francis Lederer to the effect that acting is a relatively unimportant profession, an obvious truth, when compared with medicine, the various sciences, agriculture, and other types of human endeavor that are socially and economically indispensable. Even the stage has more claim to importance in the social scheme than the cinema, because the legitimate stage is at least a great art, whereas the motion picture is merely a cheap amusement. Why those engaged in this type of amusement should consider it more important than similar types, such as the circus or the street carnival, is inexplicable, unless it is because the monetary compensation is much greater for those so engaged.

Lederer's statement of a simple fact drew down upon his head a veritable avalanche of criticism from those whose pride was lacerated. Lederer took it all philosophically, laughing at those whose illusions he had destroyed. People who draw weekly salaries of four figures do not like to be

told that they are socially and economically of little importance. Such an idea does not quite fit in with their scheme of things.

One of the most annoying characteristics of the high-salaried screen employees, whose wide publicity and tremendous incomes have resulted in self-apotheosis, is their pose of temperament. Frequently children who want to attract attention to themselves, or who are jealous because one of their number seems to be attracting most of the notice of their elders, scream and cry and behave quite abominably. Very often they have to be spanked to be quieted. It is an unfortunate fact that children of adult years, especially those whose names are nationally known, cannot be so treated, although the dream of doing so is constantly cherished by many a film director and executive. At times life for those who have to put up with temperamental players is unbearable.

If, as is often the case, a director and the star of a picture are both temperamental, everybody on the set, as well as those behind polished desks in the executive offices, are literally bundles of quivering nerves, wondering how soon the explosion will come. Generally the suspense is short-lived. When the battle does break, it is settled in a thoroughly practical manner. The person worth the most money to the studio wins out, no matter who is to blame. And woe, woe to the less important employee who unwittingly

brings down upon his head the wrath of a temperamental star or director. Either stellar or directorial displeasure has a fatal effect on his job.

There are any number of cases in which such a tragedy has happened, for the occurrence is almost a daily event in one studio or another. One of the more recent examples is a case which attracted comment in the movie columns of several newspapers. It concerns a star whose rise in the cinema she owes more to vice than talent, and who is unusually smitten with her own charms, which includes an intelligence existing solely in her fancy. The victim is an elderly actor whose deplorable financial state won him the sympathy of a studio executive. He was given a small part in this woman's picture. The work was so opportune as to be almost a miracle.

But the actor had one unpardonable fault. His education was vastly superior to the star's. Consequently, he pronounced with a short "a" a word the star had made broad. Although a rebuke was the farthest thing from his mind, the actress took offense at the way he pronounced it, and flew into a tantrum. "Use a broad 'a'!" she bawled at him. It required several minutes to calm her, and then the scene was repeated. Having for years pronounced the word according to Webster, the actor forgot himself and "mispronounced" it a few minutes later. The spoiled woman quivered

with anger. Such impudence from a mere nobody would have to be punished. In front of the entire cast and staff she screamed at him, "You fool, use a broad 'a'." The veneration of youth for age! The old man became so flustered that he hardly knew what he was doing or saying. The unhappy result of his natural agitation was that he again forgot himself on this word. It was the last straw. Considering that she had been unusually patient in granting him two chances, the star became a tempest of rage. She ordered him fired. "Either he or I," she squealed at the top of her lungs. Of course it was the old actor who went. This pretty young woman succeeded in her desire to display her power before the assembled production unit. The great Hollywood urge to show off had to be gratified, even at the expense of a starving old man.

Directors, too, like to demonstrate their authority and temperamental natures in unusual ways, frequently breaking up light pieces of furniture or throwing up their hands and screaming. However, none ever go so far as to forget themselves and bawl out a star who rates heavily at the box office. They know from much experience that the latter can retaliate in devastatingly expensive ways. More than one famous star has become irritated in the middle of production and left the set, costing the studio thousands of dollars in overhead. This is a very effective procedure, as

the studio, on the spur of the moment, can seldom find another player suitable to the vacant role. The delay may be a week or more, with ruinous costs. Moreover, if the quitting star is an important box office asset, the studio cannot afford to let her go.

Both sexes are susceptible to temperament, although women have violent attacks the more frequently. However, this may be due to the fact that the biggest box-office names are usually female. An ordinary player generally comes out the worse in a battle with his corporation, for it is easy to "starve" the small fry into submission. Only the big names can play the game of temperament and get away with it.

Not only are the cinematic great ones slaves to publicity, but, like all newly rich, they are abject worshippers of real aristocracy and real importance. Among those who consistently pay their respects to the world-renowned or blue-blood folk is Louis B. Mayer, who spends the greater part of his time fêting the great and near-great at his studio in Culver City. Whenever he is successful in luring a curious aristocrat into the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer commissary for lunch, the local papers always carry detailed stories of the affair. Mr. Mayer does not, it is very evident, share the reticence of his leading star, Greto Garbo. Silence is not a Mayer virtue.

The stream of privileged visitors to the M. G. M. plant is as continuous and unfailing as the succession of day and night. Yesterday it was the Sultan of Jehore, today it is Baron Maurice de Rothschild, and maybe tomorrow it will be Lady Astor, though no matter who, the name will be important enough to constitute news in the papers.

Mr. Mayer's little luncheons are always modest, charming events of not more than fifteen or twenty-five guests. All the leading studio officials and players are there "by command," including Howard Strickling, director of publicity. The formula of entertainment is always the same. There is a testimonial luncheon for the guest, at which Mayer is the principal speaker. In fact, so long are Mr. Mayer's addresses that there is seldom room in the press to print the comments of the guest. Mr. Strickling is unswervingly loyal to his chief. After the lengthy meal the guest is taken for a trip through the studio to see first hand the process of making motion pictures. If Marion Davies is in town, the guest has his or her picture taken with the owner of the best dressing room on the M. G. M. lot, and it appears in the Los Angeles Examiner the following morning.

The more important the guest, the more lavish is his reception and treatment, for Mayer, like most of the film aristocrats, has a faculty for

being superciliously impolite to unimportant people, but disgustingly servile to the rich, great, or famous. He has never learned the lesson of true aristocracy, that is, to treat both high and low alike with the same polite consideration.

This haughty attitude of these newly rich Hollywoodites has been copied, with few exceptions, by everyone in their employ down to the lowest clerk or door attendant. Occasionally, as a result, they find themselves in very embarrassing positions.

Recently, on the day the studio luminaries were expecting as guest the Baron Maurice de Rothschild, an agent by the same last name had an appointment with a studio official and was admitted. To his utter surprise he was treated with remarkable deference and solicitude, especially in the studio commissary. In the meantime the Baron had arrived and made known his presence in the front office. The desk clerk—they are not only allowed, but encouraged, to be insupportably insolent—gruffly told him he would have to wait until they checked up to see if he could get in. They were sure he was a fraud. The minutes flew by, and the Baron, not accustomed to such treatment, grew impatient and wondered how long he would have to wait. He received a cool reply. Finally, to the utter horror of the desk clerks, as well as the executives, the mistake was discovered and profuse—oh, such profuse—

apologies were extended the Baron. Of course the studio could not recall the politeness unintentionally shown to the agent-Rothschild, but they did their best to nullify it by promptly ignoring him.

Sometimes, too, their abysmal ignorance, combined with their studied insolence, causes the executives to make faux pas that are very laughable. The story is being circulated—now admitted to be the gospel truth—of a motion picture executive whose conference with a literary agent about getting some new, good writers, was interrupted by the executive's secretary. "Miss Nina Wilcox Putnam is waiting to see you," he was informed.

"Can't see her today," was the curt answer. "Tell her we're not casting."

Confusing a display of wealth with good taste, the motion picture colony continually perpetrates the most violent assaults on the tastes of intelligent and cultured people. Max Baer, who has now become a great film star outshining Booth, in addition to being a prize fighter, acted in Hollywood's traditional style by purchasing two dozen or so new suits of clothes to inaugurate his new prosperity, the clothes well representing every color of the rainbow. Likewise, Hollywood stars who have invested their wealth in jewels, most of which have to be pawned five years later, believe in letting their public know that they are doing

well by wearing their fortunes to any and all events. Their homes frequently represent the most unique architecture ever conceived in the human mind. One of the latest of these peculiar structures is the home of Anna Sten, built entirely of glass. Probably this was made to furnish her press agent with an opportunity for his quip about "people who live in glass houses," etc. It has been good publicity.

A number of the stars are great prize fight fans, attending every bout in the Los Angeles Olympic Auditorium, where they give free play to their emotions, shouting cuss words along with the rest of the audience. This is supposed to prove that they are not "high-hat."

The entire film colony live in luxuriously furnished homes, own aeroplanes, yachts, diamonds, limousines with footmen, marble swimming pools and fountains rivalling those of Versailles, and they give magnificent parties much like those indulged in by far-eastern potentates. On the whole, they behave much like a street urchin who suddenly comes into possession of a large sum of money.

One of the most ridiculous stunts pulled by a pretty little girl who is just starting to draw a large salary quite rightly has attracted considerable notice in the press. She has established a "secretariat!" to handle her "voluminous mail." Her mother received a form letter from her

daughter reading: Thank you for your interest Madam. I sincerely hope you will like my next picture. (Signed) . . . The excesses of these people are pathetically amusing.

Ignorance, of course, is to blame for the many crimes against good taste and manners committed by Hollywood. The motion picture industry is bankrupt not only financially, but also in education and, for the most part, the raw material of brains and common sense. Admittedly a college education is not synonymous with brilliancy or even culture. But regarding the latter social attribute, sometimes education helps a little. It should not be held against Hollywood that most of its important people have not gone very far in formal education. A college degree is not necessarily a guarantee that its holder can appreciate good literature, good music, or any of the other arts. Many of the world's greatest people in all lines of human effort have attained their position without the benefit of higher education. But in the motion picture business so many of the people holding key positions are of that class who would not care for the better things even if they had graduated from college, and to whom money is a curse rather than a blessing. One thing, at least, can be said for those who love prize fights. Their liking for this relic sport of degraded Rome, and all the attending atmosphere, is not affectation, whereas those who pose as lovers of opera gen

erally do so from being prodded by their press agents or their own unlimited conceit.

Speaking in general terms, Hollywood has never heard of most, if not all, of our current intellectual leaders. It is as unfamiliar with the names and works of the current inventors, educational leaders, composers, and other really worthwhile people as it is with the writings of Goethe or the discoveries of Newton. Few, if any, of the executives read enough to have intelligent opinions of current events. The majority of them are deficient in English grammar. Even in their own field, drama, they are so ignorant that their mistakes cause no end of trouble to their staffs.

Uphill movement in the line of screen drama need not be expected as long as those who dominate it are too ignorant to help and too stubborn to try to learn.

CHAPTER VII

The Starving Harem

In order to understand the moral conditions of the cinema extra players, it is necessary to get a background of their financial status. Morals are so greatly affected by economics, and both the moral and economic aspects of the Hollywood extras are as sorrowful as they are disgusting.

Hollywood and the picture industry is an institution of extremes. A motion picture star may make as much as three hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, and some have made a great deal more. An extra may often earn only fifty dollars a year. There is no class of employees in the world so destitute as those players, if such they may be called, who provide the atmosphere in films and who fill the bit parts. Not that they are underpaid, for an ordinary extra earns eight dollars a day, and good pay for overtime. One who speaks a line or two, or who wears jewels and merits a close-up draws fifteen. It is the scarcity of work that is responsible for their deplorable financial state.

The whole trouble is the over supply of extras, resulting in a little work for everyone, but not enough for anyone. It is impossible to give accurate figures of the total number of people de-

riving an income, however small, from extra work. The number registered at the Central Casting Bureau varies between fifteen and twenty thousand (at the present there are ten thousand girls alone registered with this company) but this by no means represents the entire number. The best extras are not registered with this organization, but get their calls directly from the studio casting offices. The demand for male extras is partially supplied by the employment offices of the University of Southern California and the University of California at Los Angeles. Beside these concerns, there are several other smaller institutions that place extra "talent" at the studios. If we err in estimating the total number at twenty thousand, it is on the side of conservatism.

The story of the Hollywood extra is essentially a tragic one, with the usual exception furnishing an occasional bright spot. It is nothing more than literal starvation, eviction, deferred hope, and frequently the worst kind of moral degradation if the individual persists in sticking. It could hardly be otherwise. The odds against making a living in this field, or of subsequently advancing to stardom, are too great. Consequently there is a huge group of beautiful women, spurred on by ambition and hope, who voluntarily sacrifice themselves to what at best is a poor livelihood. They form a sort of public harem, their morals

being on about the same plane as their economic status.

It is a good thing to remember that the vast majority of this undernourished horde are women, and as such constitute an entirely different problem than if the reverse were true.

How these people, both male and female, contrive to get by without money is one of the few modern miracles. Of course, there are many people today who do, but they do not, like the Hollywood extras, live in the best residential sections with many luxuries and without the aid of some sort of charity. However, the phenomenal system of living well without money developed by the extras has left its stamp on the city of Los Angeles generally, and on Hollywood in particular.

In scarcely any other city is it so hard to establish one's credit or get a personal check cashed, even when one is properly identified. Certainly in no other city, unless it is New York, are the landlords so unreasonable and the butcher and baker so tight-fisted with credit. Every person in Los Angeles is held to be a crook until he has proven otherwise, and the burden of proof is made overwhelmingly great. Characteristic of the credit situation in the film capital is the experience of a well-to-do-tourist in a brokerage house cafe. Being a small speculator, he dropped into a Hollywood brokerage office to watch the move-

ments of his stock on the board. (The security markets open at 6 A.M. on the coast.) To his embarrassment he discovered as he was ready to get a bite of breakfast that he had forgotten his money. He asked the cashier to take a very small personal check against a local bank. To identify himself he had his driver's license and his bank book, showing a substantial deposit. Naturally he was irked when the cafe manager refused to accept the check in spite of the guarantee. The manager insisted that he was not sufficiently well acquainted with the tourist to risk cashing his check. How did he know the gentleman did not have somebody else's license or someone else's bank book? The wealthy tourist went without his breakfast.

With merchants everywhere in the city it is practically the same. If the purchaser offers to pay by check for any merchandise, he is regarded by the cashier with an insolent look. Even though the cashier may establish the customer's account by calling the bank, the latter is still treated as a thief. It is very rarely indeed that a Los Angeles store will thank a purchaser who pays by check. The merchant assumes the attitude of extraordinary benevolence, much as though he were giving alms to a beggar. Such a state of affairs, according to the Angelenos, is the result of the movie extras developing a science of existing without money.

The amusing part of the whole thing is that the extras are the only ones who can still cash rubber checks or induce landlords to trust them another month on the rent. That they do is obvious in the twenty thousand who are getting by in life with nothing more substantial than hope. The great majority of these people live in at least moderately well-furnished apartments, dress well, have plenty of liquor, and an unbelievably large number even drive an automobile. With no more capital or income than the inhabitants of the slum districts, the extras live in a setting of middle-class luxury amid the beautiful Hollywood hills.

But this sort of existence, that is, getting much for nothing, is nerve-racking in the extreme. And it can be accomplished on a large scale only in Hollywood. It is done by a sort of financial wizardry that might well arouse the jealousy of Wall Street.

For instance, the average person would be likely to see quite a problem in renting a nice apartment on an income of sixteen or twenty dollars a month. But it bothers not the Hollywood extra, for is not necessity the mother of invention? Here again, moreover, environment plays an important part in the development of institutions. Like almost everything else in Southern California, there is an excess of apartment houses. Almost every other building in the city of Los Angeles is such a residence. Competition is keen

and rents are low. They are practically fifty per-cent under rates in New York. It is quite possible (the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce bulletins will tell you about this in detail) to get a single apartment equipped with electric refrigeration and all the extras paid by the management for as low as $22 in Hollywood. Pleasant doubles in the better neighborhoods can be had for as low as $40.

By sacrificing privacy to luxury, four or five extras can take a double renting at forty dollars a month equipped with all the modern conveniences plus a view of the mountains for only eight or ten dollars apiece.

It is necessary, of course, to have enough money to pay at least a week's rent in advance. One girl may have worked a day or so which places sufficient capital at her command to dicker with some landlord. The latter probably will not want to rent to them on a weekly basis, but if he has a number of vacancies he will take every dollar he can lay hands on. The girls get a home.

But soon they are behind on their rent. It is time to pay another week's rent, and chances are the girls haven't a dollar among them. The most persuasive beauty is sent to deal with the manager.

Manager: "We have to insist that the rent be paid in advance."

Extra: "Oh, of course. And we always pay in advance, too. This is the first time we've ever

had to ask for a little time. But Effie was sick, you know, and we just had to have a doctor for her. If you can wait until this next Monday, we'll pay up for the rest of the month."

The manager doesn't believe her, but he has so many vacancies in his building he decides to take a chance. "But you'll pay up Monday sure?" he inquires in a warning tone.

"Of course we will," is the reply.

One of the bunch really does work a day, but the money is spent on food and entertainment. When Monday comes around, the exchequer is empty as usual. Again the manager must be placated and this time it will be a more serious task.

Extra: "Susie and Jane didn't work this week, after all. The studio has postponed production until next Friday. I guess you'll have to wait a week or so longer."

The righteously indignant manager in harsh terms refuses to do anything of the sort. He gives the girls twenty-four hours to raise enough money to pay their rent. Somehow they manage to scrape up three dollars, which they offer the manager as a token of their good intentions. He, with the picture of his empty apartments foremost in his mind, decides that even a crust of bread is better than nothing, and so he accepts the money and many promises.

This sort of thing goes on until the girls are far behind. However, as long as they keep paying

something, they are permitted to hold their apartment. When the manager shows signs of putting them out for certain, they quietly sneak out in the middle of the night, taking their personal effects with them. With the price of a week's rent in advance, they take an apartment in a new neighborhood, where they employ their system over again. No wonder every apartment house manager asks every prospective guest, "Are you working in pictures?"

A great many extras get by by cashing small worthless checks. Going into the markets after banking hours, they usually have some kind of identification and plausible excuse that will induce the cashier to take their checks. They have no fear of prosecution, for the checks are made so small that they are not worth the time and effort employed in bringing the petty criminals to trial. Besides, a conviction would not make good the checks.

Self-preservation dictates that these people live in small communistic units. When four or five extras take an apartment they all pay as well as they are able, whether it is food, rent, or transportation. Today it may be Susie who has a dollar, tomorrow Jane, and the next day Winnie. When one eats, they all eat, even though it may be boiled rice and that only once a day.

This is the story of the self-financing of the extra players of Hollywood. Incidents, of course,

vary in different cases, but in general it is the same old song in the same key. However, there are some notable exceptions worthy of discussion.

There are about thirty girls, out of the entire feminine extra list, who make a decent living from doing "atmosphere" and bit parts. Thirty out of fifteen thousand is not a very good percentage, but it is something. Typifying these thirty successful extras is one Elouise Rozelle, who averages about $150 a month, of which she has to spend fifty to maintain her wardrobe. The stars, who can afford, and have, the best clothes that can be bought anywhere, are furnished their screen wardrobes by the studios, but the extras, to whom every dollar is precious, must furnish their own. Work is distributed to those with the most complete wardrobes. Miss Rozelle has an array of finery rivalling that of any fashionable heiress. It is absolutely complete in every detail. With her fine clothes are not a luxury but a commercial necessity.

Another group of extras manage to live in something approaching comfort by supplementing their screen employment with part-time work in beauty parlors, cafes, drugstores, or the like. The fact that many of these people risk losing their regular jobs to answer the occasional calls for extra work is mute testimony to the urge for screen fame.

Another group, and this one is amazingly large, is composed of those who play prostitute to help eke out an existence. Most of these fare less well than a professional harlot, getting only an occasional meal and drink for their favors. However, there are a few smart gold-diggers who manage to get something worthwhile for their trouble. These are the ones who live in splendid apartments with the rent paid, who drive big cars, and who dress as well as any woman in Los Angeles, all on a few days of extra work a month. It is this type mostly who supply the few exceptions in which an extra player rises from the ranks to stardom.

It can be readily seen that the economic set-up of the extra players is hardly conducive to good morals. As a matter of fact, the morals of the group as a whole are astonishingly fine when compared with those of the few who fare better from the industry. Nevertheless, they are atrocious.

Sociologists explain that prostitution, for the most part, is the symbol of an economic disease. What is to be expected, then, of thousands of the most beautiful girls in the world living in a state of semi-starvation. Naturally a huge number of men take advantage of this situation, and sexual license and degradation are the results.

Nowhere in the world, except perhaps in the worst districts of Paris and Constantinople, can

be found such frequent examples of the license and perversion brought to light in the Dave Allen morals case. Mr. Allen, as previously mentioned, was head of the Central Casting Bureau, the principal mart for extra talent. The girls associated with him in the vile scandal were plainly forced into their transgressions with the executive by economic necessity and promises of work. Nothing less could have forced them into the bestial intimacies which shocked even blasé Hollywood. And as Miss Delong herself testified, this sort of thing is widespread in the film capital.

Almost weekly there is a Hollywood scandal involving members of the picture profession. Immediately following the Allen mess was the arrest of a Hollywood broker on charges of attacking a beautiful extra girl in her apartment. The broker is replying with a counter-charge of blackmail, probably with good reason. How the girl, with no more work than she had in pictures, could maintain her standard of living, would tax the ingenuity of the best lawyer to explain.

Of course the vast number of sexual crimes and misdemeanors that go on amongst the film colony are never brought to light. In the industry itself a man is regarded as a fool who doesn't use whatever power or influence he has to satisfy himself with the greatest possible number of beautiful extra women. Conditions in this respect being what they are, no wonder the "regular" prostitutes

of Hollywood complain about unfair competition. How can they hope to rival really beautiful girls who give men an evening of pleasure in return for a meal, a drink, and a promise of work?

It is well known that Hollywood is the happy hunting ground of all types of sex perverts. Normal people who have never made an extensive study of psychology or medical science have no idea of the filthy, bestial practices that go on in this incomparable city. It is doubtful if even New York City, with its conglomerate population, has nearly so many of those people spoken of on Hollywood Boulevard as "queers." The picture industry is honeycombed with homosexuals and the worst sort of degenerates.

Here again the situation among the extra people plays an immensely important part. Members of both sexes, pressed on by hunger or ambition, are almost compelled to pander to the worst debauchees. After waiting and working vainly for years for even a chance at fame and fortune, no wonder many of them take a short cut.

One of the notoriously degenerate male stars, now passing rapidly from screen prominence, approaches any husky young man with the following offer: "A bottle of Scotch and ten bucks." It is virtually impossible for a stalwart, handsome fellow to walk down Hollywood Boulevard on a busy night without being approached by at least one pervert. And altogether too many penniless,

disheartened men respond favorably to the offer of "ten dollars and a bottle of Scotch."

This being true of abnormal sex traffic, it is impossible to over estimate the amount of the so-called normal. However, a publicity agent of one of the major studios summed the situation up admirably when he said, referring to the extras, "Yes, we keep them pretty well in circulation."

Those extras who marry merely change from the sin of fornication to adultery, for the idea of marital fidelity is absurd to those men who prey on the atmosphere players. Besides, the financial stability required for a happy and successful marriage is lacking. After the novelty has worn off, most of the extras follow the example set by their superiors of quickly forgetting their marriage vows.

Unless she is married to someone outside the profession, and who has a steady income, the life of the motion picture extra is anything but enviable. Old and wornout at thirty, she has but a few years in which to battle against odds that cannot be surmounted except by luck or the gratification of passion, and the latter is most unreliable. Actors, male and female, who want to become movie stars should establish themselves outside of Hollywood. The only way to get inside a motion picture studio is to make oneself sought, rather than seeking. Any other method is much too great a gamble.

CHAPTER VIII

Why Hollywood Goes Broke

It is the opinion of most people that the motion picture executive, even if he is immune to ideas of good taste in his product, is a fine business man. Producers are supposed to be shrewd, capable individuals from the practical standpoint of money making. But while this is the general conception of the public, it is true only to a certain, limited extent. It must be admitted that most of the executives are extremely proficient in diverting a steady stream of gold into their own pockets, but they cannot, to save their lives, manage their corporations to make money. All they can do is pay themselves enormous salaries which their studios cannot afford, and in the end they will lose not only their companies but also their big salaries, as did Mr. William Fox.

The motion picture executive is the perfect example of a completely successful failure. Samuel Insull, so far as his business enterprises were concerned, made a hopeless muddle of things, but he did have his Chicago opera to leave as a monument to his existence—though he gained the ill will of those prima donnas whom he persuaded to invest in Insull stock. But the motion picture executive is not responsible for the furthering of

American art, nor can he point out as can Ford, or Rockefeller, or Mellon that he has developed a great, sound business enterprise. Thus in the eyes of the Muses or in the sight of Wall Street the motion picture producer is a washout.

Of course Hollywood has produced a few great pictures, and once upon a time the studios were making a little money, but neither of these facts proves anything conclusively favorable to the producers. For most, if not virtually all, of the good productions have been the inspirations of directors or writers connected with the industry, and have generally been forced on the producers, who promptly waste whatever profits accrue raising their own salaries or in general mismanagement. Even the railroads, facing a much greater problem in competition, not to mention labor pensions, are better off financially than the motion picture companies, who lack the valid excuses of the railroads for their insolvent condition. Indeed it is true that the motion picture companies are worse off than the railroads, and the frightful disorder in the latter's finances is general knowledge.

The producers, when criticized as they are for the bankrupt condition of their companies, howl "depression" as loudly as possible. But an examination of the facts will prove that this stock argument is nothing but another sophistry. True, the depression has hurt the picture business like all other business, but it should not have damaged

it to the extent of bankruptcy. Other causes beside the abnormal times are responsible for the empty coffers of Hollywood.

In the first place, during the prosperous years the film companies should have accumulated considerably larger reserve funds. Considering the small dividends they paid even in the most prosperous times, the motion picture corporations should have piled up enormous surpluses. This would have enabled them, with any kind of management at all, to have slipped through the depression with the least trouble of any major industry, for the films were making huge profits in 1930 and continued to operate in the black as late as 1931. It was not until 1932 that the Warner Brothers, among others, began to reckon their losses in the dozens of millions and found themselves coping with real adversity. But, like the well-known grass-hopper, while summer was here they lived high, wide, and handsome, without making provision for even the most temporary set-back, let alone real trouble. When the inflation bubble burst, then, it is no wonder that the motion picture industry crashed into bankruptcy with a momentum that is still dazing the ruined stockholders.

Motion pictures, like newspapers, are a habit, and as such their patronage is not decimated by hard times like the sales in many other lines of product. People will be amused, and they will

spend their last quarters to go to the cinema. The relief officials of an Ohio county investigated a number of cases where families on charity were selling part of their fuel to attend the picture show. Moreover, it must not be thought that the huge army of unemployed constitute an entire loss to the motion picture industry, for many of the best patrons of the cheap theaters are found among this group. Naturally the depression has made inroads on movie profits, just as it has in companies like the American Telephone and Telegraph, but the latter company has managed to pay 9% throughout the depression. The difference between the Telephone Company and any of the picture companies lies essentially in the management, for the Telephone Company, when years were good, conserved enough of its profits to meet emergencies, while the executives of movie companies invested the firm's profits in white elephants and officials' salaries. The Telephone Company, like a sensibly-managed business concern, knew how to retrench when income began to decrease. The movies are learning—about three years too late.

Nearly all of the large insurance companies have managed, despite the great competition in the business, to survive the financial earthquake, although many of the fly-by-night concerns have gone under. In direct contrast, all the large film companies but Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Co-

lumbia have passed into an insolvent state if not actual bankruptcy as have Paramount, Fox, and R. K. O.

The large film companies, unlike the railroads, cannot blame the deplorable condition of their finances onto unfair competition, as in the amusement world they constitute almost a monopoly. It is a well-known fact that the cinema has driven into financial inconsequence the legitimate stage and stock companies. Moreover, the eight large film companies, of which all but about three (counting United Artists as a major producer) are bankrupt, are practically a world monopoly in their own line. The independent producers, as well as foreign producers, offer very little competition. Yet despite all these auspicious circumstances, the stockholders in film companies have just so much worthless paper on their hands—even Loew's Incorporated is paying only $1.00 a share.

True, the executives of the various producing outfits have nothing to complain of. Even with their companies in receivership because they are unable to fulfill their obligations, and although their companies' shares may have fallen to nothing or next to it, they continue to draw salaries and bonuses which in size put to shame those enjoyed by the nation's largest bankers, who, due to the colossal—a favorite movie adjective—blunder of the "brains" of filmdom, have come

to own Hollywood. Yes, indeed, while the stock of one movie company was selling for $.75 a share, stock that but eighteen months previously sold for $80 a share, its executives voted themselves bigger salaries and bonuses than ever, probably on the premise that their excellent management of the concern merited greater compensation. But the poor fools who bought motion picture stock have lost nearly everything, including hope.

In those companies where the executives own the majority of voting shares, such as Warners, the public ought to refuse to purchase a single share of the stock. Naturally, as the Warner Brothers own the majority of their stock, they can run their plant to suit themselves, and this is exactly what they do. It is possible to buy Warner Brothers Picture securities at around $2.50 a share, and, considering the earnings of the company, 4 cents would be a much fairer price. Yet the three Warner brothers enjoy salaries netting a million and a half annually. In those cases where the executives own large blocks but not the controlling stock, it is vastly to the interest of the minority stockholders to organize and throw out every one of the incompetent executives. If the insurgents happened to be too busy to run the company themselves, they could intrust the management to their children with the assurance that it could not possibly be run worse. Seriously, the minority stockholders should make every effort

to curb the salaries of the executives to the point where the difference would net them something in dividends.

The incomes enjoyed by some of the Hollywood stuffed-shirts for 1932 are given in a liberal magazine as follows:

Louis B. Mayer, M-G-M vice-president in charge of production (including, of course, bonuses).....$800,000.00
Jesse Lasky, Fox producer.....$520,000.00
Irving Thalberg, M-G-M associate producer $400,000.00
Nicholas Schenck, President of Loew's Incorporated .....$404,000.00 (plus 2½% of all the profits).
Benjamin P. Schulberg, then production manager for Paramount Publix $400,000.00
Each of the Warner Brothers.....$520,000.00

Now let us examine the financial set-up of the various companies whose officials drew the above-mentioned stipends. It is only to be expected that in return for the magnificent salaries they enjoy, these executives must accomplish wonderful things for their corporations. The only picture company in Hollywood that has any claim to art is the United Artists, including Twentieth Century Pictures, which company most nearly approaches the goal of producing consistently fine pictures. The rest of them make either mediocre or downright poor films, their occasional good ones merely constituting the exception that proves the rule. This being the case, the only thing left

on which the afore-named officials, and some others, might justify their tremendous salaries would be their commercial services.

After all, that is the thing of primary interest to the stockholders, who, in the last analysis, pay these incomparable salaries. If these executives were successful in making money for the companies they serve, their stockholders would have no reason to complain. But when the officials of a corporation draw salaries to the tune of several hundred thousands each, the shareholders have a right to expect tangible service. And that is exactly what they do not get from the executives of motion picture companies.

Starting with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, probably the most solvent of any of the producing companies, let us see what its executives do in return for the vast wealth they draw in salaries.

Its president, Nicholas Schenck, divides his time between managing the affairs of Loew's Incorporated (controlling Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) and attending to his gambling resort at Agua Caliente. He has offices in New York City whence he watches the doings in the Culver City plant. For this he is compensated $8000 weekly and given a bonus of 2½% of all Loew's profits.

The vice-president of Loew's Incorporated, Arthur Loew, is also vice-president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and draws salary in both capacities. According to the Federal report of last

spring (1934) Mr. Loew is the highest paid executive in the country. The gentleman devotes most of his time to travel. Well, that is something. Travel is supposed to be broadening—but hardly to the extent of hundreds of thousands of dollars annually.

Mr. Louis B. Mayer, the aristocrat worshipper, is vice-president of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and is in charge of production at Culver City. His modest compensation has never been accurately determined, the bonus system being essentially a secret one. However, according to a reliable source, (this figure being given in "Plain Talk Magazine" for November, 1933, and in "Real America" for January, 1934) he succeeded in 1932 in relieving the treasury of his company of about $800,000 in salary and bonuses! Considering that 1932 was the hardest year of the depression, that is not a poor record—for Mr. Mayer. Incidentally, it was Mr. Mayer who said in one of his many speeches that a poor man should be tolerant of the rich man and not throw stones at the latter's Packard. If anybody were to throw stones, it would probably be some irate stockholder, for Loew's Incorporated suddenly and without warning cut its dividend rate from $4 to $1.

But is it any wonder? The company is paying fortunes, real fortunes, in annual salaries to a president and at least five vice-presidents (Loew,

Mayer, Thalberg, Rapf, and Selznick). If the salaries of these six gentlemen were cut in halves, Loew's could pay $6 a share without any trouble. And why shouldn't their salaries be cut fifty percent? If the company's dividend rate had to be reduced seventy-five percent to meet a crisis, surely the salaries of the executives could be reduced fifty percent without impairing their precious ability. If the President of the United States feels that his executive power can be maintained with a salary of $75,000—reduced to $60,000 now—surely the executives of a corporation ought to be able to struggle along on $150,000 annually.

Besides, all these vice-presidents are a superfluity, like the relatives of a monarch who have to be supported out of the public treasury. If Nicholas Schenck is worth half a million a year, then he should be able to run his entire outfit without the assistance of a vice-president whose salary is the largest in America. And if the two of them deserve their princely stipends, surely the company could dispense with the services of the expensive Mr. Mayer. But assuming that Mr. Mayer, who is in charge of production, is vital to the welfare of the corporation, why require the additionally expensive services of Irving Thalberg, Harry Rapf, David O. Selznick, and plus, as production chiefs? Mr. Mayer, who is "worth" $800,000 a year ought to be able to run

the company without the assistance of four other vice-presidents.

Mr. B. P. Schulberg was head of production at Paramount at the time this company's stock was selling for $.75 a share. To compensate him for his worthy services, he was paid $400,000 annually. With the company in bankruptcy and running continually in the red, Mr. Schulberg's salary was nothing but brigandage. However, this is right in line with Paramount's reputation as a standing example of legal robbery and plunder. Even today, when stock in the corporation—it has a new name after each successive reorganization—is selling for between three and four dollars a share, the price represents the rankest inflation! There is more to follow about Paramount's business methods.

Its president, Adolph Zukor, has contrived most successfully to remain head of the company throughout its many changes, even managing to be appointed receiver, although it was under his management that the company completely collapsed!

So it goes with them all. Typical of the situation at Warners is the now somewhat stale joke concerning a passerby at a magnificent funeral service. "Who is the deceased?" he inquired, "and what caused his death?" . . . "Mr. Brown was a great Warner Brothers stockholder," was the reply. "He died of starvation."

No matter how broke a movie company may be, its officials always draw large salaries. Their frightful incomes on the one hand, and their equally disastrous inefficiency on the other are not simply conjectures on the part of a critical writer. These facts will be confirmed by any banker or reputable stockholder. In fact, the New York bankers have about as much faith in the ability of the motion picture magnate to run his business in the black as they have in Europe to pay her war debts. Highly significant in connection with this idea is the provision in most of the later loans made to picture companies by banking institutions that the studios are to be run under close supervision, if not actual management, of the creditors. Every broker tells his clients that motion picture stock may be bought as a speculative venture, but should never be touched as an investment. They know too well the tricks of those who sit behind the highly polished desks in the thick-carpeted offices in Hollywood. Also, it requires no expert mathematician to see that after six or eight half-million dollar executive salaries have been paid out of the company's net, there will be nothing left for the stockholders.

The question naturally rises as to why the motion picture industry is so over burdened with high-salaried executives. The answer is family loyalty. Whatever little surplus might otherwise have been left the stockholders is sucked up by the

relatives of the ruling officials. No industry in the world is so clannish as the motion picture, and the system works greatly to the industry's disadvantage. As in the old days of absolute monarchy, the relatives are given the generalships in the army, even though they know nothing about fighting. That is why it is so difficult for a talented person to find an opening in the studios. Most of the available, and practically all of the lucrative, positions are held by the mistresses and relations of the various picture autocrats, leaving but very little room for outsiders. In fact, if there are no positions open to an executive's relative when the latter needs a job, the studio creates one for him. The family tree is anything but a dead institution in Hollywood. And here is another drain on profits.

The number of studio employees related to big executives is much greater than the obvious, due to the use of fictitious names and the system of intermarriage among the ruling dynasties. It would require an expert genealogist to determine the precise number of second cousins or great uncles holding film positions, important or otherwise. Every department from property on up is honeycombed with princes of the blood. From the known facts it would seem that Mr. Mayer, Mr. Laemmle, and Mr. Thalberg have more relatives on the company payroll than the other producers.

Mr. Jack Cummings, short-subject supervisor at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is a relative of Mr. Mayer. Likewise related to that potentate is Ruth Cummings, scenarist, and Mitzi Cummings, film writer. It would be decidedly to the company's advantage to fill their writing berths with better writers, but, so long as Mr. Mayer has relatives who aspire to authorship, this will never be.

Mr. Selznick, producer for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, has done very well by his relatives, a rather effortless accomplishment, for his relatives are also Mr. Mayer's, Selznick being the son-in-law of the M-G-M vice president. Mr. Selznick's brother, Myron, is the head of a prosperous agency, the prosperity of which, you can bet, is a direct result of blood being thicker than water.

But this is not all. Poor Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer is a deplorable victim of nepotism, for associate producer, Irving Thalberg is almost as well represented as the Mayer gang. Irving, of course, produces. His wife, Norma Shearer, is a leading actress, getting the best of available stories, which is primarily why she remains a leading actress. His sister Sylvia is a screen writer and, supposedly, a novelist. (Who has ever heard of Sylvia Thalberg?) Sylvia's husband, Larry Weingarten, is a supervisor, and Norma Shearer's brother, Douglas, is chief of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer sound department. Between the

Mayers and the Thalbergs there is little enough left over for anybody else.

At the Universal Studio, whose pictures somehow manage to get poorer every year, the Laemmles hold sway—and such sway! Carl, Sr., of course is president. His son, Carl, Jr., is vice-president in charge of production, the next best position. Ernst L. Frank and Edward Laemmle, directors, are cousins of Carl, and William Wyler, a nephew, also directs. Mr. Stanley Bergerman, a Universal executive, owes his lofty position to his far-sightedness in marrying Rosabelle Laemmle, the president's daughter. And then there are others.

Of course the brothers Warner govern the corporation bearing their illustrious name, as well as the First National Studio which they got at a bargain from William Fox when his margin account ran out. Mervyn Leroy, one of their biggest directors, consolidated his position by marrying the daughter of Harry Warner, and, to further strengthen his position, had himself born a nephew of Jesse Lasky.

Clayton Sheehan, brother of Winfield Sheehan who is head of production at Fox, is in charge of the foreign department of his brother's company.

Eddie Grainger at Universal is the son of James R. Grainger, head of the sales department.

Al Kaufman, assistant to Emanuel Cohen, vice president in charge of production at Paramount,

is the brother-in-law of Adolph Zukor, the president.

Jack and Harry Cohn, together with a host of relatives and friends, rule the Columbia Studio.

Even the less important posts in the industry are filled by the relatives of the executives or stars. A few out of the everlasting string are Bill Bow, cousin of the famous, or infamous, Clara, in property at Paramount; Hal LeSeuer, brother of Joan Crawford, in stock at M-G-M; his wife serves as Miss Crawford's stand-in; Barbara Brown, cousin of Jean Harlow, is Miss Harlow's stand-in, while another cousin is an office boy; Jesse Lasky Jr. is on the writer's staff at Fox where his father is a producer; Katherine De Mille, daughter of the famous Cecil, has become a featured player at M-G-M.

From this picture of the personnel situation it can readily be seen why the motion picture industry is carried on in such a haphazard fashion. It is an unfortunate fact that being a relative of even so great a genius as Louis B. Mayer does not insure writing ability or directorial talent. When these people clutter up the various departments in which they have no business to be, the result is obvious. After all, what has either Ruth or Mitzi Cummings produced in the field of literature or drama that would indicate they are creative writers? Or what has Sylvia Thalberg contributed to the screen that would warrant her

retention by the studio as a writer? No wonder a New York agent told one of his clients who could neither write, act, sing, nor speak decent English that his place by all means was in Hollywood.

It would not be such a misfortune if all the relatives were relegated to the property department, for one person can carry a chair about as well as another. But in those departments where special talent is required, it is both poor and costly business to fill them with incompetents merely because Cousin Joe or Aunt Fanny want jobs with fat salaries. This clan institution is expensive to stockholders in particular, and unfair to the public in general.

But the stockholders in film companies are used to taking sound thrashings. Those of Paramount, for instance, have never known anything else. Reorganizing the company has become an obsession with the executives of this outfit. (As this book goes to press they have just reorganized again.) And after each reorganization the shareholders are worse off than before. No wonder everytime there is rumor of an impending shake-up in the concern the stock drops off. The following paragraph will give a brief insight into the company's financial history.

Between the years 1927 and 1930 the then Paramount Publix Corporation (formerly the Paramount Famous Players Lasky) issued bonds

to the extent of $31,000,000. This was done for the express and exclusive purpose of expansion. It was agreed by the officials that no other encumbrance or lien was to be created against the assets. Witness what happened:

A paper subsidiary was immediately created to which was transferred $10,000,000 of the company's assets, in direct violation of the agreement. This plan worked so well that subsequently the Paramount Distributing Company, the Paramount Foreign Company, and the Paramount Pictures, Inc., were created, to which were transferred the remaining assets, leaving the Paramount Publix Corporation (November 5, 1932) an empty shell. It is not astonishing, therefore, that the stock in the corporation fell at this time to seventy-five cents a share. The company slipped quietly into bankruptcy. An investigating congressman declared this, as well as the dishonest manipulations of some other companies, including Pathé, was one of the greatest swindles ever perpetrated on helpless stock and bond holders. Incidentally, right now both Pathé (selling for a dollar a share) and Paramount are planning reorganization. Pathé wants to give its shareholders one certificate of the new for two of the old!

The industry would be worse than bankrupt were it not for the gigantic monopoly it enjoys in the field of entertainment. This monopoly which limits the production and sale of motion pictures

to about eight firms derives much of its support from block-booking. So much has been written about this institution that its workings are general knowledge. The average person, however, has no idea just how far-reaching and despotic this vicious monopoly really is.

In the first place, as it exists today the motion picture industry is not just a simple monopoly, but a double-headed one, controlling both the producing field and the exhibiting field. The major producers maintain their monopoly in the field of production by their strangle-hold over the exhibitor, which, in turn, is sustained by that self-same production monopoly. It is just one more case of the egg-first, chicken-first question.

In the early stages of the motion picture industry, the producers stuck to the business of making pictures, at which, from a financial viewpoint, they were very successful. However, it soon occurred to them that, since the exhibitors were apparently making some money in the theater business, they had better grab that, too. As the producers made and distributed their own pictures, what would be easier than to acquire their own theaters which they could favor with their best pictures and thus run their competitors, the independents, out of business? And this is precisely what they did.

The Paramount-Famous-Players-Lasky bought the Publix theater chain in which to show Para-

mount pictures, at a tremendous price, and went far in debt. Immediately the company underwent one of the reorganizations for which it is famous, and emerged a brand-new company, the Paramount Publix, with $31,000,000 of sucker money in the treasury from selling bonds.

William Fox, of course, had to have a chain of theaters in which to display Fox pictures, Warner Brothers acquired Warner theaters, and RKO pictures found a home in the RKO theaters. Loew's Incorporated (a chain theater corporation) achieved distinction by reversing the usual procedure, getting control of a producing organization, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.

If the producers had ideas that their chain-theaters were going to be a huge success financially, like some of the chain grocery or drug stores, their hopes were rudely shattered. The same mismanagement that characterized the making of motion pictures was true of the exhibiting of them. Exorbitant salaries were paid—and still are—to the wrong people, and many of the theaters had so much overhead that there was no possible chance of them paying. When the depression came on and attendance fell off, it was just a matter of a very short time until most of the big houses went broke. Many of the Publix theaters throughout the middle West closed their doors entirely, at a huge saving. Everybody knows what happened to the Fox West Coast

Theaters Corporation—it went bankrupt. And so did Warners, RKO, and Paramount.

There are several other angles, however, to this sorry tale. Their greed for profits made the producers so short-sighted that they forgot what would happen to the production business if the exhibiting of pictures fell off. The invasion of the exhibiting field by the big producing corporations resulted in the failure and bankruptcy of thousands of small exhibitors. Before the advent of the producer-controlled theaters, people went to their neighborhood houses to see the celluloid dramas. Now, however, when Miss Mae West comes out in a new feature, everybody dashes down town in his automobile, where he can be shocked at least sixty days before he could at his neighborhood theater. Moreover, for only ten or fifteen cents more than it would cost him at a small house, he can see not only the first-run feature, but a well-balanced program of added attractions, frequently including a glamorous stage show with personal appearances of great celebrities. And all this takes place in an enchanted palace which cost more than a million dollars to build.

It is obvious how this has hurt the business of the small independent exhibitor. He loses half or more of his patrons. Eventually he is forced to give up the ghost and retire. This has happened so often that as a result the market for

film rentals has been substantially reduced. Now according to theory, the movie-goers patronizing the large chain theaters should more than pay for the loss in film rentals to independents. But somehow in practice it simply did not work out that way. The receipts brought into the big company-owned palaces by super, current run attractions and stage shows, paid for the enormous overhead of the subsidiary theater companies, with nothing left over for the parent, producing companies. In other words, the profits in the exhibiting field did not take the place of the loss of film rentals to independent theaters, much less over-lapping them. This was a major factor in the bankruptcy of the fifth largest industry.

Moreover, the Hollywood producers have added insult to injury by cramming down the throats of the independent exhibitors that detested block-booking system. The sales agent of a major company calls on an exhibitor and asks him, "How would you like to have Nettie Love and Teddy Spark (two current, extremely popular film lovers) in 'The Nights Are Fun'?"

The exhibitor is delighted. Remembering how much money he made from their last picture, he jumps at a chance to sign for Love and Spark in "The Nights Are Fun." "All right," says the agent, "but you will have to sign for sixteen of our pictures."

The exhibitor may hesitate, but when he stops to figure that he will probably break even on most of the rest and stands a good chance of making a large profit on "The Nights Are Fun," he signs. The contract, however, will provide for one Nettie Love-Teddie Spark romance OR SIMILAR feature. After his contract has been signed, the exhibitor may be informed that Nettie Love has not been available for "The Nights Are Fun," and instead he will get Fannie Flick in "The Days Are Gay." He can do nothing about it.

It should be clearly understood that the major producing companies have not vacated the exhibiting field, even though the venture has proved unsuccessful financially. Quite the contrary, they are as busy as ever killing the goose that lays the golden egg. Although competitors, all the major producers have joined to kill the independent theater owner. On January 11th of this year (1935) the United States Government indicted Paramount, Warner Brothers, and RKO and seven of their subsidiaries for conspiracy in restraint of trade. This was in St. Louis, and a few days later indictments were made against those same companies, and several others, in New Orleans. Of course, they have not yet been proven guilty, but even the Hollywood Reporter, trade magazine, admits that "from what has been generally known of the tactics used by the big oper-

ators for the past fifteen years, their story will have to cut a lot of corners, which, it seems from the present indictment, the Federal Courts will not permit them to cut."

It is easy enough to understand that the Paramount producing company would give the Paramount theater in every locality the best Paramount pictures first. But this is not the complete story. Paramount may come to an understanding with Fox Films to this effect: "We, Paramount, have a lot of theaters throughout the middle West. You folks have a string on the West Coast. Now if you'll give us the exclusive first run of your box office hits for our middle-West theaters, we'll give you our best hits for your theaters on the West Coast."

Warner Brothers and RKO have come to some such understanding, making it impossible for independent theaters to exhibit either Warner hits or RKO successes until the Warner or RKO theater in the community has played them.

Another reason for the movie industry's state of chronic financial embarrassment is its support of crazy fads, of which Will Hays and his Association of Motion Picture Producers are the worst, because they are the most expensive. Although no one would ever guess it, Mr. Hays has charge of the morals of Hollywood, and for keeping them clean he is paid around $4000 every week. Mr. Hays has been cleaning up Hollywood

and pictures for almost fifteen years now, and every year they grow worse. Meanwhile Mr. Hays is paid more money, having started with a modest stipend of only $2000 a week. There is, however, a reason for this, and it is not morals—unless it be a lack of them.

Mr. Hays is a power in the Republican Party, being even a greater Republican than Mr. Louis B. Mayer. Until 1933 when Mr. Roosevelt grasped the reins of power, the Republicans had governed in Washington. Inasmuch as a little word to this right person and a little word to that right person may avoid such a calamity as a Federal investigation, or, what would be infinitely worse, a Federal censorship of motion pictures, what could be better than to have as the head of Motion Picturedom a respectable Presbyterian elder and former National Chairman of the Republican Party? Whether Mr. Hays earned his increase by saying the right word to the right person is an unfathomable mystery. However, be it said that not once during the Republican regime lasting more than 12 years was Hollywood ever investigated, despite all the financial and moral scandals.

The Republicans no longer hold sway in Washington, but Mr. Hays does in pictures, for is he not still a respectable Presbyterian elder? And, in his opinion, he still qualifies for his $200,000 a

year, for he can yet "handle the Catholic Church," as he has so modestly expressed it.

Thus the poor motion picture stockholders not only have to support fat-salaried executives in their own companies, but they have to support the expensive Will Hays and his cohorts to boot. As formerly stated, Mr. Hays values his moral uplift at $4000 per week, and besides this, he has to maintain a suite of offices in New York, as he cannot be soiled by closer contact with Hollywood. New York is pure, but Mr. Hays has had less than 15 years in which to clean up Hollywood, and you cannot expect even a Presbyterian elder to completely purify Hollywood in so short a time as that. So he, and his suite, are in New York while the rest of the organization is located on Hollywood Boulevard at Western Avenue in Los Angeles, Joe Breen in charge. All in all, the Association of Motion Picture Producers must cost more than $500,000 a year to run. As independent producers do not belong, the support of Mr. Hays and his organization falls on about eight companies, which makes a nice little item of expense.

The excuse for the existence of this organization is that the producers need someone to tell them what is moral and what is immoral. Supposedly, Mr. Hays' "Association" saves the producers much money by preventing them from shooting such wicked pictures that the various

state censor boards will turn them down. One might wonder, though, why it would not be possible to find some producers who know enough about decency and morals to keep their pictures clean through their own efforts. This would eliminate the services of a $200,000-a-year morals man and his suites.

Besides, the sad fact is that Mr. Hays is not infallible in moral matters at all. He has some remarkable ideas on what is sin and what isn't. Paramount made "It Ain't No Sin," starring Mae West, under the guidance of the Association of Motion Picture Producers, Will H. Hays, President, only to see it turned down by the Board of Censors of the State of New York. Perhaps Mr. Hays can handle Pope Pius and the Catholic Church, but his magic must have slipped on the censor board, for Paramount had to remake "It Ain't No Sin" at terrific expense. Perhaps the whole trouble was that there were some Democrats on the censor board!

Of course, Will Hays and Presbyterian morals are not the only fads of Hollywood. There are dozens of them, and they are all more or less expensive. Only recently a star moved from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to Warner Brothers, taking with her, her beautiful $65,000 white cottage. The color scheme of this star is white, like the pure-driven snow. Unfortunately, the color scheme of

Warners is yellow, which color all the studio buildings have been painted.

"I suppose Miss —— will have her dressing room painted yellow now," remarked a visitor at the studio.

"Oh, no," replied one of the minor executives. "We are going to paint the studio white."

* * * *

But the handwriting is on the wall. Federal control and censorship of pictures is bound to come, and this in a very short time.

Hollywood has offended about every class and group of people possible. Its salacious products have antagonized the Church and other moral groups. Its dishonest and oppressive commercial dealings have alienated, not only independent exhibitors and producers, but thousands of investors in motion picture securities who have lost their money. Interference of official filmdom in the recent gubernatorial campaign in California in behalf of the corrupt, conservative forces was probably the greatest single cause for the defeat of Upton Sinclair. This has incensed liberal forces in all the states against the present management of the motion picture industry.

Hollywood has persistently refused to recognize any variety of ethics, whether moral, commercial,

or artistic. It is pursuing the same course as the railroads traveled before the advent of government control. Like the railroads used to be, the industry is a monopoly, and it indulges in all the abuses of monopoly.

Federal control is but a matter of time.