AMUSEMENT SECTION

Evening Ledger

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PHOTOPLAY
THEATRES
DANCING
MUSIC

Beginning the Evening Ledger Lessons in Scenario Writing—A Course of Practical Instruction by Harry O. Hoyt

Lesson Number 1—How to Find the Plot for Your First Moving Picture

IN WRITING a series of articles dealing with scenario construction, or more properly speaking, photoplay construction, it is necessary to define some of the technical terms employed. This will be done from time to time as the series progresses.

Before getting into an actual discussion of the scenario or photoplay, we must go back and get at the origin of our screen productions.

Where do they come from?

Who supplies the ideas?

This can be answered in a general way, by saying that outside contributors and staff writers supply most of the plots for the program companies, and staff writers make book and play adaptations for the majority of the feature productions. By program companies, we refer to those companies producing subjects of short length for release on certain days of each week.

The field for the outside writer is, therefore, better at the present time with the companies making shorter subjects. The old order is changing, however. The day of the hack-writer is past, and the day of the scenario writer has arrived. It is for the benefit of those who would seek to supply the photoplays of the future, who are earnestly endeavoring to create screen productions that are both virile and dramatic, that these articles are intended.

How many people, going to a theatre and witnessing a picture show, come away believing that they are capable of writing something better than the screen productions they have just witnessed? Perhaps in your own life you have remarked: "Well, if I couldn't do better than that I wouldn't write at all."

Perhaps you've had some experience, which you and your friends have thought extraordinary, and you or they have said: "It would make a fine picture play; certainly better than some we've seen."

Unfortunately this is rarely true. What is vital to you is many times of no interest to the outside world. Your experiences, while odd and queer, if produced would be "drivel" to persons who had no interest in the incidents.

"The baby did the cutest thing today!" is your wife's greeting, as you come home in the evening. Or, "I had a funny experience yesterday," you remark to Jones, as you come down in the street car with him.

It's *your* baby or *your* experience, and it comes close to home, but a first-class scenario writer could sit down and imagine something for your baby to do that would be very much more out of the ordinary, or an experience that befell you, which would be far more interesting to the multitude who visit the moving picture shows.

A test that you might apply is this: Witness a motion-picture show, and centre your attention upon some one picture. When you have come out, analyze the situations, the hairbreadth escapes, the villainy, the sacrifice. Imagine such things happening in real life. The newspapers would be full of it.

Would the incident of your baby or the experience that befell you occupy an inch of space in any newspaper, if it got hold of it? The chances are not.

This points to one moral: Beware of the story that is true to life, particularly if it comes close to you. Your perspective is almost certain to be ruined and you are quite unable to judge the dramatic values.

In the old days, most of the photoplays were highly improbable. As the natural consequence of improvement in the business, the standard is much higher today. That brings us to one of the basic principles of photoplay writing. Make your ideas probable. Your subject may be impossible, but your treatment of it must be such as to give it an air of probability that will carry it over. It is best, of course, to make it not only possible, but highly probable.

Mr. Sargent, who has written a very admirable book on photoplay writing, cites the case of a missionary in Africa, who performed an operation in major surgery on himself, without an anesthetic, and recovered. If we were to picture that on the screen, everybody would laugh. It is seemingly quite impossible and absurd—yet it actually happened.

There is a very fine distinction here, which every photoplay writer must learn; you must convince your audience of one fact: that what they see actually could have happened, otherwise your drama degenerates into farce.

In order to write picture plays for feature companies, it becomes necessary to delve deeper in the search for ideas. You must have something human—something natural; but it must have dramatic possibilities, otherwise your story is lost in an exposition, or in sermonizing. Nothing is more tiresome on the screen than a sermon; and nothing is more impossible, judging from modern standards, than melodrama for melodrama's sake alone.

One scenario writer within our experience chooses a rather novel way of writing photoplays. He thinks of various characters totally unrelated to each other, taking, for example, a carpenter, a society man, a Salvation Army lassie, a daughter of the rich and so on. He sets all these characters before him and juggles them about. He will make the society man, perhaps, engaged to the daughter of the rich, and finding her frivolous, he will meet the Salvation Army lass and conceive an interest in her.

Perhaps this is too trite. He may next try having a carpenter, who is in love with the Salvation Army lassie, repair the house of the rich girl, and the girl, tired of the society man and of society, perhaps in pique, centre her affections on a real man, and pick the carpenter.

Perhaps he will introduce other characters, giving a reason for each and every situation, and soon he has a drama. It is something he has imagined, but at least it could have happened—it is possible, and he will now attempt to make it probable.

This method cannot always be recommended, because the human mind is so constructed that trite situations are generally the first to come to the mind. Long-forgotten photoplays, seen on the screen, will furnish further ideas, and soon we have something that is not at all original.

Personally, I think the best way to get

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HOW EVENING LEDGER WILL TEACH NEW AND DEMOCRATIC SCREEN ART

TODAY the Evening Ledger prints the first two lessons of its course in scenario writing. There are 20 to follow. Those presented herewith take up How to Find a Plot and the Synopsis. Immediately following these come Terms Employed, Construction, Continuity, Heart Interest, Atmosphere, Plot Development, "Punch," Three Kinds of Comedy, Short Reel Subjects and a dozen similar topics. The final lessons will take up the practical side of selling a photoplay scenario.

The Photoplay Department of the Evening Ledger is under no delusion that every reader is a born photoplaywright. But it does know that thousands of Philadelphians are writing or want to write for the screen. It knows that the story-telling power behind the successful photoplay lies dormant in thousands more. And it knows that all these people can be helped a great step on their way by practical instruction from an authority. In Henry O. Hoyt it thinks it has found the authority.

Though scenario writing demands the dramatic instinct upon which almost all forms of literary work are based, it makes one unique concession to the novice. It throws its doors open to all comers, to the man or woman with only a grammar school education as much as to the university graduate, for it requires no extensive training in the use of words. It calls for a certain quality of mind which not every one has, but it is a quality independent of the ability to use the English language as the novelist, the essayist, even the dramatist, uses it. If the photoplaywright has dramatic sense, if he can arrange an interesting narrative in a succession of effective scenes, it matters very little whether he can pick the most effective words to describe the actions of his characters. If he can supply a real idea in a well-thought-out scenario, the film companies' experts will do the rest.

HARRY O. HOYT
Head of the Metro Scenario Staff

The Author

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WHAT THE EVENING LEDGER WILL DO TO TEST ITS SCENARIO STUDENTS

THE Evening Ledger believes that its readers will derive a very real profit from its course of scenario lessons. It is so sure of this that it purposes testing that profit by a novel sort of examination. It will not be a set of dry written questions. The examination will take just the form in which it can be most useful to the student—the writing of a scenario for production.

When the student has finished the course of lessons he will have the knowledge necessary to put his ideas in marketable shape. The Evening Ledger will then give him both a test and an incentive to further work. Upon the close of the lessons it will conduct a Scenario Contest, for which there will be not only a cash prize but a far more valuable, desirable and practical reward—production. In addition, the Photoplay Department will see that promising scripts are returned to their authors with a letter recommending these scenarios to producers likely to be interested.

To make the test more concrete, the Evening Ledger will require the contestants to locate the scenes of their scripts in Philadelphia. It will specify certain public places, such as the ball parks, the railroad stations and the postoffice, which must be used in the action, and certain types of city-dwellers from whom certain characters must be drawn. These conditions will stimulate the faculties of the contestants and arouse the interest of their friends in the finished product. They will not prevent the acceptance of any of the scripts by producing companies in New York or the West, for the elements chosen will be common to all city life.

The prize-winning scenario will be produced in Philadelphia, by a Philadelphia cast, under the direction of one of the big film companies. Watch for further announcements of the Scenario Prize contest and the filming of the successful script.

Meanwhile, cut out each day's lesson and save the complete series for reference in the writing of your scenario.

Lesson Number Two—The Synopsis, the Place to Put Your Story's Punch

THE synopsis is a very important adjunct to photoplay writing, more important than many scenario writers seem to understand. A prominent scenario writer remarked a short time ago that a synopsis makes or spoils nine out of ten photoplays. Unfortunately, this is only too true.

A photoplay, like Caesar's Gaul, is divided into three parts; the synopsis, the cast and the action. There are sometimes other elements entering into the properly prepared manuscript. Some photoplaywrights make a scene plot, a cast plot, a property plot and even a musical plot, but of all this more anon.

The principal parts are enumerated above and they are all essential, although of late there has been an increasing tendency among authors to submit scripts minus the synopsis. The editor has found hundreds of such scripts coming in lately and has sought in vain for a single good reason why the synopsis should be omitted.

The other day a playwright unversed in photoplay construction refused ever to make a synopsis, claiming that it was not done on the stage. Others will say that the editor runs through the synopsis and discards the script, when perhaps there is a big idea developed in a big way in the script. They try to force the editor to wade through their scenes, usually put together in a loose manner, thus compelling him to grope in the dark for signs to tell him what it is all about. A clever man can tell his big idea simply in the synopsis or even refer to certain scenes if he chooses to do so by giving the number of each for reference.

Give the editor credit for knowing a big idea when he sees it. The chances are that he will realize more possibilities in it than the author will. He is editor for that purpose, and his experience enables him to grasp its possibilities at once without reading the script through.

When he reads your synopsis and finds the idea, he will be only too glad to read your script carefully.

One thing is certain—you never make friends with an editor by assuming that he hasn't the brains to see your idea in synopsis form. That is the natural assumption, which any editor has the right to make if this attitude is assumed. There is another reason why you should submit a synopsis. The editor is forced to read a mass of worthless material and waste his time, and this, obviously, does not conduce to making him feel more favorably disposed toward the would-be author.

If he finds that you have a spark of dramatic ability he may write you and offer suggestions, but if you presume upon his time he is quite apt to reject your script without a word. Editors are extremely busy men and anything which helps them economize time is a point in its favor.

In other words, the lack of a synopsis works to the author's disadvantage. You can be sure of one thing, that if you are capable of writing a good, clear synopsis, you have immediately attracted the favorable attention of the editor, and he will read your script, unless he sees that it contains some impossible situation which the camera cannot show convincingly.

A synopsis should be as brief as possible. Try to state the idea clearly and concisely. Sometimes 25 words, if the idea is extraordinary or something that the company is seeking will give the editor the meat of the story and your script will do the rest. When it comes to feature stories there is quite a difference of opinion. Brevity counts here as in the shorter scenarios, and by that we mean that you should not run into long descriptions and take up space with irrelevant matter. It follows also that you cannot be expected to describe a complex situation in 200 words and omit many of the interesting points for the mere sake of brevity.

Do you realize that the average five-reel photoplay is adapted from a book-length novel or a full play and that the original photoplay for five reels could be novelized into a book-length novel? You could not be expected to tell the story of the average novel in a few words without omitting many important points, particularly in the counter-plot.

Give details that have an important relation to the action of the story at the expense of brevity. In order to give an idea of what would be considered a full or de-

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Shaw's Alter Ego Betrays the Author of "Major Barbara"

This is an account of how "Major Barbara," the Bernard Shaw comedy to be presented by Grace George and her New York Playhouse Company at the Adelphi next week, came to be written. The account is furnished by a playwright whose works are well known in this country, in England and in Germany. He prefers to keep this identity a secret, but it may be said without betrayal of confidence that he knows intimately and admires Bernard Shaw.

"MAJOR BARBARA" is the third of a group of three plays of exceptional weight and magnitude, on which the reputation of the author as a serious dramatist was first established and still mainly rests. The first of the three, completed in 1903, the author's 47th year, was "Man and Superman," which has never been performed in its prodigious entirety in America, nor in England, until the present year. The second, "John Bull's Other Island," followed in 1904, and was an immediate success. The third of the series was "Major Barbara," which arrived in 1905. It made demands on the audience, but the demands were conceded. The audience left the theatre exhausted, but felt the better for it and came again. The second act, the Salvation Army act, was a play in itself. Regarded in that way, it may be said to be the most successful of all the author's plays.

The possibility of using the wooing of a man's soul for his salvation as a substitute for the hackneyed wooing of a handsome young gentleman for the sake of marrying him had occurred to Bernard Shaw many years before, when, in the course of his campaign for Socialism, he had often found himself on Sunday mornings addressing a Socialist meeting in the open air in London or in the provinces, while the Salvation Army was at work on the same ground. He had frequently, at the conclusion of his own meeting, joined the crowd around the Salvation lassies and watched their work and studied their methods sympathetically. Many of them sang, with great effect, songs in which the drama of salvation was presented in the form of a series of scenes between a brutal and drunken husband and a saved wife, with a thrilling happy ending, in which the audience, having been persuaded by the unconscious art of the singer to expect with horror a murderous attack on the woman as her husband's steps were heard on the stairs, were relieved and delighted to hear that when the villain entered the room, and all seemed lost, his face was lighted with the Light of Heaven, for he, too, had been saved. Bernard Shaw was not at that time a playwright; but such scenes were not lost on him; the future dramatist was collecting his material everywhere.

Many years afterward, when he had acquired a considerable reputation as a critic of music, Bernard Shaw saw in a daily paper a silly remark describing some horrible noise as being almost as bad as a Salvation Army band. He immediately wrote to the paper, pointing out that the Salvation Army bands were mostly good, and that some of them were of very conspicuous excellence. This compliment from an unexpected quarter made quite a commotion at the Army headquarters in London. The General quoted it again and again in public, and the author was invited to attend one of the musical festivals of the Army. He did so, and wrote an elaborate critical report of the bands, besides declaring that the performance of the "Dead March," from Handel's Saul, at the great meeting at the Albert Hall, in commemoration of Mrs. Booth, by the combined bands of the Army, headed by the International Staff Band, was incomparably the finest he had ever heard, and the only one which showed any understanding of the magnificent triumphal character of the closing section.

Shaw took advantage of the relations thus established to ask the Army staff why they did not develop the dramatic side of their ritual by performing plays. He even offered to write a short play as a model of what might be done. The leaders of the Army, though interested and not themselves hostile to the proposal, could not venture to offend the deep prejudices against the theatre that still form part of English evangelism. They could only say rather doubtfully that if the author of a play could guarantee that everything in it had actually happened, that "it was all true," it might be possible to reconcile the stricter Salvationists to it. Shaw put forward the defense made by Bunyan that parables were allowable, but he was met with assurance that the Salvationists believed the parables to be records of fact as well as vehicles of instruction. Finally, Mrs. Bramwell Booth told the author frankly that a subscription would be more useful to the social work of the Army than a model play; and so the matter dropped. But it bore fruit in "Major Barbara," and during its run the spectacle was seen for the first time of a box filled with Salvation Army officials in uniform, sitting in a theatre and witnessing a play. Their testimony was useful. Some of the critics, in an inept attempt to be piously shocked, tried to present the play as a jibe at the Army, on the ground that the Salvationists were represented as being full of fun, and that they took money from the distiller. The Army received this with the scorn it deserved, declaring that Barbara's fun was perfectly corect and characteristic, and that the only incident that seemed incredible to them was her refusal to accept the money. Any good Salvationist, they said, would, like the Commissioner in the play, take money from the devil himself, and make so good use of it that he would perhaps be converted, as there is hope for everybody.

The play, however, raises larger issues than those of popular salvationism. Undershaft, with his terrible trade, so grimly flourishing just now, and with his creed that money comes first, and that poverty is the worst of crimes and the only unbearable crime, strikes the deepest note in the play as Barbara sounds the highest. It was the allusions to Nietzsche which he provoked that elicited from the author the well-known preface in which he protested against the habit of the English critics of referring every trace of intellect in the English drama to Norwegian and German writers, when all the doctrines which so surprised them were to be found in the literature of the English language. His reference to Samuel Butler as the greatest English exponent of Undershaft's doctrine of the importance of money was the beginning of the vogue of that remarkable writer, which has persisted and spread ever since.

It is an open secret that the part of Adolphus Cusins, the very unusual *jeune premier* of the play, owes its originality to the fact that Mr. Gilbert Murray, the Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford University, served the author as a very interesting model. He quotes his own famous translation of Euripides; and he is not the only portrait in the play. Undershaft is perhaps the most exacting part that has fallen to the lot of an actor since Shakespeare's big parts; it needs the greatest versatility and flexibility on the part of the actor, and the most alert vigilance on the part of the audience to avoid confusing them.

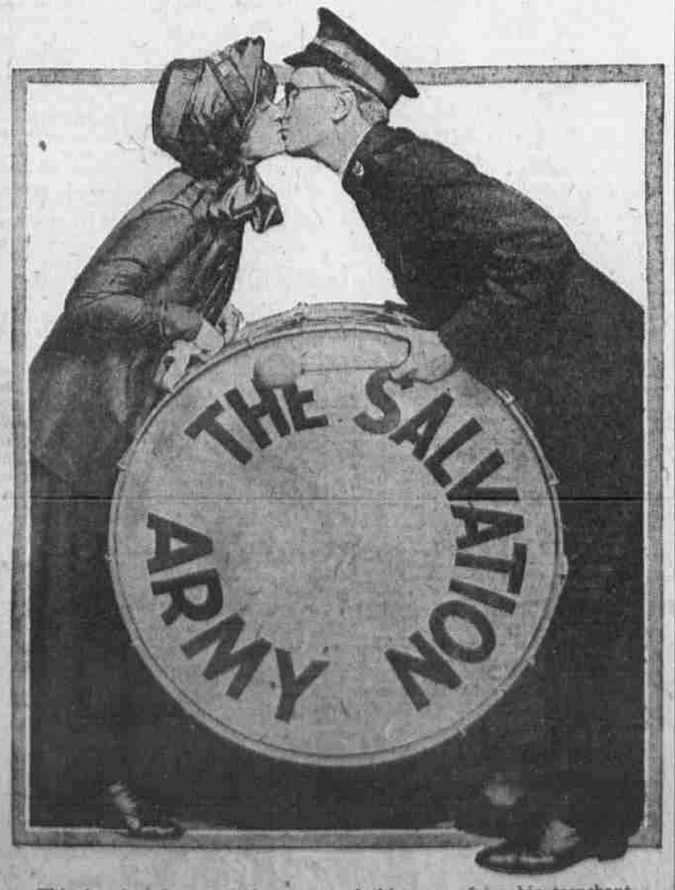
It is curious that ten years should have elapsed between the production of "Major Barbara" in London and its first appearance on the American stage. It has been the subject of many proposals; but until today the artistic conditions have never seemed to the author favorable enough to warrant him in venturing on an authorization. Miss Grace George's appearances in London have doubtless had their weight in his decision. But Shaw has always said that for plays of this class the great question is whether the audience will be a success or a failure.

The Armorer's Faith

IT LOOKS very much as if America owed Grace George's production of Bernard Shaw's remarkable comedy, "Major Barbara"—after 10 years of lying fallow on the bookshelves—to the Great War. For the portions that American audiences have found most interesting are undoubtedly the remarks of Andrew Undershaft, munition maker. Here is the faith of the armorer as Undershaft explains it:

> To give arms to all men who offer an honest price for them, without respect of persons or principles; to aristocrat and republican, to Nihilist and Czar, to capitalist and Socialist, to Protestant and Catholic, to burglar and policeman, to black man, white man and yellow man, to all sorts and conditions, all nationalities, all faiths, all follies, all causes and all crimes. The first Undershaft wrote up in his shop: "If God gave the hand, let no man withhold the sword." The second wrote up: "All have the right to fight; none have the right to judge." The third wrote up: "To man the weapon; to heaven the victory." The fourth had no literary turn, so he did not write up anything; but he sold cannons to Napoleon under the nose of George the Third. The fifth wrote up: "Peace shall not prevail save with a sword in her hand." The sixth, my master, was the best of all. He wrote up: "Nothing is ever done in this world until men are prepared to kill one another if it is not done." After that, there was nothing more to say. So he wrote up, simply: "Unashamed."

LOVE IN THE ARMY



This is what Bernard Shaw says of this scene from his trenchant comedy, "Major Barbara," which Grace George will act at the Adelphia Monday:

> Cusins—Yes, my dear, it's very wearing to be in love with you. If it lasts, I quite think I shall die young.
>
> Barbara—Should you mind?
>
> Cusins—Not at all. (He is suddenly softened, and kisses her over the drum, evidently not for the first time, as people cannot kiss over a big drum without practice.)

Hints on Scenario-Writing

HERE are a few things Frederick Palmer, assistant to Hampton Del Ruth, managing editor and assistant manager of production of the Triangle-Keystone Film Company, has learned about writing Keystone comedies in the year and more he has been a member of the scenario staff. They are worth passing along to those studying the development of the script, so here they are; and if you have Keystone aspirations, paste the list where you can see it often.

Don't invent excuses—invent stories.

Don't forget we pay you to think, but think along our lines.

Don't use cut-backs; go on with your story.

Don't forget that dialogue does not photograph.

Don't make fun of any society or labor organization.

Don't despise suggestions; even an elevator boy gives you a lift.

Don't have any of your characters dream anything—do all the dreaming yourself.

Don't borrow any stories from the magazines—we read twice as much as you do.

Don't rewrite old moving-picture stories—if you see a picture with a steamboat, swim out to dry land.

Don't write your story so a subtitle will be necessary to explain a situation.

Don't forget the value of a thrilling situation; try to get the element of suspense into it. The thrill is never so good as when it follows suspense.

Don't write stories involving brutality. The Keystone pictures often exaggerate, but as a rule they are within the range of possibility.

HAZEL DAWN
Who will be seen at the Stanley the first half of next week in "The Feud Girl," a Famous Players-Paramount production.

When Zeps Come to Town

JUST as managers and theatre patrons are warned by our fire commissioner how to act in case of fire, so Scotland Yard is cautioning London managers regarding their conduct in the event of a Zeppelin raid. One of the circulars issued by the London police department has just reached this country.

"The following features should receive special attention," states the notification, "in the event of a hostile raid taking place while the performance is in progress:

"The staff should be schooled in its duties so as to be prepared to deal with any emergency which may arise.

"Arrangements should be made beforehand for selected members of the staff to be at exits where their presence would reassure the audience. An address from the stage may be expected to have a reassuring and tranquillizing effect upon the audience and indirectly be effective in preventing panic.

"Whether the audience should or should not be asked to leave the building must depend upon circumstances of the moment. In view of the danger from falling fragments of shells and from the explosive effects of bombs dropped there can be little doubt that persons in the street would be exposed to more danger than those under cover."

LOVE IN THE MOVIES

Geraldine Farrar and Lou Tellegen, who met among the movies of California and married under the shadow of the Metropolitan Opera House in New York. Miss Farrar will be seen at the Palace the last half of next week in "Maria Rosa," a Lasky-Paramount production, upon which Miss Farrar was working when Mr. Tellegen was making "The Explorer." Miss Farrar's husband furnished much valuable aid in securing the proper Spanish atmosphere for "Maria Rosa."