

undoubtedly the greatest of living or dead directors, I still realize what I owe to Hugh. Naturally, I am fond of the blond Irishman, and he regards me as a great man, with a number of well-defined limitations.

WHEN we completed "Whisper Island," which was our last dramatic triumph before "Lord Jones," I sat in the projection room looking at the rough cut and feeling morose unto the point of murder. Old man Feltman sprawled upon an adjoining chair, and we watched 7,000 feet of first-class film and about 300 feet of fight. The fight was terrible. Hughie knocked the villain dead, and you knew in your heart the blow that laid the monster low would not really have injured a small child eating its morning gruel.

"Holy Cripes!" Feltman said in a low voice. This he repeated feelingly all during the fight stuff.

"Holy Cripes is correct," I agreed solemnly.

"It reminds me of a couple of female impersonators in mortal combat. I told you to make him fight. I begged you to make him fight."

"I did what I could," I replied dully. "I asked Hugh over and over to put some zip into it. He promised he would. I shot that scene three times, and this is the best I got."

Feltman threw his cigar violently upon the concrete floor and stamped on it. He rose and pawed his way in the darkness to the door, and I followed.

"Something," he said, "will have to be done. This can go no further. Every one of Hugh's pictures for the past year has had just such a silly fight, I'm telling you, Dryden. You'll have to do something about this, or one of these days you'll hear bad news."

I sat up in bed one misty morning about 2 o'clock, a few days after this, and grinned a glad smile at the alarm clock. Within a week we were to begin on "Lord Jones," and I had been fretting myself pink over the same old knot.

"What's the matter with you?" inquired the missus, who is a great believer in using the night for slumber and having all your ideas in the daytime.

"I've got it," I stated in a tone of triumph.

"Turn out the light," the lady requested. "You may have it, but I don't want it, nor do I wish to hear it at this moment."

I did as requested, because in California nowhere is true art so little appreciated as in the bosom of one's home.

The next morning at 10 I halted Julie Howard in front of her dressing room.

"Come into the office," I said briskly. "Important."

"Very well," Julie answered cheerily, and she's one cheerful young person. "It is usual to say 'please' when addressing a lady."

I said "please," and we entered my private boudoir, which was formerly a storehouse for synthetic elephants and decrepit scenery. I closed the door.

"You love Hugh, don't you?" I inquired, and it was a fair question, because they were engaged, and every one knew it. Julie is a diminutive leading lady with rope-colored hair and an encouraging smile. She had played opposite Hugh in six of his last fourteen pictures.

"I do," she replied, staring at me in some concern, "but why clog the wheels of progress and drag me in to ask such a fool question on a nice morning?"

"Some day you want him to be the foremost male star in the movies, don't you?" I continued, and Julie bobbed her attractive head.

"Good. You know, as we all know, that his fights have been bloomers. Everybody is criticizing them. If we want to make better pictures with Hugh, we've got to do something about the fights, and you can help me."

"How?" Julie asked.

"Get Hughie mad. I have figured out a scheme to rouse his angry passions. He never went into a fight yet when he was roaring mad, and that's

what I want him to be. I'm going to depend on you, Julie."

"How?" she asked again, like an Indian.

"Go to Hugh and tell him you want to break your engagement."

The lady surveyed me in cold amazement. "Break our engagement. What for?"

"Tell Hughie that you no longer love him; that you are now older and plainly see that you cannot ever care for him as a wife should, and that consequently you will not marry him. Talk very sensibly about it, and when he asks you if there is another man, as he will, bow your head and tell him there is."

"Who might this other man be?" Julie inquired with faint sarcasm.

"Sidney Hopper," I returned, "and there's your jolly little scheme in a nutshell. Sidney is the heavy in 'Lord Jones,' and it's his last job with the company. It's your duty to avoid Hughie and be nice to Sidney, who, of course, will never know he has won your trembling and maidenly heart from Hugh."

JULIE continued to stare at me as though I were a goldfish with nine legs that had just been called to her attention.

The Sidney Hopper in question, for

are invisible to the rest of us, it may well be that we shall see a minor massacre when we come to the flat fight in 'Lord Jones.' That's plain, isn't it?"

"Perhaps," she said, "but if I did agree to this piece of nonsense, what is there to keep Hugh from larruping Hopper without waiting for the camera? He might, you know."

"I know Hughie. He will go quietly away and grieve himself half to death. He will sink into a smoldering, silent grouch. I'll guarantee there will be no physical violence until the proper time comes. Hughie is no longshoreman."

"It's asking a great deal of a girl," she said. "Think of breaking with Hugh for that drunken little beast of a Hopper."

"Think of the picture. You want it to be a good picture, don't you?"

"All right," Julie said. "I'll do my best to help you, Steve. I want Hugh to get ahead, but I'm warning you now. If any trouble comes of all this, it is entirely up to you."

"Fair enough," I said buoyantly, patting her on the shoulder. "You're a nice little girl."

We began shooting "Lord Jones" on the 2d of January and it skimmed along gayly and without untoward

way from the end of this picture, and that fight scene comes last. Why not let me wait and tell Hugh just a day or two before he fights Sidney?"

This was a new angle. I wanted to work up a slow, petulant grouch, but Julie insisted that she certainly would not tell Hughie such an outrageous falsehood and have him all upset for weeks. I finally gave in. I had to give in. That's one of the things about women. They will do what you want, but they do it in their own way and in their own sweet time.

We ground steadily away at "Lord Jones," making very good speed, and having no trouble at all, except that Sidney Hopper acted rather nasty at times, and sneered along through his part. He knew that it was his final picture and that he was being fired because of his alcoholic habits. Feltman had already notified him that in future we would try to struggle on without him.

When we cleared up everything except the saloon brawl, I began working out the details. It was to start off with a general free-for-all battle, in which a dozen members of the company would do their best to simulate a gang fight. After the lesser scoundrels had been driven from the scene, Lord Jones was to have his chance at the villain, who deserved everything he was going to get.

We started the general battle and the mob worked well and quickly. I wound up the fighting about noon on Monday, and we spent the afternoon preparing for Hugh's big fight with Hopper, which I expected to shoot some time Tuesday.

I RECALL that during the last days of the "Lord Jones" picture I was not a gracious and pleasing object to the human eye, because of a slight accident in my own home. I think it was on the Saturday night preceding our final week with the picture that the missus roused me from a deserved slumber about 3 in the morning and bade me walk hurriedly into the kitchen and fill the hot-water bottle.

I scrambled out of bed, started for the kitchen in a staggering line, and walked directly into the end of the bedroom door. I hit the part you always hit when you walk into a door at night, namely, your head. The door was a strong, solid piece of architecture, and my first impression was that I had been killed and would be buried after a decent wait. My skull must be as thick as people have said, because I lived through it; but in the morning I resembled the sole survivor of some terrible railroad wreck.

My forehead had an indentation, as though somebody had started to hew his way through with an ax. My nose was skinned very thoroughly. My rather prominent cheek bone was chipped a bit, and my right eye was as blue and closed as a Pittsburgh saloon.

I accused the missus of trying to murder me for the insurance, but she merely remarked that at my age a man ought to be able to find his way round a five-room bungalow with doors everywhere. Sunday my features spent the time getting worse to look at, and on Monday, when I strolled into the studio, I encountered Jimmy Dean, the boss property man.

"Ah, ha!" Jimmy said, grinning at me. "First you sassed the man and then he slammed you."

I walked on to the office, and three times I was forced to listen to low insults from the hired hands. Julie Howard came along, looked at my muddled-up features and began to smile. "Why, Steve," she said. "How ever did it happen?"

"A door," I snapped. "Have you told Hugh yet about that engagement thing?"

She shook her head.

"We shoot the fight to-morrow," I went on. "You know that, don't you? If you're going to help this picture, you'll tell Hugh immediately. Of course if you want us to make another of those crummy fights, why, don't tell him."

"Very well," she said slowly, "if I have to, I suppose I must."

"Yes, and you ought to have told him a week ago," I said sourly. "However, it isn't too late yet. Tell him this morning, and then go away somewhere until the saloon stuff is over."



"GET HUGHIE MAD. * * * HE NEVER WENT INTO A FIGHT YET WHEN HE WAS ROARING MAD AND THAT'S WHAT I WANT HIM TO BE."

whom I was cooking up an unmonotonous future, was a second-rate actor who suffered from violent hallucinations about his ability. We paid him one hundred a week to be the villain, because he had a dissolute and wicked countenance, and looked like a miserable scoundrel without any make-up whatever.

He was wholly unreliable, with a chronic fondness for rum, and he spent his nights at the beach in the Brig Cafe, which was the one spot in California forbidden to Cines-Torino employees by old man Feltman. Hopper was all through with our outfit and he knew it, and therefore it was laying it on a bit to ask Julie to fall in love with him, even in pretense.

"Sidney Hopper?" Julie exclaimed. "How ridiculous!"

"Is it ridiculous?" I returned. "If it appears that you have given Hughie the sack, and have found lovable and husbandly qualities in Hopper which

incident. Following our usual custom, we were everything but the saloon stuff, which we saved for the last, because the saloon was the scene of the scrimmage between Lord Jones and Cecil Titherington, the insufferable scoundrel played by Sidney Hopper. It is always good judgment to shoot your fight stuff at the very end. In case your star inadvertently had his features erased by a moving chair, he can then go away and grow a new set and no harm done.

I watched Hugh Foley to see how my scheme worked and, somewhat to my surprise, he went along with his daily work in his usual serene manner. I looked for signs of distress over losing Julie, but there was nary a sign. After a day or two I spoke to her.

"Well," I demanded, "did you break off the engagement?"

"I did not," she replied. "What's the use of doing it now? You're a long