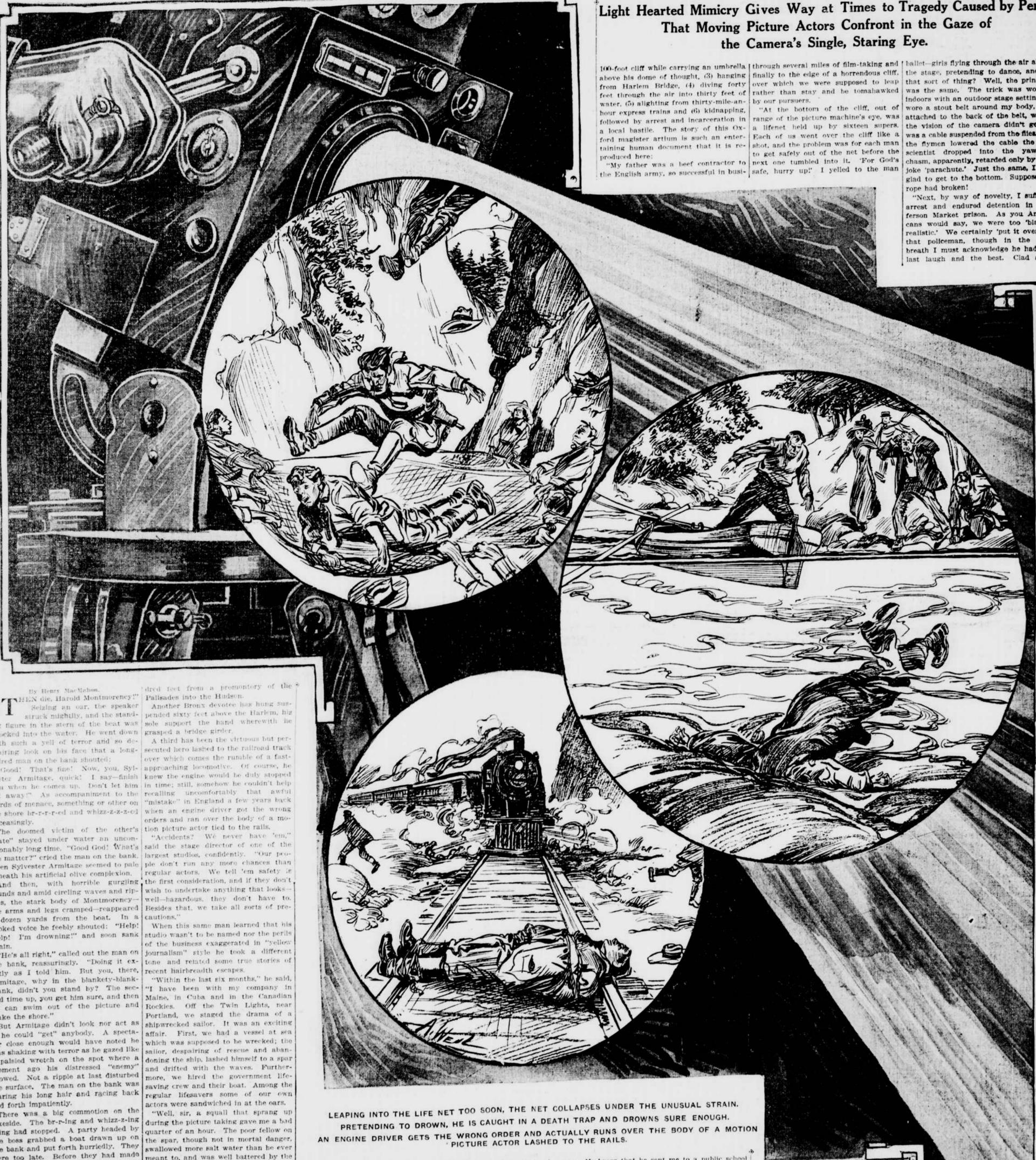


NEW-YORK, SUNDAY, JULY 23, 1911.

Sometimes It's a Real Horror That the Film Presents for Your Gaze

Light Hearted Mimicry Gives Way at Times to Tragedy Caused by Perils That Moving Picture Actors Confront in the Gaze of the Camera's Single, Staring Eye.



100-foot cliff while carrying an umbrella above his dome of thought, (3) hanging from Harlem Bridge, (4) diving forty feet through the air into thirty feet of water, (5) alighting from thirty-mile-an-hour express trains and (6) kidnapping, followed by arrest and incarceration in a local battle. The story of this Oxford magister artium is such an entertaining human document that it is reproduced here:

"My father was a beef contractor to the English army, so successful in business through several miles of film-taking and finally to the edge of a horrendous cliff, over which we were supposed to leap rather than stay and be tomahawked by our pursuers.

"At the bottom of the cliff, out of range of the picture machine's eye, was a lifenet held up by sixteen supers. Each of us went over the cliff like a shot, and the problem was for each man to get safely out of the net before the next one tumbled into it. 'For God's sake, hurry up!' I yelled to the man

ballet-girls flying through the air above the stage, pretending to dance, and all that sort of thing? Well, the principle was the same. The trick was worked indoors with an outdoor stage setting. I wore a stout belt around my body, and attached to the back of the belt, where the vision of the camera didn't get it, was a cable suspended from the flies. As the flymen lowered the cable the fool scientist dropped into the yawning chasm, apparently, retarded only by that joke 'parachute.' Just the same, I was glad to get to the bottom. Suppose the rope had broken!

"Next, by way of novelty, I suffered arrest and endured detention in Jefferson Market prison. As you Americans would say, we were too 'blamed realistic.' We certainly 'put it over' on that policeman, though in the next breath I must acknowledge he had the last laugh and the best. Clad as a

By Henry MacMahon.
"WHEN die, Harold Montmorency?" Seizing an oar, the speaker struck mightily, and the standing figure in the stern of the boat was knocked into the water. He went down with such a yell of terror and so despairing look on his face that a long-haired man on the bank shouted:

"Good! That's fine! Now, you, Sylvester Armitage, quick! I say—finish him when he comes up. Don't let him get away!" As accompaniment to the words of menace, something or other on the shore br-r-r-ed and whizz-z-z-z-ed unceasingly.

The doomed victim of the other's "hate" stayed under water an unconscionably long time. "Good God! What's the matter?" cried the man on the bank. Even Sylvester Armitage seemed to pale beneath his artificial olive complexion.

And then, with horrible gurgling sounds and amid circling waves and ripples, the stark body of Montmorency—the arms and legs cramped—reappeared a dozen yards from the boat. In a choked voice he feebly shouted: "Help! Help! I'm drowning!" and soon sank again.

"He's all right," called out the man on the bank, reassuringly. "Doing it exactly as I told him. But you, there, Armitage, why in the blankety-blank-blank, didn't you stand by? The second time up, you get him sure, and then he can swim out of the picture and make the shore."

But Armitage didn't look nor act as if he could "get" anybody. A spectator close enough would have noted he was shaking with terror as he gazed like a palsied wretch on the spot where a moment ago his distressed "enemy" showed. Not a ripple at last disturbed the surface. The man on the bank was tearing his long hair and racing back and forth impatiently.

There was a big commotion on the lakeside. The br-r-ing and whizz-z-ing thing had stopped. A party headed by the boss grabbed a boat drawn up on the bank and put forth hurriedly. They were too late. Before they had made half the distance to the drowning man his body came up the last time, but no sound issued from his lips. As he finally sank, the little fresh water pond—a lakelet small enough for "kids" to canoe in—was his death trap.

That (or something quite like it) happened a few days ago on Brady's Pond, Cransers, Staten Island, when the melodrama masquerade of a company of motion picture players was converted into terrible reality. You that have enjoyed the second hand thrills of sudden death and daredevil deeds that the picture films impart, have you ever before realized the desperate chances some of these motion picture actors take?

"It's mere trick work," you say. No, not all of it. Illusion plays the major part, it is true; yet in the great out of doors, particularly, the camera actor leads a strenuous life and faces actual dangers.

dred feet from a promontory of the Palisades into the Hudson.

Another Bronx devotee has hung suspended sixty feet above the Harlem, his sole support the hand wherewith he grasped a bridge girder.

A third has been the virtuous but persecuted hero lashed to the railroad track over which comes the rumble of a fast-approaching locomotive. Of course, he knew the engine would be duly stopped in time; still, somehow he couldn't help recalling uncomfortably that awful "mistake" in England a few years back when an engine driver got the wrong orders and ran over the body of a motion picture actor tied to the rails.

"Accidents? We never have 'em," said the stage director of one of the largest studios, confidently. "Our people don't run any more chances than regular actors. We tell 'em safety is the first consideration, and if they don't wish to undertake anything that looks well-hazardous, they don't have to. Besides that, we take all sorts of precautions."

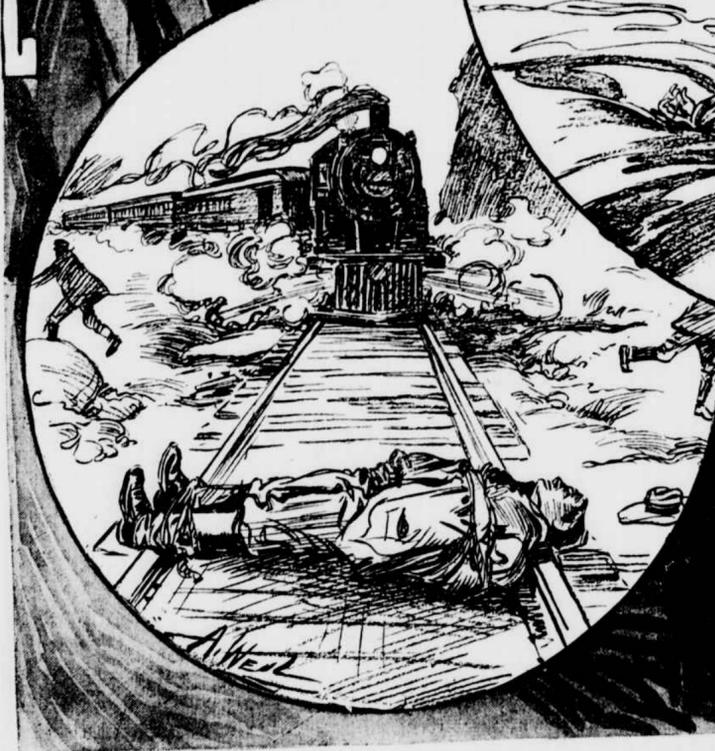
When this same man learned that his studio wasn't to be named nor the perils of the business exaggerated in "Yellow Journalism" style he took a different tone and related some true stories of recent hairbreadth escapes.

"Within the last six months," he said, "I have been with my company in Maine, in Cuba and in the Canadian Rockies. Off the Twin Lights, near Portland, we staged the drama of a shipwrecked sailor. It was an exciting affair. First, we had a vessel at sea which was supposed to be wrecked; the sailor, despairing of rescue and abandoning the ship, lashed himself to a spar and drifted with the waves. Furthermore, we hired the government life-saving crew and their boat. Among the regular lifesavers some of our own actors were sandwiched in at the oars.

"Well, sir, a squall that sprang up during the picture taking gave me a bad quarter of an hour. The poor fellow on the spar, though not in mortal danger, swallowed more salt water than he ever meant to, and was well battered by the combers. The government crew and the actor lifesavers didn't hit it off well at all. The crew was short on 'business' and the actors too 'scared' to save lives. Fortunately, we squeezed through; the lashed man was pulled aboard, spar and all, and the boat, after two or three unsuccessful trials, mastered the heavy breakers and brought all hands ashore.

"Down in Cuba," continued the director, "whither we went to get tropical ocean scenes, our picture outfit was twice wrecked, and several of us had close calls. On one occasion the machine and its operator were hurled (just think of it!) by the sheer force of the wind into the sea from a projecting rock on which they were stationed. The other incident makes me laugh to recollect it, although it was no laughing matter at the time. We were working to windward in a schooner, with the picture machine whirling away on the deck and my assistant and myself close by it.

"Of a sudden the ropes parted that held the main boom in place. Crash! went the boom as it swept clear across the deck, impelled by the tremendous



LEAPING INTO THE LIFE NET TOO SOON, THE NET COLLAPSES UNDER THE UNUSUAL STRAIN. PRETENDING TO DROWN, HE IS CAUGHT IN A DEATH TRAP AND DROWNS SURE ENOUGH. AN ENGINE DRIVER GETS THE WRONG ORDER AND ACTUALLY RUNS OVER THE BODY OF A MOTION PICTURE ACTOR LASHED TO THE RAILS.

force of the wind on the sail above. And crash! went the moving picture outfit, and a few miles, more or less, of film, as the hurrying boom remorselessly swept them into the ocean. You ought to have seen us duck! As it was, the boom carried off our caps and nearly scalped us. It would have been goodby, Mr. Stage Director, and gooby, Mr. Assistant, if it had really jammed us over. The sea was full of man eating sharks, and the vessel was skimming along at such a speed that it would have taken fully fifteen minutes to put back, even if the sharks had kindly refrained from making us the piece de resistance of their dinner.

"In the Rockies," rambled on the picture man, "I almost stumbled into death, as it were. Leaving the hotel one morning, my man and I thought we'd enjoy a little glacier holiday of our own before bucking down to the serious work of photographing Alpine rescues, landslides and moving rivers of ice. As we found the footing good, we continued over the hard, hummocky surface of the glacier until, without warning, I sank to the

waist in a small heap of snow. My companion seized me and dragged me back to the solid surface. It wasn't until two days later that I thought it worth while to relate the incident to an Alpinist. He examined the place.

"Mr. —," he said, earnestly, "it is a miracle that you are alive to tell this. That fresh snow concealed a crevice two hundred feet deep, and it's a wonder if tenderfoot explorers like yourself are not killed in traversing such dangerous ground! Sure enough, on my return I read in a newspaper that a party of sightseeing girls had been engulfed in that very crevice. Two were killed, and two others, I believe, were nearly starved and frozen to death in the awful abyss before they were rescued."

Up at the studio ruled by this picture man when he is not traipsing around the country hunting new "thrillers" works an Oxford Master of Arts, who has there mastered more arts than the Oxford faculty ever taught him. Among the strange acquirements he has gained in The Bronx are (1) jumping off a 50-foot precipice, (2) walking off a

ness that he sent me to a public school and afterward to the university. After completing my education I found that my daddy and I disagreed; he had a code of conduct in his business which I, with my university notions, felt I could not approve or tolerate; so we parted. I drifted on the stage and came to America, where I got fairly important parts in some of the plays. Remember I played Murphy in "The College Widow?" They had a truly dreadful time of it, I recall, trying to adapt my English enunciation to Murphy's brogue. Finally I went on the moving picture stage because I needed the money.

"Now, I am a bit of a coward, I must confess, and therefore, as a matter of pride and self-respect, I have made it a rule never to balk danger nor decline any hazard that came in the line of duty. Perhaps that habit of mine put me in line for most of the 'crazy stunts,' as they call 'em here. One of my first unpleasant experiences which I shared with a dozen other men was 'jumping to death' off a precipice. We were whites pursued by tomahawk-carrying, scalping Indians. They chased us

ahead of me, who was evidently taking his time. I had to follow quickly, and kerplunk! I came down almost on top of him. The lifenet gave way under the combined weights, and though the fall was partly broken I hit with great force on a stony bit of ground. My career as a motion picture actor almost ended then and there.

"My next feat, though not so hazardous, looked even more dangerous. I was an absentminded professor, holding in one hand a book I diligently read and the other hand supporting an umbrella to keep off the sun's rays. In this practically somnambulistic state I was to walk off a precipice. The horror of the picture theatre assemblage would be succeeded by uproarious laughter as the simple professor, apparently supported by his umbrella acting as a parachute, glided slowly and gracefully to earth—still intent on his book.

Black Hand, I stole a child from its mother's arms in the open doorway of a tenement. I footed it down the street as fast as I could go, pursued by the other actors in their bright Italian garbs and by no small number of real 'sons of