

SPAIN FILLS ANTHOLOGY AND MOVIE SCREEN

The Way to Write a Movie Feature Is to Get a Studio Janitor's Job

SCENARIO WRITING TO-DAY. By Grace Lytton. Houghton Mifflin Company.

Reviewed by C. BLYTHE SHERWOOD.

Deep down in his heart everybody knows how to write a screen play. It must have suspense and action; it must move the audience to hilarity, enthusiasm or sympathy. The favorite stars must have the biggest parts, and no matter how many times (if it is a he) the gallows is ordained to be the climax, or how irretrievably misunderstanding sends her to contemplate the depth, the width and temperature of the river, amidst the downpouring rain—it's always raining on nights like these—every vigorous vengeance will be forgiven the author so long as the final closeup is a clinch of happy culmination. Grace Lytton warns those of us who would be cinema scribes against certain errors, making it clear that we should as religiously acquire the proper habits. Her best do's are:

- (a) Make 'em laugh; make 'em cry; make 'em wait.
 - (b) Write in the present tense; use object words, action words, describing words, picturing words.
 - (c) Before you begin to write out your story write out your purpose, or motif, in ten or a dozen words, and keep it in plain sight all the time you are doing your work.
 - (d) Your characters must reflect your own emotions and impulses, being, however, possible of presentation on the screen. They cannot be too subtle or complicated for their natures to be shown by their acts.
 - (e) Simplify: Story, cast, sets, characters, struggle, triumph, climax. Each type must be distinct; the first appearance marks the calibre to which the player must live up to the rest of the picture. One cannot deviate or disappoint.
 - (f) Write your plot on impulse. Ideas come from feeling.
 - (g) Work out detail in deliberation. Concise continuity comes from concentration.
 - (h) Be short, be snappy, be sympathetic—for the scenario editor. Your brief synopsis is your card of introduction. "Condense! Condense!"
 - (i) Avoid the risk of actors' lives. (What would Douglas Fairbanks say to this?)
 - (j) Keep up to date. Read exhibitors' magazines. Find out what is being done, what can be done better and what should be abolished. Go to the movies—not for enjoyment but profit. "Analyze from first to last, take particular note of every word that flashes on the screen, the producing company, the director, the staff writer, as well as the names of the stars. Observe whether it is a novel or an original scenario."
 - (k) Save expensive sets and costumes. Go on location. Visit studios. Keep notebooks.
 - (l) Read: "Scenario Writing To-day."
- The final suggestion is mine. For this textbook is not dry but rather terse and pleasantly to the point. We've all known that we should do these things, and here they've been put in statements for us.
- June Mathis, who prepared the

scenario for "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," is a good example of one who lives up, no doubt unconsciously, to the text book maxim: "A scenario writer should do every part of his work as thoroughly as if he expected no aid or alteration from any source."

Miss Lytton reports: "Grouping is the director's affair, and if your luck is to have a perfect director he will correct any mistake you make. But you cannot afford to take chances, for he may happen to be less than perfect. And if your heart is in it you will not be content with anything short of perfection. . . . The great point is to keep your attention steadily fixed upon your story until it becomes to you, for the time being, the most important thing in the world. . . . It is essential while your story is in progress that you should work at it every day, and if possible at the same time every day. . . . A good scenario may be written in six weeks; with practice and skill in half the time. Now, suppose that from three to six weeks' work, and not the hardest work, but pleasant, delightful effort, you receive from \$500 to \$3,000. Is not this very well worth while?"

Undoubtedly. But suppose you do the six weeks' work and fail to connect with the \$3,000. Well, that may teach lessons not to be learned from any text book. . . . There are other things to be done besides the work of composition. Miss Mathis read "The Four Horsemen" three times. Then, after weeks of planning, she began to write. When the script was done, the assembling of a cast, the designing of sets and the choosing of locations took another period before the camera men turned their initial crank. It required six months, working night and day, to shoot the picture. All this time Miss Mathis's energy was involved, and I, myself, sat with her on various hot early mornings, continuing with little interruption the work of the night before.

Of course, a beginner has no such task. But if one is taking this up as a serious profession, not play, all these labors are to be foreseen. He should understand that after one's scenario is submitted the work is just begun. Miss Mathis sat behind the tripod, alongside of Mr. Ingram every single minute that footage was being screened of "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse." There are eleven reels of it, and she watched all of these "rushes" after every day's work in the projection room. In her glossary of movie terms, Miss Lytton didn't mention this momentous one.

Camera men, assistants, stars, technicians, writers, directors, producers, all go to criticize the character of their current production. In this way they can see if makeup is poor or the settings are not effective, or cinematography is not as beautiful as it can be. The scenario writer, as he perceives, mentally adapts titles to the action. If they have not already been placed, as all good little titles are, in the scenario. When he becomes established, and his position is recognized and respected, he may go into the cutting room, where it is his privilege to labor indefatigably over judicious elimination of thousands of feet of film.

Then comes the titling and retitling and the art titling. If plays, as Char-

ning Pollock said, "are not written, but rewritten," photoplays are not titled, but retitled. And the star doesn't do this, nor the producer, nor the director, but the scenario writer. Aye, there are more things in the movie heaven and earth than are dreamt of by Miss Lytton for the novice's psychology.

After all, one must not be discouraging, since the screen must cultivate its own style of specialized authors. In her book, Miss Lytton tells persuasively, if incompletely, what really is important. It is as efficacious as any volume can be in instructing one how to create. Mr. Pollock is credited with another aphorism: "The only way to learn to write is to do it." The only way to become a scenario writer is

not to take a course at a university or to correspond with an unknown professor. It is to go into a studio and work, as an actor, as an assistant, as a camera man, as a property man, as a writer who would learn the way the wheels go round. It is to see every new picture that is released and dissect their editing and directing. It is to frequent plays, peruse literature, identify history, grow and study and become a criterion of what is genuine and what is not, and what is essential and what is unworthy of time, vitality, interest; and when all this has been done, if there are no results the apprentice may as well decide that he is better fitted to paste up twenty-four sheet posters than to have his name printed on them.



Vicente Blasco Ibanez dreaming his "Four Horsemen," which has just been filmed.—Drawn by Carlo Fornaro.

Spanish and Latin American Poets

HISPANIC ANTHOLOGY. By Thomas Walsh, Ph. D., Litt. D. Corresponding Member of the "Real Academia Sevillana de Buenas Letras," of the "Academia Colombiana" and the "Hispanic Society of America." G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Reviewed by JORGE GODOY.

Exceedingly readable anthologies of Spain's and Latin America's most distinguished sons of the muses were compiled and edited in the good old days of George Ticknor, Fitzmaurice Kelly and other erudite bibliophiles; and innumerable flowers are still blossoming in the scented rhytmical gardens of Hispanic letters, planted and watered by such painstaking and laborious literary botanists as Alfred Coester, Peter Goldsmith and other contemporaneous craftsmen. Dr. Walsh's collection is one of the most thorough and convincing books of its kind ever placed before the American reading public. Starting with the anonymous and world famous "Poema del Cid," a rhytmical record of Spanish chivalry composed in the year 1150, and ending with the "Symphony in White," by Munoz Marin, a modern Porto Rican poet born in 1898, Mr. Walsh presents us with 779 copiously illustrated pages of text containing hundreds of brief biographical sketches and Spanish and Portuguese renderings into English by such of the earlier poets as Byron, Southey, Longfellow, Bryant; and by John Hay, John Masefield, Alice Stone Blackwell and a dozen or more masters of the intricate art of versification.

After reading some of the inspired passages of this remarkable book the reader's mind is refreshed and enlightened historically, geographically, philosophically and poetically, so to speak. Spain's barbarous and sanguinary bullfights, with their "toreros," "matadores" and "picadors," transport our adventurous souls to the Roman days of bloodthirsty Nero. With fear, astonishment and admiration we read of Spanish pirates, insatiable and daring gold diggers, quixotic knights and warrior poets seeking the enchanted fountain of eternal youth and the magical fairylands of hidden treasures and fabulous riches; Argentina's endless grassy, treeless "pampas" appear before us; Bolivia's "llamas" and "alpacas" are added to our poetic "zoo." We seem actually to drink Brazil's delightful coffee; Colombia cordially invites us to visit the "Athens of South America"—Bogota, we even dream of Chile's nitrate of soda! Cuba's sugar sweetens our palates and her tobacco makes us the worshipping slaves of Queen Nicotine and his Majesty King Smoke; Ecuador's volcanic eruptions fill our vision with seething lava and ashes; we gaze on Guatemala's abysmal ditches; the heroes and martyrs of Honduras raise their undying foreheads from the battlefields of liberty; Mexico's snow capped Popocatepetl salutes us with its glorious, gigantic and mountainous peaks of icicles; Nicaragua teaches us the new doctrines of Ruben Dario, one of the greatest "modernista" poets of all times; Panama leads us to a certain wondrous canal that astonished the entire engineering world, and the bards of Uruguay, Paraguay, Venezuela and the other highly cultured and idealistic countries of Latin America entertain us and please us with soul stirring songs.

From the earlier group, Lope Felix

de Vega Carpio, "one of the greatest figures of Spanish literature," sings to "The Good Shepherd" thus, through Longfellow's English version:

Hear, Shepherd Thou who for Thy flock art dying,
Oh wash away these scarlet sins, for Thou
Rejoicest at the contrite sinner's vow.
Oh wait! to Thee my weary soul is crying.
Wait for me; Yet why ask it, when I see,
With feet nailed to the cross, Thou'rt waiting still for me!

What a contrast between this and the lines of Ruben Dario, the "Father of Nicaraguan poetry" and perhaps the king of all South American songsters, translated by Elijah Clarence Hills! In these lines the people of the United States can see themselves as others see them:

The United States are rich, they're powerful and great
(They join the cult of Mammon to that of Hercules),
And when they stir and roar, the very Andes shake,
And though they count on all, one thing is lacking: God!

Francisco De Quevedo y Villegas, the satirical Spanish wonder, who was born in Madrid in 1580 and died in Villanueva in 1645, has also something to say about the almighty power of gold, in Thomas Walsh's excellent English version:

Over kings and priests and scholars
Rules the mighty Lord of Dollars.

In this volume the reader will find brilliant English translations of ballads, sonnets, rondeaux, epigrams, odes, romances, epic poems, panegyrics and amatory, convivial, pathetic and humorous stanzas of surpassing beauty written in various forms of verse by Jose de Espronceda, the Spanish Byron; Jose Santos Chocoma, the Peruvian prodigy; Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda, the Cuban Sappho; Amado Nervo, the Mexican mystic; Jose Asuncion Silva, the Colombian genius, and over two hundred more Spanish and Latin American poets, some of them still living and in the prime of youth. The writer knows many of these personally as kind hearted, pleasure loving men of high mental abilities and attainments, ideals and aspirations, remarkable linguists and fluent and arresting conversationalists noted for their versatility and the excellent quality of their work; while others, unfortunately, are consummate "poseurs," living lives of debauchery, extravagance and recklessness, attempting to imitate Oscar Wilde's flowing Bohemian ties and long unkempt hair, and being contemptibly assailed by creditors and implicated in matrimonial entanglements.

Although Mr. Walsh's anthology is one of the most thorough collections of its kind, he has omitted a few versifying celebrities from Spain and Latin America, especially from Mexico, where, as the popular saying goes, "should you throw a stone from the window of the National Palace you would unmistakably strike a poet." Everybody in the land beyond the Rio Grande is rhythmically inclined. The great Mexican poets excluded are three—Manuel Acuna, the suicidal bard; Juan de Dios Peza, author of "Cantos del Hoga" (Hearth Songs), and Antonio Plaza, the widely known vagabond singer.

How the American Don Quixote Tried Riding a Bucking Bronco

THE DON QUIXOTE OF AMERICA—THE STORY OF AN IDEA. By Charles Hemstreet. Dodd, Mead & Co.

Reviewed by BENJAMIN DE CASSERES.

When a title like the above jumps at us from the covers of a book one name in particular occurs to us—the man who first was too proud to fight, who then went into a war to end war, and who finally found that Sancho Panza runs this world, and that the fair Dulcinea of his dreams was a tricy wheel whose real name was Fiekie Public.

But this American Don Quixote of Mr. Hemstreet is quite of another breed. The story also proves, for the thousandth time, that Don Quixote was done once, done forever—like the Book of Job and Hamlet—and done to a turn. Cervantes put an eternal and irrevocable truth in words, and while sketching the vicissitudes of that truth in material forms he incidentally wrote the history of the human race on the pea-green planet Earth. For "Don Quixote" is the comic Gospels, and the Knight of La Mancha himself is Aristophanes on Calvary.

The nearest approach to the Cervantes masterpiece—in my reading—was done by the late Octave Mirbeau in an interlude of about one hundred pages in his great story, "L'Abbe Jules." The interlude concerns Le Pere Pamphile and his journeys around the world to collect enough money to build a stupendous temple dedicated to some Oriental secret cult, and his final death in old age in the grave he had dug for himself, which was to be the earth-opening for the first pillar. As a piece of colossal satire on human idealism Mirbeau's story has never been equaled—not even by Cervantes.

Mr. Hemstreet has a great theme which he cannot sustain. He has written a first class comic "movie." And yet it has intellectual implications. It suggests the idea of doing

the thing myself—satirizing the idealistic side of the American psyche (granting that the sheeplike innards of us Americans have evolved psyches), showing its essential cash-down, utilitarian nature and its incorrigible insipidity. James Huneker could have done it; Don Marquis could do it—but—

The Don Quixote of Mr. Hemstreet's story is John Eagle of Vinehaven, N. Y. Eagle has conceived the idea of building somewhere, vaguely in the West, a model city called Vast Eagle—a prolongation of his own inwrought, woodsman's ego. He is a Carol Kennicott in a red shirt. His spear is an axe, with which he proposes to hew, singlehanded almost, the new city out of the wilderness. He has all the "pilgrims" "het up" about it. He has promised them all jobs in Vast Eagle, and they swallow his scheme like hooch. He has builded a "wilderness" around his house, and inside one may inspect the vast map of his Kingdom Come and models of its "perfect" public buildings.

He sets forth one day with a gullible retainer who wants to be the warden of the jail of Vast Eagle. The train dumps them off at Los Angeles because it can go no further. He calls a taxi and orders the chauffeur to drive him to a "vast wilderness." He is caught in a rainstorm at night in a cemetery. John's crazy adventures continue—he is vamped, robbed, jailed, hooded and "written up."

The "writup" in a local California newspaper reaches the folks back home in Vinehaven, and on his return, broken, penniless, sans axe or map or red shirt, he finds the town decorated to receive him and the local Sousa stationed to receive him.

All of which is respectfully submitted to Mack Sennett or "Fatty" Arbuckle.

The "jaacket" hints of an "underlying idea." I have spent weary nights over the home brew trying to excavate it. I leave it for future literary archeologists to unearth.

The Book Factory

By EDWARD ANTHONY. Tomerville Anthology. THE PUBLISHER.

Speak kindly of the publisher,
Cease aiming jabs and hooks,
He spends his days devising ways
Of landing worthy books.

And granting that he spends his nights
Coralling lesser writers,
And stoops at times to make some dime
By peddling books by lighters.

Like Charlie Chee and Jennie Joy,
And other slushy Biddies,
Remember, please, that books like these
Support the Wife and Kiddies!

A blessing on his grayning head!
Speak gently as he passes,
Whose job it is (O thankless his!)
To please all shades and classes!

2. THE AUTHOR
(as the reader sees him)

It's nice to be an author
And sit and smoke a pipe,
And nothing do the seasons through
But type and type and type.

And have your picture printed
In papers everywhere,
And when you pass, hear lad and lass
Shout, "That's him over there!"

And daily open letters
Containing lots of pelf,
And live on steak. Some day I'll take
The business up myself.

"I hear," says Mr. Buckel, as he rearranges a stack of books that threaten to topple, "that H. G. Wells has written another book. Macmillan's salesman was telling me about it this morning. It's coming out soon and the title is 'The Salvaging of Civilization.'"

"Zasso!" says Mr. Flick, the head clerk, as he glances through the *Publishers' Week*; "I admire that feller Wells. He's the hardest working author in the business. And the man's going to make the universe a decent place to live in before he gets through. In 'The Outline of History' he tells what's the matter with the world and in the new book he salvages it. What can be fairer than that?"

"Don't be so flippant about the great," says Mr. Buckel, totalling the sales slips for the morning. "You'd better get busy on your inventory."

"I've got the girls working on that now. Say, have you read this new travel book of John Weaver's that Knopf's just released—'In America? Guess it's a sort of See America First, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't," says Mr. Buckel, impatiently. "It wouldn't do you any harm if you learned something about the books we sell. The title is 'In America,' not 'In America' and it isn't a travel book. It's a book of verses written in the vernacular—or, what Mencken calls the American language."

"Zasso!"
"Yes, that's so. This reminds me of the time you listed that novel 'In Dire Straits' as a travel book. Everything's a travel book to you. And you run along and see that the girls make a good job of that inventory."

"Oh, they'll do it right. Brightest lot of girls you ever saw. Read all the efficiency magazines, attend lectures on system and never make a mistake. Say, how many copies of that new Rider Haggard book, 'She and Allan,' do we want?"
"How many can we sell?"
"Several, I should say."
"Well, then, order that many and don't ask needless questions."
"Oh, Miss Pettie!" shouts Mr. Flick, a twinkle in his eye, "send Longmans,

Green, an order for several copies of the new Rider Haggard book. And now that we've settled that, how many copies of 'The Century Plant,' that new illustrated poem by P. Shelley, do we want?"

"Manhandle contemporary authors if it's essential to your happiness," says Mr. Buckel, plainly vexed. "But remember, Mr. Flick, I'll not tolerate abuse of a man like Shelley. The poem you have reference to, sir, is 'The Sensitive Plant,' not 'The Century Plant,' and as the author has been dead these many years, it isn't a new one. It's good Doubleday, Page & Co. are getting out this edition. Perhaps you'll become acquainted with it."
"I don't care for poetry," says Mr. Flick, "although I did see a pretty good poem in front of a Greek restaurant the other day. It went like this: 'Here's the place for chops and steaks Like the kind that mother makes.'"

I wonder if it's one of those Greek classics that old man Wentworth in the classical department is always raving about?"

"Speaking of the Greeks," says Mr. Buckel, "don't forget that we want some of Faxon Hibben's 'Constantine I. and the Greek People.' The Century Company's salesman tells me that Hibben completely envisaged the overthrow of Venizelos and the return to power of King Constantine."

"What!" exclaims Mr. Flick, "the salesman read the book? Wonderful!"
"When you've finished expressing wonderment over a simple fact," says Mr. Buckel, "I'd like to remind you to get up an appropriate window display for Religious Book Week, which opens this Monday. Here it is Saturday and you haven't done a thing. In addition to your other faults, I'm afraid you aren't overmindful of religious matters."

"I am, too!" replies Mr. Flick, visibly hurt. "Here," says he, taking a beautiful engraved card from his wallet, "is an honor certificate I earned for not missing a Bible class meeting in a year. As for Religious Book Week, the display I'm planning will knock your eye out."

"You needn't trouble about knocking my eye out," observes Mr. Buckel, "but I'm glad to see you show so much enthusiasm for this worthy cause. It's a good trait, young man; a good trait. And now suppose you run along and get busy on that window display."

"All right," says Mr. Flick, departing. "but it's only 2 o'clock."

Sabbath Atrocities

THE SEVEN PARSONS AND THE SMALL IGTUANADON. By Gerald N. Thayer. Harper & Bros.

When the lion saw the statue of man conquering one of his own kind he said, "I would have carved this differently." Fables have generally been written by the moralist. This booklet gives the blue law parson a dose of his own medicine.

Seven parsons sallied forth one Sabbath to kill all the joy they could. They were nagging a little boy for paddling in the brook, when an Igtuanadon who had escaped the extinction of the rest of his species overheard them.

"Shame on that long and shabby lot, say I.
To make a lazy little boy-beast cry!"
So thought he to himself: "And I should say I.
Though neither sort appears a bit of a subline.
The boy-beast is a better beast than they.
For he was wet and happy in the sunny slime."

These verses ought to receive a wide circulation in these days of repression, for they are clever, and are well illustrated by Norman Jacobsen, whose conception of an Igtuanadon is much more like a jabberwock than a museum skeleton.

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