

REFINED COMEDY VERSUS THE SLAPSTICK IN MOTION PICTURES

Much of the Old-Time Way of Making Fun Is Now Done Through Trick Photography, Such as Making an Actor Bounce Up and Down on a Jet of Water.

M

AKING people laugh may not be regarded as a serious business. But it is—it is a very serious business in the moving picture world.

When the films were first made, comedy was the easiest thing the screen actor did. Any performer who could act the "cut up" was sure of success as a comedian. The early comedies were nothing more than a series of monkey shins, and no serious thought was given to comedy except when it was done in trying to figure out a new way for the short comedian to slap his tall partner in the face with a custard pie.

Any actor who could bounce an over-ripe tomato from the head of the Patsy Bolivar of the piece in a way that would make the audience laugh louder, was regarded as a positive genius.

Some of that sort of comedy still remains in the pictures, and there are still many performers who argue that since screen comedies must of necessity be on the slap-stick order, no plot or sequence of events is necessary for their development.

The place of this kind of screen comedy has been taken to a large extent by a new school of comedians who are producing a new kind of comedy.

Miss Busch a Later Addition.

True, a great deal of the old-time comedian's tricks have been retained, but it has been dignified and reduced to a science. This has been done by taking comedy seriously and writing comedies with plots the same as dramas.

The comedy director of the new school will tell you that tragedies make the best comedies, because of the strong dramatic element in the plot. The characters may do absolutely illogical things, their every action may be absurd and incongruous, but because of the plot that is woven in with the action it all seems real. It is "monkey business" dignified and reduced to a science.

Much of the old rough-house comedy is either done away with or given in another form, and many mechanical tricks and illusions made with double exposure photographs are used. For instance, in a recent comedy where Fred Mace falls through the roof of a fashionable restaurant, he is caught on the jet of water from a fountain and bounced about like a ball.

Miss Busch is a later addition to the forces of the Keystone comedy company, of which Mr. Sennett is director general. Fred Mace was one of the original group, composed of Mace, Sennett, Ford Sterling and Mabel Normand, who jumped over the traces of picture tradition along in 1912 and formed the Keystone Comedy Company.

The polite, or parlor brand of comedy has been growing in favor recently, but there is little doubt, but that the Keystone brand of fun will always have a large following, for the very man who says he cannot stand anything of the slap-stick or rough house in comedy, is the very chap who will laugh and wipe the tears of laughter from his eyes at the antics of the scientific monkey shiners.

The little studio, where Mace and Sennett and Sterling and Miss Normand made their first funny films, is now replaced by a modern plant that covers two city blocks, and a garage is being built that will hold fifty automobiles, that will transport the performers who formerly tramped their way around, to the different locations.



MAE BUSCH
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TRIANGLE
STARS



FRED
MACE
HARTSOOK PHOTO

As to Photoplay Writing

A. E. E.
THE term feature is usually applied to a four or five reel play, although some producers make shorter subjects which they call features. As a general thing, however, a feature means at least four reels. Your synopsis must not be written out in scenes; that would be the same as writing two plays, one shorter than the other. The synopsis is an outline of the plot of your play in story form; it is intended to give the editor who reads the play an idea of the story you have written. Write the synopsis after the play is finished, use from 200 to 250 words to the reel, let it follow the cast of characters in your manuscript, then go on with the play, scene by scene.

Miss C. B.
WE know nothing about the books on photoplay writing advertised by magazines. There are many good books on the subject which may be had in the public library of your city. Be careful about paying money to any one unless you are entirely satisfied you are dealing with responsible people. Many persons are trying to teach scenario writing who cannot sell their own work.

Jessie B.
YOUR question indicates the need of considerable instruction. A photo play is nothing more than a story told in action. First get the story well fixed in your mind, then move the characters along, make them do things that will tell the story. If John loves Mabel and wants to marry her and Mabel's parents say "No," because John is a godless youth, and Mabel resolves to reform him and make him acceptable to her parents, invent scenes, in the

house, in the garden, on the street, anywhere. Scenes that will show what Mabel and John and the other characters do, and how John is reformed, and how it all ends. First of all, you must have a story, after that the rest is not so hard. Good stories almost tell themselves. Ask at the public library for books on photo-play writing.

Victrola K.
WE do not advise you to take a correspondence course in scenario writing. If many of the people who claim to teach were as competent as they claim to be they could make a great deal more money writing and selling plays themselves than by teaching others. Go to the public library, where you will find books that will give you as much instruction as any course, and will cost nothing.

Miss E. St. Louis.
YOU may use 250 words in the synopsis to each reel in writing multiple reel plays. Make the synopsis as short as you can and avoid fine writing. State your plot as clearly and as forcibly as you can in simple words. Do not fall to get in all of what you consider the dramatic points of your story. The synopsis is read first.

E. M. L.
YOU seem to have complied with all of the requirements of the contest. All that you can do now is to wait for the announcement of the prize winner.

S. H. B.—The company meant for you to study their productions on the screen at the picture shows. This will cost nothing but the price you pay to go in the show. It is a good idea to study the pictures you see, not only of one particular studio, but a general study of them all. Count the scenes and notice how the scenes shift from one point of the story to another to make the plot clear and give it strength.

Answers to Fans

Do not send loose stamps in your letters. If a personal answer is desired, inclose stamped, self-addressed envelope. Only very important questions are given personal replies. Address Moving Picture Editor, care of this paper.

A. W. R., Kansas.
MOST of the studios will buy plays from outsiders if they are good. There is always a market for plays with strong and new plots. Here is a list of studios: Thomas A. Edison, Inc., 2325 Deatur avenue, New York; Universal Manufacturing Company, 1600 Broadway, New York; American Film Manufacturing Company, 6221 Broadway, Chicago; Biograph Company, 807 East One Hundred and Seventy-fifth street, New York; David Horsley Studio, Main and Washington streets, Los Angeles, Cal. Get two sizes of envelopes, address one of them to yourself, put stamps on it, inclose it with your play, and be sure to put enough postage to carry the play both ways.

B. B. B.
EITHER a pen or a pencil written sequel is all right. You will get the prize if your story is the winning one, no matter how it is written, provided you have complied with the instructions. The North American Company will announce the winner as soon as all the plays are read and the winner decided on.

BENBON FARM—There is a "chance" for every one of us to do what we most want to do, but we must make that chance. You are just the right age to begin your life's work. Get your parents' consent to try it, and talk to people who have had stage experience. Learn all you can about acting, then make your plans

and carry them out. Everything depends on you.
BILLIE, Nashville, Ark.—There were altogether thirty-six episodes of the Elaine serials. Address Pearl White, Creighton Hale and Arnold Daly at 25 West Forty-fifth street, New York. We have never heard of any relationship between Pearl White and Creighton Hale.
S. O. S.—Dorothy Davenport was born in Boston twenty-one years ago and is the daughter of the noted comedian, Harry Davenport, and a niece of the late Fanny Davenport. Miss Davenport has been in pictures about four years, and before that was in vaudeville a year and a half. She is now with the Universal

Company at Universal City, Cal. She was married last year to Wallace Reid.
LOU—The Fairbanks twins are named Marion and Madeline and may be addressed in care of The Thanhouser Film Corporation, New Rochelle, N. Y.
DORA—The actor you ask about is named Desforge. We have no further information concerning him.
OPAL, Highland, Ill.—Robert Warwick was born in Sacramento, Cal., June 2, 1881. His address is at the World Film Studio, Fort Lee, N. J. As far as we know he is not married.
JAMES AND GEORGE—Grace Cunard and J. Francis Ford are working on an Irish picture, which can be seen early in March.

PEGGY, Alton, Ill.—At one time the Lubin Company of Philadelphia, Pa., sent a form sheet, with directions on how to prepare a manuscript, if a stamped, self-addressed envelope accompanied the request, but we do not know if they still send them. There are very good books on the subject of photo-play writing, which you should be able to get in any public library.
S. S.—Mary Pickford gets more salary than Charles Chaplin, although he is said to be the highest salaried man appearing in pictures. Miss Pickford gets \$100,000 salary a year, besides a percentage on the pictures in which she appears. Charles Chaplin received \$1200 a week and a percentage while he was with Essanay.