

Butchering

An Author in Hollywood

By WINNIFRED EATON REEVE

(Onoto Watanna)

THE train from New York is due. Hollywood prepares to make one of its typical publicity gestures. Not, it is true, of the magnitude or hysterical and blatant quality such as is accorded a Star, a Movie Executive or a Peaches Browning, but, taken all in all, a nice refined little hullabaloo. After all, it is only an Eminent Author who is arriving in Hollywood. He is met at the train by cameramen, reporters, a star or two, maybe a director, perhaps even the Mayor and a bunch of minor and major Movie folk that the publicity director has managed to round up for the occasion.

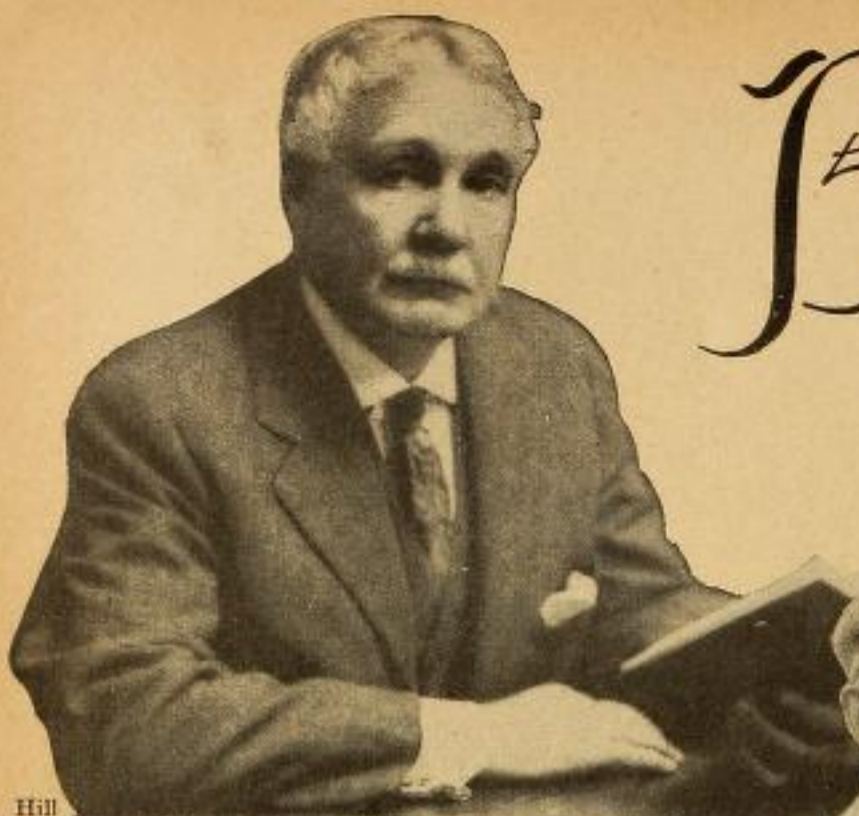
For a few days at least our Eminent Author basks in the sunshine and favor of the City of Props. He is wined and dined, photographed, touted, exploited, interviewed, quoted, misquoted. Every prospect pleases. He has a remarkable contract in his pocket. Five hundred dollars a week for the first three months; seven hundred and fifty dollars for the next six; one thousand dollars a week for the next year and so on *ad nauseam*. Small wonder that he gives forth an interview to the effect that he is charmed with Hollywood and intends to devote the rest of his literary life to the Great Art of Motion Pictures.

Like fun he is! At the end of the three months, he will get a little note to the effect that the option on his contract is not to be exercised by the Producer.

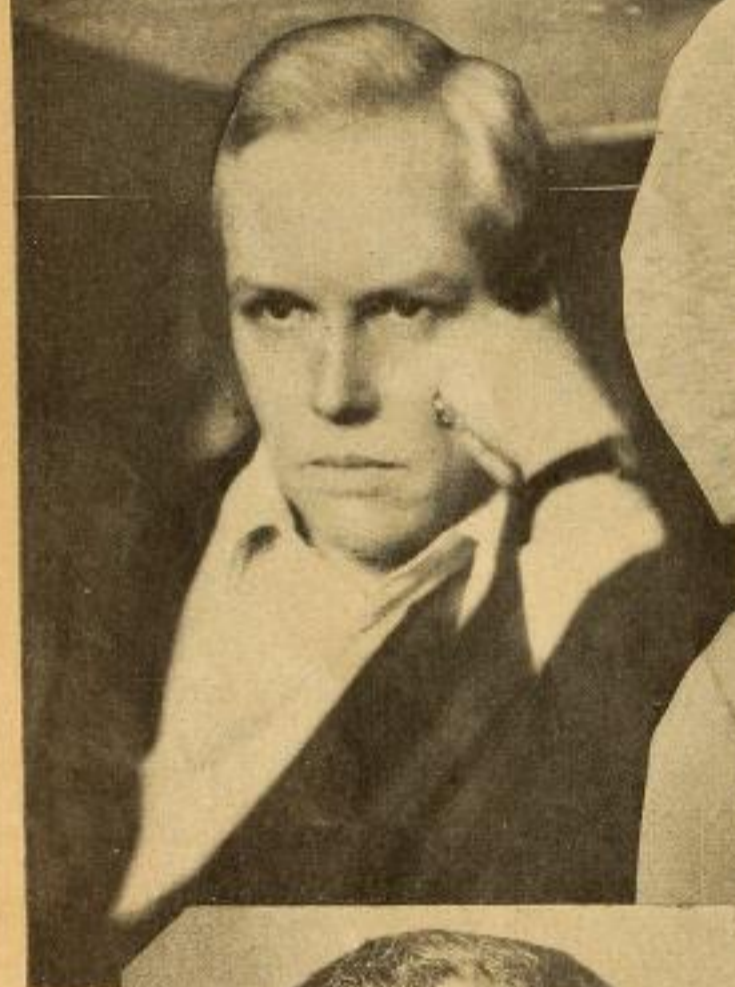
To one author who remains in Hollywood, there are a score who make their silent exit at the end of the three months. Not all go silently. Many fare forth shooting verbal fireworks behind them.

"The survival of the fittest" does not apply in Hollywood, so far as authors are concerned. The touchstone to success is not creative brains, talent or inventive genius. The inspirational writer, however big his dreams and his product, cannot hope to compete with those possessed of sharp wits, craft, salesmanship, pull, politics and the thousand and one petty tricks that contribute to one's influence in this game.

About a week after his arrival our Eminent Author finds himself parked in an ugly little office in a noisy rackety-



Hill



P.&A.



P.&A.



P.&A.

Richce

At the top: Henry Irving Dodge, then Clarence Budington Kelland, Carl Van Vechten, Elinor Glyn and Joseph Hergesheimer

Brains

Is as a Lamb in an Abattoir

packetty building. (Some studios are beginning to grant the authors offices as good as the secretaries of the executives). The refined hullabaloo aforementioned has become a thing of the dazzling past. Our author has been patted on the back for the last time.

An Original by Susy Swipes

HE sits in his office and scans, with bulging eyes, his first assignment. He is presently either convulsed with wild mirth or is stricken dumb with incoherent wrath. He has been assigned to adapt and treat an "original" by one Susy Swipes or Davy Jones of Hollywood. It is an amazing, an incredible document. Its language is almost beyond credence. It is a nightmare patchwork that contains incidents and characters and gags and plots of a hundred or more stories that are horribly reminiscent to the Eminent Author.

A wise and prudent Eminent Author will set right to work upon Susy's or Davy's story. Sometimes, however, he bolts out of his office and dashes across the lot to the opulent administration building, where in ornately luxurious offices the favorites and powers that be hold forth.

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." "Whom the gods destroy they first make mad." Alas! How sadly these adages apply to the Eminent Author in Hollywood as he forces his way into the *sanctum sanctorum* of a supervisor, or even such movie royalty as a producer.

Let us draw a kindly veil over what ensues. We will change the subject.

Talking about supervisors. Some are human beings, speaking the author's own language, possessed of a sense of humor, keen, sympathetic and kind. Others belong to that clan that a departing author (was it not Will Irwin?) quaintly dubbed "the dese and dose and dem boys." These bright young fellows sometimes mistake Maeterlinck for a patent medicine and have been known to reject a story by Victor Hugo because he "keeps a restaurant down town." Usually they have a low opinion of authors, consider them pests and bugs and duck out of their way when they see one coming.

(Continued on page 110)



Foster

At the bottom: George Jean Nathan, then Michael Arlen, Anita Loos, Laurence Stallings and Irvin S. Cobb



Richee

Underwood



(Before) (After)

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Chester Conklin justifies his blowing his own horn by the assertion that music hath charms. But Mary Brian, whose ear is nearest, takes exception to his excuse. It's all accordion, she points out, to what you call music

Butchering Brains

(Continued from page 29)

They are the big guns that the author must propitiate, defer to, conciliate, flatter, beguile, if he would remain in Hollywood.

Golden Rules for Writers

GLADYS UNGER, playwright and author of "Romance," "Starlight" and many other well-known plays, gives the following recipe to aspiring movie writers:

"Study pantomime, fencing, boxing, Yiddish, Russian and German. Forget English, American, reading and writing."

The situation is not devoid of edification to the author. He is filled with unholy joy and admiration as he scans the patent medicine advertisements of his new contemporaries.

I AM AN AUTHOR AND I CAN
PROVE IT!

Thus ingeniously proclaims Bennie Balonsky in a full-page ad in a film trade paper.

I WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW
THAT IT WAS I WHO WROTE:
"I AM YOUR WIFE!"

Thus another Susy Swipes. Her number is legion in Hollywood. She is perched in the softest and plumpest of the seats of the mighty, and sometimes, so I have heard, she is perched upon the knee of a movie executive.

Irvin Cobb is credited with a classic utterance at the end of a chaotic conference. I dare not misquote him, but I do know that his words conveyed a cordial invitation to the manhandlers of his brain product to cut a chunk of their throats and take the trail to a certain city whose temperature is high.

Michael Arlen left Hollywood gasping and smarting.

Hergesheimer studied Hollywood through

his shining specs, with resulting excellent publicity for the charming Aileen Pringle. Clever girl, Aileen. The first of the stars to become known as "The Authors' Friend!"

George Jean Nathan dodged the limelight in the company of a modest blazing star.

Laurence Stallings chucked his tongue in his cheek. Occasionally gargantuan laughter proclaimed his appreciation of the whole large humor of Hollywood.

Once, as scenario editor, I recommended Ellis Parker Butler's classic: "Pigs Is Pigs." I was shouted down with the objection that the censors and Will Hays would never stand for a picture about hogs.

Dixie Wilson blew into Hollywood—if one of bouffant form may be said to blow, waving triumphantly an extraordinary contract. No mere scenario writer was this girl from the Ringling Circus to be; but a full-fledged director—so said Dixie. Three or six months later, Dixie exited as silently as a mouse.

Carl Van Vechten peeped in at the window, cocked a quizzical eyebrow and, tongue in cheek, extolled the virtues of the movie city, which he proposed to send down to posterity via the pages of his next book.

Edmund Goulding Prospers

EDMUND GOULDBING dropped in merely to have a look around. He expected to stay a day or two. He remained to become one of its greatest scenarists and directors. Now he is back in New York, with two of his plays in rehearsal and a novel on the press. He will return to Hollywood. Hollywood is not Hollywood without him, and there are a score of down-and-outers who miss the lift, the encouraging, snappy word and the dollar or two that Eddie was wont to slip into their hands so generously.

"Well, how do you like it?" asked a fa-

mous producer of Clarence Budington Kelland, after he had permitted the author to see the screen version of one of his stories. Falling into the producer's own idiom, Kelland replied:

"I ain't a-going to kiss you!"

Dorothy Farnum reminds one of Anita Loos. She looks like a schoolgirl, a very pretty blonde one, and has the brain of a literary Napoleon. She tripped out of magazine writing and insinuated her way deftly to the very peak of scenario writing. Only master scripts are assigned her. "Beau Brummel," "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," the Garbo opuses, are from her pen. Like Frances Marion, she is possessed of exceptional beauty and brains. Frances Marion, incidentally, is without a doubt the greatest of the scenario writers. She is also a novelist.

Winifred Dunn, who wrote for the better class magazines before the movies captured her, looks like what we imagine *Jane Eyre* did. It seems incredible that this fragile girl is responsible for that epic of a pug, "The Patent-Leather Kid." "Sparrows" is another original of Miss Dunn's.

Donald McGibney stayed long enough to adapt his *Saturday Evening Post* story, "Two Arabian Knights," and hurried back to New York. But Hollywood had gotten into his blood. He is back now. He says he is competing with the butcher, the janitor, the mayor, the plumber and every other person in Hollywood as a scenarist.

Doty Thought Dotty

DOUGLAS DOTY, bespectacled, scholarly high-brow writer and editor of the *Century Magazine*, startled the sober and respectable world of which he was a prized ornament by suddenly breaking the chains and shackles that bound him to his editorial chair and home. He shot out for Hollywood. There he appeared with all the bubbling spirits and jazzy clothes of a college youth. What an exhilarating season followed. The former editor dropped ten years of his age, and even acquired height. He no longer indites high-brow editorials, but sparkling scenarios, and, moreover, he has acquired the prettiest little movie wife imaginable and an adorable Doty Junior.

This, however, is only one and an unusually exceptional instance of a professional writer's successful assimilation into the motion picture industry. The average literary man finds himself quite unable to cope with the viewpoint of the film-makers. Too, he is not infrequently aghast at their conception of him and his work.

Was it not Arthur Stringer, who submitted "Perils of the Deep" to a well-known producer, and was nearly paralyzed when said producer threw it back at him with:

"Naw! Don't want no more stories about pearls!"

Said an Eminent Author to an Eminent Producer:

"May I have the honor of dedicating my new book to you?"

"Certainly," replied the flattered producer. "When do you wish me to be ready and where does the ceremony take place?"

The author was young and he had been born in Australia. The supervisor was also young, and he had been born on Ellis Island. Said the supervisor:

"You come from Australia?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hm. Speak Austrian, heh?"

"Why, no, sir."

"How long have you been in this country?"

"One month."

"What! Where you learn to speak English so quick?"

Do you buy advertised goods?

OF COURSE you do; everybody does. Just run over in your mind the various articles that you have purchased in the last week or the last month. How about foods? Your breakfast fruits, cereals and bacon are all advertised. Probably that is how you first came to know of them—through advertising. Probably the shoes you are wearing, or the dress or suit you have on, are equally well-known advertised makes, and you are proud of them.

In the home. On the floor are rugs and linoleum—the better wearing kinds are extensively advertised. What about the kitchen? Aluminum ware, gas ranges, hot water heaters, dish and clothes, washers, cooking utensils of all kinds—practically everything you use is advertised. You buy advertised products because you have confidence in them. You know that a manufacturer cannot afford to advertise shoddy or unworthy merchandise.

Advertising is one form of insurance. It gives you a feeling of perfect confidence and safety when you ask for an advertised brand, for you know that you will get the quality and service you expect. The name is the guarantee.

The more you read advertising the more you will know about human progress. You will become well posted in almost every line of human endeavor and a canny judge of values. Reading advertisements is a fine habit. Cultivate it.

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