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How
To
Write
Scenarios
And How To Sell Them.

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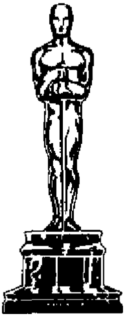

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HOW TO WRITE SCENARIOS

AND

HOW TO SELL THEM

Edited by
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How to Write Scenarios and How to Sell Them

PART I

To many the various names used for a photoplay story are confusing; so let us first get them clearly in mind.

The familiar name is Scenario; this is what the story used to be called at the studios, and still is by the public. At present the studio term Detailed Synopsis is in common use, the two names thus having practically the same meaning.

A Detailed Synopsis is the recital of the plot in story form, containing all the essential details and preferably presented in the same succession of events as are to be followed in the picture. It is always better to write in the present tense, as this makes the story more vivid. It usually contains from 2000 to 5000 words for a standard five-reel drama. When a book or a drama is to be filmed a detailed synopsis of the Plot is first written and from this the Continuity is afterwards constructed. The reason for writing this is that it becomes necessary to first prune away a whole tangle of unessential details, descriptions, conversations, explanations, reflections, which have no screen values, thus permitting the continuity writer to concentrate his attention on such material only as can be used in filming. In fact, the scenario editor would not trust himself to settle on the selection of a book without such an extract, for fear that the style and other unscreenable attractions of the book might warp his judgment, for when stripped of such—to him—useless ornaments, there might not be enough screen values left to fill up the required length of film.

An Outline Synopsis is simply a condensation of the Detailed Synopsis; its only purpose is to give a brief review of the plot, that the readers at the studios may quickly learn the general type of the story, the locations, the cast, the opportunities which it may offer the actors, etc. It should be as short as possible, yet long enough not to defeat its purpose; the average outline story will run to perhaps 500 and not over 1000 words.

The Continuity is the finished script, ready for the director. It is usually not written by the author of the story but by special writers on the studio lot; sometimes the author is qualified to write his own continuity and always he is consulted when within reach, since he best knows his intentions;

but the other contributors to the finished picture must also be consulted from time to time; the production manager about the cost of sets, cast, transportation, costumes; the director about the practicability of certain scenes, and the technical director about the practicability of the proposed sets; the cameraman concerning the probable effect of the photographic features; the electrician; the location man; the title writers; and many others.

The Plot is the story itself. In the novel or the drama it is only the skeleton upon which the real effects are hung. In the photoplay it is—or should be—the whole story, since it must be shown without words and can therefore consist of nothing but action, motion, physical evidence.

Screen Values are that part of any story which can be used on the screen; you cannot show what is going on inside the heads of your characters, except by making them do something visible; in the same manner you cannot show the relationships or intentions or states of mind. But, more particularly, by screen values is meant something striking, picturesque, spectacular, something that will look good as a picture—perhaps a fight, a change of situation shown in facial expression, a daring "stunt" or a fine landscape effect. Only a small portion of a novel or drama has any screen value, as a rule.

Main Title explains itself. It is only in rare cases the author's original title is finally adopted for the picture. While it is being filmed a Working Title is used which is preliminary, while the final title is being decided upon.

The Sub-Title or Caption is the necessary evil without which no story worth telling could be told. It must not be abused since the audience comes to a theatre to see a play, not to read about it. It is used where it would otherwise be impossible or difficult to follow the plot and can be suggested in the detailed synopsis by short conversation or a few words outlining the idea. In the continuity it is usually given in full—in colored ink—but only as a suggestion; the final titles are written sometimes by the author, but mostly by special title writers employed by the studio, after the film is completed, edited and cut. For conversations thrown on the screen the word Spoken Title is used.

The Insert is any printed or written document shown on the screen in the telling of the story; a letter, will, contract, plan, picture, or the needed portion of one.

This is about as much in the way of technical terms as the writer of the photoplay story needs to keep in mind. The continuity writer must know them all.

PART II

The photoplay is unlike any art heretofore known. Essentially it is pantomine—a story told in gesture; but, were it nothing else, it would have to limit itself to the simplest of tales, because no other kind could be made plain to the audience. But it disposes of other resources which permit it much wider liberties than ever were available to the speaking stage. The principals are: Unlimited changes of location and of time, with the consequent rapid succession of separate actions; and this, in turn, makes it possible to create associations of ideas with a vividness impossible on the speaking stage. Furthermore, these actions can be started and cut at any point, giving wide liberty to suggestion. In one scene you show the woman telephoning to the man, hundreds of miles distant, and by facial expression or a wide choice of other means indicating a refusal; immediately you cut back to the man who nervelessly drops the receiver and picks up a revolver; here you cut. Is he going to shoot himself? You can see how suspense, mystery, sustained interest, can be created and combined without end; this could not be done on the stage. Both the man and the woman could not be shown immediately one after the other; the man would have to continue his motion: either shoot or do some other definite thing, except perhaps once, at the end of an act, leaving nothing to imagination. In pictures such effects can be shuffled back and forth without limit.

The close-up of an insert is another prerogative of the picture; a letter, newspaper, locket, photograph, small mechanical device, can be shown in detail and ad libitum. On the stage some clumsy device must be employed to communicate to the audience the contents of a letter; somebody must be made to read it aloud. The inside of a clock, a purse, or a closed sack, the struggle of a diver fathoms deep at the bottom of the ocean, the clouds alternately concealing and revealing a flying machine, a mouse gnawing a rope under the mane of a lion, a thousand such possible knots in the plot, on which the whole story may hinge, can be brought into the picture; and you can start and stop all this just at the point where it will do most good.

The countless photographic tricks, daily being invented and improved; multiple exposures, visions, cut-backs, fade-outs, back-cranking, etc., permit of further aids to imagination which go very far toward overcoming limitations in direct audible expression. And, lastly, the most potent of all Aids-to-the-Perplexed-Author: the Sub-Title. It is his speech, otherwise denied to him. It has one great advantage over the stage language: it can talk directly to the audience.

On the stage you must put the words into some character's mouth, which often can only be done clumsily, in soliloquies, asides, irrelevant remarks, weakening the appearance of plausibility; in the pictures you can tell of the relations, intentions, thoughts, etc., impersonally, thus greatly facilitating your task of taking the audience into your confidence. On the other hand, though, the sub-title labors under an enormous handicap it is an illegitimate device, an interloper; it is admitted on suffrance only, because it cannot be dispensed with. It really has no valid excuse except that of necessity; for no one would disturb himself and pay the price of admission to read the sub-titles. The spectator came to see the show; to watch the story happen before him; to gloat over the sufferings of real people; to sympathize with them; to feel superior to them; to laugh, to hate or to love them.

The photoplay will have to be considered as a department of the drama, and the general principles governing dramatic construction will have to constitute the foundation of our course; from these considerations likewise will be deducted the fundamental need of the scenarist; namely, visualization, the lack of which spoils every chance an otherwise good story might have as a scenario; probably nine stories out of ten sent in to the writer woefully fall down in this most important element. Accordingly, a part of this course will be devoted to these subjects.

PART III

Most of the beginners in Photoplay writing have been used to tell, read or write stories, and the habit of telling stories in a story-telling way persists. From this results the commonest fault of their work.

When you tell a story you can explain what your characters are, or think, or think of doing; their relations or intentions; why they do this or that, or fail to do it; what they might or would do if so-and-so happened. You can explain in detail the lay of the land, the weather, or the humor of the parties, their characters and past lives; or the influence of the stars on their destinies. In fact, you can tell anything that can be told in words—there is nothing to stop you, save the patience of the listener.

When you come to the spoken drama, you still can tell almost anything you wish in words, but not quite so freely this time. Your freedom of speech is now limited by the fact that you cannot talk to your listeners directly; you must put your words in the mouths of the actors; and this limits you considerably, because the speech must agree with the character and situation of the persons whom the actors represent. Many things that you would have liked to explain to the audience, in order to make your meaning clear, must remain unsaid; and other means must be provided to "get over" what you might have liked to state directly.

But, when you get down to the motion picture, your freedom of speech is practically nil. There is only one way to make use of words: the Sub-Title, and this should be used as sparingly as possible—just enough to escape making the picture meaningless; and, occasionally, to emphasize something of importance, such as a good joke, or some "baby-talk" in affecting scenes with children, or something where the effect will be materially heightened by the introduction of just a few carefully chosen words. All the rest must be "gotten over" in the picture itself.

From this results the most important habit to be acquired when conceiving a photoplay story: to think, not in words, but in pictures on the screen, from the very first moment your idea arises in your brain. If you don't do this, your composition will inevitably be lame as a picture story, or else it will require a lot of tinkering to translate it from a word conception into a picture story. It will be necessary to keep making changes and corrections; invent new things to make the old one plausible; perhaps introduce new characters; explain explanations; change locations or circumstances; and in the end, your story is pretty sure to come out unconvincing, a patch work; a twisted or incomplete thing.

Now, suppose that from the very first, when you begin to think of your main character or circumstance, from which the story is to develop itself, you imagine it on the screen: how this or that will look as a picture, what picture will come next, what is to follow to explain the first picture, and so on; you will soon find that the entire idea will not follow the same track as it would as a spoken story. The characters will do different things; certain matters will be set aside entirely as impossible or undesirable on the screen; others will suggest themselves for their screen value; such a happening will bring in its wake such another; and soon you will find that the entire plot will not be the same. In other words, the two kinds of stories will fundamentally differ. Many very good spoken stories cannot be made into good screen productions at all, while certain excellent screen spectacles would make very indifferent word stories.

For, remember, a story grows like a tree, from the seed. First, the germ idea; from this a shoot; the direction and quality of that shoot will determine the character of the main trunk; this will suggest the first branches; the direction of each branch will call for certain secondary branches, which would diverge widely if the original idea had been different. The entire structure is not the same, according to the habit of thought that developed it.

And this is the most important ability needed by the photoplaywright. It is called visualization—the power to think in pictures, instead of words. This power can be developed by any intelligent person. All of us possess it to some extent already. Before you even mention a thing its image was present in your mind first, but perhaps only dimly. The habit of talking has pushed this natural ability into the background; we paid no special attention to it. But it is constantly present in all of us; in fact, the least educated people, who can barely express their ideas in words, are most apt to see clearly such limited ideas as they are capable of. When a dog is hungry he does not think of the word "bone;" he sees the bone itself in his mind; he thinks entirely in pictures.

But the dog is not alone in being thus endowed; the poetical genius is to a great extent based on the same power. Only, the poet must also possess such a command of his tools—the words—that by their skillful use he can evoke in our brains the images, emotions, ideas, aspirations seen or felt by him, so as to cause us all to share them in common.

This latter quality is needed only in a very low degree by the photoplaywright: just enough to clearly indicate his meaning; the quality of his language is immaterial. But the power to visualize is all-important; and therein lies the whole secret of this new art which we are now studying.

Now, how can we bring forth and develop this power?

I think I have already outlined this. If you were born that way and find it hard to get rid of the habit of conceiving your plots in word story form, try now to forget it; shut your eyes and think yourself in a picture theatre; now start building up your story again. For an example, let us begin with a comedy.

"Suppose we take an engaged couple, very much in love and soon to be married. Now, let us put all sorts of difficulties in their way, so that the marriage will appear impossible or very far off. Despair of the couple. Then we will make something happen that will make the difficulties appear straightened out. Couple rejoicing. Again, something happens to almost make the marriage impossible. And, in the end, since this is to be a comedy, we will get everything to come out satisfactorily and everybody made happy."

But this has been used in comedies many times before. The whole novelty must consist in the particular complications that interfere with the marriage. What shall they be? Here is where the author will have to start some real thinking.

"Well, this is an age of business; more people are interested in some business troubles than in any other kind, because this is more apt to come close to their own lives. We will get the prospective groom into business difficulties. I've got it! Some schemer will get him inveigled into a fraudulent enterprise in which his and his bride's fortune will be sunk, and then we will make the fraud turn out to be a real money maker, and save the situation. What will be the scheme? Will the schemer be a real villain to be punished in the end? No, I guess not; this is to be a comedy; let's try to manage it in such a way that he may start out to be a rogue, but in the end turn out not quite so bad a fellow and keep the sympathy of the audience. This will not spoil the general good feeling I am after."

The trouble now is to devise such a scheme—and this is not easy.

"Let's see. Suppose we get him into a salted mine scheme—no, that won't do; it has been done to death in the pictures. How about some swindle connected with the aircraft promotion? I guess not; I don't know much about the flying game; the producing company may object to the expense of using airplanes; and then, I don't seem to see just what kind of fraud could be managed in the way I want it. Suppose then, we use the stock market? Hold on—why not artificial rubber? And a clever machine that will fool the experts? And then, the trust buys up the formula and—no, that won't do. The trust is bound to discover the fraud, and then our hero will be in real trouble and it will be difficult to get him out of it. But suppose we make them all guilty? So that nobody can prosecute anybody else—but how?

"Just a minute—just a minute. Now, the inventor uses a piece of real rubber in a false bottom; the mails are flooded with circulars—money pours in—the innocent lover is told he will be held guilty of complicity—fraudulent use of the mails—

a lawyer friend tries to save him—apparently no escape—tells him to pretend madness—Great! This will make a wonderful opportunity for a good comedian—I see it all now!"

Or perhaps the idea started from another angle. Instead of the two lovers, the starting point might have been artificial rubber, suggested by some chance remark, or a store sign, newspaper item, anything. Then the train of thought might have run as follows:

"Artificial rubber is what they are all trying to invent, and would mean no end of money—ought to make a good scheme to hang all sorts of situations upon—fellow pretends to invent it—gets another fellow to put up the money—this will be the lover—then, to keep the sympathy of the audience, he will have to be an innocent victim of the fraud—but he also must not be a fool—so we will have to devise a pretty clever scheme—etc."

Here let us go back to our visualization.

If this was to be just a story, we could start out telling it in almost any way we wish. Probably the best device would be to keep the false bottom in the rubber machine for the last, and make this a mystery story—keep the reader guessing whether Trueman is or is not a fraud; whether Bob has guilty knowledge of the swindle; how Trueman manages to fool the trust experts. Very likely, the Uncle or Aunt might not come to the author's mind at all, and the $50,000 stock certificate would then be left out altogether. Or, on the other hand, this very transaction might look to him like a trump card of the whole story, and other characters be introduced to develop it, because the mystery might be much more effective in a recital than in a dramatic structure, while the lunatic scenes are beyond question a trump card if acted by a clever comedian. Accordingly, other characters and other situations would gradually arise in the author's mind, as he went on spinning the web of his story.

Naturally, he would first have to make the reader acquainted with the characters and their troubles. So probably he would start out by telling that Bob is a fine young fellow at heart, but heretofore had not been successful in business for such-and-such reasons; then he would tell of his home and relatives; of Lucille's folks and the love of the young pair, etc.—leisurely, in a hit-or-miss order, circumstantially, so that there may arise no misunderstanding in the reader's mind. Then he would come to Trueman, and have the young man with money and no business, meet the irresponsible rogue with a scheme and no money; describe the scheme in detail; explain

Trueman's past career, which would lay a foundation for his present hard straights, etc.

But we are devising a photoplay, and all this becomes so much rubbish, of no earthly use on the screen; only interminable sub-titles could explain it; so what are we to do?

Shut your eyes and watch the screen in your imagination. Throw on the one, two, three principal characters and let them move along; they will do the rest for you themselves. Once you get them into the particular situation which is to be your starting point, you will see how easily they will work for you, from step to step, from the cocoon to the butterfly. One thing will naturally make the next thing a plain necessity; but have care that your people be real people, just such as you know personally, or they will not behave like anything ever seen on earth; and never lose sight of some clever opportunity to make yourself laugh or weep or sympathize, feel sorry for or indignant against somebody. All this will come easily and save you that much headache; real people get into sad or funny situations at every step, if they really are real, and if, right in the beginning, you can bring them out in a tangle of circumstance or a peck of trouble. Don't worry about the spectator; that most important person will take care of himself, provided you are having a good time as you go along.

But now, how are you going to bring your people out so that anybody can at once see what they are about? You have decided to make the two lovers the principal characters and to get the young man inveigled into Trueman's fraud. This is our start. How the various incidents are to follow each other and the situation is to develop, cannot be discussed as yet. We are now only concerned with the way our story will differ if visualized from the beginning.

So, instead of telling all about Bob, Lucille, Trueman, we simply plant them on the screen. We must make the audience see that they are soon to be married and that Trueman is the man of the scheme. How? Simply make this a reception in their honor where all our people are present, doing and saying things which explain everything at a glance. Instead of talking about them, we bring them right out and make them do the rest. From the scheming Trueman and his victims, we naturally will think of some one not so enthusiastic, and this will bring in the Uncle for contrast. The Uncle might be an old bachelor, but let's try an Aunt for him; we can keep her in reserve until we see if we cannot give her something to do later on. The guests naturally belong to the occasion; we will use them by making them say things that will put the audience wise.

Now, the banquet is over. What shall we use on the screen next? The Uncle has been acting quite suspiciously and taking an important part in all the doings—he did it himself, mind you, not you, the author. Uncle's house must be next. The office of the rubber company will immediately suggest itself as the necessary thing after that; and the rest just as naturally.

Now, keep putting all this on paper, just as it comes to you—the style, or even grammar, are of small importance—you can polish them later if you know how.

This is visualization, which makes all the difference between the two kinds of stories, which determines the direction of your plot and almost invariably leads it away from the wordy arts. Whether the result will come out a masterpiece will depend on how much of a genius you may be, but at least it will be built up in logical sequence; it will be natural, convincing, and as good as yourself.

PART IV

The very essence of any art is that the rules which tradition builds up for it must be upset from time to time. As final tribunal, an art must appeal to the multitude; to appeal it must interest; to interest it must follow, in one respect or another, formerly untrodden paths. When any rule is closely followed in one play after another, the audiences end by knowing what will happen in advance; mostly without knowing anything about the rule, they become too familiar with the hidden strings that make the show go. Result: interest flags, the plays fail to draw. Then comes along some talented writer, upsets the rule and scandalizes the rule professors into fits. But the play becomes a great success, and the professors find themselves out in the cold, wondering what the world is coming to.

The rules of dramatic construction have been solidly formulated by the early Greeks and are as true today as they were then. Nevertheless, Edward Knoblock's "Milestones" was highly successful after breaking most rules; Griffith's "Intolerance" has no connected dramatic structure to speak of; Bernard Shaw breaks rules as a matter of faith, and recently Sacha Guitry, the great French comedian, produced in Paris a most gripping and amusing play without any plot at all. All were great successes and all are good art. They give what the public has a right to expect: the unexpected. But only a master can afford to be thus truly original, to disregard rules without making a mess of it. And, at that, to be too original for the taste of the day, ends in a great success—after the master is dead; generally a fine thing for his heirs or the owners of his work, but it did not do him much good when he needed a steak or shoes for the baby. Beside, we cannot all be masters; where one great film appears, every year or so, several thousand must be produced betweentimes to keep the theatres going, and somebody must write the stories for them. And there are certain well defined rules which will bring forth sure-fire success if the story material is cleverly handled.

The born masters rarely read instruction courses; they go to sleep over rules; they don't worry over somebody else's productions; theory means little to them; they furnish the theorist the materials from which he makes his theories. When they learn any rules at all, it is unconsciously, by devouring the works of other masters, not as study, but because they love it. Therefore, no instruction books can or need be written that will do the great talent much good and it is idle to quote such or such great work as being a contradiction to some well-established rule. We must limit ourselves to the average author, of average talent, earnest enough to ardently desire success and of sufficint strength of will to acquire the fundamentals of his art, by some study and much assiduous practice of the art itself. This has been done many times and can be done again, and no art has ever offered such prompt and enormous rewards, both pecuniary and in glory, because no art has ever reached the multitude so quickly, in such great masses, in such direct appeal.

PART V

Among the first rules is unity of action. The original Greek teaching recommends three unities as desirable in drama: unity of time, place and action. This means that a dramatic plot is most effective when the entire story occurs within twenty-four hours, in the same location, and only a single tale is presented. All this is true to this extent: it concentrates the attention of the audience, thus making their impressions more intense.

In the motion picture the unity of place is disregarded altogether. Things move too rapidly, too nervously; it would be insufferably monotonous to see the same scene throughout; besides, the wonderful facilities of the pictures—as contrasted with the rigid limitations of the bare open stage of the Greeks—make the rapid and endless change of locations a great feature of the art. Still, nothing should be overdone, and the expense of too many scenes must also be considered; so taste and judgment must dictate the right measure, as in everything else.

The unity of time should not be so cavalierly dismissed. In many pictures it is, but it is doubtful whether the story would not have been improved by greater condensation of the time of action; it all depends on the subject. It is a common fault of the amateur to begin a picture with one generation; kill them off; continue with the children and often bring in their grand-children, or even their descendants, to wind up the mess. Victor Hugo does this in his "Les Burgraves" and Knoblock in his "Milestones," but we are not of these. The ordinary good picture limits the time of action as much as the subject will permit without injury. The shorter the time, the easier the spectator can follow the story, and concentrated attention is the most powerful aid to the force of the impression made. Therefore: limit the time in which the story occurs as far as you can, without crippling the story. The motion picture permits much wider liberty in that respect than does the stage, for mechanical reasons; you can carry your story backward and forward in time as you please, but this is the very reason why it is so easy to abuse this facility and quite often results in making the script impossible, because the story gets itself so draggy and complicated that the audience is all mixed up as to who is who and unable to follow the long-drawn-out chronology of what you are trying to tell them. In fact, many scenario readers will quit reading as soon as you begin to drag in "visions" and carry the story back to what happened years before, this having been overdone in the past. But it is a mistake due to the natural excess of reaction; if the story itself is good, such legitimate devices, used with proper discretion, ought not to disqualify it.

But, on the unity of action we stand adamant. The story must be one story. This requires rather extended qualifications.

We all love to tell and listen to anecdotes. A novel, play or motion picture story is nothing else; only, they are bigger, more elaborate, and, being intended for a wide and paying audience, should be of high quality. Now, what is the chief end in telling an anecdote? How do you obtain your effect? What do you have to watch out for? Your story must end in a "point"—the telling of it must be a preparation for that point, it must lead up to it, as cleverly as you can manage; you must try to keep your listeners excited—in suspense—wondering all along what the point is going to be. Then you spring the point on them; and the more of a surprise you can manage to make it the greater the success. Otherwise your story is pointless, it falls flat. There is a feeling of awkwardness; I can think of no occasion when one feels so like a fool as when the expected laugh or grateful relaxation, after the tension of expectancy, fails to realize. Such anecdotes are mostly funny stories, because they must be short and it is difficult to sufficiently prepare the listeners in a few minutes for serious emotions, but a pathetic story is subject to exactly the same rules of progression.

If you will keep this in mind you will easily realize what is meant by unity of action. Suppose you start telling your story. You begin to lead up to the point; then you switch off onto something you mentioned in the telling and begin to develop that; perhaps again stop in the middle and start telling about some other circumstance which came up. What happens? Your listeners get all mixed up; you make them expect an amusing or affecting point and keep disappointing them; your story gets nowhere; possibly you, too, lose your thread and finish in a feeble flopping around, without rhyme or reason. The corking story which you had in mind when you first started out winds up in a fizzle. And when sometimes you manage to get back to the original story, the effect is weakened or spoiled altogether, because by that time the audience has recovered from the impression of expectancy which you first created—your story is not compact. True, that occassionally a very skillful story teller may use that very device to prolong and heighten the expectancy, but he must be very skillful indeed not to miss fire by attempting too much. This has happened to all of us and is the entire secret of any story, whether it takes five minutes or the full evening to tell, whether in a book, or the stage or in pictures.

The "point" is called in drama the climax; the expectancy suspense.

A homely illustration will make this still plainer. Mrs. Jones starts to tell this well-known anecdote: Johnny did not behave; his mother has to spank him; to save his pride and teach him that she is only spanking him out of necessity and for his own good she says: "It hurts me more to be obliged to spank you than it hurts you." "Yes," sobs out Johnny, "but not in the same place!"

Now, Mrs. Jones begins: "There was once a little boy by the name of Johnny, and his mother's name was Mrs. Abernethy; and he had a grandfather who, etc., etc., etc. And his mother had all kinds of trouble with him. They had lived on Chestnut street for thirty-seven years, in the same block with Dr. Green, the same one who so frightfully butchered up Mrs. Softley when she was operated on for appendicitis, and the poor woman never did need any operation in the world, because any fool knows perfectly well, etc., etc., etc." Mrs. Jones is getting nowhere, because she is going to too many places at the same time, and when she finally will get to her climax the audience will most likely be asleep.

But Mrs. Smith is a clever woman and she wants to make a real story out of the bald, shop-worn anecdote. She wants to entertain her guests with that story for, say, fifteen minutes. This is the size of her frame. How will she proceed? She must complicate her story; but every single thing she introduces must be closely related to it and lead up to that final climax, so as to keep her guests constantly on the qui vive—excited, under suspense—never losing sight of the intended climax. Something like this:

"A young gentleman of eight by the name of Johnny was continually getting himself into difficulties; if it was not this it was that (amplify this by two contrasting examples of his mischieviousness, both short and both relating to something he did to his sister's beau, thus introducing two new characters). Mother a number of times had threatened to spank him but never could steel herself to real action, at the last moment relenting or disarmed by the young gentleman's ingenious explanations. One evening sister was being groomed for her first real ball. Johnny was more excited by the bustle in sister's room than any one and kept watching behind doors and under beds for his opportunity, etc. From previous observation he knew the beau would come in the front hall and sister would run out to meet him, crossing a small rug on the slippery floor. At last Johnny hid in a stair recess, after tying a thread to the fringe of the rug. The beau appears smiling; sister rushes over the rug; Johnny pulls the thread; sister bumps into beau's arms, scratching her nose against the studs on his bosom and spoiling her artistic make-up with tears. The beau consoles her: "It hurts me more to see you cry than it hurt that sweet little nosie." Johnny and mother both snicker in their separate vantage points. Johnny sneaks around the dining room, and knowing the exact spot habitually occupied by the lovers on such occasions, liberally smears part of the settee in the parlor with honey and hides behind it. Beau leads the weeping belle to the settee for the customary consolation. When he attempts to rise there is an ominous tearing swish; his evening coat is ruined. He is dismayed; sister now retorts: "It hurts me more to see your face than it hurt the coat." Exasperated at last, mother now loses her temper and administers a vigorous spanking to Mr. Johnny, as in the previous version, but softens on sight of his tears and says: "It hurts me more, etc."

Now, what has happened? The anecdote has risen to the dignity of a story. All previous action leads up to the main climax and heightens its effect. New characters and new incidents had to be introduced, to fill out the proposed frame, but they were integrally related to the story and only used because they served our purpose: to make the climax as effective as our imagination could contrive. Of course, Mrs. Smith had to invent all these subsidiary elements, and for that very reason, the trite little old story has now become her own production—an original creation—whereas Mrs. Jones has made a lamentable mess of her attempt because she did not keep the main idea—her climax—unswervingly in view, although Dr. Green's operations, etc., may have been quite interesting in themselves, in another place with other connections. It may appear here that we are confounding climax with theme, but of this we will speak farther on.

I think we now have the idea of unity of action. If there is no well-knit, compact, single action—with as many secondary complications as you may wish, but all closely related to it—your play, or photoplay, or message, or theme, lesson or moral, will fall flat.

Of the thousands of scripts reaching the writer not over one-tenth show any clear conception of this vital matter, making the rest quite hopeless, just for that.

PART VI

Besides the climax, quite a number of other fine points may be brought forth in discussing the dramatic rules, such as crisis, rising and falling action, anti-climax, etc. But all of these will naturally be applied if you keep the "point" of your story unswervingly in mind; so we need not bother with them here. But the word theme is often obscure to the beginner;

we will find though that even this will unconsciously fall into its proper place, if you once decide what your point—climax—is to be and stick to it from beginning to end.

In every story there is a theme, whether the author realizes this or not; only, the more serious the play the greater importance does this theme acquire; and just as the entire structure must be one story so should it also have one theme, to save it from vagueness, from aimless wandering, to make it compact and keep the attention of the audience concentrated. A theme is the message, the moral, the main idea which the story is to illustrate; if the climax is kept in sight, the theme will stand out without any effort, because it will be found to be the very purpose of your point to bring it out. The less you think of that theme and the more of the climax, the stronger the impression of the theme. It might be compared to the splendid acting of children when they do it at home, not to show off, but just for their own amusement, to give the natural dramatic instinct expression, as compared with the same acting on the stage or before an audience of strangers, when it becomes an unmitigated nuisance because it is then self-conscious, forced, unnatural. In our anecdote we did not bother about the theme at all; yet it had one. The comedy effect was created by the desire of the mother to exemplify to the boy the spiritual effect of the spanking on herself, while the boy was only thinking of the very concrete location and the physical feeling of it on his own precious skin. This contrast is the theme; it was this that made us laugh, although few of the listeners would have any clear idea of it. They simply laugh and let it go at that; and a theme treated by the author in the same spirit will produce the best story. When a theme of any importance is consciously harped upon in a play it becomes a tedious, strained thing; a sermon without its directness and authority, a false pretense. But the most lofty and abstruse thoughts may be treated, beyond all resources of a direct sermon, and produce an unforgetable impression on the audience, if the author himself is intensely impregnated with his theme, but does not make a conscious attempt to impart it, simply limiting himself to the telling of a story.

Now, there are three ways in which a story first germinates in the mind of an author; incident, character and theme. Something happens in life or is read somewhere; or a striking personality, real or imaginary, attracts attention; or, finally, an idea, a problem, some desired reform or condemned iniquity or oddity calls for expression. The author then proceeds to build a story from one of these starting points, in accordance with his particular mental habits. Nevertheless, no matter how he starts, his story must of necessity contain all three of these elements; somebody in it must be doing something with some purpose in view; the latter is the theme. Apparently it may not seem that way; the character may, for instance, set out to make money, or find a lost mine, or gain the love of another, or free himself of some physical or mental load; the money, the mine, the love, the load are not the real purport of the story; if any story is interesting, if it has a "point" at all, you will find that all these are simply the means which the story employs to illustrate some general truth—a theme; try to leave out that theme and you will find that you simply cannot construct a story that will have any interest, that will be worth telling. Thus we get back to our anecdote with its point. Get a story with a good point in it, keep the point steadfastly in mind, and both your climax and your theme will take care of themselves.

Probably the easiest way to get a living, convincing story is to start from an incident. Once you come across something of real interest that actually happened, or just rose in your imagination, the characters will naturally suggest themselves, and the theme simply will be there if the incident itself is any good.

Start from character is more difficult because in pictures, to introduce them, you must show the characters doing something, moving about, and not just talking, as they might on the stage; therefore incidents will have to be devised, combined ,selected and rejected to suit the character. There is then a strong temptation to include scenes merely to identify the characters and it is found later very difficult to make these a part of the story proper.

The most difficult is the start from the theme. Many professionals advise this because theme is the very soul of the story, but probably it has spoiled more stories than any other professional fallacy. When you squirm in your seat at some absurd action on the screen it is sometimes due to the desire of producing a thriller with cheap, startling scenic effects, but mostly because the author has a theory settled in advance—a theme—and now is trying, by hook or crook, to bend his characters and his plot to prove his theme.

Let us try again an illustration of some extreme kind, to make this quite plain.

We will say that you are a fanatic on the subject of free love; you believe in it and want to prove that you are right, by means of a picture; this is your theme; legalized marriage is a failure; free love is the rule in nature and will cure humans of all their ills. But, of course, all this is simply words, an idea, not a picture. You may make a sub-title of it, but this is no picture either, and such a bald statement will convince nobody. You must prove it by having actual people do something on the screen that will make the spectator reach this conclusion; in other words, it is not you but the people on the screen who have to prove it, and the more real the people, the more natural their actions, the easier it will be to convince the spectator that what they are doing is human, natural—and therefore right. Your theme may be entirely wrong, even nonsensical, but if you can manage to lend a touch of reality to your people the spectator will be impressed and made to think. He will say to himself: "These are real people, things do happen this way, there must be something in the idea." So you begin to figure: what kind of people and what kind of a story will prove my contention? Probably we will do best by having a couple whose marriage is a failure. Do I know such a couple? Plenty of them. We will pick out the Joneses. They have been snapping at each other for twenty years and both living in a true hell since their marriage, but their mutual love for their children prevents a separation. Or perhaps, as often happens, a lack of courage for decisive action, on one or both sides, stands in the way. Now, we must show happy free love. There are the Smiths who are the living illustration of happy free love. Yet, we know this cannot last; if ever there are children the prevailing social conditions will soon bring on difficulties in their way; to prove they are right we must show society to be in the wrong. Shall the Smiths have any children?

Now, in order to have one story, one action, both couples must be directly concerned in the climax; what is that climax going to be?

There must be a climax; something violent or tense, something of great importance to the lives of the characters, if the story is to be of any interest; but the minute you place these couples face to face for the clash, the decisive struggle, you will see so many complications, leading to such unexpected conclusions that the utmost skill only might arrange it all into a logical, natural continuity of incidents. Here is the difficulty for the beginner. Quite often seasoned professionals, carried away by the recent success of some photoplay which exploited some sensational theme, are commissioned to devise a similar theme of their own and hang a story on it; despite all their skill and experience, despite lavish support from the business office and a big price paid for the story, only in rarest instances does the photoplay prove a success; absurd, unnatural, forced, untrue-to-life situations usually abound in them, leaving the student wandering that such a story could be signed with such a name.

PART VII

Now, remember, while some kind of a theme always exists in every story that is not altogether a crazy jumble, in the lighter types of comedies it is often of such light weight that it requires an effort to pick it out. We often hear that an out-and-out slapstick farce has no theme at all; nevertheless, some moral, some kind of a connecting idea must be there to bind the gags and stunts together, or it will become tiresome after a few minutes. As the theme becomes of greater import in the story so does the latter rise in the dramatic scale, from the lighter comedy to heavy drama.

But, whatever it is, on the screen it must be expressed in action. This word constantly recurs in all criticism of amateur work: insufficient action.

The reason of this common mistake is the confusion of plot and theme.

A script is written containing an excellent theme—and the author thinks he has a photoplay. But a theme is not a story; it is simply an idea, a basis, for one; the real story is still to be invented. A theme cannot be photographed; it does not move. Only things do; so it may be said that while all of the photoplay must concern itself with physical things in motion, the theme is the one element in it which dominates all but remains invisible.

Pantomime and photoplay are the two arts which depend altogether on two means of expression: background and action. You can show nothing else on the screen but the locality, the scenery, and the motion of the actors. For a few seconds the actor may remain motionless, but this will only serve as a passing moment, between two motions. Physical motion must express everything: character, situation, thoughts, intentions, decisions, plans, every part of the story. And physical motion is action, although dramatically there is some difference. On the speaking stage you may show two or more people quietly sitting and talking—and a great deal of dramatic action may be going on all the time, because they may be saying something to each other materially affecting their respective positions. For instance: the man may be telling the woman that he loves her; the woman replies she does not love him; he declares he will commit suicide. All this is action; it advances the play; something of importance is happening which may change the entire course of life of the characters, although they may not have moved a muscle. In the photoplay this would have no screen value, no meaning; we would not know what they are talking about, save through a lot of titles which are of little effect on the audience for any main action. The story must be told on the screen. From this we conclude:

Dramatic action is everything that happens in the play to forward the plot; that is of importance to the positions of the characters as regards the play. And:

All such action in a photoplay can only be expressed through physical motion or sub-titles, the latter only to be used when it cannot be avoided.

Therefore: No story is suitable for a photoplay that cannot be told in physical motion. This motion does not necessarily need be violent; a man just intensely staring at a guilty crook who thus ends the scene by confessing will make a tense situation. But too much quiet motion ends by being monotonous and a break by something violent or something that does not often happen in everyday life and yet is entirely probable, gives a welcome relief.

Several times already we mentioned that your story must be chiefly measured by your own sense of what is interesting; however, the author's unaided instinct may not always be reliable, particularly for stories from real life or some pet yarn of his in which he has taken so much personal interest that he is blinded by his own enthusiasm to the effect which they may produce on a crowd of strangers. There is a yardstick by which this may be measured; it is suspense.

It should, in a greater or lesser degree, run throughout the story, but must naturally be highest at the highest point: the climax. Ask yourself: "Will they be waiting here for something to happen? Will they be expectant? holding back their breath; excited?" If you feel that they will your story is all right. A short example may make this point plainer. We will say we are watching a mined rock which is to be split. The splitting of the rock is the purpose, the moral, the theme. The necessary preparations are the introduction. The lighting of the fuse starts the suspense; as we watch the fuse sputter, hiss, apparently die down and flare up again, with our breath drawn in and fingers stopping the ears, we are in suspense. Each sputter is a lesser climax; there may be some preliminary rumblings—we shiver—this is terror, so dear to Greek tragedy At last comes the big explosion—the climax. There is a column of smoke, a big noise, rocks flying through the air. The suspense is over; the big moment passed; the tension relieved But we may still be watching with some interest the dissolving column of smoke, the way the fragments are settling down the cleavage of the rock. This latter action is called the anticlimax. Some stories need it, in order to satisfy the curiosity of the audience as to the final disposition of the principal characters in whom by this time they ought to have a personal interest. In spoken drama often the last act is thus reserved and much skill is needed to revive the interest of the audience after the reaction of the climax. But in photoplay stories it is desirable to cut this down as much as the plot will stand, since the action must move much faster and an abrupt but conclusive ending will leave a stronger impression.

Imagine now, that while you are all excited watching that fuse, someone is trying to explain to you the composition of the rock, the lay of the ground, the kind of explosive used, the reasons for splitting the rock. Will not this make you impatient and resentful of the interruption at the wrong time? The same effect is produced in your story if you find it necessary to intrude with explanations and introductions after the main action is well started. It used to be the fashion of breaking the action with a lot of visions, cut-backs, etc. This is now very little used and the entire introduction of the story should be gotten over in the beginning, before the interest of the spectator is well engaged in the main story. Sometimes it cannot entirely be avoided, of course.

So, in conclusion of our study of dramatic rules, we will simply state that the safest road for the beginner is not to pay much attention to them, but to rely mainly on his own sense whether he has a good story. If he has not, why, then it's of no use to start at all; rules won't make it good. But, in building up your plot for a photoplay, this much may be suggested:

Fix your mind on the highest point of the action and have that point clearly settled from the first; that one incident in which the fate of the characters—insofar as the story is concerned—is decided; where the characters as well as the audience are most excited, tense, awaiting the turn of the Fates—is it going to crash this way or that? Never lose sight of that climax and the rest will be most likely to arrange itself in a logical, natural manner. As to the theme, either don't bother with it at all because it will take care of itself if the climax is a strong one, or else, if it happens to be of predominating importance in the story, first get your mind full of that theme, consider it in the light of all sorts of illustrations, how it would work out in life in such and such cases, and then, as soon as you begin to pass to the actual story and get your characters to move on the screen, forget your theme and think only of what the characters naturally would do if placed in the given situation. The less you try to prove your theme the more convincing it will come out in the story, provided your characters and your climax are well visualized.

PART VIII

There is only one definite piece of advice that I have to give to the amateur writer for the screen; don't attempt to write continuities. That is a job more technical than creative, and it is a technique that requires years to learn—a technique perhaps more difficult than that of the drama. It is a technique, moreover, almost impossible to acquire outside of a motion picture studio, where there is the opportunity to learn the various angles of practical production, the many branches that go into making of motion pictures, the limitations of the camera, the restrictions of commerce and censorship, the possibilities of lighting and trickery, the flow and ebb, the exposition, development, climax and denouncement, the introduction of character and the fullest use of the character until that character is definitely and finally disposed of, and a thousand other details which only experience can give.

In writing for the screen forget all complicated technique and create—a story. There are a few fundamental rules, observance of which will give your story a far greater chance of acceptance.

Write your story simply, as simply as you can. Write it as you would tell it to someone sitting opposite you, reciting the story, the important happenings, the characters of your people. Don't try to embelish your story to thrill the reader by your knowledge of grand-iloquent phraseology. You only befog the issue, confuse the reader and cause him to strain in an attempt to peer through a cloudy mist at what is really important. Think in terms of action.

Avoid telling your story, the development of your characters, in speech. Speech (titles) may be necessary; it probable is; but, except here and there, it is your least interesting medium. Action, movement, those things are vital. When in a motion picture theatre a patron seldom takes his eyes off the screen while the action is going on, but how often will a fast reader watch his audience while a title is on the screen, thus completely destroying illusions and suspense. Do not misunderstand. Action means more than people running, or a fight. A miser picking up a pin and sticking it into the lapel of his coat; a crabbed person taking his napkin and wiping a perfectly clean plate, or passing his hand over his chair to discover a possible speck of dirt; the unworthy girl interrupting an impassioned love scene to smooth her hair or straighten a sash, all that is action which delineates your characters, and tells your story. And of action of that sort your story should be full.

Be dramatic. Be stirring. The elements of which pictures are made, the emotions which most quickly reach the audience, are those of clash, of opposition, of thwarted ambitions, of obstacles overcome, of love not consummated until after a struggle. The course of events should never run smoothly, for then you have narrative, and human beings in the mass are not stirred by narrative. As we gather together in numbers, we retrogress culturally, and the thousand persons sitting in the theatre have only those collective emotions which all of them possess in common. In common, no thousand people are intellectuals. We revert to type. In common, we are little better than savages, and the things we understand are elemental, primal and uncivilized. It is even true that a book which a thousand people read and enjoy individually in their homes, they would not enjoy presented in a theatre if they were gathered together, for the individual intelligence and artistic appreciation drops when the individual becomes part of the mob. Keep away from complexities of characterization, do not be too eager to uplift the screen, to be artistic, undramatic, phychologic—and dull. The supreme sin of theatre and screen is that of dullness. Avoid it!

Don't, in your pride, write down to the screen. You can't. I have known some distinguished people who wrote, patronizingly, down to the screen, saying "I'll just dash this off." Their contributions never appeared anywhere except on the paper they used. Don't make the mistake of writing less than your best. Write the best you can, the finest you can, the sincerest you can, and perhaps in time it may be suited to the screen. Don't lie, artistically, and this is what you will do if you misunderstand the above to mean that what is written for the crowd must be anything less than true and fine, and sincere and simple.

Don't be morbid, but bright. Write about things you know, and avoid the appearance of ignorance. Write deeply and sincerely of those things which are everyday and true, but do not think that by adding "This really happened" you make your sale easier. If the events have the appearance of having happened—that is the important thing in offering screen material to the public. Extraordinary things happen, but if your public won't believe them you might just as well burn the film used in depicting them.

PART IX

Practical Suggestions are what the writer who seeks to "get there" is most in need of. Suggestions that will aid in marketing scenarios. An absolutely original story will always reach the screen—have no doubts on that score. Producers and Directors are hungry for absolutely original stories, plots and ideas. But, unfortunately, it is not always that the real author of such originality gets due credit and payment. Staff writers, staff readers, and even some directors, themselves, have pirated the brain children of others and reaped ignominous credit, and are still doing so. They must be frustrated by the only practical means.

A Free-Lance Writer must copyright an original plot and and situations; otherwise a terrible risk is run in submitting same to any producing organization—one never knows into whose hands a story may fall. The Producing Company may be absolutely honest, the Scenario Editor above reproach, the Director and Staff writers honorable people, yet some busybody around a studio may nose in somehow and get a chance of reading a story—and first thing you know, the cherished original plot is turned in by a worker in the studio, who, naturally, has a "pull" in some direction or other, and the real author will have the painful pleasure of seeing the story, under some other title flaunted before her or his eyes in a local theatre, and with no copyright to back up the claim the author is powerless to do anything in the matter.

In constructing a scenario in synopsis form for publication in print, in order to obtain copyright, it is always very advisable to give the cast of leading players in detail before starting to outline the plot. Make the cast as small as possible. It should not comprise more than eight, or ten at most.

Describe the leading lady and leading man very fully—state the age of every character; their social standing; their height and weight, as you visualize them. Such information will often create a first interest in the story when it falls into a scenario editor's hands. He is naturally looking for stories that will suit the stars and players employed at the studio. A glance at the "cast" may often impel him to read further, and then if the story appeals to him as suitable for one of the producing company's he will submit it to the director, who will, if it also appeals to him, undoubtedly discuss it with the "star" whom he is directing, and the author will in due time receive an envelope that does not contain a rejection slip. If the leading lady in the story is supposed to be youthful it is advisable to describe her something like this:

Adeline Travers—Age 20—medium height—weight about 125 pounds—beautiful and chic—perfectly gowned—up-to-date in manner; full of natural charm and with eyes that depict a singular depth of soul.

A female star on reading this will be pleased. She may be 35 but she does not advertise the fact. If the story is submitted to her by the Director she, naturally, thinks that he must concede that these qualifications fit her like a glove and she feels happy and is in immediate sympathy with the story. The story is as good as sold.

Depict your leading man in like manner—describe him as manly, ruggedly or boyishly handsome. Honest eyed and with an obvious appeal to the best in womanhood—that will please him. He will like your story even before he delves into the plot.

A writer must study the art of salesmanship. Figure out everything possible that will aid in selling the brain product. Make a synopsis clear and concise. Avoid descriptive matter. Bring out the strong situations as strongly as possible. Suggest a comedy relief if it can be handled logically. Insert a little dialogue, if such will strengthen a situation. Too long a synopsis is fatal. The reader is apt to get bored—3,000 words should be the limit—too short a spnopsis is equally fatal—except in case of one-reel comedies. No photo-play drama synopsis should be less than 1,000 words. From 1,500 to 2,500 is a fair average. Of course, a good deal depends on the strength of plot and the situations the author wants to depict. Sentences should be short and crisp. A reader's brain digests them more readily. Figure that out yourself. Always try and put yourself in the reader's place.

In outlining your synopsis, make your chief character stand out prominently from the others. Use the name of that character frequently, so that in the reading it will loom out big.

The Director is always looking for dramatic situations, and it is the Director who is, as a rule, the deciding factor as to whether a story is to be purchased or not. It is sedom that a Scenario Editor is empowered to make a purchase on his own responsibility. His duty is to select suitable material. The average director is not a literary cuss. He does not care a rap about style or composition. You have to present your plot in a concise form that he can readily grasp. He understands dramatic situations. He craves what he calls "a punch." The more "punches" you can embrace in your synopsis the better chance it will have of gaining his approval. If your story is written with the aim of appealing to a female "star" always, if possible, make her the center of your dramatic situations. The same holds good if your story is written around a male "star."

When a story reaches the eyes of a "star" the first thing she or he looks at is to discover what opportunities it will give her, or him, for dramatic action. Don't get the idea into your head that you are writing the synopsis of a novel or an essay. Remember you are writing for the dramatic profession, and such calls for dramatic action, and plenty of it. If you are wholly literary and your object is to turn out really good literary compositions, then you should devote your energies to the literary magazines. Don't humble your literary pride by what you may inwardly consider demeaning yourself in working to gain hush money in the Silent Drama!

PART X

Can Writers make money? Nearly every one contemplating the taking up of literary endeavor is anxious to know whether a living is to be made by such effort, if earnestly and rightly directed. The answer should be easy to come by, if the party contemplating such a course is properly fitted for the task.

If your inclination urges you to write, nothing will keep you from doing so. Lack of education should not deter you. Many writers who have not had the advantages of costly education have made good. Shakespeare was woefully illiterate; could hardly sign his own name, yet he made himself famous. Bret Harte, Mark Twain and O. Henry were very deficient in what you would call "education." Alexander Dumas was a Negro and absolutely self-taught.

Then why hesitate? If the urge within you is sufficiently strong you will not be deterred by fear of failure. If you are an absolute novice and crave enlightenment as to how to begin and proceed you have the whole field of present and past literature to aid you. Read the best authors' works. The fiction stories and articles in the current magazines. Study the various styles of different authors who are making good. Don't bother about "technique" whatever that is. Write your story. Tell your tale in the most natural and easy manner that comes to you.

A great number of people write stories with the object of selling them to film producing companies. Some call them scenarios; others call them photoplays and others simply say they are writing for the movies. The last named are away off. They are not writing for the movies, because, in 999 cases out of 1000 they never become acquainted with the movies. Their stories may reach scenario departments and be glanced at by a Staff Reader or Staff Writer and be promptly returned with rejection slips enclosed. They are writing to the movies, not for them.

The vast majority of struggling writers are merely writing synopses, or unsolicited "continuity," with no benefit to anybody except Uncle Sam. They help to swell the mails. Oh, dear me, such waste of stamps and paper!

There is only one way to write a story with the hope of its reaching the screen. To have, in the first place, an original and interesting plot, and evolve it into a clear, concise synopsis in such a way that the average reader will become immediately interested and want to read on to the end, whilst others who drift into a mass of detail that kill interest in the story and bore or, puzzle the reader, and thus put themselves out of the running. That is why scenario departments employ practiced readers and writers to go over books, plays and original MSS and make synopses of submitted material. That is why embryo writers would do well to have their synopses revised by practised hands before submitting their MSS to scenario departments.

A writer in addition to being that, must be a business man, too. What are you writing for? To make money? Most writers have that hope in view. Well, your stories are to constitute your stock in trade. You are going to put your goods on the market. Look at it that way and constitute yourself a merchant and a salesman. Can you evolve your plots into fiction stories? If you can, fine! You have a splendid market for your wares.

Your original plots are your own brain children. No one can teach you how to write them. No one can bring them out better than the original author. An author may be crude but his crudeness will have the value of reality.

If you have that knack your stories will never need revision. If you have not that knack, then it would be worth while to have a practiced hand make revisions of your stories, until you catch onto the knack yourself.

Well, you and your partner—your brain—have decided to go into business. You must get busy. By all means, learn to typewrite your stories. You must have proper tools to work with—that is, if you intend to submit your brain-children in MSS form. If you are going to have your stories printed and published, in order to secure protection by copyright, then it does not matter. In that case, pen and ink, or even pencil will do; the publisher will do the rest. And a good sensible merchant will, of course, protect his products, and present them to prospective purchasers in the most alluring form possible.

If it is not in you to evolve your stories suitable for publication in fiction publications, then you must rely on the synopsis form of presentation. Then seek all the necessary information that you can as to where and to whom your story will have direct appeal. The Scenario Bulletin-Review submits the authors' published synopses to all the Scenario Departments and to the leading "Stars" and to Producing Directors every month, so that their stories are brought vividly before the best prospective buyers of their brain-children and the authors become talked about in the various studios and they never know but that any moment someone in need of a story may select one of these published stories and clamor to have it produced. Would that I had had such an easy path to tread when I first started evolving plots with the hope of their reaching the screen!

The Scenario Bulletin-Digest and Bulletin-Review make a broad, clear avenue to the film studios. Publication of a synopsis in the Bulletin-Review is, to my mind, the best and most direct path for the embryo writer to steer his brain-child towards the screen. For those who hesitate to entrust their wares by that route there is only one other method to employ. Carefully pave the way to the studios before you approach them. Get into correspondence with the various Scenario Editors—and find out which of the studios are in the market for stories—original, unpublished stories—and also write to various "Stars" and find out whether it would be worth while to submit stories to them or to their Directors, direct. Sometimes it is worth while. But, you must remember, there is always the great risk of having original stories stolen if they are not protected by copyright. I once joined a Scenario Department and found one of my scenarios in the desk of a brother Staff Writer—one that I had submitted, as a Freelance Writer, six months previously. It had been produced under his name. Of course, I made a rumpus and established the true authorship of the story and got payment for it—I had retained a carbon copy—he had merely changed the title of the story and recopied the first page. He lost his job and that Scenario Department was glad to see him go, because that sort of thing is not tolerated in any Scenario Department. Yet, there is always the danger of irresponsible parties drifting into Scenario Departments and reading MSS and copying plots and then passing them off as their own, and often these parties have means of approach to "Stars" and Directors, and before you know where you are your pet story may be screened under some other name and, naturally, the original author will lay the blame of "Stolen Goods" on the Scenario Department to which he, or she, may have submitted it.

Exercise "Salesmanship." Lay the foundation for your market, in the simple way I have outlined. Having ascertained where your story would be most welcome, then submit it directly to the party with whom you have been in correspondence—being careful to have it correctly typewritten and enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope for its return, in case of its rejection.

The writing game is the same as any other industry. Anyone who undertakes it must be prepared to work hard and have determination to succeed. So many essay their hand at a story and submit it to a few magazines and if it gets rejected a few times come to the conclusion that they must give it up.

Now, suppose a man opens a grocery store, say, with one can of tomatoes, and exposes that lone can in the window, and waits for a customer to come along and buy it. If, after a few days no customer has done so, is he justified in claiming that there is no money to be made in the grocery business? No, the sensible grocer plans ahead before he starts into business for himself. He stocks up his shelves with saleable goods and connives to invite trade. A writer must write and keep on writing and sending his, or her, work out. If it is any good at all, some of it is sure to find a billet. Then, after a writer has landed a few stories, the rest will come easy; that is, if the writer continues to consistently turn out good work

Never become discouraged. Keep on writing. Keep your store full. Always have plenty of goods in stock. Any day there may be a better market. Keep on submitting. Every good story will find its niche sooner or later. One of my earliest stories was rejected 18 times, but was eventually accepted by the second film company to whom I had submitted it five months previously. A merchant does not shut up shop if he does not make a fortune right away. He sticks. You and your partner—your brain—must do likewise. Stick to it and you'll win out.

——FINIS——